

《The Treasury of David (Vol. 6)》 (C.H. Spurgeon)

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Psalm 76

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.* The Precentor is here instructed to perform this song to the music of stringed instruments. The master of the harpers was called for his most skilful minstrelsy, and truly the song is worthy of the sweetest sounds that strings can yield. *A Psalm or Song of Asaph.* The style and matter indicate the same hand as that which wrote the preceding; and it is an admirable arrangement which placed the two in juxtaposition. Faith in the 75th Psalm sung of victories to come, and here it sings of triumphs achieved. The present Psalm is a most jubilant war song, a paean to the King of kings, the hymn of a theocratic nation to its divine ruler. We have no need to mark divisions in a song where the unity is so well preserved.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *In Judah is God known.* If unknown in all the world beside, he has so revealed himself to his people by his deeds of grace, that he is no unknown God to them. His name is great in Israel. To be known, in the Lord's case, is to be honoured: those who know his name admire the greatness of it. Although Judah and Israel were unhappily divided politically, yet the godly of both nations were agreed concerning Jehovah their God; and truly whatever schisms may mar the visible church, the saints always "appear as one" in magnifying the Lord their God. Dark is the outer world, but within the

favoured circle Jehovah is revealed, and is the adoration of all who behold him. The world knows him not, and therefore blasphemes him, but his church is full of ardour to proclaim his fame unto the ends of the earth.

Verse 2. *In Salem also is his tabernacle.* In the peaceful city he dwells, and the peace is perpetuated, because there his sacred tent is pitched. The church of God is the place where the Lord abides and he is to her the Lord and giver of peace. And his dwelling place in Zion. Upon the chosen hill was the palace of Israel's Lord. It is the glory of the church that the Redeemer inhabits her by his Holy Spirit. Vain are the assaults of the enemy, for they attack not us alone, but the Lord himself. Immanuel, God with us, finds a home among his people, who then shall work us ill?

Verse 3. *There brake he the arrows of the bow.* Without leaving his tranquil abode, he sent forth his word and snapped the arrows of his enemies before they could shoot them. The idea is sublime, and marks the ease, completeness, and rapidity of the divine action. The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Every weapon, offensive and defensive, the Lord dashed in pieces; death bearing bolts and life preserving armour were alike of no avail when the Breaker sent forth his word of power. In the spiritual conflicts of this and every age, the like will be seen; no weapon that is formed against the church shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against her in judgment, she shall condemn. Selah. It is meet that we should dwell on so soul stirring a theme, and give the Lord our grateful adoration,—hence a pause is inserted.

Verse 4. *Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.* Far more is Jehovah to be extolled than all the invading powers which sought to oppress his people, though they were for power and greatness comparable to mountains. Assyria had pillaged the nations till it had become rich with mountains of spoil, this was talked of among men as glory, but the psalmist despised such renown, and declares that the Lord was far more illustrious. What are the honours of war but brags of murder? What the fame of conquerors but the reek of manslaughter? But the Lord is glorious in holiness, and his terrible deeds are done in justice for the defence of the weak and the deliverance of the enslaved. Mere power may be glorious, but it is not excellent: when we behold the mighty acts of the Lord, we see a perfect blending of the two qualities.

Verse 5. *The stouthearted are spoiled.* They came to spoil, and lo! they are spoiled themselves. Their stout hearts are cold in death, the angel of the pestilence has dried up their life blood, their very heart is taken from them. They have slept their sleep. Their last sleep—the sleep of death. And none of the men of might have found their hands. Their arms are palsied, they cannot lift a finger, for the rigour of death has stiffened them. What a scene was that when Sennacherib's host was utterly destroyed in one night. The hands which were furious to pull down Jerusalem, could not even be raised from the sod, the most valiant warriors were as weak as the palsied cripples at the temple gate, yea, their eyes they could not open, a deep sleep sealed their vision in everlasting darkness. O

God, how terrible art thou! Thus shalt thou fight for us, and in the hour of peril overthrow the enemies of thy gospel. Therefore in thee will we trust and not be afraid.

Verse 6. *At thy rebuke.* A word accomplished all, there was no need of a single blow. O God of Jacob. God of thy wrestling people, who again like their father supplant their enemy; God of the covenant and the promise, thou hast in this gracious character fought for thine elect nation. Both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. They will neither neigh nor rattle again; still are the trappings of the horses and the crash of the cars; the calvary no more creates its din. The Israelites always had a special fear of horses and scythed chariots; and, therefore, the sudden stillness of the entire force of the enemy in this department is made the theme of special rejoicing. The horses were stretched on the ground, and the chariots stood still, as if the whole camp had fallen asleep. Thus can the Lord send a judicial sleep over the enemies of the church, a premonition of the second death, and this he can do when they are in the zenith of power; and, as they imagine, in the very act of blotting out the remembrance of his people. The world's Rabshakahs can write terrible letters, but the Lord answers not with pen and ink, but with rebukes, which bear death in every syllable.

Verse 7. *Thou, even thou, art to be feared.* Not Sennacherib, nor Nisroch his god, but Jehovah alone, who with a silent rebuke had withered all the monarch's host.

"Fear him, ye saints, and then ye shall
Have nothing else to fear."

The fear of man is a snare, but the fear of God is a great virtue, and has great power for good over the human mind. God is to be feared profoundly, continually, and alone. Let all worship be to him only. And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Who indeed? The angels fell when their rebellion provoked his justice; Adam lost his place in Paradise in the same manner; Pharaoh and other proud monarchs passed away at his frown; neither is there in earth or hell any who can abide the terror of his wrath. How blest are they who are sheltered in the atonement of Jesus, and hence have no cause to fear the righteous anger of the Judge of all the earth.

Verse 8. *Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven.* So complete an overthrow was evidently a judgment from heaven; those who saw it not, yet heard the report of it, and said, "This is the finger of God." Man will not hear God's voice if he can help it, but God takes care to cause it to be heard. The echoes of that judgment executed on the haughty Assyrian are heard still, and will ring on down all the ages, to the praise of divine justice. The earth feared and was still. All nations trembled at the tidings, and sat in humbled awe. Repose followed the former turmoils of war, when the oppressor's power was broken, and God was revered for having given quiet to the peoples. How readily can Jehovah command an audience! It may be that in the latter days he will, by some such miracles of power in the realms of grace, constrain all earth's inhabitants to attend to the gospel, and submit to the reign of his all glorious Son. So be it, good Lord.

Verse 9. *When God arose to judgment.* Men were hushed when he ascended the judgment seat and actively carried out the decrees of justice. When God is still the people are in tumult; when he arises they are still as a stone. To save all the meek of the earth. The Ruler of men has a special eye towards the poor and despised; he makes it his first point to right all their wrongs. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." They have little enough of it now, but their avenger is strong and he will surely save them. He who saves his people is the same God who overthrows their enemies; he is as omnipotent to save as to destroy. Glory be unto his name. Selah. Here pause, and let devout contemplation adore the God of Jacob.

Verse 10. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.* It shall not only be overcome but rendered subservient to thy glory. Man with his breath of threatening is but blowing the trumpet of the Lord's eternal fame. Furious winds often drive vessels the more swiftly into port. The devil blows the fire and melts the iron, and then the Lord fashions it for his own purposes. Let men and devils rage as they may, they cannot do otherwise than subserve the divine purposes. The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Malice is tethered and cannot break its bounds. The fire which cannot be utilised shall be damped. Some read it "thou shalt gird, "as if the Lord girded on the wrath of man as a sword to be used for his own designs, and certainly men of the world are often a sword in the hand of God, to scourge others. The verse clearly teaches that even the most rampant evil is under the control of the Lord, and will in the end be overruled for his praise.

Verse 11. *Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God.* Well may we do so in memory of such mercies and judgments. To vow or not is a matter of choice, but to discharge our vows is our bounden duty. He who would defraud God, his own God, is a wretch indeed. He keeps his promises, let not his people fail in theirs. He is their faithful God and deserves to have a faithful people. Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought *to be feared*. Let surrounding nations submit to the only living God, let his own people with alacrity present their offerings, and let his priests and Levites be leaders in the sacred sacrifice. He who deserves to be praised as our God does, should not have mere verbal homage, but substantial tribute. Dread Sovereign, behold I give myself to thee.

Verse 12. *He shall cut off the spirit of princes.* Their courage, skill, and life are in his hands, and he can remove them as a gardener cuts off a slip from a plant. None are great in his hand. Caesars and Napoleons fall under his power as the boughs of the tree beneath the woodman's axe. He is terrible to the kings of the earth. While they are terrible to others, he is terrible to them. If they oppose themselves to his people, he will make short work of them; they shall perish before the terror of his arm, "for the Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name." Rejoice before him all ye who adore the God of Jacob.

Whole Psalm. No Psalm has a greater right to follow Psalm 75 than this, which is inscribed *To the Precentor, with accompaniment of stringed instruments (vid.) iv. 1, a Psalm by Asaph, a song.* Similar expressions (*God of Jacob, Ps 75:10 77:7; saints, wicked of the earth, Ps 75:9 76:10*), and the same impress throughout speak in favour of unity of authorship. In other respects too, they form a pair: Psalm 75 prepares the way for the divine deed of judgments as imminent, which Psalm 76 celebrates as having taken place. *Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1. *In Judah is God known.* God is truly and savingly known only in and through his Son; God indeed is obscurely and darkly known in his *works*, as a God of power; in his providence, as a God of authority, wisdom, and order; in his common mercies, as a God of bounty; and in his punishments and judgments, as a God of justice; but in Christ opened and preached in the gospel, God is known with a clear, a comfortable, and saving knowledge, as a father of grace and singular mercy and lovingkindness. *In Judah (saith the psalmist) is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Judah,* in his church, where his word and ordinances are, where Christ is preached and the mystery of man's salvation is opened, there God is known *truly* without error, *perspicuously* without obscurities, and *savingly* without uncertainties; there he is known as a *King* in his courts, for the glory and beauty which he there manifests; as a *teacher* in his school, for the wisdom and knowledge which he there dispenses; as a *dweller* in his house, for the holy orders he there prescribes, and gracious rule and dominion he there erects and beareth in the souls of his servants; as a *bridegroom* in the banqueting house, for the spiritual dainties he there maketh, for the clear and open manifestation of himself, and love and comforts he there ministereth to his spiritual friends and guests; *and his name is great in Israel;* his power, wisdom, truth, love, and goodness is much magnified and very glorious in their apprehensions who know him in Christ Jesus. *Alexander Grosse.*

Verse 1. *His name.* By the *name* of God here, God himself is understood; for in so many good effects as God uttereth himself towards his kirk, *so many names* he giveth to himself whereby he may be praised of her. As for example, when he promises unto his kirk freely grace and mercy, his kirk giveth him a *name*, and calleth him merciful. When he keepeth his promise, and uttereth himself a faithful God to his kirk, his kirk giveth him a *name*, and calleth him a true God. When he delivereth his kirk out of danger, and sheweth him a mighty God, and terrible against his enemies, the kirk giveth him a *name*, and calleth him a potent God, and so forth in the rest of his effects: so that by the *name* of God is understood here God himself, as God maketh himself to be known in his wonderful works. *Robert Bruce.*

Verse 1. *His name is great in Israel.* Properly the great name in Israel, that is, the church, is the name of Jesus, which is great, first, by its efficacy: for it signifies Saviour. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. Secondly, it is great in dignity: for it is the name that is above every name... Thirdly, it is great in the breadth of its range, Ps 8:1: *How excellent is thy name in all the*

earth. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2. *In Salem also is his tabernacle.* It is not without meaning that Jerusalem has the appellation of *Salem*; for it is thereby insinuated that the *tabernacle* of God, notwithstanding the assault of foes, in the very heart of the tumults of war remained *in peace*. How much more now that the invaders had been overthrown, would *prosperity* be enjoyed? *Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2. *In Salem also is his tabernacle.* God the Holy Ghost is a spirit of peace, he is the comforter; he seals up peace (2Co 1:22). This blessed dove brings the olive branch of peace in his mouth: now a peaceable disposition evidences something of God in a man, therefore God loves to dwell there. "In Salem is God's tabernacle:" Salem signifies peace; God dwells in a peaceable spirit. *Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2. *In Salem also is his tabernacle,* etc. All the old versions, as well as the two English ones, have missed one especial force of this passage. There is no direct reference in words to any human habitation, but to the lair of the Lion of Judah. The word *wkm* does not only mean *his tabernacle*, but *his covert*, and is so translated in another place (Jer 25:38): "He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion;" and the vaguer word *wtgwem* which succeeds may well be translated by "den," or some equivalent phrase. Ps 10:9. *Simon De Muis.*

Verses 2-3. The care of Salem, or Zion, lies at the bottom of all God's powerful acting and workings among the sons of men. Every mighty work of God throughout the world may be prefaced with these two verses. The whole course of affairs in the world is steered by Providence in reference to the good of Salem. *John Owen.*

Verse 3. *There.* Observe how it is said, *There he brake*, namely, in his temple, his habitation there. For unto that his temple doth the coherence in the verse afore carry it, for that was last in mention, and with the greatest emphasis. In the story we read how that Sennacherib's overthrow was from Hezekiah's prayer in the temple; for upon Sennacherib's letter, and Hezekiah's hearsay of the blasphemy, he took himself thither, went instantly into the temple, and began his prayer thus: "O thou God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims." He invokes him under that style of his dwelling in the holiest, and so hearing prayers there. Thus you have it recorded both in Isaiah and in 2Ki 19:15. And how suitably, in answer hereunto, it is said here in the Psalm, that God gave forth sentence presently out of his tabernacle, yea, and that so suddenly too, as that the very execution is said to be done there, that is, from thence. And yet again, in the eighth verse of the Psalm, it is said to be a sentence from heaven too; *Thou didst cause judgment* (so called because it was the sentence of God as a judge) *to be heard from heaven.* Thus Hezekiah prayed, and thus God heard; and both as in the temple. *Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3. *There.* These men, to wit the King of Asshur and his accomplices, came to cast out God out of his dwelling place; but he stood to the defence of his own house, and showed them that he would

not remove for their pleasure. *Robert Bruce.*

Verse 4. God was not known in Babylon, in Egypt, in other nations, his tabernacle and dwelling place was not amongst them, therefore they were not glorious. But see what is in the fourth verse, *Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey*; thou Judah, thou Israel, thou Salem, thou Zion, that hast spiritual mercies and blessings, art more glorious than they, whatever their glory be. Have the nations abroad goodly towers? thou hast the temple; have they stately cities? thou hast Jerusalem, the city of God; have they wise men? thou hast the prophets; have they gods of gold, silver, and stones; thou hast the true living God, Jehovah, to be thy God; have they human laws that are good? thou hast divine laws that excel; have they temporal excellencies? thou hast spiritual; have they the glory of the world? thou hast the glory of heaven. *William Greenhill.*

Verse 4. *The mountains of prey.* Why are they called the mountains of prey? There is a reference to *the lairs of the lions* in the mountains, whence they rush forth upon those who come that way, and tear them in pieces. In the same way the dwelling place of God was represented above under the title of a tabernacle or lair. Moreover, this is a mystic epithet of the *mountains of Judah*, by which it is hinted that the enemies who venture to approach that lair are wont to be torn in sunder: a terrible example of which had just been shown in the case of the Assyrian, there overthrown, torn, and spoiled. Compare Isa 31:4. *Hermann Venema.*

Verse 5. *The stouthearted are spoiled.* There is indicated in these words that consternation of mind which deprives of judgment and power. *The valiant are spoiled of their heart*: that is, they who at other times were wise and courageous *have now lost their heart*, and have been reduced to foolishness and stupidity. *Hermann Venema.*

Verse 5. *The stouthearted are spoiled.* After the breaking of their weapons their spoliation is recorded, for that follows the slaughter of foes. Nor is mention made of that without reason. They had come to spoil, therefore are they deservedly spoiled. *Musculus.*

Verse 5. *The stouthearted are spoiled.* Some translate it, *They are spoiled of their stout heart*. The stouthearted, the strong, are spoiled. The strong man may be spoiled by a stronger; that's a good sense, but it is more elegantly rendered, *they are spoiled of their stout heart*; that is, the Lord takes their heart out of their bosom. Daring men, who fear nothing, are turned into *Magor-missabibs—fear round about*; their stout hearts are taken from them, and they are so far from being a terror to other men, that they run from the shadow of a man; their courage is down; they cannot give a child a confident look, much less look dangers or enemies in the face. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5. *(last clause).* The strength and power of a man is in his hands; if they be gone, all his hope is gone. If a man's sword be taken from him, he will do what he can with his hands; but if his hands be gone, he may go to sleep for any disturbance he will work. For men not to find their hands, is not to have that power for the execution of their designs which formerly they had. *John Owen.*

Verse 5. (*last clause*). As we say of a man that goes lamely or lazily, "he cannot find his feet; "so of a man that acts lamely or lazily, or of a soldier that fights faintly and cowardly, *he cannot find his hands*.
Joseph Caryl.

Verses 5-6.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever were still!
And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride:
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock breaking surf.
And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

—*George Gordon, Lord Byron.*

Verse 6. *Cast into a deep sleep*. It is observable that the verb here used is the same as is used in the narrative of the act of Jael, and of the death of the proud enemy of Israel, Sisera, *cast into a deep sleep*, by God's power, working by the hand of a woman. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 7. *Thou, even thou, art to be feared*. The emphasis in the word *thou*, redoubled, implies as much as if he had said, Not principalities, not powers, not hell, not death, nor anything for themselves, but thou, O Lord, alone art to be feared. Arguments and reasons to confirm it are two, here laid down in the text: the first is drawn from God's anger, who hath decreed, and accordingly executes vengeance upon all the proud. The second is drawn from his power; not princes, not armies, not men, not angels, are able to endure the breath of his fury; for, *Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?*... The anger of God is a terrible, unspeakable, unsupportable, intolerable, burden. Every word in the text hath a special emphasis to prove this. *Who may stand? Who? Shall angels? They are but like refracted beams or rays, if God should hide his face, they would cease to shine. Shall man? His glory and pomp, like the colours in the rainbow, vanish away, when God puts forth in anger the brightness of his face. Shall devils? If he speak the word, they are tumbled down from heaven like lightning. Stand in thy sight. Stand. What! a reed against a cedar, a thistle in Lebanon against a cedar in Lebanon; a feather against a flame; a grasshopper against an Almighty, a head of glass against a rod of brass? When once thou art angry. Angry.* By sending out his wrath, that it wounds like arrows; angry, in pouring it out, that it drowns like water; angry, in kindling of it, that

it burns like fire; a consuming fire, but you tell me such a fire may be quenched; an unquenchable fire, but since that may cease to burn, when it lacks matter, it is in one word an everlasting fire, that never goes out. That, that's it; such anger as is never fully shown, but in punishment of reprobates; in no punishment, but that in hell; in none in hell, but that eternal. *John Cragge's "Cabinet of Spiritual Jewells."* 1657.

Verse 9. *God arose to judgment.* This great judgment was wrought upon the enemies *when God rose*: it was not done when God sat; for the whole time when he sat his enemies were aloft, stirring their time, raging in murder, oppression, and blood... He bringeth in God here after the manner of earthly judges, after the custom of our judges; for first they sit down, they try, seek out, and advise, and after consideration they resolve, and after resolution they rise up, give forth judgment, and pronounce the sentence; even so the prophet bringeth in God after the same manner; sitting, and after sitting, rising and pronouncing the sentence. *Robert Bruce.*

Verse 9. *To save all the meek.* We see from this passage what care God takes of the afflicted. When he is angry with the ungodly, he is angry with them chiefly because they have oppressed the poor and the innocent. Although he detests all iniquity, yet he is most indignant with that which is committed against the needy and guiltless. So in Psalm 12, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." So in this verse, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. *Musculus.*

Verse 9. Is not this the day when the Saviour comes to reign? the day when the results of things shall best be seen; the day when every saint with anointed eye shall see that events all tended to the glory of God; the day when they shall sing better far than now.

"Surely the wrath of man praiseth thee.

Thou girdest thyself with the remnant of wrath."

—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 10. *Surly the wrath of man shall praise thee.* Persecutions tend to correct the failings of good men, and to exercise and illustrate their several graces and virtues. By these, good men are usually made much better and more approved, while they tend to exercise our patience, to quicken our devotion, to evidence out zeal and Christian fortitude, and to show to the whole world what love we bear to the truth, and how much we are willing to undergo for the honour of God. Till they have suffered something for it, truth is too apt to grow cheap and be less prized many times, even by those that are good men in the main; whereas we are apt on the contrary, never to value it at a higher rate, or to be more zealous for it, or to make better use of it, than when it is opposed and persecuted. What more truly beneficial therefore, or tending to the divine glory, than for God, who useth to bring good out of evil, to make use also of the opposers of his truth, to rouse up his servants whom he sees growing more remiss and negligent than they should be, and to suffer such temptations to assault

them, by which their drowsy minds may be spurred on into a greater love and zeal for the truth, and a deeper sense of the divine benefit in it, and in general, excited to the more diligent performance of their duty. *Richard Pearson*. 1684.

Verse 10. *The wrath of man shall praise thee.* In the Septuagint it is, The wrath of man shall keep holy day to thee, shall increase a festival for thee. God many times gets up in the world on Satan's shoulders. When matters are ravelled and disordered, he can find out the right end of the thread, and how to disentangle us again; and when we have spoiled a business, he can dispose it for good, and make an advantage of those things which seem to obscure the glory of his name. *Thomas Manton*.

Verse 10. *The wrath of man shall praise thee.* The wrath of wicked men against the people of God is very tributary to his praise.

1. It puts them upon many subtle devices and cunning stratagems, in frustrating of which the wisdom of God and his care of his Church is very much illustrated.
2. The wrath of wicked men impels them to many violent and forcible attempts upon the people of God to destroy them, and so gives him occasion to manifest his power in their defence.
3. It makes them sometimes fit to be his instruments in correcting his people, and so he vindicates himself from the suspicion of being a patron to sin in them that are nearest to him, and makes them that hate holiness promote it in his people, and them that intend them the greatest hurt, to do them the greatest good.
4. It administers occasion to him for the manifestation of the power of his grace in upholding the spirits of his people and the being of his church in despite of all that enemies can do against them.
5. It serves very much to adorn God's most signal undertakings for his people in the world.
6. It serves to manifest the glory of God's justice upon his people's enemies in the day when he rises up to avenge himself upon them, when he shall stand over them, lashing them with scorpions, and at every blow mind their former cruelties. Here, take that for your inhuman rage against my people at such a place, and that for your barbarous usage of them at such a time. Now see how good it is to be imprisoned, beaten, tortured, burnt, and sawn asunder. Thus the enemies themselves are often constrained to acknowledge with Adoni Bezek the righteous hand of God upon them in the day of inquisition. *Condensed from John Warren's Sermon before Parliament*. 1656.

Verse 10. *The wrath of man.* Wrath is anger accented unto the highest pitch, or blown up into a flame. *The wrath of man*, (in the original it is *The wrath of Adam*, or *the wrath of clay*, weak, impotent man) *shall praise thee*, i.e., it shall turn to the praise and glory of God through his overruling providence, though quite otherwise intended. God will bring honour to himself, and serve his own holy and wise designs out of it... This expression, *the wrath of man*, imports the weakness and impotence of it; it is but the wrath of *Adam*, or of *red clay*. How contemptibly doth the Spirit of God speak of man, and of the power of man, in Scripture? "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his

nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" The wrath of man, when it is lengthened out to its utmost boundaries, can only go to the length of killing the body, or in the breaking the sheath of clay in which the soul lodges, and then it can do no more. *Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 10. *Shall praise thee.* God turns the wrath of man to the praise of his adorable sovereignty. Never have the Lord's people had such awful impressions of the sovereignty of God, as when they have been in the furnace of man's wrath, then they become dumb with silence. When the Chaldean and Sabeian robbers are let loose to plunder and spoil the substance of Job, he is made to view adorable sovereignty in it, saying, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." It is in such a case as this that God says to his own people, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen." What work of God about the church is advanced by the wrath of men?

1. His *discovering* work; for by the wind of man's wrath he separates between the precious and the vile, betwixt the chaff and the wheat. In the day of the church's prosperity and quiet, hypocrites and true believers are mingled together, like the chaff and the wheat in the barn floor: but the Lord, like the husbandman, opens the door of his barn, and puts the wind of man's wrath through it, that the world may know which is which. O, sirs, much chaff is cast up already, both among ministers and professors; but it is like the wind and sieve may cast up much more yet ere all be done.

2. God's *purging* work is advanced among his own children by the wrath of men: there is much of the dross of corruption cleaves to the Lord's people while in the wilderness. Now, the Lord heats the furnace of man's wrath, and casts his people into it, that when he has tried them, he may bring them forth as gold.

3. God's *uniting* work is hereby advanced. In a time of peace and external tranquillity the sheep of Christ scatter and divide among themselves; but God lets loose the dogs upon them, and then the flock runs together; or like pieces of metal cast into the fire, they run together in a lump.

4. God's *enlarging* work, or his work of spreading the gospel, is sometimes advanced by the wrath of man. Ac 8:1-5. The gospel, like the chamomile, the more it is trodden upon, the more it spreads.

Ebenezer Erskine.

Verse 10. *The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* *The remainder of wrath, i.e.* what is left behind of the wrath of men, when God has glorified himself thereby. Even after God has defeated the purposes of wicked men, and made them contribute to his glory, yet there is abundance of wrath remaining. But what becomes of that wrath that is left? God shall *restrain* it. The word signifies to *gird up*. However God may see fit to slacken the bridle of his providence, and suffer wicked men to vent their wrath and enmity, as far as it shall contribute to his glory; yet the super abounding and the remainder of his wrath that is not for his glory and his people's profit, God will gird it up, that they shall not get it vented... If any wrath of man remain beyond what shall bring in a revenue of praise unto

God, he will *restrain it*, and bind it up like the waters of a mill: he will suffer as much of the current of water to run upon the wheel, as serves to carry it about and grind his corn, but the remainder of the water he sets it off another way: so God will let out as much of the current of man's wrath as shall serve the ends of his glory and our good, but the remainder of the stream and current he will *restrain*, and turn another way. In Isaiah 28 we are told that God will not be aye "threshing his corn, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." All this comfort is sure and certain, there is not the least peradventure about it, that the flame of man's wrath shall praise the Lord, and the superfluous fire shall be quenched, or hemmed in; for here we have God's parole of honour for it: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 10. *The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* twmh *Chemoth*, "wrath," in the plural number, seems to be put in opposition to *chamoth*, the *single wrath* of man in the former part of the verse; to shew there is more wrath which God is to restrain, than merely that of man. There is also more pride which needs a like restraint; namely, that of the *first Lucifer*, who sinned, and, as is thought, fell by aspiring to ascend, and to be like the Most High. There are finally, other *counsels* also, as well as other *wrath* and *pride*, besides human, which God confounds. There is a wisdom that descendeth not from above (no, nor grows on earth) but is devilish, Jas 3:15. And both *wrath*, *pride*, and *wisdom*, of *devils* as well as *men*, shall God *restrain*, when he pleases not to turn them to his praise. Let there be hellish plots, yet our God shall confound them. From "A Sermon preached"... before the Queen... By Edward (Wetenhall) *Lord Bishop of Corke and Rosse*. 1691.

Verse 10. *Thou shalt restrain.* This, in the Hebrew, is expressed in one word, rygxt, which imports the girding or binding of it on every side, that it shall by no means break out, but shall be kept in, as a dog in a chain, as a lion in his den, how violent soever. *Cornelius Burges*, in "*Another Sermon preached to the Honourable House of Commons... November the fifth, 1641.*"

Verse 11. *Round about him.* A description of his people, as the twelve tribes pitched round about the tabernacle, Nu 2:2; and the twenty-four elders were round about God's throne, Re 4:4. So the Chaldee expounds it;—*Ye that dwell about his sanctuary. Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 12. *Cut off.* He deals with princes as men deal with a vine. An axe is too strong for a cluster of grapes, or a sprig of a vine; it easily cuts them off: so God by a judgment easily cuts off the spirit of princes; they are not able to stand against the least judgments of God: when he puts strength into worms, or any other creature they fall. *William Greenhill*, in a Sermon, entitled, "*The Axe at the Root.*"

Verse 12. The Lord *cuts off the spirit of princes*; the word is, *he slips off*, as one should slip off a flower between one's fingers, or as one should slip off a bunch of grapes from a vine, so soon is it done. How great uncertainty have many great ones, by their miserable experience, found in their

outward glory and worldly felicity! What a change hath a little time made in all their honours, riches, and delights! That victorious emperor Henry the Fourth, who had fought fifty-two pitched battles, fell to that poverty before he died, that he was forced to petition to be a prebend in the church of Spier, to maintain him in his old age. And Procopius reports of King Gillimer, who was a potent king of the Vandals, who was so low brought, as to intreat his friends to send him a sponge, a loaf of bread, and a harp; a sponge to dry up his tears, a loaf of bread to maintain his life, and a harp to solace himself in his misery. Philip de Comines reports of a Duke of Exeter, who though he had married Edward the Fourth's sister, yet he saw him in the Low Countries begging barefoot. Bellisarius, the chief man living in his time, having his eyes put out, was led at last in a string, crying, "give a halfpenny to Bellisarius." *Jeremiah Burroughs.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. Reverence for God's name proportionate to true knowledge of it.

Verse 2. The peculiar relation of God to his church.

Verse 2. (*first clause*). A peaceful church the tabernacle of God. The benefits peace confers, the evils of strife, the causes of dissension, and the means of promoting unity.

Verse 3. Christian glories, or the victories vouchsafed to the church over heathenism, heresy, persecution, etc.

Verse 3.

1. Where enemies are conquered; "There; "not on the battlefield so much as in the house of God; as Amalek by Moses on the Mount; Sennacherib by Hezekiah in the Sanctuary.

2. How there?

(a) By faith.

(b) By prayer. "The weapons of our warfare, "etc.

Verse 4. The Lord, our portion, compared with the treasures of empires.

Verse 4.

1. What the world is, compared with the church: Mountains of prey.

(a) Cruelty instead of love.

(b) Violence instead of peace.

2. What the church is compared with the world.

(a) *More glorious, because more excellent.*

(b) *More excellent, because more glorious.* Both are more real and abiding. *G. R.*

Verse 5. *They have slept their sleep.* Divers kinds of deaths or sleeps for the various classes of men.

Verse 7. The anger of God. A very suggestive subject.

Verses 8-9.

1. The characters described: *the meek of the earth*.
2. The need implied.
 - (a) To be vindicated.
 - (b) To be saved.
3. The divine interposition on their behalf: *Thou didst cause, etc. When God arose, etc.*
4. The effect of their deliverance: *The earth feared, etc. G. R.*

Verse 10.

1. Evil permitted for good: *the wrath, etc.*
2. Restrained for good: *The remainder, etc.*

Or,

1. Ruled.
2. Overruled. *G. R.*

Verse 11.

1. To whom vows may be made. Not to man, but God.
2. What vows should be thus made.
 - (a) Of self dedication.
 - (b) Of self service.
 - (c) Of self sacrifice.
3. How kept: *Vow and pay.* (a) From duty.
(b) From fear of his displeasure. *G. R.*

Verse 11. The propriety, obligation, pleasure, and profit of presenting gifts unto the Lord.

Psalm 77

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician, to Jeduthun.* It was meet that another leader of the psalmody should take his turn. No harp should be silent in the courts of the Lord's house. *A Psalm of Asaph.* Asaph was a man of exercised mind, and often touched the minor key; he was thoughtful, contemplative, believing, but withal there was a dash of sadness about him, and this imparted a tonic flavour to his songs. To follow him with understanding, it is needful to have done business on the great waters, and weathered many an Atlantic gale.

DIVISION. If we follow the poetical arrangement, and divide at the Selahs, we shall find the troubled

man of God pleading in Ps 77:1-3, and then we shall hear him lamenting and arguing within himself, Ps 77:4-9. From Ps 77:10-15 his meditations run toward God, and in the close he seems as in a vision to behold the wonders of the Red Sea and the wilderness. At this point, as if lost in an ecstasy, he hurriedly closes the Psalm with an abruptness, the effect of which is quite startling. The Spirit of God knows when to cease speaking, which is more than those do who, for the sake of making a methodical conclusion, prolong their words even to weariness. Perhaps this Psalm was meant to be a prelude to the next, and, if so, its sudden close is accounted for. The hymn now before us is for experienced saints only, but to them it will be of rare value as a transcript of their own inner conflicts.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice.* This Psalm has much sadness in it, but we may be sure it will end well, for it begins with prayer, and prayer never has an ill issue. Asaph did not run to man but to the Lord, and to him he went, not with studied, stately, stilted words, but with a cry, the natural, unaffected, unfeigned expression of pain. He used his voice also, for though vocal utterance is not necessary to the life of prayer, it often seems forced upon us by the energy of our desires. Sometimes the soul feels compelled to use the voice, for thus it finds a freer vent for its agony. It is a comfort to hear the alarm bell ringing when the house is invaded by thieves. Even unto God with my voice. He returned to his pleading. If once sufficed not, he cried again. He needed an answer, he expected one, he was eager to have it soon, therefore he cried again and again, and with his voice too, for the sound helped his earnestness. And he gave ear unto me. Importunity prevailed. The gate opened to the steady knock. It shall be so with us in our hour of trial, the God of grace will hear us in due season.

Verse 2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* All day long his distress drove him to his God, so that when night came he continued still in the same search. God had hidden his face from his servant, therefore the first care of the troubled saint was to seek his Lord again. This was going to the root of the matter and removing the main impediment first. Diseases and tribulations are easily enough endured when God is found of us, but without him they crush us to the earth. My sore ran in the night, and ceased not. As by day so by night his trouble was on him and his prayer continued. Some of us know what it is, both physically and spiritually, to be compelled to use these words: no respite has been afforded us by the silence of the night, our bed has been a rack to us, our body has been in torment, and our spirit in anguish. It appears that this sentence is wrongly translated, and should be, "my hand was stretched out all night," this shows that his prayer ceased not, but with uplifted hand he continued to seek succour of his God. My soul refused to be comforted. He refused some comforts as too weak for his case, others as untrue, others as unhallowed; but chiefly because of distraction, he declined even those grounds of consolation which ought to have been effectual with

him. As a sick man turns away even from the most nourishing food, so did he. It is impossible to comfort those who refuse to be comforted. You may bring them to the waters of the promise, but who shall make them drink if they will not do so? Many a daughter of despondency has pushed aside the cup of gladness, and many a son of sorrow has hugged his chains. There are times when we are suspicious of good news, and are not to be persuaded into peace, though the happy truth should be as plain before us as the King's highway.

Verse 3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* He who is the wellspring of delight to faith becomes an object of dread to the psalmist's distracted heart. The justice, holiness, power, and truth of God have all a dark side, and indeed all the attributed may be made to look black upon us if our eye be evil; even the brightness of divine love blinds us, and fills us with a horrible suspicion that we have neither part nor lot in it. He is wretched indeed whose memories of the Ever Blessed prove distressing to him; yet the best of men know the depth of this abyss. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. He mused and mused but only sank the deeper. His inward disquietudes did not fall asleep as soon as they were expressed, but rather they returned upon him, and leaped over him like raging billows of an angry sea. It was not his body alone which smarted, but his noblest nature writhed in pain, his life itself seemed crushed into the earth. It is in such a case that death is coveted as a relief, for life becomes an intolerable burden. With no spirit left in us to sustain our infirmity, our case becomes forlorn; like man in a tangle of briars who is stripped of his clothes, every hook of the thorns becomes a lancet, and we bleed with ten thousand wounds. Alas, my God, the writer of this exposition well knows what thy servant Asaph meant, for his soul is familiar with the way of grief. Deep glens and lonely caves of soul depressions, my spirit knows full well your awful glooms! Selah. Let the song go softly; this is no merry dance for the swift feet of the daughters of music, pause ye awhile, and let sorrow take breath between her sighs.

Verse 4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking.* The fears which thy strokes excite in me forbid my eyelids to fall, my eyes continue to watch as sentinels forbidden to rest. Sleep is a great comforter, but it forsakes the sorrowful, and then their sorrow deepens and eats into the soul. If God holds the eyes waking, what anodyne shall give us rest? How much we owe to him who giveth his beloved sleep! I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Great griefs are dumb. Deep streams brawl not among the pebbles like the shallow brooklets which live on passing showers. Words fail the man whose heart fails him. He had cried to God but he could not speak to man, what a mercy it is that if we can do the first, we need not despair though the second should be quite out of our power. Sleepless and speechless Asaph was reduced to great extremities, and yet he rallied, and even so shall we.

Verse 5. *I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.* If no good was in the present, memory ransacked the past to find consolation. She fain would borrow a light from the altars of yesterday to light the gloom of today. It is our duty to search for comfort, and not in sullen indolence

yield to despair; in quiet contemplation topics may occur to us which will prove the means of raising our spirits, and there is scarcely any theme more likely to prove consolatory than that which deals with the days of yore, the years of the olden time, when the Lord's faithfulness was tried and proven by hosts of his people. Yet it seems that even this consideration created depression rather than delight in the good man's soul, for he contrasted his own mournful condition with all that was bright in the venerable experiences of ancient saints, and so complained the more. Ah, sad calamity of a jaundiced mind, to see nothing as it should be seen, but everything as through a veil of mist.

Verse 6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* At other times his spirit had a song for the darkest hour, but now he could only recall the strain as a departed memory. Where is the harp which once thrilled sympathetically to the touch of those joyful fingers? My tongue, hast thou forgotten to praise? Hast thou no skill except in mournful ditties? Ah me, how sadly fallen am I! How lamentable that I, who like the nightingale could charm the night, am now fit comrade for the hooting owl. I commune with mine own heart. He did not cease from introspection, for he was resolved to find the bottom of his sorrow, and trace it to its fountain head. He made sure work of it by talking not with his mind only, but with his inmost heart; it was heart work with him. He was no idler, no melancholy trifler; he was up and at it, resolutely resolved that he would not tamely die of despair, but would fight for his hope to the last moment of life. And my spirit made diligent search. He ransacked his experience, his memory, his intellect, his whole nature, his entire self, either to find comfort or to discover the reason why it was denied him. That man will not die by the hand of the enemy who has enough force of soul remaining to struggle in this fashion.

Verse 7. *Wilt the Lord cast off forever?* This was one of the matters he enquired into. He painfully knew that the Lord might leave his people for a season, but his fear was that the time might be prolonged and have no close; eagerly, therefore, he asked, will the Lord utterly and finally reject those who are his own, and suffer them to be the objects of his contemptuous reprobation, his everlasting cast offs? This he was persuaded could not be. No instance in the years of ancient times led him to fear that such could be the case. And will he be favourable no more? Favourable he had been; would that goodwill never again show itself? Was the sun set never to rise again? Would spring never follow the long and dreary winter? The questions are suggested by fear, but they are also the cure for fear. It is a blessed thing to have grace enough to look such questions in the face, for their answer is self evident and eminently fitted to cheer the heart.

Verse 8. *Is his mercy clean gone for ever?* If he has no love for his elect, has he not still his mercy left? Has that dried up? Has he no pity for the sorrowful? Doth his promise fail for evermore? His word is pledged to those who plead with him; is that become of none effect? Shall it be said that from one generation to another the Lord's word has fallen to the ground; whereas aforetime he kept his covenant to all generations of them that fear him? It is a wise thing thus to put unbelief through the

catechism. Each one of the questions is a dart aimed at the very heart of despair. Thus have we also in our days of darkness done battle for life itself.

Verse 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* Has El, the Mighty One, become great in everything but grace? Does he know how to afflict, but not how to uphold? Can he forget anything? Above all, can he forget to exercise that attribute which lies nearest to his essence, for he is love? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Are the pipes of goodness choked up so that love can no more flow through them? Do the bowels of Jehovah no longer yearn towards his own beloved children? Thus with cord after cord unbelief is smitten and driven out of the soul; it raises questions and we will meet it with questions: it makes us think and act ridiculously, and we will heap scorn upon it. The argument of this passage assumes very much the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Strip it naked, and mistrust is a monstrous piece of folly. Selah. Here rest awhile, for the battle of questions needs a lull.

Verse 10. *And I said, This is my infirmity.* He has won the day, he talks reasonably now, and surveys the field with a cooler mind. He confesses that unbelief is an infirmity, a weakness, a folly, a sin. He may also be understood to mean, "this is my appointed sorrow, "I will bear it without complaint. When we perceive that our affliction is meted out by the Lord, and is the ordained portion of our cup, we become reconciled to it, and no longer rebel against the inevitable. Why should we not be content if it be the Lord's will? What he arranges it is not for us to cavil at. But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. Here a good deal is supplied by our translators, and they make the sense to be that the psalmist would console himself by remembering the goodness of God to himself and others of his people in times gone by: but the original seems to consist only of the words, "the years of the right hand of the most High, "and to express the idea that his long continued affliction, reaching through several years, was allotted to him by the Sovereign Lord of all. It is well when a consideration of the divine goodness and greatness silences all complaining, and creates a childlike acquiescence.

Verse 11. *I will remember the works of the Lord.* Fly back my soul, away from present turmoil, to the grandeurs of history, the sublime deeds of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts; for he is the same and is ready even now to defend his servants as in days of yore. Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. Whatever else may glide into oblivion, the marvellous works of the Lord in the ancient days must not be suffered to be forgotten. Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries.

Verse 12. *I will meditate also of all thy work.* Sweet work to enter into Jehovah's work of grace, and there to lie down and ruminate, every thought being absorbed in the one precious subject. And talk of thy doings. It is well that the overflow of the mouth should indicate the good matter which fills the heart. Meditation makes rich talking; it is to be lamented that so much of the conversation of professors is utterly barren, because they take no time for contemplation. A meditative man should

be a talker, otherwise he is a mental miser, a mill which grinds corn only for the miller. The subject of our meditation should be choice, and then our task will be edifying; if we meditate on folly and affect to speak wisdom, our double mindedness will soon be known unto all men. Holy talk following upon meditation has a consoling power in it for ourselves as well as for those who listen, hence its value in the connection in which we find it in this passage.

Verse 13. *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary, or in holiness.* In the holy place we understand our God, and rest assured that all his ways are just and right. When we cannot trace his way, because it is "in the sea," it is a rich consolation that we can trust it, for it is in holiness. We must have fellowship with holiness if we would understand "the ways of God to man." He who would be wise must worship. The pure in heart shall see God, and pure worship is the way to the philosophy of providence. Who is so great a God as our God? In him the good and the great are blended. He surpasses in both. None can for a moment be compared with the mighty One of Israel.

Verse 14. *Thou art the God that doest wonders.* Thou alone art Almighty. The false gods are surrounded with the pretence of wonders, but you really work them. It is thy peculiar prerogative to work marvels; it is no new or strange thing with thee, it is according to thy wont and use. Herein is renewed reason for holy confidence. It would be a great wonder if we did not trust the wonder working God. Thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Not only Israel, but Egypt, Bashan, Edom, Philistia, and all the nations have seen Jehovah's power. It was no secret in the olden time and to this day it is published abroad. God's providence and grace are both full of displays of his power; he is in the latter peculiarly conspicuous as "mighty to save." Who will not be strong in faith when there is so strong an arm to lean upon? Shall our trust be doubtful when his power is beyond all question? My soul see to it that these considerations banish thy mistrusts.

Verse 15. *Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.* All Israel, the two tribes of Joseph as well as those which sprang from the other sons of Jacob, were brought out of Egypt by a display of divine power, which is here ascribed not to the hand but to the arm of the Lord, because it was the fulness of his might. Ancient believers were in the constant habit of referring to the wonders of the Red Sea, and we also can unite with them, taking care to add the song of the Lamb to that of Moses, the servant of God. The comfort derivable from such a meditation is obvious and abundant, for he who brought up his people from the house of bondage will continue to redeem and deliver till we come into the promised rest. Selah. Here we have another pause preparatory to a final burst of song.

Verse 16. *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid.* As if conscious of its Maker's presence, the sea was ready to flee from before his face. The conception is highly poetical, the psalmist has the scene before his mind's eye, and describes it gloriously. The water saw its God, but man refuses to discern him; it was afraid, but proud sinners are rebellious and fear not the Lord.

The depths also were troubled. To their heart the floods were made afraid. Quiet caves of the sea, far down in the abyss, were moved with fear; and the lowest channels were left bare, as the water rushed away from its place, in terror of the God of Israel.

Verse 17. *The clouds poured out water.* Obedient to the Lord, the lower region of the atmosphere yielded its aid to overthrow the Egyptian host. The cloudy chariots of heaven hurried forward to discharge their floods. The skies sent out a sound. From the loftier aerial regions thundered the dread artillery of the Lord of Hosts. Peal on peal the skies sounded over the heads of the routed enemies, confusing their minds and adding to their horror. Thine arrows also went abroad. Lightnings flew like bolts from the bow of God. Swiftly, hither and thither, went the red tongues of flame, on helm and shield they gleamed; anon with blue bale fires revealing the innermost caverns of the hungry sea which waited to swallow up the pride of Mizraim. Behold, how all the creatures wait upon their God, and show themselves strong to overthrow his enemies.

Verse 18. *The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven, or in the whirlwind.* Rushing on with terrific swiftness and bearing all before it, the storm was as a chariot driven furiously, and a voice was heard (even thy voice, O Lord!) out of the fiery car, even as when a mighty man in battle urges forward his charger, and shouts to it aloud. All heaven resounded with the voice of the Lord. The lightnings lightened the world. The entire globe shone in the blaze of Jehovah's lightnings. No need for other light amid the battle of that terrible night, every wave gleamed in the fire flashes, and the shore was lit up with the blaze. How pale were men's faces in that hour, when all around the fire leaped from sea to shore, from crag to hill, from mountain to star, till the whole universe was illuminated in honour of Jehovah's triumph. The earth trembled and shook. It quaked and quaked again. Sympathetic with the sea, the solid shore forgot its quiescence and heaved in dread. How dreadful art thou, O God, when thou comest forth in thy majesty to humble thine arrogant adversaries.

Verse 19. *Thy way is in the sea.* Far down in secret channels of the deep is thy roadway; when thou wilt thou canst make a sea a highway for thy glorious march. And thy path in the great waters. There, where the billows surge and swell, thou still dost walk; Lord of each crested wave. And thy footsteps are not known. None can follow thy tracks by foot or eye. Thou art alone in thy glory, and thy ways are hidden from mortal ken. Thy purposes thou wilt accomplish, but the means are often concealed, yea, they need no concealing, they are in themselves too vast and mysterious for human understanding. Glory be to thee, O Jehovah.

Verse 20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* What a transition from tempest to peace, from wrath to love. Quietly as a flock Israel was guided on, by human agency which veiled the excessive glory of the divine presence. The smiter of Egypt was the shepherd of Israel. He drove his foes before him, but went before his people. Heaven and earth fought on his side against the sons of Ham, but they were equally subservient to the interests of the sons of Jacob.

Therefore, with devout joy and full of consolation, we close this Psalm; the song of one who forgot how to speak and yet learned to sing far more sweetly than his fellows.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Whenever, and by whomsoever, the Psalm may have been written, it clearly is individual, not national. It utterly destroys all the beauty, all the tenderness and depth of feeling in the opening portion, if we suppose that the people are introduced speaking in the first person. The allusions to the national history may indeed show that the season was a season of national distress, and that the sweet singer was himself bowed down by the burden of the time, and oppressed by woes which he had no power to alleviate; but it is his own sorrow, not the sorrow of others under which he sighs, and of which he has left the pathetic record. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1. In the beginning of the Psalm, before speaking of his sorrows, he hastens to show the necessary and most efficacious remedy for allaying sorrow. He says that he did not, as many do, out of their impatience of grief or murmuring, either accuse God of cruelty or tyranny, or utter blasphemous words by which dishonour might fall upon God, or by indulging in sorrow and distrust hasten his own destruction, or fill the air with vain complaining, but fled straight to God and to him unburdened his sorrow, and sought that he would not shut him out from that grace which he bountifully offers to all. This is the only and sure sovereign remedy which most effectually heals his griefs. *Mollerus.*

Verse 1. *I cried.* To the Orientals the word qeu presented the idea of a *crash*, as of the heavens sending out thunders and lightnings. Whence beyond other things he metaphorically says, *he cried for sorrow*; ...shaken with a tempest of thoughts he burst out into an open and loud sounding complaint. *Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1. *Even unto God with my voice.* The repetition here is emphatic. The idea is that it was an earnest or fervent cry. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 1. (*last clause*). At the second knock, the door of grace flew open: *the Lord heard me.* *John Collings.*

Whole Psalm. See *Psalms on "Ps 77:1"* for further information.

Verse 2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* Days of trouble must be days of prayer; in days of inward trouble, especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversions of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2. *My sore ran in the night.* Hebrew: *My hand was poured out*; that is, stretched out in prayer; or wet with continual weeping. *Non fuit remissa, nec retracta in lectum.* *John Trapp.*

Verse 2. *My sore ran in the night, and ceased not,* etc. There is no healing of this wound, no easing of this sore, no cleansing of the conscience, no quieting of a man's spirit: till God whom the soul seeketh show himself as the Physician, the evil continueth still and groweth. *David Dickson.*

Verse 2. *My soul refused to be comforted.* God has provided suitable and sufficient comfort for his people. He sends them comforters just as their circumstances require. But they at times refuse to hear the voice of the charmer. The Lord has perhaps taken away an idol—or he withholds his sensible presence, that they may learn to live by faith—or he has blighted their worldly prospects—or he has written vanity and emptiness upon all their gourds, cisterns, and delights. They give way to passion, as did Jonah—or they sink into sullen gloom—or allow unhumbled pride to rule the spirit—or yield to extreme sorrow, as Rachel did—or fall under the power of temptation—or imbibe the notion that they have no right to comfort. This is wrong, all wrong, decidedly wrong. Look at what is left you, at what the gospel presents to you, at what heaven will be to you. But the psalmist was recovered from this state. He was convinced that it was wrong. He was sorry for his sin. He was reformed in his spirit and conduct. He wrote this Psalm to instruct, caution, and warn us. Observe, they who are entitled to all comfort, often through their own folly, enjoy the least. The Lord's people are often their own tormentors, they put away the cup of comfort from them, and say they are unworthy of it

O Thou source of every blessing,
Chase my sorrows, cheer my heart,
Till in heaven, thy smiles possessing,
Life, and joy, and peace impart. *James Smith.*

Verse 2. *My soul refused to be comforted.* Poor I, that am but of yesterday, have known some that have been so deeply plunged in the gulf of despair, that they would throw all the spiritual cordials that have been tendered to them against the walls. They were strong in reasoning against their own souls, and resolved against everything that might be a comfort and support unto them. They have been much set against all ordinances and religious services; they have cast off holy duties themselves, and peremptorily refused to join with others in them; yea, they have, out of a sense of sin and wrath, which hath laid hard upon them, refused the necessary comforts of this life, even to the overthrow of natural life, and yet out of this horrible pit, this hell upon earth, hath God delivered their souls, and given them such manifestations of his grace and favour, that they would not exchange them for a thousand worlds. O despairing souls, you see that others, whose conditions have been as bad if not worse than yours, have obtained mercy. God hath turned their hell into a heaven; he hath remembered them in their low estate; he hath pacified their raging consciences, and quieted their distracted souls; he hath wiped all tears from their eyes; and he hath been a well spring of life unto their hearts. Therefore be not discouraged, O despairing souls, but look up to the mercyseat. *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* If our hearts or consciences condemn us, it is impossible to remember him without being troubled. It will then be painful to remember that he is our Creator and Redeemer, for the remembrance will be attended with a consciousness of base ingratitude. It will be painful to think of him as Lawgiver; for such thoughts will remind us that we have broken his law. It will be painful to think of his holiness; for if he is holy, he must hate our sins, and be angry with us as sinners:—of his justice and truth, for these perfections make it necessary that he should fulfil his threatenings and punish us for our sins. It will be painful to think of his omniscience—for this perfection makes him acquainted with our most secret offences, and renders it impossible for conceal them from his view; of his omnipresence—for the constant presence of an invisible witness must be disagreeable to those who wish to indulge their sinful propensities. It will be painful to think of his power—for it enables him to restrain or destroy, as he pleases: of his sovereignty, for sinners always hate to see themselves in the hands of a sovereign God: of his eternity and immutability—for from his possessing these perfections it follows that he will never alter the threatening which he has denounced against sinners, and that he will always live to execute them. It will be painful to think of him as judge; for we shall feel, that as sinners, we have no reason to expect a favourable sentence from his lips. It will even be painful to think of the perfect goodness and excellence of his character; for his goodness leaves us without excuse in rebelling against him, and makes our sins appear exceedingly sinful. *Edward Payson.*

Verse 3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* All had not been well between God and him; and whereas formerly, in his remembrance of God, his thoughts were chiefly exercised about his love and kindness, now they were wholly possessed with his own sin and unkindness. This causeth his trouble. Herein lies a share of the entanglements occasioned by sin. Saith such a soul in itself, "Foolish creature, hast thou thus requited the Lord?" Is this the return that thou hast made unto him for all his love, his kindness, his consolations, mercies? Is this thy kindness for him, thy love to him? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Is this thy boasting of him, that thou hadst found so much goodness and excellence in him and his love, that though all men should forsake him, thou never would do so? Are all thy promises all thy engagements which thou madest unto God, in times of distress upon prevailing obligations, and mighty impressions of his good Spirit upon thy soul, now come to this, that thou shouldest so foolishly forget, neglect, despise, cast him off? Well! now he is gone; he is withdrawn from thee; and what wilt thou do? Art thou not even ashamed to desire him to return? They were thoughts of this nature that cut Peter to the heart upon his fall. The soul finds them cruel as death, and strong as the grave. It is bound in the chains of them, and cannot be comforted, Ps 38:3-6. *John Owen.*

Verse 3. There are moments in the life of all believers when God and his ways become unintelligible to them. They get lost in profound meditation, and nothing is left them but a desponding sigh. But we

know from Paul the apostle that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers with God, when they cannot utter their sighs. Ro 8:26. *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 3. *Selah.* In the end of this verse is put the word *Selah.* And it doth note unto the reader or hearer what a miserable and comfortless thing man is in trouble, if God be not present with him to help him. It is also put as a spur and prick for every Christian man and woman to remember and call upon God in the days of their troubles. For as the Jews say, wheresoever this word *Selah* is, it doth admonish and stir up the reader or hearer to mark what was said before it; for it is a word always put after very notable sentences. *John Hooper.*

Verse 4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking.* Thou art afflicted with want of sleep:—A complaint incident to distempered bodies and thoughtful minds. Oh, how wearisome a thing it is to spend the long night in tossing up and down in a restless bed, in the chase of sleep; which the more eagerly it is followed, flies so much the farther from us! Couldst thou obtain of thyself to forbear the desire of it, perhaps it would come alone: now that thou suest for it, like to some froward piece, it is coy and overly, and punishes thee with thy longing. Lo, he that could command a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, yet could not command rest. `On that night his sleep departed from him, 'Es 6:1, neither could be forced or entreated to his bed. And the great Babylonian monarch, though he had laid some hand on sleep, yet he could not hold it; for "his sleep brake from him, "Da 2:1. And, for great and wise Solomon, it would not so much as come within his view. "Neither day nor night seeth he sleep with his eyes." Ec 8:16. Surely, as there is no earthly thing more comfortable to nature than bodily rest (Jer 31:26); so, there is nothing more grievous and disheartening... Instead of closing thy lids to wait for sleep, lift up thy stiff eyes to him that "giveth his beloved rest, "Ps 127:2. Whatever be the means, he it is that *holdeth mine eyes waking.* He that made thine eyes, keeps off sleep from thy body, for the good of thy soul: let not thine eyes wake, without thy heart. The spouse of Christ can say, "I sleep, but my heart waketh, "So 5:2. How much more should she say, "Mine eyes wake, and my heart waketh also!" When thou canst not sleep with thine eyes, labour to see him that is invisible: one glimpse of that sight is more worth than all the sleep that thine eyes can be capable of. Give thyself up into his hands, to be disposed of at his will. What is this sweet acquiescence but the rest of the soul? which if thou canst find in thyself, thou shalt quietly digest the want of thy bodily sleep. *Joseph Hall, in his "Balm of Gilead."*

Verse 4. *I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* He adds that he was so cut down and lifeless that he could not speak. Little griefs, as it is often said, are uttered, great ones strike us dumb. In great troubles and fears the spirit fails the exterior members, and flows back to its fountain; the limbs stand motionless, the whole body trembles, the eyes remain fixed, and the tongue forgets its office. Hence it is that Niobe was represented by the poets as turned into a stone. The history of Psammentius also, in Herodotus, is well known, how over the misfortunes of his children he sat silent and

overwhelmed, but when he saw his friend's calamities he bewailed them with bitter tears. *Mollerus.*

Verse 4. *I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* Sometimes our grief is so violent that it finds no vent, it strangles us, and we are overcome. It is with us in our desertions as with a man that gets a slight hurt; at first he walks up and down, but not looking betimes to prevent a growing mischief, the neglected wound begins to fester, or to gangrene, and brings him to greater pain and loss. So it is with us many times in our spiritual sadness; when we are first troubled, we pray and pour out our souls before the Lord; but afterwards the waters of our grief drown our cries and we are so overwhelmed, that if we might have all the world we cannot pray, or at least we can find no enlargement, no life, no pleasure in our prayers; and God himself seems to take no delight in them, and that makes us more sad, Ps 22:1. *Timothy Rogers (1660-1729), in "A Discourse on Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy."*

Verse 4. *Troubled.* Or, *bruised:* the Hebrew word probably signifieth an astonishment caused by some great blow received. *John Diodati.*

Verse 4. *I cannot speak.* Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A dumb beggar getteth an alms at Christ's gates, even by making signs, when his tongue cannot plead for him; and the rather, because he is dumb. *Objection.* I have not so much as a voice to utter to God; and Christ saith, "Cause me to hear thy voice" (Canticles 2:14). *Answer.* Yea, but some other thing hath a voice beside the tongue: "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping" (Ps 6:8). Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babes have no prayer for the breast, but weeping: the mother can read hunger in weeping. *Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 4. If through all thy discouragements thy condition prove worse and worse, so that thou canst not pray, but are struck dumb when thou comest into his presence, as David, then fall making signs when thou canst not speak; groan, sigh, sob, "chatter," as Hezekiah did; bemoan thyself for thine unworthiness, and desire Christ to speak thy requests for thee, and God to hear him for thee. *Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 5. *The days of old.* Doubtless to our first parents the darkness of the first night was somewhat strange; persons who had never seen anything but the light of the day, when the shadows of the night first did encompass them, could not be without some apprehension: yet when at the back of a number of nights they had seen the day spring of the morning lights constantly to arise; the darkness of the blackest nights was passed over without fear, and in as great security, as the light of the fairest days. To men who have always lived upon land, when first they set to sea, the winds, waves, and storms are exceeding terrible; but when they are a little beaten with the experience of tempests, their fears do change into resolution and courage. It is of no small use to remember that those things which vex most our spirit, are not new, but have already been in times before our days. *Robert*

Baylie's Sermon before the House of Commons. 1643.

Verse 6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* Either (1) "I will now, in the present night of affliction, remember my former songs." "Though this is a time of distress, and my present circumstances are gloomy, yet I have known brighter days. He that lifted me up, has cast me down, and he can raise me up again." Sometimes this reflection, indeed, adds a poignancy to our distress, as it did to David's trouble, Ps 42:4. Yet it will bear a better improvement, which he seems to make of it; Ps 77:11, and so Job, (Job 2:10.) "*Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*" And his case shows that after the most sweeping calamities the Lord can again give things a turn in favour of them that hope in him. Therefore, present troubles should not make us forget former comforts, especially as the former so much exceeded our deserts, and the present afflictions fall so short of our demerits. Or (2) the text may mean, "I will remember how I have been enabled to sing in the former nights of affliction." And surely it is especially seasonable to remember supports and consolations granted under preceding distresses. Elihu complained (Job 35:10), "There is none that saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs on the night." David comforted himself with the thought, "Though deep calleth unto deep, yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me." Ps 42:8. And the Lord promised by Isaiah (Isa 30:29), "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept." No doubt Paul and Silas remembered their song in the night, when imprisoned at Philippi; and it afforded them encouragement under subsequent trials. And cannot many of you, my brethren, in like manner, remember the supports and consolations you have enjoyed in former difficulties, and how the Lord turned the shadow of death into morning? And ought you not to trust to him that hath delivered, that he will yet deliver? He that hath delivered in six troubles, will not forsake you in seven. The "clouds may return after the rain, "but not a drop can fail without the leave of him, who rides on the heavens for your help, and in his excellency on the sky. Did you not forbode at first a very different termination of the former troubles? and did the Lord disappoint your fears, and put a new song into your mouth; and will you not now begin to trust him, and triumph in him? Surely you have found that the Lord can clear the darkest skies. "Light is sown for the righteous, "and ere long you shall see an eternal day. If such songs are given to the pilgrims of the night, how shall they sing in that world where the sun shall set no more! There will be no night there. *John Ryland. 1753-1825.*

Verse 6. *I call to remembrance:* being glad in this scarcity of comfort, to live upon the old store, as bees do in winter. *John Trapp.*

Verse 6. *My song in the night.* The "songs of the night" is as favourite a word of the Old Testament as "glory in tribulation" is of the New, and it is one of those which prove that both Testaments have the self same root and spirit. *John Kerr.*

Verse 6. *My spirit made diligent search.* He falls upon self examination, and searcheth his spirit, to

consider why the hand of God was so against him, and why the face of God was so hid from him. Some read it, "I digged into my spirit; "as Ezekiel digged into the wall, to search for and find out the abomination, that made the Lord thus leave him in the dark, and hide his face from him. He searcheth the wound of his spirit; that was another way to cure it. It is a notable way to cure the wounds of the soul, for the soul to search them. *John Collings.*

Verse 6. My spirit made diligent search. The verb vbx, *chaphas*, signifies such an investigation as a man makes who is obliged to *strip himself* in order to do it; or *to lift up coverings*, to search fold by fold, or in our own phrase, *to leave no stone unturned.* *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6. *My spirit made diligent search.* As Ahasuerus, when he could not sleep, called for the records and chronicles of his kingdom, so the doubting soul betakes himself to the records of heaven, the word of God in the Scriptures, and one while he is reading there, another while looking into his heart, if he can find there anything that answers the characters of Scripture faith, as the face in the glass doth the face of man. David, when he was at a loss what to think of himself, and many doubts did clog his faith, insomuch that the thinking of God increased his trouble, he did not sit down and let the ship drive, as we say, not regarding whether God loved him or no, but *communes with his own heart, and his spirit makes diligent search.* Thus it is with every sincere soul under doubting: he dares no more sit down contented in that unresolved condition, than one who thinks he smells fire in his house dares settle himself to sleep till he hath looked in every room and corner, and satisfied himself that all is safe, lest he should be waked with the fire about his ears in the night: and the poor doubting soul is much more afraid, lest it should wake with hell fire about it: whereas a soul in a state and under the power of unbelief is secure and careless. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 6. *Diligent search.* Thus duty requires diligence. External acts of religion are facile; to lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer, this requires no more labour than for a papist to tell over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to take the heart all in pieces as a watch, and see what is defective, this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others, but hard to find out our own. *Thomas Watson.*

Verse 8. *Doth his promise fail for evermore?* Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, it is enough, if God has said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation, which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation, and the Author of the promise, will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill brought low." Lu 3:5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other; Isa 53:1: "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come, though

he should find no faith on the earth. See Ro 3:3. Cast not away your confidence because God defers his performances. Though providence run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves. The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season. *Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* In what pangs couldest thou be, O Asaph, that so woeful a word should fall from thee: *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* Surely, the temptation went so high, that the next step had been blasphemy. Had not that good God, whom thy bold weakness questions for forgetfulness, in great mercies remembered thee, and brought thee speedily to remember thyself and him; that, which you confess to have been infirmity, had proved a sinful despair. I dare say for thee, that word washed thy cheeks with many a tear, and was worthy of more; for, O God, what can be so dear to thee, as the glory of thy mercy? There is none of thy blessed attributes, which thou desirest to set forth so much unto the sons of men, and so much abhorrest to be disparaged by our detraction, as thy mercy. Thou canst, O Lord, forget thy displeasure against thy people; thou canst forget our iniquities, and cast our sins out of thy remembrance, Mic 7:18-19; but thou canst no more forget to be gracious, than thou canst cease to be thyself. O my God, I sin against thy justice hourly, and thy mercy interposes for my remission: but, oh, keep me from sinning against thy mercy. What plea can I hope for, when I have made my advocate my enemy? *Joseph Hall.*

Verse 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* The poor child crieth after the mother. What shall I do for my mother! Oh, my mother, my mother, what shall I do for my mother! And it may be the mother stands behind the back of the child, only she hides herself, to try the affection of the child: so the poor soul cries after God, and complains, Oh my Father! my Father! Where is my heavenly Father? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he shut up his lovingkindness in displeasure? when, (all the while), God is nearer than they think for, shining upon them in "a spirit of grace and supplications, "with sighs and "groans that cannot be uttered." Thus the gracious woman, weeps: My dear Saviour, my dear Lord and Master, he is "taken out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid him!" Thus she complains to the disciples, and thus she complains to the angels, when Christ stood at her very back and overheard all: nay, when she turned her about and saw him, yet at first she did not know him; nay, when he spoke to her and she to him, yet she knew him not, but thought he had been the gardener, Joh 20:15. Thus it is with many a gracious soul; though God speaks home to their hearts in his Word, and they speak to him by prayer, and they cannot say but the Spirit "*helps their infirmities;* "yet they complain for want of his presence, as if there were nothing of God in them. *Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 9. *Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* The metaphor here is taken from a *spring*, the mouth of which is closed, so that its waters can no longer run in the same channel; but, being confined, break out and take some other course. Wilt thou take thy mercy from the Israelites and give it to some other people? *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9. *Selah.* Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when on a sudden he first checked himself with that word, *Selah*; stop there; go no further; let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises; and then he chid himself, Ps 77:10: *This is mine infirmity.* *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10. *This is my infirmity.* Literally, this is my disease,—which appears to mean, This is my lot and I must bear it; lo! it is a partial evil, for which the equity of God's government should not be questioned. The authorised version, *This is my infirmity*, suggests, perhaps advisedly, another signification, viz., These thoughts are but hallucinations of my agony,—but to this gloss I should scruple to commit myself. *C. B. Cayley.*

Verse 10. It is the *infirmity* of a believer to be thinking of himself, and drawing false inferences (for *all* such inferences are necessarily erroneous), from what he sees or feels, as to the light in which he is beheld and estimated on the part of God. It is his *strength*, on the other hand, to remember the right hand of the Most High—to meditate upon the changeless truth and mercy of that God who has committed himself in holiness to the believing sinner's sure salvation, by causing the Son of his love to suffer in our stead the dread reality of penal death. *Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 10. *Infirmity.* An *infirmity* is this,—some sickness or indisposition of the soul, that arises from the weakness of grace. Or an *infirmity* is this,—when the purpose and inclination of the heart is upright, but a man wants strength to perform that purpose; when "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41); when a man can say with the apostle, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not," Ro 7:18. When the bent and inclination of the soul is right, but either through some violence of corruption or strength of temptation, a man is diverted and turned out of the way. As the needle in the seaman's compass, you know if it be right it will stand always northwards, the bent of it will be toward the North Pole, but being jogged and troubled, it may sometimes be put out of frame and order, yet the bent and inclination of it is still northward; this is an *infirmity.* *James Nalton.* 1664.

Verse 10. It is unnecessary to state all the renderings which the learned have given of this verse. It is unquestionably ambiguous, as the word *ytwlh* may be derived from different roots, which have different significations. I derive it from *lwx* or *llx* which signifies to be *in pain* as a woman in labour, and as it is in the infinitive, I render it, "*the time of my sorrow or pain.*" The next term, *twgv*, I derive from *hgv* to *change*, as the Chaldee does, Ainsworth, Hammond, and others; and I render it potentially. I consider the whole as a beautiful metaphor. The author considers himself as in distress, like a woman in travail; and like her, hopes soon to have his sorrow turned to joy. He confides in

God's power to effect such a change; and hence naturally recollects the past instances of God's favour to his people. *Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 10. *I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* Not the moments, nor the hours, nor days of a few short afflictions, that his left hand hath dealt to me: but the *years of his right hand*; those long, large, and boundless mercies wherewith he hath comforted me. *Thomas Adams.*

Verse 10. *I will remember the years,* etc. The words in the Hebrew text are *shenoth jemin gneljon*, which I find to be variously rendered and translated by interpreters. I shall not trouble you with them all at this present time, but only take notice of two of them, which I conceive are the principal and most comprehensive; the one is our oldest English translation, and the other of our last and newest; the former reads the words thus: *The right hand of the Most High can change all this.* The latter reads the words thus, as we have it now before us, *I will remember the years,* etc. The main ground of this variation is the different exposition of the Hebrew word *shenoth*, which may be translated either *to change*, from the *verb* in the *infinitive mood*, or else may be translated *years*, from the *noun* in the *plural number*. This hath given the occasion to this difference and variety of translation, but the sense is very good and agreeable which way soever we take it—*First*, take it according to the *former* translation, as it does exhibit to us the power of God. *The right hand of the Lord can change all this.* This was that whereby David did support himself in his present affliction; that the Lord was able *to change and alter* this his condition to him, and that *for the better*... For the second sense here before us, that's this: *I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High*; where the word *remember* is borrowed from the next following verse, to supply the sense of this, as otherwise being not in the text. Now here the prophet David fetches a ground of comfort from God's *practice*, as before he did from his *power*; there, from what God *could* do; here, from what he has done already in former time, and ages, and generations. *Thomas Horton.*

Verse 11. *I will remember,* etc. *Remember* and *commemorate*, as the Hebrew (by a double reading) imports. *John Trapp.*

Verse 11. *I will remember.* Faith is a considering grace: he that believes will not make haste; no, not to think or speak of God. Faith hath a good memory, and can tell the Christian many stories of ancient mercies; and when his present meal falls short, it can entertain the soul with a cold dish, and not complain that God keeps a bad house. Thus David recovered himself, when he was even tumbling down the hill of temptation: *This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember thy wonders of old.* Therefore, Christian, when thou art in the depths of affliction, and Satan tempts thee to asperse God, as if he were forgetful of thee, stop his mouth with this: No, Satan, God hath not forgot to do for me, but I have forgot what he hath done for me, or else I could not question his fatherly care at present over me. Go, Christian, play over thy own lessons, praise God for past mercies, and it will not be long before thou hast a new song put into thy

mouth for a present mercy. . . .

Sometimes a little writing is found in a man's study that helps to save his estate, for want of which he had gone to prison; and some one experience remembered keeps the soul from despair, a prison which the devil longs to have the Christian in. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope," La 3:21. David was famous for his hope, and not less eminent for his care to observe and preserve the experiences he had of God's goodness. He was able to recount the dealings of God with him; they were so often the subject of his meditation and matter of his discourse, that he had made them familiar to him. When his hope is at a loss, he doth but exercise his memory a little, and he recovers himself presently, and chides himself for his weakness. *I said, this is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* The hound, when he hath lost his scent, hunts backwards and so recovers it, and pursues his game with louder cry than ever. Thus, Christian, when thy hope is at a loss, and you question your salvation in another world, then look backward and see what God hath already done for thee. Some promises have their day of payment here, and others we must stay to receive in heaven. Now the payment which God makes of some promises here, is an earnest given to our faith that the others also shall be faithfully discharged when their date expires; as every judgment inflicted here on the wicked is sent as a pledge of that wrath the full sum whereof God will make up in hell. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 11. *The works of the Lord... Thy wonders.* The psalmist does not mean to draw a distinction between the *works* and the *wonders* of God; but, rather, to state that all God's works are wonders... All, whether in providence or grace—all God's works are wonderful. If we take the individual experience of the Christian, of what is that experience made up? Of wonders. The work of his conversion, wonderful!—arrested in a course of thoughtlessness and impiety; graciously sought and gently compelled to be at peace with God, whose wrath he had provoked. The communication of knowledge, wonderful!—Deity and eternity gradually piled up; the Bible taken page by page, and each page made a volume which no searching can exhaust. The assistance in warfare, wonderful!—himself a child of corruption, yet enabled to grapple with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and often to trample them under foot. The solaces in affliction, wonderful!—sorrow sanctified so as to minister to joy, and a harvest of gladness reaped from a field which has been watered with tears. The foretastes of heaven, wonderful!—angels bringing down the clusters of the land, and the spirit walking with lightsome tread the crystal river and the streets of gold. All wonderful! Wonderful that the Spirit should strive with man; wonderful that God should bear with his backslidings; wonderful that God should love him notwithstanding his pollution; wonderful that God should persist in saving him, in spite, as it were, of himself. Oh! those amongst you who know anything, experimentally, of salvation through Christ, well know that the work is wonderful in its commencement, wonderful in its continuance, and they will need no argument to vindicate the transition from *works* to *wonders*. It will

be the transition of your own thoughts and your own feelings, and you will never give in the record of God's dealings with yourselves without passing, as the psalmist passed, from mentioning to ascription. Ye may set yourselves to commemorate God's *works*, ye will find yourselves extolling God's *wonders*. Ye may begin with saying, *I will remember the works of the Lord*; but ye will conclude by exclaiming, *Surely I will remember thy wonders of old*. Henry Melvill.

Verse 11. *Thy wonders*. The word is in the singular here, and also in Ps 77:14. So also in the next verse, *Thy work*, because the one great wonder, the one great work in which all others were included, is before his thoughts. J. J. Stewart Perowne.

Verse 11. *Thy wonders*. He had before spoken to others, but here he turns to God. It is good for a soul in a hard exercise, to raise itself from thinking of God and of his works, unto speaking unto God directly: no ease or relief will be found till address be made unto himself, till we turn our face toward him and direct our speech unto him, as here the psalmist doth, from the midst of the eleventh verse to the end of the psalm. David Dickson.

Verse 13. *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary*. The word *sanctuary* is to be taken either for heaven or for the temple. I am rather inclined to refer it to heaven, conceiving the meaning to be, that the ways of God rise high above the world, so that if we are truly desirous to know them, we must ascend above all heavens. Although the works of God are in part manifest to us, yet all our knowledge of them comes far short of their immeasurable height. Besides, it is to be observed, that none enjoy the least taste of his works but those who by faith rise up to heaven. And yet, the utmost point to which we can ever attain is, to contemplate with admiration and reverence the hidden wisdom and power of God, which, while they shine forth in his works, yet far surpass the limited powers of our understanding. John Calvin.

Verse 13. *Thy way is in the sanctuary*. That is, every one of the elect may and ought to learn in thy church the conduct and proceedings of thy providence towards those that were thine. John Diodati.

Verse 13, 19. *In the sanctuary* and *In the sea*. His way is *in the sanctuary*, and *His ways in the sea*. Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the *sanctuary*, where all is *light*, all is *clear*. There is no mistake there. There is nothing, in the least degree, that is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor, troubled one enters into the sanctuary, and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else—everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth. But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy); but God's way is in the "sea." He walks *where we cannot always trace his footsteps*. God moves mysteriously by times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But, still, there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in his own hands. The way of God is

thus not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with his footsteps being in the sea is, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." That was through the sea; afterwards, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with his people were there; because, from first to last, God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn. How happy to know that, while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God himself is nearer still—and to him we are brought now. As it is said (1 Peter 3), "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." This is a most precious thing; because there we are in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God himself. And I am bold to say, that heaven itself would be but a small matter if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial—better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One we belong to; who is himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God. But, still, there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary—*In the sea*. And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then *they are not known*. But confidence in God himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that we pass through, for his name's sake. *From "Things New and Old."* 1865.

Verse 14. *The God that doest wonders.* If he said, *Thou art the God that hast done wonders*, it would be plain that he spake only of those ancient miracles which were wrought in former days: but now that he saith, *Thou art the God that doest wonders*, he evidently refers to those wonderful works, which he is doing now, and shall not cease to do even to the end of the world. *Gerhohus*.

Verse 15. *The sons of Jacob and Joseph.* The distinction between the sons of Jacob and Joseph is not meaningless. For by the sons of Jacob or Israel the believing Jews are properly intended, those that trace their descent to him not only according to the flesh but according to faith. Of whom although *Joseph* was one, yet since he was sold by his brethren and after many sufferings among foreign tribes raised to high rank, it is highly congruous to distinguish him from the sons of *Jacob*, and he is fitly regarded as a prince of the Gentiles apart from *Jacob's* sons, who sold him. *Gerhohus*.

Verse 15. *The sons of Jacob and Joseph.* Was it Joseph or was it Jacob that begat the children of Israel? Certainly Jacob begat, but as Joseph nourished them, they are called by his name also. *Talmud*.

Verse 16. *The waters saw thee, O God*, etc. "The waters of the Red Sea," says Bishop Horne, "are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility; as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator, when he commanded them to open a way, and to form a wall on each side of it, until his people were passed over." This in fact is true poetry; and in this attributing of life, spirit, feeling, action, and suffering to inanimate

objects, there are no poets who can vie with those of the Hebrew nation. *Richard Mant.*

Verse 16. *The depths also were troubled.* The *depths* are mentioned in addition to the *waters*, to show that the dominion and power of God reach not only to the surface of the waters, but penetrate to the most profound abysses, and agitate and restrain the waters from their lowest bottom. *Mollerus.*

Verses 16-18. The waters saw thee, but men do not see thee. The depths were troubled, but men say in their heart, There is no God. The clouds poured out water, but men pour not out cries and tears unto God. The skies send out a sound, but men say not, Where is God my Maker? Thine arrows also went abroad, but no arrows of contrition and supplication are sent back by men in return. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven, but men hear not the louder thunders of the law. The lightnings lightened the world, but the light of truth shines in darkness and the darkness comprehends it not. The earth trembled and shook, but human hearts remain unmoved.

"My heart it shakes not at the wrath

And terrors of a God." *George Rogers.*

Verse 16-19. As soon as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind, and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunderbolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time; for a dark and dismal might oppressed them. And thus did all these men perish, so that there was not one man left to be a messenger of this calamity to the rest of the Egyptians. *Josephus.*

Verse 19. *Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters,* etc. Until lately, not much was known of oceanic currents, nor of their influences on the condition of particular localities and the intercourse of man with man. They are now seen to be the *way* or *path* of the Creator *in the great waters*. Numerous agencies tend to the production of these currents. Amongst them we may reckon the propagation of the tide wave in its progress over the globe, the duration and strength of certain winds, the variations in density which seawater undergoes in different latitudes, and at different depths, by change of temperature, and the quantity of salt it contains, and by the hourly alterations of atmospheric pressure which take place within the tropics. The oceanic currents are nearly constant in breadth, crossing the sea in many directions. Long bands of seaweed carried by the currents shew at once their velocity, and the line of demarcation between the waters at rest and the waters in motion. Between the tropics there is a general movement of the sea from east to west, called the equatorial current, supposed to be due to the trade winds, and the progress of the tide wave. There are narrower currents carrying warm water to higher and cold water to lower latitudes. *Edwin Sidney, in "Conversations on the Bible and Science."* 1860.

Verse 19. *Thy way is in the sea,* where no man can wade, except God be before him, but where any

man may walk if God take him by the hand and lead him through. *David Dickson.*

Verse 19. *Thy footsteps are not known.* He often goeth so much out of our sight, that we are unable to give an account of what he doeth, or what he is about to do. Frequently the pillar of divine providence is dark throughout, to Israelites as well as Egyptians; so that his own people understand not the riddles, till he is pleased to be his own interpreter, and to lead them into his secrets. *Samuel Slater(-1704), in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 19. *Thy footsteps are not known.* That is, they are not always known; or, they are not known in all things; yea, they are not altogether known in anything. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 19. *Thy footsteps are not known.* Upon some affair of great consequence which had occurred in some providential dispensation, Luther was very importunate at the throne of grace to know the mind of God in it; and it seemed to him as if he heard God speak to his heart thus: "I am not to be traced." Referring to this incident, one adds, "If he is not to be traced, he may be trusted; "and that religion is of little value which will not enable a man to trust God where he can neither trace nor see him. But there is a time for everything beneath the sun, and the Almighty has his `times and seasons.' It has been frequently with my hopes and desires, in regard to providence, as with my watch and the sun, which has often been ahead of true time; I have gone faster than providence, and have been forced to stand still and wait, or I have been set back painfully. That was a fine sentiment of Flavel, "Some providence, like Hebrew letters, must be read backwards." *Quoted in "Christian Treasury," 1849. Author not mentioned.*

Verse 20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock,* etc. From this verse the afflicted may learn many consolations. First, that the best people that be are no better able to resist temptation, than the simple sheep is able to withstand the brier that catcheth him. The next, that man is of no more ability to beware of temptations, than the poor sheep is to avoid the brier, being preserved only by the diligence of the shepherd. The third, that as the shepherd is careful of his entangled and briard sheep, so is God of his afflicted faithful. And the fourth is, that the people of Israel could take no harm of the water, because they entered the sea at God's commandment. Whereof we learn, that no danger can hurt when God doth command us to enter into it; and all dangers overcome us if we choose them ourselves, besides God's commandment; as Peter, when he went at God's commandment upon the water, took no hurt; but when he entered into the bishop's house upon his own presumption, was overcome and denied Christ. The Israelites, when they fought at God's commandment, the peril was nothing; but when they would do it of their own heads, they perished: so that we are bound to attend upon God's commandment, and then no danger shall destroy us, though it pain us. The other doctrine is in this, that God used the ministry of Moses and Aaron in the deliverance of his people, who did command them to do nothing but that the Lord did first bid. Whereof we learn that such as be ministers appointed of God, and do nothing but as God

commandeth, are to be followed; as Paul saith, "Follow me, as I follow Christ." *John Hooper.*

Verse 20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock.* Observe, the good shepherd leads his followers *like sheep*: First, with great solicitude and care, to protect them from wolves. Secondly, with consideration and kindness, for the sheep is a harmless animal. Thirdly, with a wise strictness, for sheep easily wander, and they are of all animals the most stupid. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 20. *Leddest thy people.* Our guiding must be mild and gentle, else it is not *duxisti*, but *traxisti*; drawing and driving, and no leading. *Leni spiritu non dure manu*, rather by an inward sweet influence to be led, than by an outward extreme violence to be forced forward. So did God lead his people here. Not the greatest pace, I wist, for they were a year marching that they might have posted in eleven days, as Moses saith. (De 1:2.) No nor yet the nearest way neither, as Moses telleth us. (Ex 8:18.) For he fetched a compass divers times, as all wise governors by his example must do, that desire rather safely to lead, than hastily to drive forward. "The Spirit of God leadeth this people," saith Isaiah (Isa 63:14) "as an horse is ridden down the hill into a valley;" which must not be at a gallop, lest horse and ruler both come down one over another; but warily and easily. *Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 20. *By the hand of Moses and Aaron.* He says not, Moses and Aaron led the people of Israel; but, *Thou leddest the people*, and that *thy people*, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Great was the power of these two men; nevertheless neither of them was the shepherd of the sheep, but each was a servant to the one and only true shepherd, to whom the sheep exclusively belonged. Nor yet was either the leader of the sheep, but the shepherd himself was present and led his own flock, to whom these two acted as servants. There are therefore three things to be learned from this passage. First, the sheep do not belong to the servants, but to the true shepherd. Secondly, the true shepherd is the leader of his own sheep. Thirdly, the offices of Moses and Aaron was to attend to this duty, that the Lord's sheep should be properly led and pastured. So Christ himself leads the sheep, his own sheep, and for this work he employs the ministry of his servants. *Musculus.*

Verse 20. The psalmist has reached the climax of his strain, he has found relief from his sorrow by forcing his thoughts into another channel, by dwelling on all God's mightiest wonders of old; but there he must end: in his present intensity of passion he cannot trust himself to draw forth in detail any mere *lessons* of comfort. There are seasons when even the holiest faith cannot bear to listen to words of reasoning; though it can still find a support whereon to rest, in the simple contemplation, in all their native grandeur, of the deeds that God hath wrought. *Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The benefit of using the voice in private prayer.

Verses 1, 3, 5, 10. Note the wise man's progress out of his soul trouble.

1. I cried.

2. I remembered.

3. I considered.

4. I said.

Verse 2. See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 853. "A Sermon for the Most Miserable of Men."

Verse 2.

1. Special prayer: *In the days*, etc.

2. Persevering prayer: hands lifted up to God by night as well as by day.

3. Agonizing prayer: *my soul refused to be comforted, until the answer came*. "Being in an agony, he prayed, "etc.

Verse 2. (*last clause*). When this is wise, and when it is censurable.

Verse 4.

1. A good man cannot rest on his bed until his soul rests on God.

2. He cannot speak freely to others until God speaks peace to his soul. *G. R.*

Verse 4. Occupation for the sleepless, and consolation for the speechless.

Verses 5-6. There are four rules for obtaining comfort in affliction.

1. The consideration of God's goodness to his people of old.

2. Remembrance of our own past experience.

3. Self examination.

4. The diligent study of the word. *G. R.*

Verse 6. *Remembrance.* A good memory is very helpful and useful.

1. It is a great means of *knowledge*: for what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing?

2. It is a means of *faith*: 1Co 15:2.

3. It is a means of *comfort*. If a poor Christian in distress could remember God's promises they would inspire him with new life; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink.

4. It is a means of *thankfulness*.

5. It is a means of *hope*; for "experience worketh hope" (Ro 5:4), and the memory is the storehouse of experience.

6. It is a means of *repentance*; for, how can we repent or mourn for that which we have forgotten?

7. It is a means of *usefulness*. When one spark of grace is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also. *R. Steele*.

Verse 7. (*first clause*). To place the question in a strong light, let us consider,

1. Of whom is the question raised? *the Lord*.

2. What course of action is in question? *cast off for ever*.

3. Towards whom would the action be performed?

Verse 8. These questions,

1. Suppose a change in the immutable Jehovah in two glorious attributes.
2. Are contrary to all past evidence.
3. Can only arise from the flesh and Satan; and, therefore,
4. Are to be met in the power of the Spirit, with strong faith in the Eternal God.

Verse 10. A confession applicable to many other matters. Such as, fear of death, fear of desertion, dread of public service, sensitiveness of neglect, etc.

Verse 10. *My infirmity.* Different meanings of this word. These would furnish a good subject. Some infirmities are to be patiently endured, others gloried in, others taken in prayer to God for his Spirit's help, and others lamented and repented of.

Verses 10-12. Remember, meditate, talk.

Verses 11-12.

1. Consolation derived from the remembrance of the past.
2. Consolation increased by meditation.
3. Consolation strengthened by communication: "and talk," etc. *G. R.*

Verses 11-12.

1. Consolation derived from the remembrance of the past.
2. Consolation increased by meditation.
3. Consolation strengthened by communication: "and talk," etc. *G. R.*

Verse 12. Themes for thought and topics for conversation. Creation, Providence, Redemption, etc.

Verses 13, 19. *In the sea, in the sanctuary.* God's way incomprehensible, though undoubtedly right: in his holiness lies the answer to its enigmas.

Verse 14. *Thaumaturgeis,* or the Great Wonder worker.

Verse 15. *And Joseph.* The honour of nourishing those who have been begotten of God by other men's labours.

Verse 15. Redemption thy power, the consequence, evidence, and necessary attendant of redemption by price.

Verse 15.

1. The redeemed: *thy people; the sons of,* etc.
 - (a) In captivity though they are his people.
 - (b) His people though they are in captivity.
2. The redemption: from Egyptian bondage.
3. The Redeemer: *Thou, with thine arm,* etc. God by Christ, his arm: *Mine own arm brought,* etc. *To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? G. R.*

Verses 16-18.

1. The homage of nature to the God of grace.
2. Its subserviency to his designs. *G. R.*

Verse 19.

1. The ways of God to men are peculiar: *In the sea: thy path, etc.*
2. They are uniform, they lie in regular *footsteps*.
3. They are inscrutable: like the path of the ship upon the waters, not of the ploughshare on the land.

Verse 19. God's way is in the sea. In things changeable, ungovernable, vast, unfathomable, terrible, overwhelming, the Lord has the ruling power.

Verse 20.

1. The subjects of divine guidance: *thy people*.
 2. The manner of their guidance: *like a flock*—separated, united, dependent.
 3. The agents employed: *by the hand*; the Great Shepherd leads by the hand of under shepherds.
- "May every under shepherd keep his eye intent on Thee."

Verse 20. Church history.

1. The church a flock.
2. God seen as leading it on.
3. Instrumentality always used.

WORK UPON THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH PSALM

"An Exposition upon the Seventy-seventh Psalm, made by the constant *Martyr of Christ, Master John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester.*" In the "Later Writings of Bishop Hooper." (In Parker Society's Publications, and also in the "British Reformer's" series of the Religious Tract Society.)

Psalm 78

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. *Maschil of Asaph.* This is rightly entitled an instructive Psalm. It is not a mere recapitulation of important events in Israelitish history, but is intended to be viewed as a parable setting forth the conduct and experience of believers in all ages. It is a singular proof of the obtuseness of mind of many professors that they will object to sermons and expositions upon the historical parts of Scripture, as if they contained no instruction in spiritual matters: were such persons truly enlightened by the Spirit of God, they would perceive that all Scripture is profitable, and would blush at their own

folly in undervaluing any portion of the inspired volume.

DIVISION. The unity is well maintained throughout, but for the sake of the reader's convenience, we may note that Ps 78:1-8 may be viewed as a preface, setting forth the psalmist's object in the epic which he is composing. From Ps 78:9-41 the theme is Israel in the wilderness; then intervenes an account of the Lord's preceding goodness towards his people in bringing them out of Egypt by plagues and wonders, Ps 78:42-52. The history of the tribes is resumed at Ps 78:53, and continued to Ps 78:66, where we reach the time of the removal of the ark to Zion and the transference of the leadership of Israel from Ephraim to Judah, which is rehearsed in song from Ps 78:67-72.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Give ear, O my people, to my law.* The inspired bard calls on his countrymen to give heed to his patriotic teaching. We naturally expect God's chosen nation to be first in hearkening to his voice. When God gives his truth a tongue, and sends forth his messengers trained to declare his word with power, it is the least we can do to give them our ears and the earnest obedience of our hearts. Shall God speak, and his children refuse to hear? His teaching has the force of law, let us yield both ear and heart to it. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. Give earnest attention, bow your stiff necks, lean forward to catch every syllable. We are at this day, as readers of the sacred records, bound to study them deeply, exploring their meaning, and labouring to practice their teaching. As the officer of an army commences his drill by calling for "Attention," even so every trained soldier of Christ is called upon to give ear to his words. Men lend their ears to music, how much more then should they listen to the harmonies of the gospel; they sit enthralled in the presence of an orator, how much rather should they yield to the eloquence of heaven.

Verse 2. *I will open my mouth in a parable.* Analogies are not only to be imagined, but are intended by God to be traced between the story of Israel and the lives of believers. Israel was ordained to be a type; the tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all wise providence. Unspiritual persons may sneer about fancies and mysticisms, but Paul spake well when he said "which things are an allegory," and Asaph in the present case spake to the point when he called his narrative "a parable." That such was his meaning is clear from the quotation, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Mt 13:34-35. I will utter dark sayings of old;—enigmas of antiquity, riddles of yore. The mind of the poet prophet was so full of ancient lore that he poured it forth in a copious stream of song, while beneath the gushing flood lay pearls and gems of spiritual truth, capable of enriching those who could dive into the depths and bring them up. The letter of this song is precious, but the inner sense is beyond all price. Whereas the first verse

called for attention, the second justifies the demand by hinting that the outer sense conceals an inner and hidden meaning, which only the thoughtful will be able to perceive.

Verse 3. *Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.* Tradition was of the utmost service to the people of God in the olden time, before the more sure word of prophecy had become complete and generally accessible. The receipt of truth from the lips of others laid the instructed believer under solemn obligation to pass on the truth to the next generation. Truth, endeared to us by its fond associations with godly parents and venerable friends, deserves of us our best exertions to preserve and propagate it. Our fathers told us, we hear them, and we know personally what they taught; it remains for us in our turn to hand it on. Blessed be God we have now the less mutable testimony of written revelation, but this by no means lessens our obligation to instruct our children in divine truth by word of mouth: rather, with such a gracious help, we ought to teach them far more fully the things of God. Dr. Doddridge owed much to the Dutch tiles and his mother's explanations of the Bible narratives. The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mother's tears and father's prayers.

Verse 4. *We will not hide them from their children.* Our negligent silence shall not deprive our own and our father's offspring of the precious truth of God, it would be shameful indeed if we did so. Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord. We will look forward to future generations, and endeavour to provide for their godly education. It is the duty of the church of God to maintain, in fullest vigour, every agency intended for the religious education of the young; to them we must look for the church of the future, and as we sow towards them so shall we reap. Children are to be taught to magnify the Lord; they ought to be well informed as to his wonderful doings in ages past, and should be made to know his strength and his wonderful works that he hath done. The best education is education in the best things. The first lesson for a child should be concerning his mother's God. Teach him what you will, if he learn not the fear of the Lord, he will perish for lack of knowledge. Grammar is poor food for the soul if it be not flavoured with grace. Every satchel should have a Bible in it. The world may teach secular knowledge alone, it is all she has a heart to know, but the church must not deal so with her offspring; she should look well to every Timothy, and see to it that from a child he knows the Holy Scriptures. Around the fireside fathers should repeat not only the Bible records, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings of the Lord with themselves both in providence and grace. We dare not follow the vain and vicious traditions of the apostate church of Rome, neither would we compare the fallible record of the best human memories with the infallible written word, yet would we fain see oral tradition practised by every Christian in his family, and children taught cheerfully by word of mouth by their own mothers and fathers, as well as by the printed pages of what they too often regard as dull, dry task books. What happy hours and pleasant evenings have children had at their parents knees as they have listened to some "sweet

story of old." Reader, if you have children, mind you do not fail in this duty.

Verse 5. *For he established a testimony in Jacob.* The favoured nation existed for the very purpose of maintaining God's truth in the midst of surrounding idolatry. They were the oracles, they were the conservators and guardians of the truth. And appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that *they should make them known to their children.* The testimony for the true God was to be transmitted from generation to generation by the careful instruction of succeeding families. We have the command for this oral transmission very frequently given in the Pentateuch, and it may suffice to quote one instance from De 6:7: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Reader, if you are a parent, have you conscientiously discharged this duty?

Verse 6. *That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born.* As far on as our brief life allows us to arrange, we must industriously provide for the godly nurture of youth. The narratives, commands, and doctrines of the word of God are not worn out; they are calculated to exert an influence as long as our race shall exist. Who should arise and declare them to their children. The one object aimed at is transmission; the testimony is only given that it may be passed on to succeeding generations.

Verse 7. *That they might set their hope in God.* Faith cometh by hearing. Those who know the name of the Lord will set their hope in him, and that they may be led to do so is the main end of all spiritual teaching. And not forget the works of God. Grace cures bad memories; those who soon forget the merciful works of the Lord have need of teaching; they require to learn the divine art of holy memory. But keep his commandments. Those who forget God's works are sure to fail in their own. He who does not keep God's love in memory is not likely to remember his law. The design of teaching is practical; holiness towards God is the end we aim at, and not the filling of the head with speculative notions.

Verse 8. *And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.* There was room for improvement. Fathers stubborn in their own way, and rebellious against God's way, are sorry examples for their children; and it is earnestly desired that better instruction may bring forth a better race. It is common in some regions for men to count their family custom as the very best rule; but disobedience is not to be excused because it is hereditary. The leprosy was none the less loathsome because it had been long in the family. If our fathers were rebellious we must be better than they were, or else we shall perish as they did. A generation that set not their heart aright. They had no decision for righteousness and truth. In them there was no preparedness, or willingness of heart, to entertain the Saviour; neither judgments, nor mercies could bind their affections to their God; they were fickle as the winds, and changeful as the waves. And whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

The tribes in the wilderness were constant only in their inconstancy; there was no depending upon them. It was, indeed, needful that their descendants should be warned, so that they might not blindly imitate them. How blessed it would be if each age improved upon its predecessor; but, alas! it is to be feared that decline is more general than progress, and too often the heirs of true saints are far more rebellious than even their fathers were in their unregeneracy. May the reading of this patriotic and divine song move many to labour after the elevation of themselves and their posterity.

Verse 9. *The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.* Well equipped and furnished with the best weapons of the times, the leading tribe failed in faith and courage and retreated before the foe. There were several particular instances of this, but probably the psalmist refers to the general failure of Ephraim to lead the tribes to the conquest of Canaan. How often have we also, although supplied with every gracious weapon, failed to wage successful war against our sins, we have marched onward gallantly enough till the testing hour has come, and then "in the day of battle "we have proved false to good resolutions and holy obligations. How altogether vain is unregenerate man! Array him in the best that nature and grace can supply, he still remains a helpless coward in the holy war, so long as he lacks a loyal faith in his God.

Verse 10. *They kept not the covenant of God.* Vows and promises were broken, idols were set up, and the living God was forsaken. They were brought out of Egypt in order to be a people separated unto the Lord, but they fell into the sins of other nations, and did not maintain a pure testimony for the one only true God. And refused to walk in his law. They gave way to fornication, and idolatry, and other violations of the decalogue, and were often in a state of rebellion against the benign theocracy under which they lived. They had pledged themselves at Sinai to keep the law, and then they wilfully disobeyed it, and so became covenant breakers.

Verse 11. *And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.* Had they remembered them they would have been filled with gratitude and inspired with holy awe: but the memory of God's mercies to them was as soon effaced as if written upon water. Scarcely could one generation retain the sense of the divine presence in miraculous power, the succeeding race needed a renewal of the extraordinary manifestations, and even then was not satisfied without many displays thereof. Ere we condemn them, let us repent of our own wicked forgetfulness, and confess the many occasions upon which we also have been unmindful of past favours.

Verse 12. Egypt, here called *the field of Zoan*, was the scene of marvellous things which were done in open day *in the sight* of Israel. These were extraordinary, upon a vast scale, astounding, indisputable, and such as ought to have rendered it impossible for an Israelite to be disloyal to Jehovah, Israel's God.

Verse 13. *He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through.* A double wonder, for when the waters were divided the bottom of the sea would naturally be in a very unfit state for the passage of

so vast a host as that of Israel; it would in fact have been impassable, had not the Lord made the road for his people. Who else has ever led a nation through a sea? Yet the Lord has done this full often for his saints in providential deliverances, making a highway for them where nothing short of an almighty arm could have done so. And he made the waters to stand as an heap. He forbade a drop to fall upon his chosen, they felt no spray from the crystal walls on either hand. Fire will descend and water stand upright at the bidding of the Lord of all. The nature of creatures is not their own intrinsically, but is retained or altered at the will of him who first created them. The Lord can cause those evils which threaten to overwhelm us to suspend their ordinary actions, and become innocuous to us.

Verse 14. *In the daytime also he led them with a cloud.* HE did it all. *He* alone. He brought them into the wilderness, and he led them through it; it is not the Lord's manner to begin a work, and then cease from it while it is incomplete. The cloud both led and shadowed the tribes. It was by day a vast sun screen, rendering the fierce heat of the sun and the glare of the desert sand bearable. And all the night with a light of fire. So constant was the care of the Great Shepherd that all night and every night the token of his presence was with his people. That cloud which was a shade by day was as a sun by night. Even thus the grace which cools and calms our joys, soothes and solaces our sorrows. What a mercy to have a light of fire with us amid the lonely horrors of the wilderness of affliction. Our God has been all this to us, and shall we prove unfaithful to him? We have felt him to be both shade and light, according as our changing circumstances have required.

"He hath been our joy in woe,
Cheered our heart when it was low,
And, with warnings softly sad,
Calmed our heart when it was glad."

May this frequently renewed experience knit our hearts to him in firmest bonds.

Verse 15. *He clave the rocks in the wilderness.* Moses was the instrument, but the Lord did it all. Twice he made the flint a gushing rill. What can he not do? And gave them drink as out of the great depths,—as though it gushed from earth's innermost reservoirs. The streams were so fresh, so copious, so constant, that they seemed to well up from the earth's primeval fountains, and to leap at once from "the deep which coucheth beneath." Here was a divine supply for Israel's urgent need, and such an one as ought to have held them for ever in unwavering fidelity to their wonder working God.

Verse 16. The supply of water was as plenteous in quantity as it was miraculous in origin. Torrents, not driblets came from the rocks. Streams followed the camp; the supply was not for an hour or a day. This was a marvel of goodness. If we contemplate the abounding of divine grace we shall be lost in admiration. Mighty rivers of love have flowed for us in the wilderness. Alas, great God! our return has not been commensurate therewith, but far otherwise.

Verse 17. *And they sinned yet more against him.* Outdoing their former sins, going into greater deeps of evil: the more they had the more loudly they clamoured for more, and murmured because they had not every luxury that pampered appetites could desire. It was bad enough to mistrust their God for necessaries, but to revolt against him in a greedy rage for superfluities was far worse. Ever is it the nature of the disease of sin to proceed from bad to worse; men never weary of sinning, but rather increase their speed in the race of iniquity. In the case before us the goodness of God was abused into a reason for greater sin. Had not the Lord been so good they would not have been so bad. If he had wrought fewer miracles before, they would not have been so inexcusable in their unbelief, so wanton in their idolatry. By provoking the most High in the wilderness. Although they were in a position of obvious dependence upon God for everything, being in a desert where the soil could yield them no support, yet they were graceless enough to provoke their benefactor. At one time they provoked his jealousy by their hankering after false gods, anon they excited his wrath by their challenges of his power, their slanders against his love, their rebellions against his will. He was all bounty of love, and they all superfluity of naughtiness. They were favoured above all nations, and yet none were more ill favoured. For them the heavens dropped manna, and they returned murmurs; the rocks gave them rivers, and they replied with floods of wickedness. Herein, as in a mirror, we see ourselves. Israel in the wilderness acted out, as in a drama, all the story of man's conduct towards his God.

Verse 18. *And they tempted God in their heart.* He was not tempted, for he cannot be tempted by any, but they acted in a manner calculated to tempt him, and it always just to charge that upon men which is the obvious tendency of their conduct. Christ cannot die again, and yet many crucify him afresh, because such would be the legitimate result of their behaviour if its effects were not prevented by other forces. The sinners in the wilderness would have had the Lord change his wise proceedings to humour their whims, hence they are said to tempt him. By asking meat for their lust. Would they have God become purveyor for their greediness? Was there nothing for it but that he must give them whatever their diseased appetites might crave? The sin began in their hearts, but it soon reached their tongues. What they at first silently wished for, they soon loudly demanded with menaces, insinuations, and upbraidings.

Verse 19. From this verse we learn that unbelief of God is a slander against him. Yea, they spake against God. But how? The answer is, They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? To question the ability of one who is manifestly Almighty, is to speak against him. These people were base enough to say that although their God had given them bread and water, yet he could not properly order or furnish a table. He could give them coarse food, but could not prepare a feast properly arranged, so they were ungrateful enough to declare. As if the manna was a mere makeshift, and the flowing rock stream a temporary expedient, they ask to have a regularly furnished

table, such as they had been accustomed to in Egypt. Alas, how have we also quarrelled with our mercies, and querulously pined for some imaginary good, counting our actual enjoyments to be nothing because they did not happen to be exactly conformed to our foolish fancies. They who will not be content will speak against providence even when it daily loadeth them with benefits.

Verse 20. *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed.* They admit what he had done, and yet, with superabundant folly and insolence, demand further proofs of his omnipotence. Can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? As if the manna were nothing, as if animal food alone was true nourishment for men. If they had argued, "can he *not* give flesh?" the argument would have been reasonable, but they ran into insanity; when, having seen many marvels of omnipotence, they dared to insinuate that other things were beyond the divine power. Yet, in this also, we have imitated their senseless conduct. Each new difficulty has excited fresh incredulity. We are still fools and slow of heart to believe our God, and this is a fault to be bemoaned with deepest penitence. For this cause the Lord is often wroth with us and chastens us sorely; for unbelief has in it a degree of provocation of the highest kind.

Verse 21. *Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth.* He was not indifferent to what they said. He dwelt among them in the holy place, and, therefore, they insulted him to his face. He did not hear a report of it, but the language itself came into his ears. So a fire was kindled against Jacob. The fire of his anger which was also attended with literal burnings. And anger also came up against Israel. Whether he viewed them in the lower or higher light, as Jacob or as Israel, he was angry with them: even as mere men they ought to have believed him; and as chosen tribes, their wicked unbelief was without excuse. The Lord doeth well to be angry at so ungrateful, gratuitous and dastardly an insult as the questioning of his power.

Verse 22. *Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.* This is the master sin, the crying sin. Like Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, it sins and makes Israel to sin; it is in itself evil and the parent of evils. It was this sin which shut Israel out of Canaan, and it shuts myriads out of heaven. God is ready to save, combining power with willingness, but rebellious man will not trust his Saviour, and therefore is condemned already. In the text it appears as if all Israel's other sins were as nothing compared with this; this is the peculiar spot which the Lord points at, the special provocation which angered him. From this let every unbeliever learn to tremble more at his unbelief than at anything else. If he be no fornicator, or thief, or liar, let him reflect that it is quite enough to condemn him that he trusts not in God's salvation.

Verse 23. *Though he had commanded the clouds from above.* Such a marvel ought to have rendered unbelief impossible: when clouds become granaries, seeing should be believing, and doubts should dissolve. And opened the doors of heaven. The great storehouse doors were set wide open, and the corn of heaven poured out in heaps. Those who would not believe in such a case were

hardened indeed; and yet our own position is very similar, for the Lord has wrought for us great deliverances, quite as memorable and undeniable, and yet suspicions and forebodings haunt us. He might have shut the gates of hell upon us, instead of which he has opened the doors of heaven; shall we not both believe in him and magnify him for this?

Verse 24. *And had rained down manna upon them to eat.* There was so much of it, the skies poured with food, the clouds burst with provender. It was fit food, proper not for looking at but for eating; they could eat it as they gathered it. Mysterious though it was, so that they called it manna, or "what is it?" yet it was eminently adapted for human nourishment; and it was both abundant and adapted, so also was it available! They had not far to fetch it, it was nigh them, and they had only to gather it up. O Lord Jesus, thou blessed manna of heaven, how all this agrees with Thee! We will even now feed on Thee as our spiritual meat, and will pray Thee to chase away all wicked unbelief from us. Our fathers ate manna and doubted; we feed upon Thee and are filled with assurance. And had given them of the corn of heaven. It was all a gift without money and without price. Food which dropped from above, and was of the best quality, so as to be called heavenly corn, was freely granted them. The manna was round, like a coriander seed, and hence was rightly called corn; it did not rise from the earth, but descended from the clouds, and hence the words of the verse are literally accurate. The point to be noted is that this wonder of wonders left the beholders, and the feasters, as prone as ever to mistrust their Lord.

Verse 25. *Man did eat angel's food.* The delicacies of kings were outdone, for the dainties of angels were supplied. Bread of the mighty ones fell on feeble man. Those who are lower than the angels fared as well. It was not for the priests, or the princes, that the manna fell; but for all the nation, for every man, woman, and child in the camp: and there was sufficient for them all, for he sent them meat to the full. God's banquets are never stinted; he gives the best diet, and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and preeminent; they are of God's preparing, sending, and bestowing. He is well fed whom God feeds; heaven's meat is nourishing and plentiful. If we have ever fed upon Jesus we have tasted better than angel's food; for

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

It will be our wisdom to eat to the full of it, for God has so sent it that we are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels. Happy pilgrims who in the desert have their meat sent from the Lord's own palace above; let them eat abundantly of the celestial banquet, and magnify the all sufficient grace which supplies all their needs, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

Verse 26. *He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven.* He is Lord Paramount, above the prince of the power of the air: storms arise and tempests blow at his command. Winds sleep till God arouses

them, and then, like Samuel, each one answers, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." And by his power he brought in the south wind. Either these winds followed each other, and so blew the birds in the desired direction, or else they combined to form a south east wind; in either case they fulfilled the design of the Lord, and illustrated his supreme and universal power. If one wind will not serve, another shall; and if need be, they shall both blow at once. We speak of *fickle* winds, but their obedience to their Lord is such that they deserve a better word. If we ourselves were half as obedient as the winds, we should be far superior to what we are now.

Verse 27. *He rained flesh also upon them as dust.* First he rained bread and then flesh, when he might have rained fire and brimstone. The words indicate the speed, and the abundance of the descending quails. And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea; there was no counting them. By a remarkable providence, if not by miracle, enormous numbers of migratory birds were caused to alight around the tents of the tribes. It was, however, a doubtful blessing, as easily acquired and superabounding riches generally are. The Lord save us from meat which is seasoned with divine wrath.

Verse 28. *And he let it fall in the midst of their camp.* They had no journey to make; they had clamoured for flesh, and it almost flew into their mouths, round about their habitations. This made them glad for the moment, but they knew not that mercies can be sent in anger, else they had trembled at sight of the good things which they had lusted after.

Verse 29. *So they did eat, and were well filled.* They greedily devoured the birds, even to repletion. The Lord shewed them that he could "provide flesh for his people, "even enough and to spare. He also shewed them that when lust wins its desire it is disappointed, and by the way of satiety arrive at distaste. First the food satiates, then it nauseates. For he gave them their own desire. They were filled with their own ways. The flesh meat was unhealthy for them, but as they cried for it they had it, and a curse with it. O my God, deny me my most urgent prayers sooner than answer them in displeasure. Better hunger and thirst after righteousness than to be well filled with sin's dainties.

Verses 30-31. They were not estranged from their lust. Lust grows upon that which it feeds on. If sick of too much flesh, yet men grow not weary of lust, they change the object, and go on lusting still. When one sin is proved to be a bitterness, men do not desist, but pursue another iniquity. If, like Jehu, they turn from Baal, they fall to worshipping the calves of Bethel. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, before they could digest their coveted meat, it turned to their destruction. The wrath of God came upon them before they could swallow their first meal of flesh. Short was the pleasure, sudden was the doom. The festival ended in a funeral. And slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of *Israel*. Perhaps these were the ringleaders in the lusting; they are first in the punishment. God's justice has no respect of persons, the strong and the valiant fall as well as the weak and the mean. What they ate on earth they digested in hell, as many have done since. How soon they died, though they felt not the edge of the sword! How terrible was the havoc, though not

amid the din of battle! My soul, see here the danger of gratified passions; they are the janitors of hell. When the Lord's people hunger God loves them; Lazarus is his beloved, though he pines upon crumbs; but when he fattens the wicked he abhors them; Dives is hated of heaven when he fares sumptuously every day. We must never dare to judge men's happiness by their tables, the heart is the place to look at. The poorest starveling believer is more to be envied than the most full fleshed of the favourites of the world. Better be God's dog than the devil's darling.

Verse 32. *For all this they sinned still.* Judgments moved them no more than mercies. They defied the wrath of God. Though death was in the cup of their iniquity, yet they would not put it away, but continued to quaff it as if it were a healthful potion. How truly might these words be applied to ungodly men who have been often afflicted, laid upon a sick bed, broken in spirit, and impoverished in estate, and yet have persevered in their evil ways, unmoved by terrors, unswayed by threatenings. And believed not for his wondrous works. Their unbelief was chronic and incurable. Miracles both of mercy and judgment were unavailing. They might be made to wonder, but they could not be taught to believe. Continuance in sin and in unbelief go together. Had they believed they would not have sinned, had they not have been blinded by sin they would have believed. There is a reflex action between faith and character. How can the lover of sin believe? How, on the other hand, can the unbeliever cease from sin? God's ways with us in providence are in themselves both convincing and converting, but unrenewed nature refuses to be either convicted or converted by them.

Verse 33. *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity.* Apart from faith life is vanity. To wander up and down in the wilderness was a vain thing indeed, when unbelief had shut them out of the promised land. It was meet that those who would not live to answer the divine purpose by believing and obeying their God should be made to live to no purpose, and to die before their time, unsatisfied, unblessed. Those who wasted their days in sin had little cause to wonder when the Lord cut short their lives, and swore that they should never enter the rest which they had despised. And their years in trouble. Weary marches were their trouble, and to come to no resting place was their vanity. Innumerable graves were left all along the track of Israel, and if any ask, "Who slew all these?" the answer must be, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Doubtless much of the vexation and failure of many lives results from their being sapped by unbelief, and honeycombed by evil passions. None live so fruitlessly and so wretchedly as those who allow sense and sight to override faith, and their reason and appetite to domineer over their fear of God. Our days go fast enough according to the ordinary lapse of time, but the Lord can make them rust away at a bitterer rate, till we feel as if sorrow actually ate out the heart of our life, and like a canker devoured our existence. Such was the punishment of rebellious Israel, the Lord grant it may not be ours.

Verse 34. *When he slew them, then they sought him.* Like whipped curs, they licked their Master's feet. They obeyed only so long as they felt the whip about their loins. Hard are the hearts which only

death can move. While thousands died around them, the people of Israel became suddenly religious, and repaired to the tabernacle door, like sheep who run in a mass while the black dog drives them, but scatter and wander when the shepherd whistles him off. And they returned and enquired early after God. They could not be too zealous, they were in hot haste to prove their loyalty to their divine King. "The devil was sick and the devil a monk would be." Who would not be pious while the plague is abroad? Doors, which were never so sanctified before, put on the white cross then. Even reprobates send for the minister when they lie a dying. Thus sinners pay involuntary homage to the power of right and the supremacy of God, but their hypocritical homage is of small value in the sight of the Great Judge.

Verse 35. *And they remember that God was their rock.* Sharp strokes awoke their sleepy memories. Reflection followed infliction. They were led to see that all their dependence must be placed upon their God; for he alone had been their shelter, their foundation, their fountain of supply, and their unchangeable friend. What could have made them forget this? Was it that their stomachs were so full of flesh that they had no space for ruminating upon spiritual things? And the high God their redeemer. They had forgotten this also. The high hand and outstretched arm which redeemed them out of bondage had both faded from their mental vision. Alas, poor man, how readily dost thou forget thy God! Shame on thee, ungrateful worm, to have no sense of favours a few days after they have been received. Will nothing make thee keep in memory the mercy of thy God except the utter withdrawal of it?

Verse 36. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth. Bad were they at their best. False on their knees, liars in their prayers. Mouth worship must be very detestable to God when dissociated from the heart: other kings love flattery, but the King of kings abhors it. Since the sharpest afflictions only extort from carnal men a feigned submission to God, there is proof positive that the heart is desperately set on mischief, and that sin is ingrained in our very nature. If you beat a tiger with many stripes you cannot turn him into a sheep. The devil cannot be whipped out of human nature, though another devil, namely, hypocrisy may be whipped into it. Piety produced by the damps of sorrow and the heats of terror is of mushroom growth; it is rapid in its springing up—"they enquired early after God"—but it is a mere unsubstantial fungus of unabiding excitement. And they lied unto him with their tongues. Their godly speech was cant, their praise mere wind, their prayer a fraud. Their skin deep repentance was a film too thin to conceal the deadly wound of sin. This teaches us to place small reliance upon professions of repentance made by dying men, or upon such even when the basis is evidently slavish fear, and nothing more. Any thief will whine out repentance if he thinks the judge will thereby be moved to let him go scot free.

Verse 37. *For their heart was not right with him.* There was no depth in their repentance, it was not heart work. They were fickle as a weathercock, every wind turned them, their mind was not settled

upon God. Neither were they stedfast in his covenant. Their promises were no sooner made than broken, as if only made in mockery. Good resolutions called at their hearts as men do at inns; they tarried awhile, and then took their leave. They were hot today for holiness, but cold towards it tomorrow. Variable as the hues of the dolphin, they changed from reverence to rebellion, from thankfulness to murmuring. One day they gave their gold to build a tabernacle for Jehovah, and the next they plucked off their earrings to make a golden calf. Surely the heart is a chameleon. Proteus had not so many changes. As in the ague we both burn and freeze, so do inconstant natures in their religion.

Verse 38. *But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not.* Though they were full of flattery, he was full of mercy, and for this cause he had pity on them. Not because of their pitiful and hypocritical pretensions to penitence, but because of his own real compassion for them he overlooked their provocations. Yea, many a time turned he his anger away. When he had grown angry with them he withdrew his displeasure. Even unto seventy times seven did he forgive their offences. He was slow, very slow, to anger. The sword was uplifted and flashed in midair, but it was sheathed again, and the nation yet lived. Though not mentioned in the text, we know from the history that a mediator interposed, the man Moses stood in the gap; even so at this hour the Lord Jesus pleads for sinners, and averts the divine wrath. Many a barren tree is left standing because the dresser of the vineyard cries, "let it alone this year also." And did not stir up all his wrath. Had he done so they must have perished in a moment. When his wrath is kindled but a little men are burned up as chaff; but were he to let loose his indignation, the solid earth itself would melt, and hell would engulf every rebel. Who knoweth the power of thine anger, O Lord? We see the fulness of God's compassion, but we never see all his wrath.

Verse 39. *For he remembered that they were but flesh.* They were forgetful of God, but he was mindful of them. He knew that they were made of earthy, frail, corruptible material, and therefore he dealt leniently with them. Though in this he saw no excuse for their sin, yet he constrained it into a reason for mercy; the Lord is ever ready to discover some plea or other upon which he may have compassion. A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. Man is but a breath, gone never to return. Spirit and wind are in this alike, so far as our humanity is concerned; they pass and cannot be recalled. What a nothing is our life. How gracious on the Lord's part to make man's insignificance an argument for staying his wrath.

Verse 40. *How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness.* Times enough did they rebel: they were as constant in provocation as he was in his patience. In our own case, who can count his errors? In what book could all our perverse rebellions be recorded? The wilderness was a place of manifest dependence, where the tribes were helpless without divine supplies, yet they wounded the hand which fed them while it was in the act of feeding them. Is there no likeness between us and them?

Does it bring no tears into our eyes, while as in a glass, we see our own selves? And grieve him in the desert. Their provocations had an effect; God was not insensible to them, he is said to have been grieved. His holiness could not find pleasure in their sin, his justice in their unjust treatment, or his truth in their falsehood. What must it be to grieve the Lord of love! Yet we also have vexed the Holy Spirit, and he would long ago have withdrawn himself from us, were it not that he is God and not man. We are in the desert where we need our God, let us not make it a wilderness of sin by grieving him.

Verses 41. Yea, they turned back. Their hearts sighed for Egypt and its fleshpots. They turned to their old ways again and again, after they had been scourged out of them. Full of twists and turns, they never kept the straight path. And tempted God. As far as in them lay they tempted him. His ways were good, and they in desiring to have them altered tempted God. Before they would believe in him they demanded signs, defying the Lord to do this and that, and acting as if he could be cajoled into being the minion of their lusts. What blasphemy was this! Yet let us not tempt Christ lest we also be destroyed by the destroyer. And limited the Holy One of Israel. Doubted his power and so limited him, dictated to his wisdom and so did the same. To chalk out a path for God is arrogant impiety. The Holy One must do right, the covenant God of Israel must be true, it is profanity itself to say unto him thou shalt do this or that, or otherwise I will not worship thee. Not thus is the Eternal God to be led by a string by his impotent creature. He is the Lord and he will do as seemeth him good.

Verse 42. *They remembered not his hand.* Yet it must have been difficult to forget it. Such displays of divine power as those which smote Egypt with astonishment, it must have needed some more than usual effort to blot it from the tablets of memory. It is probably meant that they practically, rather than actually, forgot. He who forgets the natural returns of gratitude, may justly be charged with not remembering the obligation. Nor the days when he delivered them from the enemy. The day itself was erased from their calendar, so far as any due result from it or return for it. Strange is the faculty of memory in its oblivion as well as its records. Sin perverts man's powers, makes them forceful only in wrong directions, and practically dead for righteous ends.

Verse 43. *How he had wrought his signs in Egypt.* The plagues were ensigns of Jehovah's presence and proofs of his hatred of idols; these instructive acts of power were wrought in the open view of all, as signals are set up to be observed by those far and near. And his wonders in the field of Zoan. In the whole land were miracles wrought, not in cities alone, but in the broad territory, in the most select and ancient regions of the proud nation. This the Israelites ought not to have forgotten, for they were the favoured people for whom these memorable deeds were wrought.

Verse 44. *And had turned their rivers into blood.* The waters had been made the means of the destruction of Israel's newborn infants, and now they do as it were betray the crime—they blush for it, they avenge it on the murderers. The Nile was the vitality of Egypt, its true life blood, but at God's

command it became a flowing curse; every drop of it was a horror, poison to drink, and terror to gaze on. How soon might the Almighty One do this with the Thames or the Seine. Sometimes he has allowed men, who were his rod, to make rivers crimson with gore, and this is a severe judgment; but the event now before us was more mysterious, more general, more complete, and must, therefore, have been a plague of the first magnitude. And their floods, that they could not drink. Lesser streams partook in the curse, reservoirs and canals felt the evil; God does nothing by halves. All Egypt boasted of the sweet waters of their river, but they were made to loathe it more than they had ever loved it. Our mercies may soon become our miseries if the Lord shall deal with us in wrath.

Verse 45. *He sent diverse sorts of flies among them, which devoured them.* Small creatures become great tormentors. When they swarm they can sting a man till they threaten to eat him up. In this case, various orders of insects fought under the same banner; lice and beetles, gnats and hornets, wasps and gadflies dashed forward in fierce battalions, and worried the sinners of Egypt without mercy. The tiniest plagues are the greatest. What sword or spear could fight with these innumerable bands? Vain were the monarch's armour and robes of majesty, the little cannibals were no more lenient towards royal flesh than any other; it had the same blood in it, and the same sin upon it. How great is that God who thus by the minute can crush the magnificent. And frogs, which destroyed them. These creatures swarmed everywhere when they were alive, until the people felt ready to die at the sight; and when the reptiles died, the heaps of their bodies made the land to stink so foully, that a pestilence was imminent. Thus not only did earth and air send forth armies of horrible life, but the water also added its legions of loathsomeness. It seemed as if the Nile was first made nauseous and then caused to leave its bed altogether, crawling and leaping in the form of frogs. Those who contend with the Almighty, little know what arrows are in his quiver; surprising sin shall be visited with surprising punishment.

Verse 46. *He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.* Different sorts of devourers ate up every green herb and tree. What one would not eat another did. What they expected from the natural fertility of the soil, and what they looked for from their own toil, they saw devoured before their eyes by an insatiable multitude against whose depredation no defense could be found. Observe in the text that the Lord did it all—"he sent, " "he gave, ""he destroyed, ""he gave up, "etc.; whatever the second agent may be, the direct hand of the Lord is in every national visitation.

Verse 47. *He destroyed their vines with hail.* No more shall thy butler press the clusters into thy cup, O Pharaoh! The young fruit bearing shoots were broken off, the vintage failed. And their sycamore trees with frost. Frost was not usual, but Jehovah regards no laws of nature when men regard not his moral laws. The sycamore fig was perhaps more the fruit of the many than was the vine, therefore this judgment was meant to smite the poor, while the former fell most heavily upon the rich. Mark how

the heavens obey their Lord and yield their stores of hail, and note how the fickle weather is equally subservient to the divine will.

Verse 48. *He gave up their cattle also to the hail.* What hail it must have been to have force enough to batter down bullocks and other great beasts. God usually protects animals from such destruction, but here he withdraws his safeguards and gave them up: may the Lord never give *us* up. Some read, "shut up, "and the idea of being abandoned to destructive influences is then before us in another shape. And their flocks to hot thunderbolts. Fire was mingled with the hail, the fire ran along upon the ground, it smote the smaller cattle. What a storm must that have been: its effects were terrible enough upon plants, but to see the poor dumb creatures stricken must have been heartbreaking. Adamantine was that heart which quailed not under such plagues as these, harder than adamant those hearts which in after years forgot all that the Lord had done, and broke off from their allegiance to him.

Verse 49. *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble.* His last arrow was the sharpest. He reserved the strong wine of his indignation to the last. Note how the psalmist piles up the words, and well he might; for blow followed blow, each one more staggering than its predecessor, and then the crushing stroke was reserved for the end. By sending evil angels among them. Messengers of evil entered their houses at midnight, and smote the dearest objects of their love. The angels were evil to them, though good enough in themselves; those who to the heirs of salvation are ministers of grace, are to the heirs of wrath executioners of judgment. When God sends angels, they are sure to come, and if he bids them slay they will not spare. See how sin sets all the powers of heaven in array against man; he has no friend left in the universe when God is his enemy.

Verse 50. *He made a way to his anger,* coming to the point with them by slow degrees; assailing their outworks first by destroying their property, and then coming in upon their persons as through an open breach in the walls. He broke down all the comforts of their life, and then advanced against their life itself. Nothing could stand in his way; he cleared a space in which to do execution upon his adversaries. He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the *pestilence*. In their soul was the origin of the sin, and he followed it to its source and smote it there. A fierce disease filled the land with countless funerals; Jehovah dealt out myriads of blows, and multitudes of spirits failed before him.

Verse 51. *And smote all the firstborn in Egypt.* No exceptions were made, the monarch bewailed his heir as did the menial at the mill. They smote the Lord's firstborn, even Israel, and he smites theirs. The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham. Swinging his scythe over the field, death topped off the highest flowers. The tents of Ham knew each one its own peculiar sorrow, and were made to sympathise with the sorrows which had been ruthlessly inflicted upon the habitations of Israel. Thus

curses come home to roost. Oppressors are repaid in their own coin, without the discount of a penny.

Verse 52. *But made his own people to go forth like sheep.* The contrast is striking, and ought never to have been forgotten by the people. The wolves were slain in heaps, the sheep were carefully gathered, and triumphantly delivered. The tables were turned, and the poor serfs became the honoured people, while their oppressors were humbled before them. Israel went out in a compact body like a flock; they were defenceless in themselves as sheep, but they were safe under their Great Shepherd; they left Egypt as easily as a flock leaves one pasture for another. And guided them in the wilderness like a flock. Knowing nothing of the way by their own understanding or experience, they were, nevertheless, rightly directed, for the All wise God knew every spot of the wilderness. To the sea, through the sea, and from the sea, the Lord led his chosen; while their former taskmasters were too cowed in spirit, and broken in power, to dare to molest them.

Verse 53. *And he led them on safely, so that they feared not.* After the first little alarm, natural enough when they found themselves pursued by their old taskmasters, they plucked up courage and ventured forth boldly into the sea, and afterwards into the desert where no man dwelt. But the sea overwhelmed their enemies. They were gone, gone for ever, never to disturb the fugitives again. That tremendous blow effectually defended the tribes for forty years from any further attempt to drive them back. Egypt found the stone too heavy and was glad to let it alone. Let the Lord be praised who thus effectually freed his elect nation. What a grand narrative have we been considering. Well might the mightiest master of sacred song select "Israel in Egypt" as a choice theme for his genius; and well may every believing mind linger over every item of the amazing transaction. The marvel is that the favoured nation should live as if unmindful of it all, and yet such is human nature. Alas, poor man! Rather, alas, base heart! We now, after a pause, follow again the chain of events, the narration of which had been interrupted by a retrospect, and we find Israel entering into the promised land, there to repeat her follies and enlarge her crimes.

Verse 54. *And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary.* He conducted them to the frontier of the Holy Land, where he intended the tabernacle to become the permanent symbol of his abode among his people. He did not leave them halfway upon their journey to their heritage; his power and wisdom preserved the nation till the palm trees of Jericho were within sight on the other side of the river. Even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. Nor did he leave them then, but still conducted them till they were in the region round about Zion, which was to be the central seat of his worship. This the Lord had purchased in type of old by the sacrifice of Isaac, fit symbol of the greater sacrifice which was in due season to be presented there: that mountain was also redeemed by power, when the Lord's right hand enabled his valiant men to smite the Jebusites, and take the sacred hill from the insulting Canaanite. Thus shall the elect of God enjoy the sure protection of the Lord of hosts, even to the border land of death, and through the river, up to the hill of the Lord in

glory. The purchased people shall safely reach the purchased inheritance.

Verse 55. *He cast out the heathen also before them,* or "he drove out the nations." Not only were armies routed, but whole peoples displaced. The iniquity of the Canaanites was full; their vices made them rot above ground; therefore, the land ate up its inhabitants, the hornets vexed them, the pestilence destroyed them, and the sword of the tribes completed the execution to which the justice of long provoked heaven had at length appointed them. The Lord was the true conqueror of Canaan; he cast out the nations as men cast out filth from their habitations, he uprooted them as noxious weeds are extirpated by the husbandman. And divided them an inheritance by line. He divided the land of the nations among the tribes by lot and measure, assigning Hivite, Perizzite, and Jebusite territory to Simeon, Judah, or Ephraim, as the case might be. Among those condemned nations were not only giants in stature, but also giants in crime: those monsters of iniquity had too long defiled the earth; it was time that they should no more indulge the unnatural crimes for which they were infamous; they were, therefore, doomed to forfeit life and lands by the hands of the tribes of Israel. The distribution of the forfeited country was made by divine appointment; it was no scramble, but a judicial appointment of lands which had fallen to the crown by the attainder of the former holders. And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. The favoured people entered upon a furnished house: they found the larder supplied, for they fed upon the old corn of the land, and the dwellings were already builded in which they could dwell. Thus does another race often enter into the lot of a former people, and it is sad indeed when the change which judgment decrees does not turn out to be much for the better, because the incomers inherit the evils as well as the goods of the ejected. Such a case of judicial visitation ought to have had a salutary influence upon the tribes; but, alas, they were incorrigible, and would not learn even from examples so near at home and so terribly suggestive.

Verse 56. *Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God.* Change of condition had not altered their manners. They left their nomadic habits, but not their tendencies to wander from their God. Though every divine promise had been fulfilled to the letter, and the land flowing with milk and honey was actually their own, yet they tried the Lord again with unbelief, and provoked him with other sins. He is not only high and glorious, but most High, yea, *the* most High, the only being who deserves to be so highly had in honour; yet, instead of honouring him, Israel grieved him with rebellion. And kept not his testimonies. They were true to nothing but hereditary treachery; steadfast in nothing but in falsehood. They knew his truth and forgot it, his will and disobeyed it, his grace and perverted it to an occasion for greater transgression. Reader, dost thou need a looking glass? See here is one which suits the present expositor well; does it not also reflect thine image?

Verse 57. *But turned back.* Turned over the old leaf, repeated the same offences, started aside like an ill made bow, were false and faithless to their best promises. And dealt unfaithfully like their fathers, proving themselves legitimate by manifesting the treachery of their sires. They were a new

generation, but not a new nation—another race yet not another. Evil propensities are transmitted; the birth follows the progenitor; the wild ass breeds wild asses; the children of the raven fly to the carrion. Human nature does not improve, the new editions contain all the errata of the first, and sometimes fresh errors are imported. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow, which not only fails to send the arrow towards the mark in a direct line, but springs back to the archer's hurt, and perhaps sends the shaft among his friends to their serious jeopardy. Israel boasted of the bow as the national weapon, they sang the song of the bow, and hence a deceitful bow is made to be the type and symbol of their own unsteadfastness; God can make men's glory the very ensign of their shame, he draws a bar sinister across the escutcheon of traitors.

Verse 58. *For they provoked him to anger with their high places.* This was their first error—will worship, or the worship of God, otherwise than according to his command. Many think lightly of this, but it was no mean sin; and its tendencies to further offence are very powerful. The Lord would have his holy place remain as the only spot for sacrifice; and Israel, in wilful rebellion, (no doubt glossed over by the plea of great devotion,) determined to have many altars upon many hills. If they might have but one God, they insisted upon it that they would not be restricted to one sacred place of sacrifice. How much of the worship of the present day is neither more nor less than sheer will worship! Nobody dare plead a divine appointment for a tithe of the offices, festivals, ceremonies, and observances of certain churches. Doubtless God, so far from being honoured by worship which he has not commanded, is greatly angered at it. And moved him to jealousy with their graven images. This was but one more step; they manufactured symbols of the invisible God, for they lusted after something tangible and visible to which they could shew reverence. This also is the crying sin of modern times. Do we not hear and see superstition abounding? Images, pictures, crucifixes, and a host of visible things are had in religious honour, and worst of all men now a days worship what they eat, and call that a God which passes into their belly, and thence into baser places still. Surely the Lord is very patient, or he would visit the earth for this worst and basest of idolatry. He is a jealous God, and abhors to see himself dishonoured by any form of representation which can come from man's hands.

Verse 59. *When God heard this, he was wroth.* The mere report of it filled him with indignation; he could not bear it, he was incensed to the uttermost, and most justly so. And greatly abhorred Israel. He cast his idolatrous people from his favour, and left them to themselves, and their own devices. How could he have fellowship with idols? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Sin is in itself so offensive that it makes the sinner offensive too. Idols of any sort are highly abhorrent to God, and we must see to it that we keep ourselves from them through divine grace, for rest assured idolatry is not consistent with true grace in the heart. If Dagon sit aloft in any soul, the ark of God is not there. Where the Lord dwells no image of jealousy will be tolerated. A visible church will soon become a

visible curse if idols be set up in it, and then the pruning knife will remove it as a dead branch from the vine. Note that God did not utterly cast away his people Israel even when he greatly abhorred them, for he returned in mercy to them, so the subsequent verses tell us: so now the seed of Abraham, though for awhile under a heavy cloud, will be gathered yet again, for the covenant of salt shall not be broken. As for the spiritual seed, the Lord hath not despised nor abhorred them; they are his peculiar treasure and lie for ever near his heart.

Verse 60. *So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men.* His glory would no more reveal itself there, he left Shiloh to become a complete ruin. At the door of that tent shameless sin had been perpetrated, and all around it idols had been adored, and therefore the glory departed and Ichabod was sounded as a word of dread concerning Shiloh and the tribe of Ephraim. Thus may the candlestick be removed though the candle is not quenched. Erring churches become apostate, but a true church still remains; if Shiloh be profaned Zion is consecrated. Yet is it ever a solemn caution to all the assemblies of the saints, admonishing them to walk humbly with their God, when we read such words as those of the prophet Jeremiah in his seventh chapter, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." Let us take heed, lest as the ark never returned to Shiloh after its capture by the Philistines, so the gospel may be taken from us in judgment, never to be restored to the same church again.

Verse 61. *And delivered his strength into captivity.* The ark was captured by the Philistines in battle, only because the Lord for the punishment of Israel chose to deliver it into their hands, otherwise they could have had no power at all against it. The token of the divine presence is here poetically called "his strength; ", and, indeed, the presence of the Lord is his strength among his people. It was a black day when the mercyseat was removed, when the cherubim took flight, and Israel's palladium was carried away. And his glory into the enemy's hand. The ark was the place for the revealed glory of God, and his enemies exulted greatly when they bore it away into their own cities. Nothing could more clearly have shown the divine displeasure. It seemed to say that Jehovah would sooner dwell among his avowed adversaries than among so false a people as Israel; he would sooner bear the insults of Philistia than the treacheries of Ephraim. This was a fearful downfall for the favoured nation, and it was followed by dire judgments of most appalling nature. When God is gone all is gone. No calamity can equal the withdrawal of the divine presence from a people. O Israel, how art thou brought low! Who shall help thee now that thy God has left thee!

Verse 62. *He gave his people over also unto the sword.* They fell in battle because they were no longer aided by the divine strength. Sharp was the sword, but sharper still the cause of its being unsheathed. And was wroth with his inheritance. They were *his* still, and twice in this verse they are

called so; yet his regard for them did not prevent his chastening them, even with a rod of steel. Where the love is most fervent, the jealousy is most cruel. Sin cannot be tolerated in those who are a people near unto God.

Verse 63. *The fire consumed their young men.* As fire slew Nadab and Abihu literally, so the fire of divine wrath fell on the sons of Eli, who defiled the sanctuary of the Lord, and the like fire, in the form of war, consumed the flower of the people. And their maidens were not given to marriage. No nuptial hymn were sung, the bride lacked her bridegroom, the edge of the sword had cut the bands of their espousals, and left unmarried those who else had been extolled in hymns and congratulations. Thus Israel was brought very low, she could not find husbands for her maids, and therefore her state was not replenished; no young children clustered around parental knees. The nation had failed in its solemn task of instructing the young in the fear of Jehovah, and it was a fitting judgment that the very production of a posterity should be endangered.

Verse 64. *Their priests fell by the sword.* Hophni and Phineas were slain; they were among the chief in sin, and, therefore, they perished with the rest. Priesthood is no shelter for transgressors; the jewelled breastplate cannot turn aside the arrows of judgment. And their widows made no lamentation. Their private griefs were swallowed up in the greater national agony, because the ark of God was taken. As the maidens had no heart for the marriage song, so the widows had no spirit, even to utter the funeral wail. The dead were buried too often and too hurriedly to allow of the usual rites of lamentation. This was the lowest depth; from this point things will take a gracious turn.

Verse 65. *The Lord awaked as one out of sleep.* Justly inactive, he had suffered the enemy to triumph, his ark to be captured, and his people to be slain; but now he arouses himself, his heart is full of pity for his chosen, and anger against the insulting foe. Woe to thee, O Philistia, now thou shalt feel the weight of his right hand! Waking and putting forth strength like a man who has taken a refreshing draught, the Lord is said to be, like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. Strong and full of energy the Lord dashed upon his foes, and made them stagger beneath his blows. His ark from city to city went as an avenger rather than as a trophy, and in every place the false gods fell helplessly before it.

Verse 66. *He smote his enemies in the hinder parts.* The emerods rendered them ridiculous, and their numerous defeats made them yet more so. They fled but were overtaken and wounded in the back to their eternal disgrace. He put them to a perpetual reproach. Orientals are not very refined, and we can well believe that the haemorrhoids were the subject of many a taunt against the Philistines, as also were their frequent defeats by Israel until at last they were crushed under, never to exist again as a distinct nation.

Verse 67. *Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph.* God had honoured Ephraim, for to that tribe belonged Joshua the great conqueror, and Gideon the great judge, and within its borders was

Shiloh the place of the ark and the sanctuary; but now the Lord would change all this and set up other rulers. He would no longer leave matters to the leadership of Ephraim, since that tribe had been tried and found wanting. And chose not the tribe of Ephraim. Sin had been found in them, folly and instability, and therefore they were set aside as unfit to lead.

Verse 68. *But chose the tribe of Judah.* To give the nation another trial this tribe was elected to supremacy. This was according to Jacob's dying prophecy. Our Lord sprang out of Judah, and he it is whom his brethren shall praise. The Mount Zion which he loved. The tabernacle and ark were removed to Zion during the reign of David; no honour was left to the wayward Ephraimites. Hard by this mountain the Father of the Faithful had offered up his only son, and there in future days the great gatherings of his chosen seed would be, and therefore Zion is said to be lovely unto God.

Verse 69. *And he built his sanctuary like high palaces.* The tabernacle was placed on high, literally and spiritually it was a mountain of beauty. True religion was exalted in the land. For sanctity it was a temple, for majesty it was a palace. Like the earth which he hath established for ever. Stability as well as stateliness were seen in the temple, and so also in the church of God. The prophets saw both in vision.

Verse 70. *He chose David also his servant.* It was an election of a sovereignly gracious kind, and it operated practically by making the chosen man a willing servant of the Lord. He was not chosen because he was a servant, but in order that he might be so. David always esteemed it to be a high honour that he was both elect of God, and a servant of God. And took him from the sheepfolds. A shepherd of sheep he had been, and this was a fit school for a shepherd of men. Lowliness of occupation will debar no man from such honours as the Lord's election confers, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He delights to bless those who are of low estate.

Verse 71. *From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.* Exercising the care and art of those who watch for the young lambs, David followed the ewes in their wanderings; the tenderness and patience thus acquired would tend to the development of characteristics most becoming in a king. To the man thus prepared, the office and dignity which God had appointed for him, came in due season, and he was enabled worthily to wear them. It is wonderful how often divine wisdom so arranges the early and obscure portion of a choice life, so as to make it a preparatory school for a more active and noble future.

Verse 72. *So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart.* David was upright before God, and never swerved in heart from the obedient worship of Jehovah. Whatever faults he had, he was unfeignedly sincere in his allegiance to Israel's superior king; he shepherded for God with honest heart. And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands. He was a sagacious ruler, and the psalmist magnifies the Lord for having appointed him. Under David, the Jewish kingdom rose to an honourable position among the nations, and exercised an influence over its neighbours. In closing

the Psalm which has described the varying conditions of the chosen nation, we are glad to end so peacefully; with all noise of tumult or of sinful rites hushed into silence. After a long voyage over a stormy sea, the ark of the Jewish state rested on its Ararat, beneath a wise and gentle reign, to be wafted no more hither and thither by floods and gales. The psalmist had all along intended to make this his last stanza, and we too may be content to finish all our songs of love with the reign of the Lord's anointed. Only we may eagerly enquire, when will it come? When shall we end these desert roamings, these rebellions, and chastenings, and enter into the rest of a settled kingdom, with the Lord Jesus reigning as "the Prince of the house of David?" Thus have we ended this lengthy parable, may we in our life parable have less of sin, and as much of grace as are displayed in Israel's history, and may we close it under the safe guidance of "that great Shepherd of the sheep." AMEN.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This Psalm appears to have been occasioned by the removal of the sanctuary from Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim to Judah, and the coincident transfer of preeminence in Israel from the former to the latter tribe, as clearly evinced by David's settlement as the head of the church and nation. Though this was the execution of God's purpose, the writer here shows that it also proceeded from the divine judgment on Ephraim, under whose leadership the people had manifested the same sinful and rebellious character which had distinguished their ancestors in Egypt. *B. M. Smith, in "The Critical and Explanatory Pocket Bible."* 1867.

Verse 1. *Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears.* Inclining the ears does not denote any ordinary sort of hearing, but such as a disciple renders to the words of his master, with submission and reverence of mind, silent and earnest, that whatever is enunciated for the purpose of instruction may be heard and properly understood, and nothing be allowed to escape. He is a hearer of a different stamp, who hears carelessly, not for the purpose of learning or imitation, but to criticise, to make merry, to indulge animosity, or to kill time. *Musculus.*

Verse 1. *Incline your ears.* Lay them close to my lips, that no parcel of this sacred language fall to the ground by your default. *John Trapp.*

Verse 1. *To the words of my mouth.* Was it not sufficient for the parallelism to say, *To my words?* Obviously. Why then is there any notice taken of the *mouth?* Because those who can prescribe laws to their subjects are also those who scorn to address them with their mouth. Such is the custom of kings, princes, pontiffs, both Roman and others. For the higher every one rises in dignity, the less he considers it becoming to him to speak to the people, to teach and instruct them by word of mouth. They think they owe nothing to the people, but are altogether taken up with this, that they may be looked up to as princes, and so retain a certain secular majesty of command. But, with one's own mouth to teach the ignorant, is a singular proof of love and paternal affection, such as becomes the

preceptor, pastor and teacher. This Christ most constantly employed, because he was touched with paternal affection towards the lost sheep, and came as a shepherd to seek them. The manner of earthly princes he therefore rejected, and clothed himself with that paternal custom which becomes the shepherd and teacher, going about and opening his mouth in order to give instruction. See Matthew 5. Rightly, therefore, was the prophet not content with saying, *Give ear, O my people, to my law*: he adds, *Incline your ears to the words of my mouth*. Thus he indicates that he was about to address and instruct them with paternal affection. *Musculus*.

Verse 2. Parable. *Dark sayings.* Ivm, *an authoritative weighty speech or saying.* The Hebrew term very nearly answers to the Greek, kuriai doxai, i.e., *authoritative sentences or maxims, or weighty sayings*, expressing or implying a *comparison*, as such sayings frequently do. hdyx *an enigma, a parable*, which penetrates the mind, and when understood makes a deep impression of what is intended or represented by it. Here twdyx seems to refer to the historical facts mentioned in the subsequent part of the Psalm, considered as *enigmas* of spiritual concern. *John Parkhurst*.

Verse 2. Parable. Parables are the speeches of wise men, yea, they are the extracts and spirits of wisdom. The Hebrew word signifies to rule, or have authority, because such speeches come upon us with authority, and subdue our reason by the weight of theirs. *Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 2. I will utter. The metaphor in this word is taken from a fountain which pours forth water abundantly. For ebg properly means to gush forth, or bubble up. The heart of teachers in the Church ought to be full, and ready to pour forth those streams by which the Church is watered. Their spring ought not to become exhausted, and fail in the summer. *Mollerus*.

Verse 3. Which we have heard and known. We have *heard* the *law* and *known* the *facts*. *Adam Clarke*.

Verse 3. Fathers. Those are worthy of the name of *fathers* in the church, in relation to posterity, who transmit to posterity the truth of God contained in Scripture, such as here is set down in this Psalm: and this is the only infallible sort of tradition, which delivereth to posterity what God delivered to the prophets or their predecessors by Scripture, such as is the doctrine delivered in this Psalm. *David Dickson*.

Verse 4. We will not hide from their children, etc. Thou must not only praise God thyself, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity. Children are their parent's heirs; it were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of a good man's treasure, nor the least of his children's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience. "Our fathers have told us what works thou didst in their days, how thou didst drive out the heathen" etc., Ps 44:1-2; from this they ground their confidence, Ps 44:4, "Thou art my King, O God; command deliverances for Jacob, " and excite their thankfulness, Ps 44:8, "In God we boast

all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." Indeed, as children are their parents heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts: now the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and, therefore, it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time. *William Gurnall.*

Verses 4-6. The cloth that is dyed in the wool will keep colour best. Disciples in youth will prove angels in age. Use and experience strengthen and confirm in any art or science. The longer thy child hath been brought up in Christ's school, the more able he will be to find out Satan's wiles and fallacies, and to avoid them. The longer he hath been at the trade the more skill and delight will he have in worshipping and enjoying the blessed God. The tree when it is old stands strongly against the wind, just as it was set when it was young. The children of Merindal so answered one another in the matters of religion, before the persecuting Bishop of Cavailon, that a bystander said unto the bishop, I must needs confess I have often been at the disputations of the doctors in the Sorbonne, but I never learned so much as by these children. Seven children at one time suffered martyrdom with Symphrosia, a godly matron, their mother. Such a blessing doth often accompany religious breeding; therefore Julian the apostate, to hinder the growth and increase of Christianity, would not suffer children to be taught either human or divine learning.

Philip was glad that Alexander was born whilst Aristotle lived, that he might be instructed by Aristotle in philosophy. It is no mean mercy that thy children are born in the days of the gospel, and in a valley of vision, a land of light, where they may be instructed in Christianity. Oh, do not fail, therefore, to acquaint thy children with the nature of God, the natures and offices of Christ, their own natural sinfulness and misery, the way and means of their recovery, the end and errand for which they were sent into the world, the necessity of regeneration and a holy life, if ever they would escape eternal death! Alas! how is it possible they should ever arrive at heaven if they know not the way thither? The inhabitants of Mitylene, sometime the lords of the seas, if any of their neighbours revolted, did inflict this punishment,—they forbade them to instruct their children, esteeming this a sufficient revenge.—(*Aelian.*) Reader, if thou art careless of this duty, I would ask thee what wrong thy children have done thee that thou shouldest revenge thyself by denying them that which is their due. I mean pious instruction. The Jewish rabbis speak of a very strict custom and method for the instruction of their children, according to their age and capacity. At five years old they were *filii legis*, sons of the law, to read it. At thirteen they were *filli praecepti*, sons of the precept, to understand the law. At fifteen they were *Talmudistae*, and went to deeper points of the law, even to Talmudic doubts. As thy children grow up, so do thou go on to instruct them in God's will. They are "born like the wild ass's colt," Job 11:12—that is, unruly, foolish, and ignorant. We often call a fool an ass, but here it is a "wild ass's colt," which is most rude, unruly, and foolish. How, then, shall thy ignorant children come to

know God or themselves without instruction?

Thy duty is to acquaint thy children with the works of God. Teach them his doings as well as his sayings. "Take heed to thyself, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons, "De 4:9. God's wonders should be had in everlasting remembrance. "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, "Ps 109:4. Now, one special way to do this is by writing them in our children's memories, hereby they are transmitted to posterity. This was the godly practice of the patriarchs, to instruct their children concerning the creation of the world, transgression of man, destruction of the old world, God's providence, the Messiah to be revealed, and the like. The parents' mouths were large books, in which their children did read the noble acts of the Lord. The precept is here urged (Ps 78:2-7) upon a double ground, *partly for God's praise*, in the perpetuity of his worthy deeds: his words are of great weight, and therefore, as curious pictures or precious jewels, must in memory of him be bequeathed from father to son whilst the world continueth. If they are written on paper or parchment they may perish (and is it not a thousand pities that such excellent records should be lost?); but if they be written by fathers successfully on their children's hearts, no time shall blot or wear them out, Ex 12:26-27. Therefore, as the rabbis observe, the night before the passover the Jews (to keep God's mercies in memory to his honour) were wont to confer with their children on this wise. The child said, Why is it called the passover? The father said, Because the angel passed over us when it slew the Egyptians, and destroyed us not. The child said, Why do we eat unleavened bread? The father answered, Because we were forced to hasten out of Egypt. The child said, Why do we eat bitter herbs? The father answered, To mind us of our afflictions in Egypt.

But the duty is also urged, *partly for their own profit*, Ps 78:7, *That they might set their hope in God*, etc. Acquaintance with God's favour will encourage their faith; knowledge of his power will help them to believe his promise. Reader, obedience to this precept may tend much to thy own and thy children's profit. By teaching thy children God's actions, thou wilt fix them the faster, and they will make the greater impression, upon thy own spirit. A frequent mention of things is the best art of memory: what the mouth preacheth often the mind will ponder much. Besides, it may work for thy children's weal; the more they be acquainted with the goodness, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of God which appear in his works, the more they will fear, love, and trust him. *George Swinnock*.

Verses 5-6. Five generations appear to be mentioned:

1. *Fathers;*
2. *Their children;*
3. *The generation to come;*
4. *And their children;*
5. *And their children.*

—Adam Clarke.

Verse 6. Children should earnestly hearken to the instruction of their parents that they themselves may afterwards be able to tell the same to their sons, and so a golden chain be formed, wherewith being bound together, the whole family may seek the skies. Whilst the father draws the son, the son the grandson, the grandson his children to Christ, as the magnet of them all, that they all may be made one. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 7. *Set their hope in God.* Their hope was to be set not in the law which punishes, but in grace freely given which redeems; therefore is it added *and not forget the works of God.* *Johannes De Turrecremata.* 1476.

Verse 8. *And might not be as their fathers.* The warning is taken from an example at home. He does not say, That they might not be as the nations, which know not God: but, That they might not be *as their fathers.* Domestic examples of vice are much more pernicious than foreign ones. Hence one says: *Sic natura jubet, velocius et citius nos corrumpunt vitiorum exempla domestica.* Let us learn from this place, that it is not safe in all things to cleave to the footsteps of our fathers. He speaks of those fathers who perished in the wilderness: of whom, see Numbers 14; Deuteronomy 1, and Ps 68:6. *Musculus.*

Verse 8. *As their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.* Forasmuch as this bad emulation of their ancestors is with difficulty plucked from the minds of men, because of our innate reverence for our fathers, the prophet heaps up words in the description of the crimes of their fathers. He says they were *hmrwd*, that is, a generation detracting from the authority of God, and continually breaking the bonds of the law, and in their petulance shaking off the yoke, as a violent and refractory horse, or an untamed bullock, enduring not the rein, or refusing to yield its neck to the yoke, but constantly drawing back and rejecting the bridle. *Mollerus.*

Verses 8-9. Look carefully to the ground of thy active obedience, that it be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God comes with such an errand. "The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange: read the preceding verse and you will cease wondering; they are called there, *A generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.* Let the armour be what it will, yea, if soldiers were in a castle, whose foundations were rock, and walls brass; yet if their hearts be not right to their prince, an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that the honest hearts within thin and weak works have held the town, when no walls could defend treachery from betraying trust. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 9. *The children of Ephraim, being armed,* etc. "When ye had girded on every man is weapons

of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah." De 1:41-44.

Verse 9. Many person suppose the passage to refer to the event recorded in 1Ch 7:21-22, where are mentioned the sons of Ephraim, "whom the men of Gath that were born in the land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." The manner of the relation shows that the slaughter must have been great; and this flight and defeat, and their not acknowledging their dependence upon God, it is supposed the psalmist has in view in this place. But the objection to this interpretation is, that the event referred to in the book of Chronicles, evidently occurred at a time anterior to that of the Israelitish exodus from Egypt; whilst Ps 78:11 speaks of these same Ephraimites being forgetful of God's doings and wonderful works which he did at the time of their exit from Egypt. It is, therefore, more probable that Myrka ygk may designate the Israelitish people generally, which Mendelssohn thinks to be the case. He observes that "the meaning of the noun Ephraim was that of a general term for Israel before the reigning of the house of David, because that Joshua the son of Nun, the first judge, was of this tribe; also because the territory assigned to this tribe was in the region of Shiloh: and it is possible that because of the reputation of this tribe in those days, all those who were in high esteem were also called Ephraimites." He might have added another and stronger reason than any of the preceding for this application of the term to Israel, and it is, that Jeroboam, who may be regarded as the founder of the Israelitish monarchy, is said, in 1Ki 11:26, to have been a descendant of Ephraim. The war alluded to may have been one of those which were waged between the ten tribes and the people of Judah. *George Phillips.*

Verse 10. *Walk in his law.* Note, we must walk in the law of God, this is that narrow and sacred way which Christ traces before us. At Athens there was iera odov, the sacred way, by which, as Harpocratio relates, the priests of the mysteries travelled to Elusin. At Rome also there was a way which was called *Via Sacra*. To us also there is a way to the skies, consecrated by the footsteps of the saints. It behooves us therefore not to loiter, but to be ever on the march. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 12. *Zoan.* The name of a city in Egypt (Nu 13:22), though it be not set down in the story in Exodus, is twice specified by the writer of this psalm, here, and Ps 78:43, as the scene wherein the wondrous works were wrought on Pharaoh by Moses; either because really the first and principal of the miracles were shewed Pharaoh there, this city being the seat of the king, and a most ancient city, as appears by the expression used of Hebron, in Nu 13:22, where to set out the antiquity of that city, where Abraham, the tenth from Noah dwelt, it is said, that "it was built seven years before Zoan in

Egypt; "or perhaps only in poetical style, as "the field" or country of Zoan, is all one with the "land of Egypt" foregoing. Thus, in other prophetic writings, when judgments are threatened, instead of "Egypt" sometimes we find "Zoan" alone, Isa 19:11, where the "princes of Zoan" are all one with the counsellors of Pharaoh; sometimes "the princes of Zoan," with the addition of some other city, as Isa 19:13, "the princes of Zoan, the princes of Noph," *i.e.*, again, the counsellors of that kingdom, which as it follows, "have seduced Egypt,"—brought the whole nation to ruin. So Isa 30:4, where they sent to Egypt for relief, it is said, their "princes were at Zoan, their ambassadors at Hanes." *Henry Hammond.*

Verse 12. *In the field of Zoan.* We see in this passage that it was not without reason that God most powerfully displayed his wondrous works, his virtue and his glory in the more famous cities: not that he despised the humbler and obscure, but that he might more conveniently in this way scatter abroad the knowledge and renown of his name. For this cause he desired Moses to perform his miracles in the royal city, and in its *field*; for the same reason he afterwards fixed his dwelling place in the most famous city of Canaan, in which he decreed also that Christ his Son should be crucified and the foundation of his heavenly kingdom laid. *Musculus.*

Verse 13. *He made the waters to stand as an heap.* The original word imports, those great heaps which are made use of as dykes or banks to restrain the waters. But the Jews have not only understood these expressions literally, but have likewise taken upon them to add particular circumstances, as if the history had been so concise, that it wanted to be supplied therewith. They say, that the sea had formed, as it were, twelve roads or causeways, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites. *James Saurin.*

Verse 13. *He made the waters to stand as an heap.* God did not wish altogether to take the sea from the gaze of the Hebrews, but to interrupt and divide it, that like a wall it might stand firm on either side of the way. This was done, first, that the miracle might be evident, for in that sea there is no tidal rise or fall of the waters. Secondly, that the people might have greater joy at the sight of so great a miracle. Thirdly, that in their whole passage they might depend more upon the providence of God, who, in a single moment, could allow the sea to return to its bed and drown all of them. It is God's will that we should flee to him the more ardently as the aspect of present danger. Fourthly and lastly, that the people might pass over the more rapidly, since they knew not how long God wished the miracle to last. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 14. That there was a mystery in this *pillar of cloud and fire* is clear from Isa 4:5-6, for there never was a *literal* cloud and fire upon Mount Zion. This fiery pillar did cease when they were entered into Canaan; Isaiah therefore intends a *spiritual* thing under those expressions. So it is represented by the Apostle as representing a gospel mystery: 1Co 10:2. It signified and shadowed forth, 1. Something of *Christ himself*; 2. The *benefits* of Christ; 3. The *ordinances* of Christ.

1. *Christ himself.* Some have noted a shadow both of his *Deity* and *humanity*. There was a *fiery brightness* in the clouds, which yet was but a dark shadow of the glory of his Deity, which was often in vision so represented; but his divine nature was veiled and over clouded by his human, as in this shadow there was a pillar of *cloud* as well as *fire*. In Re 10:1 Christ is represented as *clothed with a cloud, and his feet as pillars of fire*; expressions notably answering this ancient type and shadow.

2. It holds forth something of the *benefits* of Christ. What benefits had they from this pillar of fire and cloud? They had three: (1) Light and direction. (2) Defence and protection. (3) Ornament and glory. All which we have in a higher manner in Christ by the gospel.

3. It figured also the *ordinances*, and his presence in and with them; for the ordinances are the outward and visible tokens of God's presence with his people, as this fiery pillar was of old. And, therefore, when the Tabernacle was made and set up, *it rested upon the Tabernacle*, Ex 40:38. There be some duties are secret, which the world sees not, nor may see; as alms deeds and personal and secret prayer. But the *ordinances* of institution are things that ought to be practised with all the publickness that may be: they are outward and visible tokens of God's presence, particularly that great ordinance of *baptism*, as in 1Co 10:2. The cloud, it seems, had a refreshing moisture in it, to shade, refresh, and cool them from the burning heat; and they were bedewed (Rather "*baptised*" in it, as Paul puts it in 1Co 10:2) with it, as we are with the water of baptism; whereby this legal cloud became a type of gospel baptism. And so you see how it represented something of *Christ himself*, and something of his *benefits*, and something of all his *ordinances* under the New Testament. —*Samuel Mather*.

Verse 14. *All the night.* We need not dwell long upon the thought of what this *all* was to the Israelites. In night *marchings*, and night restings, it was very precious; whether they were in motion or at rest, it was alike needed, alike good. This light of fire, unless continuous, would have been of comparatively little worth. Were it suddenly extinguished as they marched, all Israel would have been plunged into confusion and dismay; the quenching of the light would have changed into a disordered rabble, the marshalled host. *Philip Bennett Power, in "Breviates: or Short Texts and Their Teachings."*

Verse 15. *The rocks.* They were typical of Christ, 1Co 10:4; who is frequently compared to one for height, strength, and duration, shade, shelter, and protection; and is called the "Rock of Israel," the "Rock of offence to both houses of Israel," the "Rock of salvation," the "Rock of refuge," the "Rock of strength," the "Rock that is higher than," the saints, and on which the church is built, and who is "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." *John Gill*.

Verse 15. *Gave them drink as out of the great depths.* As if he had formed a lake or an ocean, furnishing an inexhaustible supply. *Albert Barnes*.

Verse 16. *He brought streams also out of the rock, etc.* "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The second murmuring for water at Kadesh seems to have been a more aggravated act of

rebellion than the former, and yet the water is given in greater abundance. Oh, the freeness of the sovereign grace of God! *W. Wilson.*

Verse 17. *And they sinned yet more against him.* He does not say that they sinned only, but that they sinned against God. And they sinned yet more against him, namely, *God*. Against what God? Against him who had delivered them by great and unheard of wonders out of Egypt, who had led them as free men across the Red Sea with a dry foot, who had continued to lead and to protect them with pillars of cloud and fire by day and night, and had given them to drink abundantly of water drawn from the arid rock. Against this God they had added sin to sin. Simply to sin is human, and happens to the saints even after they have received grace: but to sin against God argues a singular degree of impiety. To sin against God is to injure and dishonour him in things immediately pertaining to himself. So they sinned against God, because after so many distinguished proofs and testimonies of his care made manifest to them, they continued to think and speak evil against him. All sins indeed, of whatever class they may be, are done against God, because they are opposed to his will; but those which are committed peculiarly against God, are certainly greater than others. Such are those wrought against his name, goodness, providence, power, truth, and worship, and against those things which specially concern him, whatever they may be. So we read of the sins of the sons of Eli, 1Sa 2:24-25: "It is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?" *Musculus.*

Verse 17. *They sinned yet more.* Their sin was not murmuring only, sinful as that is, but *uncontrolled desire*. And for what was that desire? It was for meat. They had grown so weary of the bread of heaven which God so mercifully provided; and they wanted something in addition—something, too, which was not absolutely necessary to their existence. When they murmured for water at Massah, they murmured for something *needful*. Their sin *then* was in *murmuring*, instead of *praying*. But here they lusted for something *unnecessary*, and this was an aggravation of their sin. And thus the psalmist, evidently comparing this sin with the murmuring at Massah, says, "They sinned *yet more* against him." *George Wagner, in "The Wanderings of the Children of Israel."*

Verse 18. *They tempted God.* We know that, although "God cannot be tempted with evil," he may justly be said to be tempted, whensoever men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial with their feelings. If you reflect a little, you can hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be said to be a tempting of God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of Providence; suppose him to murmur and repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear: is he not to be charged with provoking God to change his purpose? and what is this if it be not "tempting" God—a striving to induce him to swerve from his plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by infinite wisdom? Or, again, if any one of us, notwithstanding multiplied proofs of the Divine lovingkindness,

doubt or question whether God do indeed love him; of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to give additional evidence, as though there were deficiency, and challenges him to fresh demonstrations of what he has already abundantly displayed? This would be called *tempting* amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as thereby striving to extort from them fresh proofs of that affection, though they had already done as much as either in justice or in wisdom they ought to have done; this would be a clear tempting of them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and degree may be said to be a tempting of God; for not to believe on the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to tempt him to give more than he has already given—offering our possible assent, if proof were increased, as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed... You cannot distrust God, and not accuse him of a want either of power or of goodness; you cannot repine—no, not even in thought—without virtually telling him that his plans are not the best, nor his dispensations the wisest, which might have been appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety in circumstances of perplexity, or of peril, is nothing less than a call upon God to depart from his fixed course,—a suspicion, or rather an assertion, that he might proceed in a manner more worthy of himself, and therefore a challenge to him to alter his dealings, if he would prove that he possesses the attributes which he claims. You may not intend thus to accuse, or provoke God, whenever you murmur; but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to do it. You cannot be dissatisfied, without virtually saying that God might order things better; you cannot say that he might order things better, without virtually demanding that he change his course of acting, and give other proofs of his infinite perfections. And thus you *tempt* him, tempt him even as did the Israelites in the wilderness. *Henry Melvill.*

Verse 18. *Asking meat for their lusts.* God had given them meat for their hunger in the manna, wholesome, pleasant food, and in abundance; he had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of Leviathan which he brake in pieces, Ps 74:14. But all this would not serve, they must have meat *for their lust*; dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 19. It is particularly to be observed, that the sin of which the children of Israel were on this occasion guilty, was not in wishing for bread and water, but in thinking for one moment, that after the Lord had brought them out of Egypt, he would suffer them, for the lack of any needful thing, to come short of Canaan. It was no sin to be hungry and thirsty; it was a necessity of their nature. There is nothing living that does not desire and require food: when we do not we are dead, and that they did so was no sin. Their sin was *to doubt either that God could or would support them in the wilderness, or allow those who followed his leading to lack any good thing.* This was their sin. It is just the same

with the Christian now. These Israelites did not more literally require a supply of daily food for their bodies, than does the Christian for his soul. Not to do so is a sign of death, and the living soul would soon die without it. And so far from its being a sin, our Lord has pronounced that man blessed who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, adding the most precious promise, that all such shall be satisfied. But it is a sin, and a very great sin, should this food not be perceptibly, and to the evidence of our senses, immediately supplied, to murmur and be fearful. It was for *the trial of their faith* that these things happened to the Israelites, as do the trials of all Christians in all ages: and it is "after we have suffered a while" that we may expect to be established, strengthened, settled. *Brownlow North, in "Ourselves. A Picture sketched from the History of the Children of Israel."* (1865.)

Verses 19-20. After all their experience, they doubted the divine omnipotence, as if it were to be regarded as nothing, when it refused to gratify their lusts. Unbelief is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that when God performs miracles on *earth*, unbelief doubts whether he can perform them in *heaven*, and when he does them in *heaven*, whether he can do them on *earth*? *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 20. *Can he give bread also?* They should have said, "Will he serve our lusts?" but that they were ashamed to say. *John Trapp.*

Verse 20. Who will say that a man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness, if he nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future? This was all that ungrateful Israel returned to God, for his miraculous broaching of the rock to quench their thirst: *Behold, he smote the rock,—Can he give bread also?* This, indeed, was their trade all the time they were in the wilderness. Wherefore, God gives them their character, not by what they seemed to be while his mercies were before them; then they could say, "God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer;" but by their temper and carriage in straits; when the cloth was drawn, and the feast taken out of their sight, what opinion then had they of God? Could they satisfy his name so far as to trust him for their dinner tomorrow who had feasted them yesterday? Truly no, as soon as they feel their hunger return, like froward children, they are crying, as if God meant to starve them. Wherefore God rejects their praises, and owns not their hypocritical acknowledgments, but sets their ingratitude upon record; they forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel. O how sad is this, that after God had entertained a soul at his table with choice mercies and deliverances, these should be so ill husbanded, that not a bit of them should be left to give faith a meal, to keep the heart from fainting, when God comes not so fast to deliver as desired. He is the most thankful man that treasures up the mercies of God in his memory, and can feed his faith with what God hath done for him, so as to walk in the strength thereof in present straits. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 23. *Opened the doors of heaven.* There is an allusion here to the flood, as in Ps 78:15. *A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 23. *Opened the doors of heaven.* God, who has the key of the clouds, *opened the doors of*

heaven, that is more than *opening the windows*, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal 3:19. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 23. *Opened the doors of heaven.* This is a metaphor taken from a granary, from which corn is brought; and by *opening the doors* is signified, that the manna fell very plentifully. Compare Ge 7:11. *Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 24-25. Manna. The prophet celebrates this miracle, *first*, because of the unusual place whence the manna was sent. For he did not produce fruits from the earth wherewith to feed them, but rained down this food from the clouds, and from the depths of the skies. *Secondly*, because of the facility of the distribution. By the command of God alone, without any labour of men, yea, while they slept, this food was prepared. Therefore is it said, *He gave*, etc. *Thirdly*, he celebrates its great abundance which sufficed to supply so great a multitude. *Fourthly*, the excellence of the food. He calls it the food of the excellent or the strong, such as was not pleasant merely to the common multitude, but to the princes also, and to the heroes, for it was the food of *the mighty ones*. *Mollerus.*

Verse 25. *Man.* Rather, as Ex 16:6, *every man*. Not one of them was left without it. *A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 25. *Man did eat angel's food.* It is called *angel's food*, not because the angels do daily feed upon it, but because it was both made and ministered by the ministry of angels, and that phrase sets forth the excellency of it. *Christopher Ness (1621-1705), in "The Sacred History and Mystery of the Old Testament."*

Verse 25. *Angels food.* Mann is called *the bread of angels* because it was brought down by their ministry; and it was so pleasant in taste, that if the angels had eaten bread, it might have served them. *John Weemse.*

Verse 25. *Angel's food.* So their manna was called, either,

1. Because it was provided and sent by the ministry of angels; or,
2. Because it seemed to come down from heaven, the dwelling place of the angels; or,
3. To set forth the excellency of this bread, that it was meat, as one would say, fit for angels, if angels needed meat.

And so, indeed, the exceeding glory of Stephen's countenance is set forth by this, that they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," Ac 6:15; and Paul calls an excellent tongue, "the tongue of angels," 1Co 13:1. *Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 25. The more excellent the benefit is which God giveth, the greater is the ingratitude of him who doth not esteem of it and make use of it as becometh; as we see in Israel's sin, who did not esteem of manna as they should have done. Had the Lord fed them with dust of earth, or roots of grass, or any other mean thing, they should have had no reason to complain: but when he giveth them a new food, created every morning for their sakes, sent down from heaven as fresh furniture every day, of such excellent colour, taste, smell and wholesomeness; what a provocation of God was

it, not to be content now; in special, when he gave them abundantly of it? *He sent them meat to the full.* David Dickson.

Verse 26. *He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.* Here, on examining the geographical position of the Israelites, we see exactly how the south east wind would bring the *quails*. The Israelites had just passed by the Red Sea, and had begun to experience a foretaste of the privations which they were to expect in the desert, through which they had to pass. Passing northwards in their usual migrations, the birds would come to the coast of the Red Sea, and there would wait until a favourable wind enabled them to cross the water. The south east wind afforded them just the very assistance which they needed, and they would naturally take advantage of it. *J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

Verse 27. *As dust.* The amazing clouds of fine dust or sand, which a violent wind raises in the deserts of the East, constitute the point of comparison. *William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 27. *Feathered fowls.* Hebrew, "fowl of wing; "i.e., flying fowls, in distinction from domestic poultry. *Williams, in Notes to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 27, 31. If the cemetery on Sarbut el Khadem be, what all the antecedent evidences combine to indicate, the workmanship of the Israelites, (a chief burial ground of their fatal encampment at Kibroth Hattaayah), it may most reasonably be expected that its monuments shall contain symbolic representations of the miracle of the "feathered fowls, "and of the awful plague which followed it. Now Niebuhr happily enables us to meet this just expectation, by his copies of the hieroglyphics on three of those tombstones, published in the 45th and 46th plates of his first volume, and prefaced plate 44, by a *plan of the cemetery itself*, which is of more value than any or all subsequent descriptions. It was discovered by the present writer (as stated in a former work), ("The Voice of Israel") on the evidence of no less than four Sinaitic inscriptions, that the birds of the miracle, named by Moses, generically, wlv, *salu*, and by the psalmist, still more generally, P_{gk} Pwe, *winged fowls*, or more correctly, "long winged fowls, "were not (as rendered by all our versions, ancient and modern) *quails*, but a crane like red bird resembling a goose, named in the Arabic *nuham*. The discovery received subsequently a singular and signal corroboration from the further discovery, by Dean Stanley, and previously by Schubert, of immense flocks of these very nuhams on the reputed scene of the miracle at Kibroth Hattaavah. With these antecedents in his mind, the reader will now turn to the three monuments copied by Niebuhr in the cemetery of Sarbut el Khadem. He will at once see that a crane like bird resembling a goose, with slender body and long legs, is the leading hieroglyphic symbol in all three tablets. No fewer than twenty-five of these symbolic birds occur in the first, ten in the second, and fifteen in the third tablet. The goose appears occasionally, but the principal specimens have the air of the goose, but the form of the crane. In a word, they are the very species of birds seen by Dean Stanley, both at this point of Sinai, and at the first cataract of the Nile; and which constantly occur

also in Egyptian monuments: as though the very food of Egypt, after which the Israelites lusted, was sent to be at once their prey and their plague. "And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, *when we sat by the flesh pots.*" Ex 16:3. The reader has here before him the irrefragable fact that the very birds which by every kind of evidence stand identified with the *salus*, or long legged and long winged fowls of the miracle, are the very birds depicted on the tombstones of Sarbut el Khadem, both standing, flying, and apparently even trussed and cooked... The inevitable inference is... that these tombstones record the miracle of the "feathered fowls, "and stand over the graves of the gluttons who consumed them. *Charles Forster, in "Israel in the Wilderness."* 1865. Mr. Forster thus deciphers by his alphabet some of the mixed legends and devices:—

"From the sea the cranes congregate to one spot;
The archers shoot at the cranes passing over the plain.
Evil stomached they rush after the prey—
The sepulchre their doom—their marrow corrupted by God,
The sleepy owl, emblem of death, God sends destruction among them."
"The mother of sepulchres—the black and white geese,
A sudden death, greedily lusting after flesh, die the gluttons.
The mountain top ascend the Hebrews,
They eat, devour, consume, till nothing is left, exceeding all bounds,
Their bodies corrupted, by gluttony they die."

Verse 29. Note: The prophet in this Psalm institutes, as it were, a conflict between God and man. God contends with blessings, man with sins. God exerts his power for the benefit of undeserving man, Ps 78:12, *Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers:* man repays the divine power with infidelity, Ps 78:17, *And they sinned yet more against him.* And farther on, in Ps 78:19, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Secondly,* God showers down his bounty to overwhelm ungrateful sinners with his gifts, Ps 78:23, *He commanded the clouds from above, &c., and rained down manna upon them.* These less than men (*homunciones*) oppose their gluttony to the liberality of God, and abuse the gifts conferred, Ps 78:29, *They did eat, and were well filled.* *Thirdly,* divine justice renews the conflict to scourge at once stupidity out of them, Ps 78:30-31, *While their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them.* Still obdurate they kick against the goad, Ps 78:33, *For all this they sinned still.* *Fourthly,* mercy flies down from heaven, to invite them to peace, Ps 78:38, *But he being full of compassion.* Men are but emboldened by his compassion, and the more easily relapse into sin, Ps 78:40, *How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness? Fifthly, and lastly,* when all seems lost, love draws nigh, and performs unheard of wonders, to touch their hardness, and to deliver them from the dangers by which they were pressed, Ps 78:43, *How he set his signs in Egypt.*

To these shafts of his love sinners oppose a forgetfulness of all his benefits, Ps 78:42, *They remembered not his hand nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.* And all this took place before they entered the land of promise. The conflict that happened between the Hebrews and God in the land of promise is related in the next section of the Psalm. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 29-31. Dangerous prayers. When lust dictates, wrath may answer. Let grace dictate, and mercy will answer. *C. D.*

Verse 30. *They were not estranged from their lust.* This implies, that they were still burning with their lust. If it is objected that this does not agree with the preceding sentence, where it is said, that "they did eat, and were thoroughly filled," I would answer, that if, as is well known, the minds of men are not kept within the bounds of reason and temperance, they become insatiable; and, therefore, a great abundance will not extinguish the fire of a depraved appetite. *John Calvin.*

Verse 30. *They were not estranged from their lust.* Satiated they were, but not satisfied. It is as easy to quench the fire of Etna, as the thoughts set on fire by lust. *John Trapp.*

Verse 30. *They were not estranged from their lust.* Consider that there is more real satisfaction in mortifying lusts than in making provision for them or in fulfilling them: there's more true pleasure in crossing and pinching our flesh than in gratifying it; were there any true pleasure in sin, hell would not be hell, for the more sin, the more joy. You cannot satisfy one lust if you would do your utmost, and make yourself never so absolute a slave to it; you think if you had your heart's desire you would be at rest: you much mistake; they had it. *Alexander Carmichael.*

Verse 31. *The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them.* Two things are here worthy of notice. 1. One, Why he gave them abundance and sufficiency of quails, and afterward punished the murmuring and unbelieving. If he had punished them before, he would have appeared to have had greater ability to destroy them, than to give them flesh. Therefore, that he might first declare his power, and so make the unbelief of the people the more plain, and show how deserving they were of punishment, he first showed he could give, because they believed he could not, and then punished them for their unbelief... 2. The other, that he destroyed the fat and the chosen men among the people, although they all are said to have murmured. Without a doubt, they were first in the crime, and therefore they are specially mentioned in the punishment. *Musculus.*

Verse 31. *Slew the fattest of them.* They were fed as sheep for the slaughter. The butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust, Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom; they who make "*a god of their belly, their end is destruction,*" Php 3:19. *Matthew Henry.*

Verses 31-34. The Christian has more true pleasure from the creature than the wicked, as it comes more refined to him than to the other. The unholy wretch sucks dregs and all, dregs of sin and dregs

of wrath, whereas the Christian's cup is not thus spiced. *First*, dregs of sin; the more he hath of the creature's delights given him, the more he sins with them. Oh, it is sad to think what work they make in his naughty heart! they are but fuel for his lust to kindle upon; away they run with their enjoyments, as the prodigal with his bags, or like hogs in shaking time; no sight is to be had of them, or thought of their return as long as they can get anything abroad, among the delights of the world. None so prodigiously wicked as those who are fed high with carnal pleasures. They are to the ungodly as the dung and ordure is to the swine which grows fat by lying in it; so their hearts grow gross and fat; their consciences more stupid and senseless in sin by them; whereas the comforts and delights that God gives unto a holy soul by the creature, turn to spiritual nourishment to his graces, and draw these forth into exercise, as they do others' lusts. *Secondly*, dregs of wrath. The Israelites had little pleasure from their dainties, when the wrath of God fell upon them, before they could get them down their throats. The sinner's feast is no sooner served in but divine justice is preparing to send up a reckoning after it, and the fearful expectation of this cannot but spoil the taste of the other. *William Gurnall*.

Verse 33. *Their days did he consume in vanity.* He says with great significance, In vanity their days were consumed, because they were plainly deprived of their hope, and endured all their sufferings in vain. They did not attain what they had hoped for, but only their children entered the land. *Mollerus*.

Verse 33. *Days* are put in the first place, and then *years*; by which it is intimated, that the duration of their life was cut short by the curse of God, and that it was quite apparent that they failed in the midst of their course. *John Calvin*.

Verses 34-36. There are some if they come under afflictions, or if they fall in sickness, or a fever, and God shake death over their head; or if they be at some solemn ordinances, they will be at resolving and purposing, and readily bringing vows upon themselves, of personal covenanting with God; but as they are easily gotten, so they easily vanish: *When he slew them, they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God.* Several times our afflictions are like a gutter; when there is a great shower we will be running over with purposes after God. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant:* and yet when he slew them, they sought after him, and they early enquired after him: so that in deliberate actions and covenanting with God, as they are hastily begotten, they no less suddenly vanish; the action ought then to be deliberate when we indenture with the Cautioner, and oblige ourselves to more watchfulness, and more tenderness, or else it will soon vanish. *Alexander Wedderburn, in "David's Testament, opened up in Forty Sermons." 1701.*

Verses 34-37. In these words you see plainly that these people are very early and earnest in seeking God to take off his hand, to remove judgments that were upon them, but not that God would cure them of those sins that provoked him to draw his sword, and to make it drunk with their blood; for,

notwithstanding the sad slaughters that divine justice had made among them, they did but flatter and lie, and play the hypocrites with God; they would fain be rid of their sufferings, but did not care to be rid of their sins. Ah! but a gracious soul cries out, Lord, do but take away my sins, and it will satisfy me and cheer me, though thou shouldst never take off thy heavy hand. A true Nathanael sighs it out under his greatest affliction, as that good man did, *A me, me salva, Domine*, (Augustine) deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man myself. No burden to the burden of sin. Lord! says the believing soul; deliver me from my inward burden, and lay upon me what outward burden you please. *Thomas Brooks*.

Verses 34-37. There are a sort of men that lie in the enmity of their natures, and in an unreconciled state, living in the visible church, who are not only much restrained, and bite their enmity in, but who, by means of an inferior work of the word and Spirit of God upon their hearts, are brought to seek unto God for friendship, yea, and do much for him in outward actions, and side and take part with his friends; and yet their hearts being unchanged, the cursed enmity of their nature remaining alive and not taken away, they lie still in the gall of bitterness. For instance, look to these in Ps 78:34-37. It is said that they `sought the Lord early as their Redeemer, 'whilst he was slaying of them; yet they did but *flatter him with their mouths*, etc. A flatterer, you know, differs from a friend, in that he pretends much kindness, yet wants inward good will, doing it for his own ends. And so do many seek God, that yet he accounts as enemies; for they seek him whilst they are themselves in his lurch. Now, it is hard to discover these, because they pretend much friendship, and externally (it may be) do as many outward kindnesses as the true friends; as flatterers will abound in outward kindnesses as much as true friends, nay, often exceed them, because they may not be discovered. Now, if none of the former signs reach to them, nor touch them, then there is no better way left than to search unto the grounds of all they do, and to examine whether it proceeds from true, inward, pure, and constant good will, yea or no, or self respects? As now, when we see an ape do many things that a man doth, how do we therefore distinguish those actions in the one and in the other? Why, by the inward principles from whence they spring, by saying that they proceed from reason in the one, but not so in the other. If, therefore, it can be evinced, that all that any man seems to do for God, comes not from good will to him, it is enough to convince them to be persons unreconciled; for whereas all outward kindnesses and expressions of friendship proceed not from friend like dispositions and pure good will, but altogether from self respects, it is but feigned flattery, even among men; and when discovered once, it breeds double hatred. And there is much more reason it should do so with God, because he being a God that knows the heart, to flatter him is the greatest mockery; for that is it which chiefly provoketh men to hate such as dissemble friendship, because there is mockery joined with it. Now, that God accounts every one that doth not turn to him out of pure goodwill a flatterer is plain by these words in Ps 78:36-37: *Notwithstanding, they did but flatter him, and dealt falsely in his covenant*. If men's

hearts be not inwardly for God, and with him, as a friend would be to a friend, in their actions he esteems them against him. "Thy heart," says Peter to Simon Magus, "is not right before the Lord," Ac 8:22, and therefore he tells him he was "still in the gall of bitterness." *Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 36. Flattery of God.

1. A common sin.
2. A hateful sin.
3. A dangerous sin. *B. D.*

Verses 36-38. There is no disputing the fact which gives accuracy to the text, that God was moved by a repentance which had not in it even the elements of godly sorrow for sin; which could not even, by a casual observer, much less by him who searches the heart, have been mistaken for that penitence which supposes an inward and radical change, and, nevertheless, even such a repentance as this sufficed to procure a recompense at the hands of God. Though the sackcloth was on the body and not on the soul; though it was the punishment of the sin and not the sin itself which led to this outward humiliation, God did not turn away from the forced supplication, but vouchsafed the deliverance which was sought at his hands. Yes, God, who never expresses greater abhorrence of any character than that of the hypocrite; God, who rejects nothing more indignantly than outward homage when it is not the index of inward prostration—God may be said to have removed the humiliation of the people as though he could not read their hearts, or as though, having read them, and noted their unsubdued rebellion, he still thought the apparent contrition deserving of some recompense...

If God would not leave the show and semblance of contrition without a recompense, will he be unmindful of real penitence? If *many a time turned he his anger away* from those who *did but flatter him with their mouths, and lied unto him with their tongues*, has he nothing in store for those who are humble in spirit, and who come to him with the sacrifice of a broken heart? Oh! the turning away of temporal wrath because idols were outwardly abandoned, this is a mighty pledge that eternal wrath will be averted if we are inwardly stricken, and flee for refuge to the Saviour. God must have eternal good in store for his friends, if even his enemies are recompensed with temporal good. Yes, as I mark the Philistines and the Ammonites oppressing the idolatrous Israelites, and then see the oppressors driven back in return even for heartless service, Oh! I learn that true penitence for sin and true faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will cause all enemies to be scattered; I return from the contemplation of the backsliding people, emancipated notwithstanding the known hollowness of their vows, I return assured that a kingdom which neither Philistine nor Ammonite can invade, shall be the portion of all who seek deliverance through Christ. *Henry Melvill*.

Verse 37. *Their heart was not right with him.* God pleases them when he replenishes themselves with food, not their heart with his graces; therefore they repay him with the mouth, and not with the

heart. They are altogether mouth and tongue: but God is all heart and breast. They give words; God gives milk and perfect love. Love does not reach the inner nature of many men, it sticks in the entrance. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 37. *Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast,* etc. This is the ever repeated complain, see Ps 78:8,22. There is no permanence, no stability in the reformation which has been produced. Compare Ho 6:4. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 38. According to *B. Kiddushin 30a*, this verse is the middle one of the 5896 Nyqymk, sticoi, of the Psalter. According to *B. Maccoth 22b*, Ps 78:38, and previously De 28:58-59 29:9, were recited when the forty strokes of the lash save one, which, according to 2Co 11:24, Paul received five times, were being counted out to the culprit. *Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 38. *He, being full of compassion,* etc. When his hand was up, and he giving the blow, he called it back again, as one that could not find it in his heart to do it; and when he did it, *he did not stir up all his wrath;* he let fall some drops of it, but would not shed the whole shower of it; and he giveth the reason of both, for *they are but flesh;* and, indeed, his primary scope is to show mercy; and that he afflicts is but upon occasions; and therefore he is provoked, and provoked much before he doth it. As it is natural for the bee to give honey, but it stings; but it stings but by occasion when it is provoked; and this we see to be true in God by experience, who suffers men, and suffers them long; they continue in their sins, and yet he continues in his mercies, and withholds his judgments. *John Preston (1587-1628), in "The Golden Sceptre held forth to the Humble."*

Verse 38. *Forgave* is a very inadequate translation of the Hebrew word, which necessarily suggests the idea of expiation as the ground of pardon. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 38. *Many a time turned he his anger away.* God is provoked every day, yet is he slow to anger. Yea, sometimes when he has determined to bring evil upon a people, and has put himself into a posture of judgment, drawn out the sword, and smitten them; though they cease not to provoke him, he ceaseth to punish them; as a tender father in correcting a rebellious and graceless child, holds his hand sometimes, before the child begs for mercy, and of mere grace forbears: so God did with Israel. Notwithstanding their dissembling with their flattering tongues, and covenant breaking hearts, *He forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up his wrath.* The words are, *He multiplied to turn away his anger:* as they multiplied to provoke it, he multiplied to turn it away; and so at length outnumbered their sins with his mercies, that they were not destroyed. *John Strickland, in "A Sermon preached before the House of Commons, " entitled "Mercy rejoicing against Judgment." 1645.*

Verse 38. *He did not stir up all his wrath.* His patience is manifest in moderating his judgments when he sends them. Doth he empty his quiver of his arrows, or exhaust his magazine of thunder? No; he could roll one thunderbolt successively upon all mankind; it is as easy with him to create a perpetual

motion of lightning and thunder, as of the sun and stars, and make the world as terrible by the one as it is delightful by the other. He opens not all his store; he sends out a light party to skirmish with men, and puts not in array his whole army. *He stirs not up all his wrath*; he doth but pinch, where he might have torn asunder; when he takes away much, he leaves enough to support us. If he had stirred up all his anger, he had taken away all, and our lives to boot. He rakes up but a few sparks, takes but one firebrand to fling upon men, when he might discharge the whole furnace upon them; he sends but a few drops out of the cloud, which he might make to break in the gross, and fall down upon our heads to overwhelm us; he abates much of what he might do. *Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 39. *A wind that passeth away.*

"The secret wheels of hurrying time do give
So short a warning, and so fast they drive,
That I am dead before I seem to live.
And what's a life? a weary pilgrimage,
Whose glory in one day doth fill thy stage
With childhood, manhood, and decrepid age.
And what's a life? the flourishing army
Of the proud summer meadow, which today
Wears her green plush, and is tomorrow hay.
And what's a life? a blast sustained with clothing,
Maintained with food, retained with vile self loathing,
Then weary of itself, again to nothing." *Francis Quarles*.

Verse 40. *How oft did they provoke*, etc. They provoked God at least ten times (Nu 14:22) during the first two years of their journey through the wilderness: (1) at the Red Sea (Ex 14:11-12): (2) at the waters of Marah (Ex 15:24): (3) in the wilderness of Sin (Ex 16:2): (4) when they kept the manna until the following day (Ex 16:10): (5) when the manna was collected on the Sabbath (Ex 16:27): (6) in Rephidim, where there was no water (Nu 20:2,13): (7) at Horeb when a molten calf was made (Ex 22:1 &c.): (8) at Taberah (Nu 11:1-3): (9) when they lusted for flesh (Nu 11:4): (10) when they murmured at the news brought by the men, who had been sent to search the land (Nu 14:1, &c.) *Daniel Cresswell*.

Verse 40. *How oft.* God kept an account how oft they provoked him, though they did not, Nu 14:22: "They have tempted me these ten times." *Matthew Henry*.

Verse 41. *They turned back.* As for that expression, *wbwyw*, which we translate, *and they turned back*; that is, say some, to go back again into *Egypt*, or as others, returned back to their *old wont* of rebellion; I say, it hath no such meaning here; it is a Hebraism, and should be rendered, *they returned and tempted*, that is, *saepius tentaverunt*, they oftentimes tempted him, or they tempted him

again. Thomas Froyse, in "Sermons concerning Grace and Temptation." 1678.

Verse 41. Tempted God. This only expresses the fact that men act towards him as if he could be tempted, or in a way fitted to put him to the proof, to provoke his righteous displeasure, and make him proceed against them, as it were just for him actually to do because of their offences. It is not in the least degree opposed to the statement of James—"God cannot be tempted with evil, "which is the effect that he cannot be influenced by evil, so as to be drawn into it, turned toward it—so as to feel its power or experience its contamination. He is infinitely far removed from it, raised above it, under all its forms. He is so because of the absolute perfection of his being and blessedness. *John Adam, in "Exposition of the Epistle of James."* 1867.

Verse 41. Limited the Holy One of Israel. They limited either

1. God's power, as above, *Ps 78:19-20*. Or,
2. God's will, directing and prescribing to him what to do, and when, and in what manner; and murmuring at him if he did not always grant their particular and various desires. *Matthew Poole*.

Verse 41. They limited the Holy One of Israel. Here, then, is an awful charge, and mysterious it seems to us as awful. How dreadful that man, the worm, should arrogate to himself *that*, to say to him that made him, "*Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.*" Amazing, I say, the charge! to contract the dimensions and operations of the Deity. Amazing insolence, to draw a boundary line, beyond which the Creator himself must not pass, to define and prescribe to the Lawgiver of nature himself the pathway of his providence! The turpitude is immense. But we know, my friends, that the crime is not uncommon; and one of the natural results of sin seem to be this,—that the sinful spirit, whether of man or of the lost archangel, unable to shake the firm foundations of the Eternal Throne, *amuses* its malignity, and seeks a temporary cessation from its withering cares, in putting up barriers on the outskirts and frontiers of the Almighty empire, vainly hoping to annoy the Possessor of the throne they cannot disturb. Affecting words! Do they affect you as they affect me? *They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.* Somehow, it seems no combination of words could have been so affecting. *They limited God. They limited the Almighty. They limited the Infinite. No!* These words have an awful and affecting surge of meaning in them; for wile they describe *Him*, awful and self contained Being whose essence is eternity and power; whose self existence is declared by the amazing marvels of nature; whose life was essential being. They limited *Him—The One* in whose being all being was swallowed up and absorbed—*The One* before whose glance mountains and hills fled away and were not found—*The One* from everlasting, God; *high over all, blessed for ever more.* *The One* to whom all the nations were as the drop of a bucket, and who took up the isles as a very little thing,—*Him, they limited.* They had known his character as *The Holy One*; it was all they knew of his character; but it was surrounded with an awfulness more dread than even the solitary power and self repose of Deity. In awful words and meanings they had heard his character proclaimed—*The*

Holy One. Him they limited. Him, whose throne was curtained with the dreadful wings of sinless archangels, crying through the darkness of that ineffable brightness, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! and whose holiness was asserted even by the disorders of the rolling world. They limited him. More personal, and therefore more wonderful, became the enormity. The generation of their race had testified for Him, the Holy One of Israel; they had beheld the marvels of his holiness and power in Egypt, in the Red Sea; they had heard of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; they had heard of him who had spoken to their Captain in the bush burning with fire; they beheld his pillar of fire and cloud; they knew themselves divinely selected and chosen; and him who chose they limited! That which should have ensured their faith became only the fountain of their criminality. E. Paxton Hood.

Verse 41. *They limited the Holy One of Israel.* God cannot bear it with patience, that we should *limit him*, either to the time, or manner, or means of help. He complains of the Jews for this presumption, *they limited the Holy One of Israel.* It is insufferable to circumscribe an infinite wisdom and power. He will work, but when he pleases, and how he pleases, and by what instruments he pleases, and if he please, without instruments, and if he please by weak and improbable, by despised and exploded instruments. *Joseph Caryl, in a "Sermon before the House of Commons, "entitled, "The Works of Ephesus."*

Verse 41. *(last clause).* This was Israel's sin, and has it not often been ours? Our God is the "Holy One, "and will do what is most for His glory; he is the Holy One *of Israel*, and will therefore consult his people's welfare. We must not limit his *wisdom*, for it is infinite; we must not limit his *power*, for it is omnipotent; we must not limit him to *time*, for he will display his sovereignty: he will not be tied to walk by our rules, or be bound to keep our time; but he will perform his word, honour our faith, and reward them that diligently seek him. *James Smith.*

Verse 41. *Limited.* In the only other place where the Hebrew word occurs (*Ezr 9:4*), it means to set a mark upon a person, which some apply here, in the figurative sense of stigmatising or insulting. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 41. *Limited the Holy One of Israel, or signed him; signed him with a sign, so the Targum; they tempted him by asking a sign of him, as Jarchi interprets it; insisting that a miracle be wrought, by which it might be known whether the Lord was among them or not, Ex 17:7; with which compare Mt 15:1: or they set bounds, so Kimchi, to his power and goodness, saying, this he could do, and the other he could not; see Ps 78:19-20; and so men limit the Lord when they fix on a blessing they would have, even that, and not another; and the measure of it, to what degree it should be bestowed on them, as well as the set time when they would have it; whereas the blessing itself, and the degree of it, and the time of giving it, should be all left with the Lord who knows which and what of it is most convenient for us, and when is the best time to bestow it on us. John Gill.*

Verse 41. *Limited the Holy One of Israel*—mistrust of God's power to effectuate all his graces, to do what is needed in any case for his people, and carry out his purposes for them. The moment I suppose anything cannot be for blessing, I limit God. This is a great sin—doubly, when we think of all he has done for us. The Holy Ghost ever reasons from God's revealed, infinite love to all its consequences. He reconciled; surely he will save to the end. He did not spare his Son; how shall he not give all things? *J. N. Darby.*

Verse 42. *They remembered not his hand*, etc. God hates forgetfulness of his blessings. First, because he has commanded that we should not forget them, *De 4:9 8:14*. Secondly, because forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. Thirdly, it is the peculiarity of singular carelessness. Fourthly, it springs from unbelief. Fifthly, it is the greatest mark of ingratitude. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 42. *They remembered not his hand*, etc. The rallying point of faith in time of trial is *the primary manifestation of grace*. To an Israelite a remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt is the test of active faith. In like manner, to the tried believer now it is the CROSS that furnishes the outlet of deliverance from the misty darkness with which Satan sometimes is permitted to envelope our conscience, when the Lord had not been kept watchfully before our face. Because Israel forgot that first deliverance, they went on frowardly in the way of evil. Because a Christian sometimes stops short of the Cross in his spiritual conflicts, he fails to defeat the enemy and remains unfruitful and unhappy, until by some special intervention of the great Restorer, he is again brought, in spirit, to that place where God first met him, and welcomed him in Jesus in the fulness of forgiveness and of peace. No intermediate experience, how truthful soever in its character, will meet his case. It is at the cross alone that we regain a thorough right mindedness about ourselves as well as about God. If we would glorify him, we must "hold fast the *beginning* of our confidence stedfast unto the end," *Heb 3:14*. *Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 42. *They remembered not his hand*, etc. Eaten bread is soon forgotten. *Nihil citius senescit quam gratia*. Nothing so soon grows stale as a favour. *John Trapp.*

Verse 43. *Zoan*, or *San*, seems to have been one of the principal capitals, or royal abodes, of the Pharaohs (*Isa 19:11,13 Isa 30:4*): and accordingly *the field of Zoan*, or the fine alluvial plain around the city, is described as the scene of the marvellous works which God wrought in the time of Moses. *John Kitto.*

Verses 43-51. Moses wrought wonders destructive, Christ wonders preservative: he turned water into blood, Christ water into wine; he brought flies and frogs and locusts and caterpillars, destroying the fruits of the earth, and annoying it; Christ increased a little of these fruits, five loaves and a few fishes, by blessing them, so that he herewith fed five thousand men: Moses smote both men and cattle with hail, and thunder and lightning, that they died, Christ made some alive that were dead, and saved from death the diseased and sick; Moses was an instrument to bring all manner of wrath and

evil angels amongst them, Christ cast out devils and did all manner of good, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, limbs to the lame, and cleansing to the leper, and when the sea was tempestuous appeasing it; Moses slew their firstborn, thus causing an horrible cry in all the land of Egypt; Christ saveth all the firstborn, or by saving makes them so; for thus they are called, *Heb 12:23. John Mayer.*

Verse 46. *Caterpillar.* (>lyox), *chasil*, is rendered *broucos* by the LXX, in *2Ch 6:28*, and by Aquila here, and also by the Vulgate in Chronicles and in *Isa 33:4*, and is rendered by Jerome here, *bruchas*, "the chaffer, "which everyone knows to be a great devourer of the leaves of trees. The Syriac in *Joe 1:4 2:25*, renders it (arwuru) *tzartzooro*, which Michaelis, from the Arabic (ruru) *tzartzar*, a cricket, interprets the *mole cricket*, which in its grub state, is also very destructive to corn, grass, and other vegetables, by cankering the roots on which it feeds. *Editorial note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 46. *Caterpillar.* In former times, any destructive, crawling creature occurring in cultivated places was thus called; now, by general consent, we restrict the term to the second stage of insects of the Lepidopterous order, namely, butterflies and moths. These caterpillars, by the voracity with which they attack the leaves, the fruit, and sometimes the solid wood of plants and trees, are made conspicuous even to those who are little acquainted with natural history. "*Biblical Treasury.*"

Verse 46. *Locust.* Their quantity is incredible to all who have not themselves witnessed their astonishing numbers; the whole earth is covered with them for the space of several leagues. The noise they make in browsing on the trees and herbage may be heard at a great distance, and resembles that of an army plundering in secret. The Tartars themselves are a less destructive enemy than these little animals. One would imagine that fire had followed their progress. Wherever their myriads spread, the verdure of the country disappears; trees and plants stripped of their leaves and reduced to their naked boughs and stems, cause the dreary image of winter to succeed in an instant to the rich scenery of spring. When these clouds of locusts take their flight, to surmount any obstacles, or to traverse more rapidly a desert soil, the heavens may literally be said to be obscured with them. *F. C., Comte de Volney.*

Verse 47. *He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost.* The grape vine for the rich, and the sycomore fig for the poor, were cut off by the just judgment of God upon the nation. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 47. The sycomore (not sycamore, for this is altogether different, though, in consequence of a typographical error, often confounded with it in our Bibles) was the name of a tree, common in Egypt, *Am 7:14 Lu 19:4*. This tree resembled the mulberry in its leaves, and the fig in its fruit; and on its produce the inferior ranks of people, for the most part, lived. The psalmist refers to but one sort, still he clearly means every kind, of valuable tree. *William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 49. *By sending evil angels.* Evils come uncalled, but not unsent. Are they nor here called

angels? they are sent; the word *angel* means a messenger. Not things only without life, but not living creatures neither, brute, nor men, nor Satan's self can hurt unless God bid. The three days' darkness in Egypt, how came it? "He sent darkness," saith David. *Ps 105:28*. So the hail, thunder, and lightning, the Lord sent them, saith Moses. The frogs, flies, lice, grasshoppers, and caterpillars, that infected Egypt, and the lions that slew the idolaters in Samaria (*2Ki 17:1-41*), the text saith of them all, *Dominus immisit*, the Lord sent them. And for men—"Am I come" (saith Rabshakeh) "without the Lord?" He bade me go. Yea, the devil, the arch evil angel, who seeks to devour, yet must be *sent* ere he can do ought. The lying spirit in the mouths of the false prophets longed to seduce Ahab; God must first bid; *Egredere*, go forth, and do so. The use of this is easy without my help: not to fear, doing well; not man, fiend, any creature, can hurt you, God not sending them. But sinning, to fear everything. The weakest creature can quell the mightiest man, if God bid, go. A mouse (saith the poet) will bite a wicked man. Be it proud Herod, great Antiochus; if God but ask the creatures, *Quem mittam*, which of you shall I send? the worm will answer, *Ecce me*, send me; I will devour him. And such poor, silly, despicable creatures are some of these *evil angels* in my text. *He sent*: what sent he? *evil angels*, the next thing in this Scripture.

Evil angels? *Par dispar*, a pair of words which seem not well matched. The latter may say to the former, *Quid mihi et tibi*, what have I to do with thee? Angels were the best and holiest of God's creatures. They all were good, very good, Moses saith; but angels kat exochn, excellently good. Then is *evil* here an evil epithet for angels. And is never read but here, and here (some think) not well translated. But the phrase of *evil angels* hath other meaning here: *evil angels, i.e., the angels, i.e., the messengers of evil*. It is in the Hebrew, not (Mykalm), but (ykalm); insomuch that some expositors think the psalmist means the words of Moses and Aaron; that they were sent from God to be the messengers of evil, *i.e., all of the plagues that God would bring on Egypt*. That sense I censure not, but follow not. The Greek Fathers have another—that by the *evil angels*, are meant the *evil spirits*. Christ calls them angels too, thee devil's angels. Augustine likes not that sense. The most current exposition is as a Jewish writer speaks: the "evil angels" are the ten several plagues. *Richard Clerke*. (—1634.)

Verse 49. *By sending evil angels among them.* That the devil and his angels are so very evil, that for them everlasting fire is prepared, no believer is ignorant: but that there should be sent by means of them an infliction from the Lord God upon certain whom he judgeth to be deserving of this punishment, seemeth to be a hard thing to those who are little prone to consider how the perfect justice of God doth use well even evil things. For these indeed, as far as regardeth their substance, what other person but himself hath made? But evil he hath not made them; yet he doth use them, inasmuch as he is good, conveniently and justly; just as on the other hand unrighteous men do use his good creatures in evil manner: God therefore doth use evil angels not only to punish evil men, as

in the case of all those concerning whom the Psalm doth speak, as in the case of king Ahab, whom a spirit of lying by the will of God did beguile, in order that he might fall in war; but also to prove and make manifest good men, as he did in the case of Job. *Augustine*.

Verse 50. *He made a way to his anger.* Literally—"weighed a way:" implying that God, in punishing the Egyptians so severely, did nothing but what was just and equitable, when *weighed* in the balance of right. *Pr 4:26. A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 50. *He made a way to his anger.* As if the psalmist had said, If there were not a way for his anger, that is, for the execution of his anger, *he forced* his way; though he did not find a way, yet he *made* one, and fought himself through all difficulties which seemed to oppose the destruction of his enemies. We put in the margin, *he weighed a path*, he made the path as exact as if he had put it into a balance; the way was fitted to the largeness of his own anger, and it was fitted to the dimensions of their wickedness. Thus *he made a way to his anger*, both by suiting the way to his anger and by removing all impediments out of the way of his anger. If God will work to save, who shall let it? and if God will work to destroy, who will or what shall let it? *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 51. *The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham.* The sun of the last day of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt had set. It was the fourth day after the interview with Moses. Pharaoh, his princes, and the priests of his idols would doubtless take courage from this unwonted delay. Jehovah and his ministers are beaten at length, for now the gods of Egypt prevail against them. The triumph would be celebrated in pomps and sacrifices, in feasts and dances. Nothing is more likely than that the banquet halls of Pharaoh at Rameses were blazing with lamps, and that he and his princes were pouring forth libations of wine to their gods, and concerting schemes amid their revelry, for the perpetuation of the thralldom of Israel... Pharaoh Sethos started from his couch that night yelling in fierce and bitter agony, and gnawing at the sharp arrow that was rankling in his vitals, like a wounded lion. His son, his firstborn, his only son, just arrived at man's estate, just crowned king of Egypt, and associated with his father in the care of sovereignty, writhed before him in mortal throes, and died. His transports of grief were reechoed, and with no feigned voice, by the princes, the councillors, and the priest that partook of his revelry. Each one rends his garments and clasps to his bosom the quivering corpse of his firstborn son. On that fearful night "there was a great cry throughout the land of Egypt, "but if we have rightly read its history, the loudest, wildest wail of remorseful anguish would arise from Pharaoh's banquet hall! *William Osburn, in "Israel in Egypt."* 1856.

Verse 52. *But made his own people to go forth like sheep.* It is not said that they went forth like sheep; but that he made them go forth like sheep. It is not a description of the character of the people, but a commendation of the providence and goodness of God, by which, after the manner of a good shepherd, he led forth from Egypt his own people with all security, like sheep snatched from the midst of wolves. *Musculus.*

Verse 53. *They feared not.* First, they had no cause for fear, *in their departure from Egypt.* Though they saw the Egyptians slain, yet against them not even a dog moved its tongue. 2. They were all in sound health. 3. They were enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians. 4. They went forth a great multitude. 5. They supplied themselves with arms. Secondly, *they feared not to enter the Red Sea,* for the fear started by the approach of Pharaoh was swiftly suppressed. Thirdly, *they feared not to wander in the desert* for forty years, God going before his pillar. Fourthly, *they feared not, though enemies attacked them.* Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 54. *He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, or holiness;* that is, to the holy land; so called in diverse respects, but especially because of his sanctuary, the place of his residence; to which he makes all the land to be but as bounds and limits, because of the eminency of that place, the holiness whereof did, as it were, spread to all other parts of the land, as if the whole had been a sanctuary, and consecrated ground. It is therefore to the honour of the whole land, as well as of the sanctuary, that he calleth it, *the holy border, a border of his sanctuary.* Westminster Assembly's Annotations.

Verse 57. *They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.* The eastern bow, which when at rest is in the form of a (1), must be *recurved, or turned the contrary way,* in order to be what is called *bent and strung.* If a person who is unskilful or weak attempt to *recurve* and string one of these bows, if he take not great heed it will spring back and regain its quiescent position, and perhaps break his arm. And sometimes I have known it, when bent, to *start aside,* and regain its quiescent position, to my no small danger, and in one or two cases to my injury. This image is frequently used in the sacred writings; but no person has understood it, not being acquainted with the eastern *bow,* which must be *recurved* or bent the contrary way (1), in order to be proper for use. If not well made, they will fly back in discharging the arrow. It is said of the *bow* of Jonathan, "*it turned not back,*" 2Sa 1:22, (rwxg gwsn al), *lo nasog achor,* "did not twist itself backward." It was a good bow, one on which he could depend. Hosea, Ho 7:16, compares the unfaithful Israelites to a *deceitful bow;* in that, when bent, would suddenly start aside and recover its former position. We may find the same passage in Jer 9:3. And this is precisely the kind of bow mentioned by Homer, Odyss. 21, which none of Penelope's suitors could bend, called toxon palinonon, the *crooked bow,* in the state of rest; but toxon palintonon, the *recurved bow* when prepared for use. And of his trial of *strength* and *skill* in the bending of the bow of Ulysses, none of the critics and commentators have been able to make anything, because they knew not the instrument in question. On the toxon yhsiv of Homer I have written a dissertation elsewhere. The image is very correct; these Israelites, when brought out of their natural bent, soon recoiled, and relapsed into their former state. Adam Clarke.

Verse 57. *Starting aside like a broken bow* (English Prayer Book): but if a bow breaks, it will not start aside, for the elasticity which should make it start aside would be destroyed. Stephen Street.

Verse 57. *They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.* When the bow is unbent the rift it hath may be undiscerned, but go to use it by drawing the arrow to the head, and it flies in pieces; thus doth a false heart when put to the trial. As the ape in the fable, dressed like a man, when nuts are thrown before her, cannot then dissemble her nature any longer, but shows herself as ape indeed; a false heart betrays itself before it is aware, when a fair occasion is presented for its lust; whereas sincerity keeps the soul pure in the face of temptation. *William Gurnall.*

Verses 57. The fourth thing is *the deceitful bow*, (hymr tvq), a slack or warping bow *arcus doli vel dolosus seu fallax* (Hebrew) will be sure to deceive the archer that shoots in it; it will turn back into belly, as the archer's phrase is; and though he level both his eye and his arrow never so directly to the mark and think confidently with himself to hit it; yet, in the event, the arrow, through the warping of the bow, flies a quite contrary way, yea, and sometimes reflects upon the archer himself. *Non semper feriet, quodcunque minabitur arcus*, the bow smites not all it threatens, and the ill fashioned or casting bow will turn in the shooter's hand, and send the arrow sometimes one way and sometimes another way; yea, and sometimes it rebounds into his own sides; or if it be a rotten bow (though otherwise fair to look upon), when an arrow is drawn to the head it breaks in the hand, and deceives the archer. The same thing happeneth when the string of the bow is naughty, and breaks when the arrow is drawn. This is no less than a divine Scripture allegory. Behold, such a fallacious, warping, and rotten bow is man's deceitful heart; his purposes and promises are the arrows that he puts upon the string, the mark he aims at is repentance, to the which (in affliction especially) he looketh with an accurate and intent eye, as though he would repent indeed; but, alas! his heart deceives him, as being unsound in God's statutes, *Ps 119:80*; and hence it is that his promises and pretences do fall at his foot, or vanish in the air as smoke. Thus a *deceiving*, as well as a *deceived*, heart, turns him aside, *Isa 64:20*, as it did those false Israelites: oh, then, look to the secret warping of your own heart, and seeing you are God's bow, you must be bent by him, and stand bent for him, *Zec 9:13*; thereby you shall be like Jonathan's bow that "never returned empty," *2Sa 1:22*. *Christopher Ness, in "A Crystal Mirror."* 1679.

Verses 57-59. Not to be settled in the faith, is provoking to God. To espouse the truth, and then to fall away, brings an ill report upon the gospel, which will not go unpunished. *They turned back, and dealt unfaithfully. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.* The apostate drops as a windfall into the devil's mouth. *Thomas Watson.*

Verse 58. *High places.* Or, altars, chapels, and such like places, to celebrate divine service in, out of the only place which was by him consecrated, and was alone acceptable unto him; or peradventure also dedicated to idols; and were so called, because that they chose out the choicest hills and hillocks for those purposes. *John Diodati.*

Verse 59. *When God heard this.* The psalmist represents the noise of the ill deeds of the people

ascending to the ears of the Eternal. *Armand de Mestral, in "Commentaire sur le Livre de Psaumes."* 1856.

Verse 60. It is a heathenish delusion and false confidence to suppose that God is bound to any place or spot, as the Trojans thought because they had the temple of Pallas in their city it could not be taken, and in the present day the manner of the Papists is to bind Christ to Rome and the chair of Peter, and then defiantly maintain "I shall never be moved" *Ps 10:6*. For, they say, the ship of Peter may sink a little, but not altogether. Then the only point that is deficient is this, that they are not the ship of Peter, but rather an East Indiaman with a cargo of Italian apes and such like foreign merchandise, pearls, purple, silk, brass, iron, silver, gold, incense, lead, that they may carry on simony and make merchandise of religion, and deceive the whole world *Re 18:11-24*. *Johann Andreas Cramer. 1723-1788.*

Verse 61. *And delivered his strength into captivity*, etc. He calls the ark the *strength of God*, not because the virtue of God was shut up therein, or was so bound to it that he could not, unless through it, be powerful and strong: but because his presence, whose symbol the ark was, had always revealed its virtue and might to Israel, in the perpetual defence and various deliverances of that people. After the same manner he calls it the beauty or glory of God, because God by his own presence declared his glory among the people, and desired that it should be conspicuous by this external symbol. *Mollerus.*

Verse 63. *The fire consumed their young men.* Fire here may be regarded as an image of destructive war, as in *Nu 21:28*. "For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, "etc. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 63 (*first clause*). When religion is overthrown among God's people, let not the commonwealth think to stand: when God gave his glory unto the enemies' hand, "He gave his people over also unto the sword, and the *fire consumed their young men.*" *David Dickson.*

Verse 63. *Not given in marriage. Not praised:* viz. they had not been honoured with nuptial songs according to the custom of those times; see *Jer 7:34 16:9 25:10*. The meaning is, they had not been honourably married, because men were grown scarce by reason of the wars, *Isa 4:1 Jer 21:22*. Or, they had been married without any solemnity like poor bondwomen; or privately, as in the time of public calamities. *John Diodati.*

Verse 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

consoling friends to the house of mourning; and therefore, as well as from the stupefaction of feeling which scenes of continual 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's "Pictorial Bible."* 1856.

Verse 64. *Their widows made no lamentation.* The meaning is, either 1. That being overwhelmed with sorrow they could not weep; or, 2. That being in captivity amongst the Philistines they were not suffered to lament the death of their husbands; or, 3. That dying with grief they lived not to make any lamentations for them at their funerals; or, 4. That they were so taken up and oppressed with their own miseries, and especially with the miseries of the church and people of God in general, that they had not leisure to bewail their husbands; of both which last we have a clear instance in the wife of Phinehas in particular, *1Sa 4:19-20*, who dying, made no mention of her husband. *Arthus Jackson.*

Verse 64. The daughter-in-law of Eli, when she was at once travailing, and in that travail dying, to make up the full sum of God's judgment upon that wicked house, as one insensible of the death of her father, of her husband, of herself, in comparison of this loss, calls her (then unseasonable) son Ichabod, and with her last breath says, "The glory is departed from Israel, the ark is taken." *Joseph Hall.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verses 59-72.

1. A gloomy sunset, *Ps 78:59-60.*
2. A baleful night, *Ps 78:60-64.*
3. A blessed sunrise, *Ps 78:65-72. C. D.*

Verse 65. *Then the Lord awaked.* Know how to understand this and similar passages in Scripture, as to the Lord's sleeping and forgetting his people, *Ps 13:1 44:33 77:9.* These are not to be understood as to an universal and absolute forgetting and sleep of providence; for God hath not his vacation time: he still holds the reins of government in his hand, all the world over. Neither do they infer an absolute cessation of providence in reference to that object matter which the Lord to our apprehension seems to forget, and lies dormant; for there is a promoting work of providence, which we see not, and are not so sensible of for the present, as hath been shewed. Besides, such forgetting and sleep of providence, as it is such, bespeaks the beauty of providence in the way of bringing things to pass. It is so far from inferring an *interrgnum*, or letting fall the sceptre of government, as that it is a glorious demonstration that God orders matters, and that wisely, whilst he seems to forget, and be as one asleep. As the night, as night, falls under the providence of God, as well as the day, for there are the ordinances of heaven for the night season, *Jer 31:35:* so the dark night, when as to

matters the Lord seems to sleep, is part and parcel of his all wise model of government. The seventy years captivity was a long night for the church's distress; and yet thus it must be according to the ordinance of providence. *Jer 29:10. Thomas Crane.*

Verse 65. *Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine:* whose spirit and courage is revived and inflamed by a liberal draught of generous wine; which comparison is no more injurious to the Divine Majesty than that of a thief's coming in the night, to which Christ's second coming is compared. *1Th 5:2. Matthew Poole.*

Verse 66. *He smote his enemies in the hinder parts.* This has reference to the Philistines being smitten with haemorrhoids, or piles, whilst the ark was retained a captive by them, *1Sa 5:6, 12* ...The Greek version, as quoted by Suidas, is, *he smote his enemies on the back parts of the seat;* signifying, he says, a disease modestly expressed. *John Gill.*

Verse 67. The moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not. God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Sion. *Matthew Henry.*

Verses 67-68. Refused. Chose not. Chose. As God's love is set out to us, as not independently pitched, but as having all the persons in his eye and having them all in view; so by this also, that he hath not pitched it upon everybody. This is distinct from the former; for an indefinite is not knowing whom he pitched it upon. Now, as he knew whom he pitched upon, so he hath pitched but upon some, not on every one...If God would love, it was fit he should be free. It is a strange thing that you will not allow God that which kings and princes have the prerogative of, and you will allow it them. They will have favourites whom they will love, and will not love others; and yet men will not allow God that liberty, but he must either love all mankind, or he must be cruel and unjust. The specialness of his love, increases it, endears it to us. You shall find almost all along the Bible, that when God would express his love, he doth it with a speciality to his own elect, which he illustrates by the contrary done to others...And you shall find frequently in the Scripture, when he mentions his choice of some persons, he holdeth up likewise on purpose his refusing of others...When he speaks of an election out of the tribes, he contents not himself to say he chose Judah, but he puts in the rejection, the preterition at least, of Joseph. *He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.* ...He speaks of the times of the judges. The rejection of the ten tribes began to show itself soon; he says, he refused the tabernacle of Ephraim, but he chose Judah. After Solomon's time, they fell to worshipping of calves (let me tell you, it is the declining of election that undoes a nation, when election grows low, and ceases in an age), till at last the ten tribes were cast off, as they are at this day; but the tribe of Judah had election among them...

Though at the first, and for a long time, both were alike his people, yet at last election began to pass a

discontinuation. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had at first the advantage of Judah in spirituals; for the ark, the token of God's presence, was committed unto their keeping at Shiloh; the seal of God's worship and ordinances was entrusted to them, and Judah must come up thither, if they would seek the Lord. But Ephraim, for their sinning against that worship, forfeited and lost it, and should therefore have the keeping of it no longer, no, not for ever any more; but Judah had it at Bethlehem, till at last it was fixedly seated in Sion, as "the earth is established" *Ps 78:69*; and this for no other reason than that he had loved them, and out of love had chosen them *Ps 78:67-69*. For otherwise Judah was, as well as Ephraim, alike involved in the same guilt of sin which had forfeited it, as *Ps 78:56-60* of the Psalm plainly show. "*Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies,*" etc. He speaks it of the whole in those verses, and yet takes the occasion against Ephraim to remove it for ever. Thus, the first are last, and the last first; and those whom God's presence is with for a while, upon some eminent sin God begins to withdraw from them, and by degrees as he did by that people of the ten tribes, till at last he cast them off from being a people; but dealt not so with Judah, though these made a forfeiture of their temple, and worship, and nation, in the captivity of Babylon, yet God restored all again to greater glory at last. The ground was that in *Ps 78:68*, *Zion which he loved*. *Thomas Goodwin*.

Verses 67-68. Refused. Chose not. Chose.

Verse 70. *He took him from the sheepfolds.* The art of feeding cattle, and the art of ruling men are sisters, saith Basil. *John Trapp*.

Verse 71. *From following the ewes great with young.* A good and steady lamber is of great value to a grazier, but I would advise all graziers to attend to this operation themselves, as few servants will be found to pay that attention which is necessary, or which a master himself would do, and the slightest neglect, is, in many cases, followed with the greatest disadvantage. I have attended to the practice of lambing for several years, therefore, trust I am not a novice in it, or incompetent to give a description of it. Many lambs may be lost without its being possible to charge the lamber with neglect or ignorance, though greater attention on his part might have saved many that otherwise perish...The practice of lambing is at times very intricate, and is apt to exhaust the patience of a lamber. Sheep are obstinate, and lambing presents a scene of confusion, disorder, and trouble, which it is the lamber's business to rectify, and for which he ought always to be prepared: some of the ewes perhaps leave their lambs, or the lambs get intermixed, and the ewes which have lost their lambs run about bleating, while others want assistance. These are only a few of the various occurrences which call for the immediate attention of the lamber. *Daniel Price, in "A System of Sheep grazing and Management."* 1809.

Verse 71. *From following the ewes great with young.* It hath been reported that a learned doctor of Oxford hung up his leathern breeches in his study for a memorial to visitors of his mean original; the

truth I avouch not, but history tells us of Agathocles who arose from a potter to be king of Sicily, and would be served in no other plate at his table but earthenware, to mind him of his former drudgery. It were well if some would remember whose shoes they have cleaned, whose coals they have carried, and whose money they have borrowed, and deal gratefully with their creditors, as the good Lord Cromwell did by the Florentine merchant in the time of Henry the Eighth, when Wolsey (Foxe's Martyrology) like a butcher forgot the king his master. It was otherwise with holy David, who being in kingly dignity, graciously calls to mind his following the ewes great with young, when now feeding the sheep of Israel. His golden sceptre points at his wooden hook, and he plays the old lessons of his oaten pipe upon his Algum harp, and spreads his Bethlehem tent within his marble palace on Mount Zion. *Samuel Lee.*

Verse 71. *To feed Jacob his people.* (This is a curious specimen of medieval spiritualising, and is here inserted as such. It is amusing to note that a Tractarian expositor quotes the passage with evidently intense admiration. C. H. S.) Observe, a good shepherd must be humble and faithful, he ought to have bread in a wallet, a dog by a string, a staff with a rod, and a tuneful horn. The bread is the word of God, the wallet is the memory of the word; the dog is zeal, wherewith the shepherd glows for the house of God, casts out the wolves with pious barking, following preaching and unwearied prayer: the string by which the dog is held is the moderation of zeal, and discretion, whereby the zeal of the shepherd is tempered by the spirit of piety and knowledge. The staff is the consolation of pious exhortation by which the too timid are sustained and refreshed, lest they fail in the time of tribulation; but the rod is the authority and power by which the turbulent are restrained. The tuneful horn, which sounds so sweetly, signifies the sweetness of eternal blessedness, which the faithful shepherd gently and often instils into the ears of his flock. *Johannes Paulus Palanterius.* 1600.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The duty of attending to God's word. Modes of neglecting the duty; ways of fulfilment; reasons for obedience; evils of inattention.

Verse 2. (*first clause*). Preach on the "Parable of the Prodigal Nation, "as given in the whole Psalm. *C. A. Davies, of Chesterfield.*

Verses 2-3.

1. Truths are none the worse for being old: *sayings of old.* "Old wood, "says Lord Bacon, "is best to burn; old books are best to read; and old friends are best to trust."

2. Truths are none the worse for being concealed under metaphors: *I will open, etc., in a parable; dark sayings.*

3. Truths are none the worse for being often repeated.

(a) They are more tested.

(b) They are better testified. *G. R.*

Verse 3. The connection between what we have "heard, "and what we have personally "known" in religion.

Verse 4. A good resolution, and a blessed result. *C. D.*

Verse 4.

1. What is to be made known? *The praises of the Lord; his strength and his wonderful works.*

2. To whom are they to be made known? *To the generations to come.*

3. By whom? Parents—one generation to another.

4. How made known?

(a) By hiding nothing.

(b) By declaring everything God has done. *G. R.*

Verse 5. Scriptural tradition, or the heirloom of the gospel.

Verses 5-8. Family religion.

1. The fathers' knowledge the children's heritage—Ps 78:5-6.

2. The fathers' fall the children's preservation—Ps 78:7-8.

Verses 5-8.

1. Truth once started can never be arrested—Ps 78:5-6.

2. Truth received binds the soul to God—Ps 78:7.

3. Truth rejected lights up beacons for others—Ps 78:8.

Verses 7-8. On the deceitfulness of the heart, in disregarding providential dispensations in general.

John Jamieson's "Sermons on the Heart," l. 430.

Verse 8. Stubbornness not steadfastness, or the difference between a natural vice and a gracious quality.

Verse 8. The false heart (*middle clause*), with its left hand, "Stubbornness in the wrong" (*first clause*), and its right hand, "Fickleness in the right" (*last clause*). *C. D.*

Verse 9. Who were they? What had they? What did they? When did they do it?

Verses 9, 67. The backsliding of prominent believers.

1. The Lord's soldiers: who they were; belonging to God's chosen people; were distinguished by grace. Ge 48:17-20. Strong by God's blessing. De 33:17. Honourable place among their brethren. Favoured with the tabernacle at Shiloh—Ps 78:60.

2. Their equipment: armour defensive and offensive; like that of others who triumphed.

3. Their behaviour in battle: to turn back was traitorous, cowardly, dangerous, disastrous, dishonourable.

4. Their punishment—Ps 78:57. Deprived of their special honour. Re 3:11. *C. D.*

Verses 10-11. The gradations of sin: neglecting, rejecting, forgetting God. *C. D.*

Verses 12-16. God revealed in his deeds. The wonder working God—Ps 78:12-16. The avenging God—Ps 78:12. The interposing God—Ps 78:13. The guiding God—Ps 78:14. The Father God—Ps 78:14-16. *C. D.*

Verses 12-17. Obstinacy of unbelief. It makes head against God's majesty—Ps 78:17; his gracious providence—Ps 78:14-16; his interposing care—Ps 78:13; his avenging justice—Ps 78:12; his distinguishing grace—Ps 78:12-16. *C. D.*

Verses 12-17. Prodigies cannot convert the soul. Lu 16:31. *C. D.*

Verses 15-16. Divine supplies seasonable, plentiful, of the best, marvellous.

Verse 16. Streams from the Rock Christ Jesus.

1. Their source.
2. Their variety.
3. Their abundance.

—*B. Davies, of Greenwich.*

Verses 12-17. Obstinacy of unbelief. It makes head against God's majesty—Ps 78:17; his gracious providence—Ps 78:14-16; his interposing care—Ps 78:13; his avenging justice—Ps 78:12; his distinguishing grace—Ps 78:12-16. *C. D.*

Verses 12-17. Prodigies cannot convert the soul. Lu 16:31. *C. D.*

Verse 17. Sin in its progress feeds upon divine mercies to aid its advance, as also every other surrounding circumstance.

Verses 17-21.

1. They tempted God's patience; Ps 78:17.
2. They tempted God's wisdom; Ps 78:18.
3. They tempted God's power; Ps 78:19-20.
4. They tempted God's wrath; Ps 78:21.

—*E. G. Gange, of Bristol.*

Verses 18-21. The progress of evil.

1. They are drawn away by their lust: Ps 78:18.
2. Lust having conceived bringeth forth sin: Ps 78:19-20.
3. Sin being finished bringeth forth death: Ps 78:21.

"Their carcasses fell." *C. D.*

Verses 21-22. Evil consequences of unbelief.

1. The sin itself: they doubted the ultimate certainty, completeness, and reality of God's salvation from Egypt.
2. The aggravation of it: the object of it was God; they who entertained it were God's people: The aids to faith were overlooked: "though."

3. What it led them to; inward sin—Ps 78:18; outward sin—Ps 78:19, etc.

4. What it brought upon them; Ps 78:21. Fiery serpents, etc. *C. D.*

Verse 25. Different kinds of food. Beast's food, Lu 15:16. Sinners' food, Ho 4:8. Formalists' food, Ho 12:1. Saints' food, Jer 15:16 Joh 6:53-57. Angels' food. Christ's food, Joh 4:34. *C. D.*

Verse 29-31. Dangerous prayers. When lust dictates, wrath may answer. Let grace dictate, and mercy will answer. *C. D.*

Verses 34-37. The hypocrite's feet, Ps 78:34. The hypocrite's memory, Ps 78:35. The hypocrite's tongue, Ps 78:36. The hypocrite's heart, Ps 78:37. Or, the hypocrite's cloak and the hypocrite's heart. *C. D.*

Verse 38. (*last clause*) and Ps 78:50 (*first clause*). God's anger as exercised against his people and against his foes. *C. D.*

Verses 39, 35. God's memory of his people and their memory of God.

Verse 42. The day of days.

1. The enemy encountered on that day.

2. The conflict endured.

3. The deliverance accomplished.

4. The joy experienced. *B. D.*

Verse 45. The power of little things when commissioned to plague us.

Verse 47. (*last clause*). Sometimes it will not shoot. Sometimes it will. And when it does, it misses the mark.

Verse 52.

1. God has a people in the world.

2. He brings them away from others.

3. He brings them into fellowship with himself.

4. He brings them into fellowship with each other.

5. He guides them to their rest.

Verse 55. Divine supplanting. He supplants the fallen angels in heaven. One nation of earth by another (see all history). The thoughts and affections of the heart in regeneration, etc.—*Isa 55:13. C. D.*

Verses 56-57. On the deceitfulness of the heart, with respect to the performance of duty. *J. Jamieson. I. 326.* On the deceitfulness of the heart, with respect to the omission of duty. *J. Jamieson. I. 353.*

Verses 59-72.

1. A gloomy sunset, *Ps 78:59-60.*

2. A baleful night, *Ps 78:60-64.*

3. A blessed sunrise, *Ps 78:65-72. C. D.*

Verses 9, 67. The backsliding of prominent believers.

1. The Lord's soldiers: who they were; belonging to God's chosen people; were distinguished by grace. *Ge 48:17-20.* Strong by God's blessing. *De 33:17.* Honourable place among their brethren. Favoured with the tabernacle at Shiloh—*Ps 78:60.*

2. Their equipment: armour defensive and offensive; like that of others who triumphed.

3. Their behaviour in battle: to turn back was traitorous, cowardly, dangerous, disastrous, dishonourable.

4. Their punishment—*Ps 78:57.* Deprived of their special honour. *Re 3:11. C. D.*

Verses 70-72. Spiritual promotions.

Verses 72. In spite of his transgressions, which he always bitterly repented of and which were therefore blotted out of the Book of God, he remains to all princes and rulers of the earth as the noblest pattern. In perfect inward truth he knew and felt himself to be "*King by the grace of God.*" The crown and sceptre he bore merely in trust from the King of all kings; and to his latest breath he endeavoured with all his earnestness to be found as a genuine theocratic king, who in everything must conduct his earthly government according to the ordinances and directions of God. Therefore the Lord made all that he took in hand prosper, and nothing was clearer to the people than that the Lord was *truly with the king.* *Frederick William Krummacher, in "David, the King of Israel."* 1867.

WORKS UPON THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH PSALM

Valuable information upon THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT will be found in the following works:—

"Observations upon the Plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians: in which is shewn the peculiarity of those Judgments, and their correspondence with the Rites and Idolatry of that People... By JACOB BRYANT. 1794."

"Israel in Egypt; or the Books of Genesis and Exodus illustrated by *existing Monuments.* By WILLIAM OSBURN. 1856."

UPON ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

"The wanderings of the Children of Israel." By the late Rev. GEORGE WAGNER, 1862.

"The Church in the Wilderness." By WILLIAM SEATON. In two vols. 1821.

Psalm 79

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. A Psalm of Asaph. A *Psalm of complaint* such as *Jeremiah* might have written amid the ruins of the beloved city. It evidently treats of times of invasion, oppression, and national overthrow. Asaph was a patriotic poet, and was never more at home than when he rehearsed the history of his nation. Would to God that we had national poets whose song should be of the Lord.

DIVISION. From *Ps 79:1-4* the complaint is poured out, from *Ps 79:5-12* prayer is presented, and, in the closing verse, praise is promised.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance.* It is the cry of amazement at sacrilegious intrusion; as if the poet were struck with horror. The stranger pollutes thine hallowed courts with his tread. All Canaan is thy land, but thy foes have ravaged it. *"Thy holy temple have they defiled."* Into the inmost sanctuary they have profanely forced their way, and there behaved themselves arrogantly. Thus, the holy land, the holy house, and the holy city, were all polluted by the uncircumcised. It is an awful thing when wicked men are found in the church and numbered with her ministry. Then are the tares sown with the wheat, and the poisoned gourds cast into the pot. *"They have laid Jerusalem on heaps."* After devouring and defiling, they have come to destroying, and have done their work with a cruel completeness. Jerusalem, the beloved city, the joy of the nation, the abode of her God, was totally wrecked. Alas! alas! for Israel! It is sad to see the foe in our own house, but worse to meet him in the house of God; they strike hardest who smite at our religion. The psalmist piles up the agony; he was a suppliant, and he knew how to bring out the strong points of his case. We ought to order our case before the Lord with as much care as if our success depended on our pleading. Men in earthly courts use all their powers to obtain their ends, and so also should we state our case with earnestness, and bring forth our strong arguments.

Verse 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."* The enemy cared not to bury the dead, and there was not a sufficient number of Israel left alive to perform the funeral rites; therefore, the precious relics of the departed were left to be devoured of vultures and torn by wolves. Beasts on which man could not feed fed on him. The flesh of creation's Lord became meat for carrion crows and hungry dogs. Dire are the calamities of war, yet have they happened to God's saints and servants. This might well move the heart of the poet, and he did well to appeal to the heart of God by reciting the grievous evil. Such might have been the lamentation of an early Christian as he thought of the amphitheatre and all its deeds of blood. Note in the two verses how the plea is made to turn upon God's property in the temple and the people:—we read "thine inheritance, ""thy temple, ""thy

servants, "and "thy saints." Surely the Lord will defend his own, and will not suffer rampant adversaries to despoil them.

Verse 3. *"Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem."* The invaders slew men as if their blood was of no more value than so much water; they poured it forth as lavishly as when the floods deluge the plains. The city of holy peace became a field of blood. *"And there was none to bury them."* The few who survived were afraid to engage in the task. This was a serious trial and grievous horror to the Jews, who evinced much care concerning their burials. Has it come to this, that there are none to bury the dead of thy family, O Lord? Can none be found to grant a shovelful of earth with which to cover up the poor bodies of thy murdered saints? What woe is here! How glad should we be that we live in so quiet an age, when the blast of the trumpet is no more heard in our streets.

Verse 4. *"We are become a reproach to our neighbours."* Those who have escaped the common foe make a mockery of us, they fling our disasters into our face, and ask us, "Where is your God?" Pity should be shown to the afflicted, but in too many cases it is not so, for a hard logic argues that those who suffer more than ordinary calamities must have been extraordinary sinners. Neighbours especially are often the reverse of neighbourly; the nearer they dwell the less they sympathize. It is most pitiable it should be so. *"A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us."* To find mirth in others' miseries, and to exult over the ills of others, is worthy only of the devil and of those whose father he is. Thus the case is stated before the Lord, and it is a very deplorable one. Asaph was an excellent advocate, for he gave a telling description of calamities which were under his own eyes, and in which he sympathized, but we have a mightier Intercessor above, who never ceases to urge our suit before the eternal throne.

Verse 5. *"How long, Lord?"* Will there be no end to these chastisements? They are most sharp and overwhelming; wilt thou much longer continue them? *"Wilt thou be angry for ever?"* Is thy mercy gone so that thou wilt for ever smite? *"Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?"* There was great cause for the Lord to be jealous, since idols had been set up, and Israel had gone aside from his worship, but the psalmist begs the Lord not to consume his people utterly as with fire, but to abate their woes.

Verse 6. *"Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee."* If thou must smite look further afield; spare thy children and strike thy foes. There are lands where thou art in no measure acknowledged; be pleased to visit these first with thy judgments, and let thine erring Israel have a respite. *"And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name."* Hear us the prayerful, and avenge thyself upon the prayerless. Sometimes providence appears to deal much more severely with the righteous than with the wicked, and this verse is a bold appeal founded upon such an appearance. It in effect says—Lord, if thou must empty out the vials of thy wrath, begin with those who have no measure of regard for thee, but are openly up in arms against thee; and be pleased to spare thy people, who are thine notwithstanding all their sins.

Verse 7. *"For they have devoured Jacob."* The oppressor would quite eat up the saints if he could. If these lions do not swallow us, it is because the Lord has sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths. *"And laid waste his dwelling place,"* or his pasture. The invader left no food for man or beast, but devoured all as the locust. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Verse 8. *"O remember not against us former iniquities."* Sins accumulate against nations. Generations lay up stores of transgressions to be visited upon their successors; hence this urgent prayer. In Josiah's days the most earnest repentance was not able to avert the doom which former long years of idolatry had sealed against Judah. Every man has reason to ask for an act of oblivion for his past sins, and every nation should make this a continual prayer. *"Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low."* Hasten to our rescue, for our nation is hurrying down to destruction; our numbers are diminished and our condition is deplorable. Observe how penitent sorrow seizes upon the sweeter attributes, and draws her piteous from the "tender mercies" of God; see, too, how she pleads her own distress, and not her goodness, as a motive for the display of mercy. Let souls who are brought very low find an argument in their abject condition. What can so powerfully appeal to pity as dire affliction? The quaint prayer-book version is touchingly expressive: "O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon; for we are come to great misery." This supplication befits a sinner's life. We have known seasons when this would have been as good a prayer for our burdened heart as any that human mind could compose.

Verse 9. *"Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name."* This is masterly pleading. No argument has such force as this. God's glory was tarnished in the eyes of the heathen by the defeat of his people, and the profanation of his temple; therefore, his distressed servants implore his aid, that his great name may no more be the scorn of blaspheming enemies. *"And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake."* Sin,—the root of the evil—is seen and confessed; pardon of sin is sought as well as removal of chastisement, and both are asked not as matters of right, but as gifts of grace. God's name is a second time brought into the pleading. Believers will find it their wisdom to use very frequently this noble plea: it is the great gun of the battle, the mightiest weapon in the armoury of prayer.

Verse 10. *"Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?"* Why should those impious mouths be filled with food so sweet to them, but so bitter to us? When the afflictions of God's people become the derision of sinners, and cause them to ridicule religion, we have good ground for expostulation with the Lord. *"Let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed."* Justice is desired that God may be vindicated and feared. It is but meet that those who taunted the people of God because they smarted under the Lord's rod, should be made themselves also to smart by the same hand. If any complain of the spirit of this imprecation, we think they do so needlessly; for it is the common feeling of every patriot to desire to

see his country's wrongs redressed, and of every Christian to wish a noble vengeance for the church by the overthrow of error. The destruction of Antichrist is the recompense of the blood of the martyrs, and by no means is it to be deprecated; far rather is it one of the most glorious hopes of the latter days.

Verse 11. *"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee."* When thy people cannot sing, and dare not shout aloud, then let their silent sigh ascend into thine ear, and secure for them deliverance. These words are suitable for the afflicted in a great variety of conditions; men of experience will know how to adapt them to their own position and to use them in reference to others. *"According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die."* Faith grows while it prays; the appeal to the Lord's tender mercy is here supplemented by another addressed to the divine power, and the petitioner rises from a request for those who are brought low, to a prayer for those who are on the verge of death, set apart as victims for the slaughter. How consoling is it to desponding believers to reflect that God can preserve even those who bear the sentence of death in themselves. Men and devils may consign us to perdition, while sickness drags us to the grave, and sorrow sinks us in the dust; but, there is One who can keep our soul alive, ay, and bring it up again from the depths of despair. A lamb shall live between the lion's jaws if the Lord wills it. Even in the charnel, life shall vanquish death if God be near.

Verse 12. *"And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord."* They denied thine existence, mocked thy power, insulted thy worship, and destroyed thy house; up, therefore, O Lord, and make them feel to the full that thou art not to be mocked with impunity. Pour into their laps good store of shame because they dared insult the God of Israel. Recompense them fully, till they have received the perfect number of punishments. It will be so. The wish of the text will become matter of fact. The Lord will avenge his own elect though he bear long with them.

Verse 13. *"So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks far ever; we will shew forth thy praise to all generations."* The gratitude of the church is lasting as well as deep. On her tablets are memorials of great deliverances, and, as long as she shall exist, her sons will rehearse them with delight. We have a history which will survive all other records, and it is bright in every line with the glory of the Lord. From the direst calamities God's glory springs, and the dark days of his people become the prelude to unusual displays of the Lord's love and power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is, in every respect, the pendant of Psalm 74. The points of contact are not merely matters of style (Ps 79:5, "how long for ever?" with Ps 74:1,10 79:10, edwy, with Ps 74:5 79:2, the giving over to the wild beasts, with Ps 74:19,14 79:13, the conception of Israel as of a flock,

in which respect Psalm 79 is judiciously appended to Ps 78:70-72, with Ps 74:1 and also with Ps 74:19.) But the mutual relationships lie still deeper. Both Psalms have the same Asaphic stamp, both stand in the same relation to Jeremiah, and both send forth their complaints out of the same circumstances of the time, concerning a destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, such as only the age of the Seleucidae (1 Maccabees 1:31 3:45 2 Maccabees 8:3), together with the Chaldean period can exhibit, and in conjunction with a defiling of the Temple and a massacre of the servants of God, of the *Chasîdîm* (1 Maccabees 7:13 14:6), such as the age of the Seleucidae exclusively can exhibit. The work of the destruction of the Temple which was in progress in Ps 74:1-23, appears in Ps 79:1-13 as completed, and here, as in the former Psalm, one receives the impression of the outrages, not of some war, but of some persecution: it is straightway the religion of Israel for the sake of which the sanctuaries are destroyed and the faithful are massacred.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 1. *Thy holy temple have they defiled.* This was not only the highest degree of the enemy's inhumanity and barbarity, ...but also a calamity to the people of God never to be sufficiently deplored. For by the overthrow of the temple the true worship of God, which had been instituted at that temple alone, appeared to be extinguished, and the knowledge of God to vanish from among mankind. No pious heart could ponder this without the greatest grief. *Mollerus*.

Verse 1. *They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.* They have made Jerusalem to be nothing but *graves*. Such multitudes were cruelly slain and murdered, that Jerusalem was, as it were, but one *grave*.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 1-4. In the time of the Maccabees, Demetrius, the son of Seleuces, sent Bacchides to Jerusalem; who slew the scribes, who came to require justice, and the Assideans, the first of the children of Israel who sought peace of them. Bacchides "took of them threescore men, and slew them in one day, according to the words which he wrote, the flesh of thy saints have they cast out, and their blood have they shed round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them." And in that last and most fearful destruction, when the eagles of Rome were gathered round the doomed city, and the temple of which God had said, "Let us depart hence; "when one stone was not to be left upon another, when the fire was to consume the sanctuary, and the foundations of Sion were to be ploughed up; when Jerusalem was to be filled with slain, and the sons of Judah were to be crucified round her walls in such thick multitudes that no more room was left for death; when insult, and shame, and scorn was the lot of the child of Israel, as he wandered an outcast, a fugitive in all lands; when all these bitter and deadly things came upon Jerusalem, it was as a punishment for many and long repeated crimes; it was the accomplishment of a warning which had been often sent in vain. Yea, fiercely did thy foes assault thee, O Jerusalem, but thy sins more fiercely still!—"*Plain Commentary*."

Verses 1, 4, 5. Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked, filthy

lanes, I suddenly found myself on turning a sharp corner, in a spot of singular interest; the "Jews' place of Wailing." It is a small paved quadrangle; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of recent date above, but having below five courses of bevelled stones in a perfect state of preservation. Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred enclosure, and wail over the fallen temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in whose stones they still take pleasure. Ps 102:14. It was Friday, and a crowd of miserable devotees had assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there,—pale, haggard, careworn men tottering on pilgrim staves; and little girls with white faces, and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees, chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones; some were kissing them, some had their arms spread out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst. It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts' affections, or deadened their feelings of devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, down trodden outcasts,—amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonoured ruins of their ancient sanctuary,—chanting now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own psalmist,—*O God the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled... We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever?*—J. L. Porter, in "The Giant Cities of Bashan." 1865.

Verse 2. "*The dead bodies of thy servants,*" etc. It is a true saying of S. Augustine, The care of our funeral, the manner of our burial, the exequial pomp, all these *magis sunt vivorum solatia quam subsidia mortuorum*, are rather comforts for the living than any way helps for the dead. To be interred profiteth not the party deceased; his body feels it not, his soul regards it not; and we know that many holy martyrs have been excluded from burial, who in a Christian scorn thereof bespoke their persecutors in words of those which were slain at Pharsalia: "You effect nothing by this anger; what matters it whether disease dissolve the body, or the funeral pile!" But yet there is an honesty (*i.e.* a right, a proper respect) which belongeth to the dead body of man. Jehu commanded Jezebel to be buried; David thanked the people of Jabesh Gilead for burying of Saul. Peter, who commanded Ananias and Sapphira, those false abdicators of their patrimony, to die, commanded to have them buried being dead. It is an axiom of charity, *Mortuo non prohibeas gratiam*, withhold not kindness from the dead. It shows our love and regard for men in our own flesh to see them buried; it manifests our faith and hope of the resurrection; and therefore when that body which is to rise again, and to be

made glorious and immortal in heaven, shall be cast to the fowls of the air or beasts of the field, it argues in God great indignation against sin (Jer 22:19, of Jehoiakim, "He shall be buried as an ass is buried, and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem"); in man inhuman and barbarous cruelty.—*John Dunster, in "Prodromus."* 1613.

Verses 2, 3. (The following extract is from the writings of a godly monk who applies the language of the Psalm to the persecutions of his time. He wrote at Rome during the period of the Reformation, and was evidently a favourer of the gospel.) At this day what river is there, what brook, in this our afflicted Europe, (if it is still ours) that we have not seen flowing with the blood of Christians? And that too shed by the swords and spears of Christians? Wherefore there is made a great wailing in Israel; and the princes and elders mourn; the young men and virgins are become weak, and the beauty of the women is changed. Why? The holy place itself is desolate as a wilderness. Hast thou ever seen so dire a spectacle? They have piled up in heaps the dead bodies of thy servants to be devoured by birds: the unburied remains of thy saints, I say, they have given to the beasts of the earth. What greater cruelty could ever be committed? So great was the effusion of human blood at that time, that the rivulets, yea, rather, the rivers round the entire circuit of the city, flowed with it. And thus truly is the form of our most beautiful city laid waste, and its loveliness; and so reduced is it, that not even the men who carry forth dead bodies for burial can be obtained, though pressed with the offer of large rewards; so full of fear and horror were their minds: and this was all the more bitter, because "*We are become a reproach to those round about us,*" and are spoken of in derision by the infidels abroad and by enemies at home. Who is so bold as to endure this and live? How long therefore shall this most bitter disquietude last?—*Giambattista Folengo.* 1490-1559.

Verse 2. "*Dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls.*" With what unconcern are we accustomed to view, on all sides of us, multitudes, "dead in trespasses and sins, "torn in pieces, and devoured by wild passions, filthy lusts, and infernal spirits, those dogs and vultures of the moral world! Yet, to a discerning eye, and a thinking mind, the latter is by far the more melancholy sight of the two.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2. "*Thy servants.*" "*Thy saints.*" No temporal wrath, no calamities whatsoever can separate the Lord's children from God's love and estimation of them, nor untie the relation between God and them: for here, albeit their carcasses fall, and be devoured by the fowls of heaven and beasts of the earth, yet remain they the Lord's servants and saints under these sufferings.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4. "*We are become a reproach.*" If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were "counted as the off scouring of all things."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4. "A scorn and derision to them that are round about us." This was more grievous to them than stripes or wounds, saith Chrysostom, because these being inflicted upon the body are divided after a sort betwixt soul and body, but scorns and reproaches do wound the soul only. *Habet quendam aculeum contumelia*, they leave a sting behind them, as Cicero observeth.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 4. It is the height of reproach a father casts upon his child when he commands his slave to beat him. Of all outward judgments this is the sorest, to have strangers rule over us, as being made up of shame and cruelty. If once the heathen come into God's inheritance, no wonder the church complains that she is "become a reproach to her neighbours, a shame and derision to all round about her."—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 5. "How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?" The voice of complaint says not, How long, Lord, shall this wickedness of our enemy endure? How long shall we see this desolation? But, *How long, O Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?* We are admonished, therefore, in this passage, that we should recognize the anger of God against us in all our afflictions, lest as the nations are accustomed, we only accuse the malice of our enemies, and never think of our sins and the divine punishment. It cannot be that he who acknowledges the anger of God that is upon him, should not at the same time acknowledge his fault also, unless he wishes to attribute the iniquity to God of being angry and inflicting stripes upon the undeserving.—*Musculus*.

Verse 5. The word "jealousy" signifies not mere revenge but revenge mingled with love, for unless he loved, says Jerome, he would not be jealous, and after the manner of a husband avenge the sin of his wife.—*Lorinus*.

Verse 6. Neglect of prayer by unbelievers is threatened with punishment. The prophet's imprecation is the same in effect with a threatening, see Jer 10:25, and same imprecation, Ps 79:6. The prophets would not have used such an imprecation against those that call not upon God, but that their neglect of calling on his name makes them liable to his wrath and fury; and no neglect makes men liable to the wrath of God but the neglect of duty. Prayer, then, is a duty even to the heathen, the neglect of which provokes him to pour out his fury on them.—*David Clarkson*.

Verse 7. "They have devoured Jacob." Like wolves who cruelly tear and devour a flock of sheep. For the word which follows signifies not only a habitation in general, but also a sheepcote.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 8. "O remember not against us former iniquities." The prophet numbers himself with the people not only in their affliction, but also in their distress, and liability to the anger of God because of the crimes committed. He was not a partner in those enormous sins by which they had provoked the jealousy of God, and yet he exempts not himself from the people at large. Thus, in the following verse, he says, "And purge away our sins." He says not, Remember not the iniquity of this people; nor, And purge away their sins: But, Remember not *our* iniquities: and Purge away *our* sins. In this way the prophets, though holy men, were wont to make themselves sharers of the people's sins, not

by sinning, but by weeping and praying and imploring the mercy of God. See Isaiah 59:12. "*Our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us.*" . . . Daniel 9:5. "*We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled,*" etc. 1. Let us also follow this example, that so far we may have fellowship with the whole Church, that we may be partners of those who truly love and worship God. 2. Then, that abstaining from false worship, we may not sin wickedly with the wicked. 3. That whenever we ought to weep or pray, we may mourn and confess not only our own, but also the shortcomings of the whole church corporate, as if they were common to ourselves, even if we have no part in them, and may implore for them the mercy of God.—*Musculus*.

Verse 8. "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The Jews have a saying, that there is no punishment happens to Israel, but there is an ounce in it for the sin of the calf; their meaning is, that this is always remembered and visited, according to Exodus 32:34; the phrase may take in all the sins of former persons, their ancestors, and of former times, from age to age, they had continued in, which had brought ruin upon them; and all their own sins of nature and of youth, all past ones to the present time.—*John Gill*.

Verse 8. "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" Old debts vex most; the delay of payment increases them by interest upon interest; and the return of them being unexpected, a person is least provided for them. We count old sores, breaking forth, incurable. Augustus wondered at a person sleeping quietly that was very much in debt, and sent for his pillow, saying, "surely there is some strange virtue in it, that makes him rest so secure." My brethren, if one debt unto God's law be more than the whole creation can satisfy, what do any of us mean to rest secure with so vast a burden upon our consciences and accounts? Ah! take heed thou beest not surprised and arrested with old debts. *O God, thou rememberest former iniquities against us.* God will call over, and charge thy sins upon thee, when all the sweet is gone.—*Elias Pledger* (—1681), in "*Morning Exercises*."

Verse 8. "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The only right way to remedy a miserable condition, is to sue for the remission of sins, and for the renewed evidence of reconciliation: for before the church here do ask any thing for their outward delivery, they pray, "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*"—*David Dickson*.

Verse 8. "*Speedily.*" Lest they come too late, for we are at our last gasp.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 8. "*Prevent.*" God's mercy must anticipate, "*come to meet,*" man's necessity.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 8. "*We are brought very low.*" Literally, "We are greatly thinned." Few of us remain.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 8. "*We are brought very low.*" We are very greatly exhausted (emptied out): that is, we are utterly destitute of all things, both fortune, and strength of mind and body, just like a well or a vessel

completely emptied.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8. "*Very low.*" Past the hopes of all human help, and therefore the glory of our deliverance will be wholly thine.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 8. "*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name and deliver us.*" "Help us" under our troubles, that we may bear them well; "help us" out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. "Deliver us" from sin, and from sinking.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9. "*God of our salvation.*" If human reason were to judge of the many and great blows wherewith God so often smote and wasted his people, it would call God not the Saviour of the people, but the destroyer and oppressor. But the faith of the Prophet judges far otherwise of God, and sees even in an angry and pursuing God, the salvation of his people. The gods of the nations, though they do not afflict even in temporal things, are gods not of the salvation of their worshippers but of their perdition. But our God, even when he is most severely angry, and smites, is not the God of destruction, but of salvation.—*Musculus.*

Verse 9. "*For thy name's sake.*" Twice the appeal is made "*for thy name's sake;*" that revelation of God which he had made of himself to Moses when he passed by and proclaimed the name of Jehovah, Ex. 24:6, 7. Compare Ps. 20:1, 23:3; 29:2.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 9. "*For thy name's sake.*" The good which God doth unto his church, be it temporal or spiritual, is for his own sake. What I do (saith God), I do for mine holy name's sake; there is nothing to move me but mine own name; that is holy, great, and glorious, and I will for my name's sake do much for my church and people. That they were preserved in Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were brought out of Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were replanted in Canaan, was for his holy name's sake; that they had a temple, sacrifices, priests, prophets, ordinances again, was for his name's sake; when they were near to destruction often, in former days, God wrought for his name's sake, Ezek. 20; so Isaiah 48:8, 9. It is not for the enemies' sake that God doth preserve or deliver his people; nor for their sakes, their prayers, tears, faith, obedience, holiness, that he doth great things for them, bestows great mercies upon them; but it is for his own name's sake. For man's sake God cursed the earth, Gen. 8:21; but it is for his name's sake that he blesseth it. The choicest mercies God's people have, are for his name's sake; they have pardon of sin for his name's sake, Ps. 25:11, 1 John 2:12; purging of sin for his name's sake; Ps. 79:9; leading in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, Ps. 23:2; quickening of their dead and dull hearts for his name's sake, Ps. 143:11. Though his people offend him, yet he forsakes them not, for his great name's sake.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 9. If God could not be more glorified in our peace and reconciliation, than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us, that he is no loser by acts of mercy. In this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he would not love "mercy

rather than sacrifice." God is free to choose what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name: and he delights more in the mercy shown to one than in the blood of all the damned, that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And, indeed, he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering; and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy, in his saved ones. This is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow of it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. "This," said Abigail to David, "shall be no grief to thee nor offence of heart unto my Lord," 1 Sam. 25; she meant, he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from Shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God, and say, O Lord, when I shall with saints and angels be praising thy pardoning grace in heaven, it will not grieve thee that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul in hell.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 9. When the Lord's people are brought very low, let them not look for a lifting up or relief except from God only; therefore say they here, "*Help us, O Lord.*" Such as have laid hold on God for salvation promised in the covenant, may also look for particular deliveries out of particular troubles, as appendices of the main benefit of salvation; therefore, "*Help us, O God of our salvation,*" say they. When men do ask anything, the granting whereof may glorify God, they may confidently expect to have it; and in special when God may be so glorified, and his people may also be preserved and comforted: "*Help us (say they) for the glory of thy name: and deliver us.*" As the conscience of sin useth to step in oftener between us and mercy, so must we call oftener for remission of sin; for earnest affection can double and treble the same petition without babbling; "*Deliver us, and purge away our sins.*" It is the glory of the Lord to forget sin, and when remission of sins is prayed for according to God's promise, the Lord's glory is engaged for the helping of faith to obtain it: "*Purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*"—*David Dickson*.

Verse 11. "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" The propriety of styling the sons of Adam "*prisoners,*" can scarcely fail to be discerned when we remember the restraint which the immortal spirit endures whilst it inhabits its present earthly house, or recollect the hardships to which many of our race are subjected, or, once more, the degrading slavery to which they reduce themselves by serving their own lusts and refusing to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ would make them free. Now, in whichever of these senses men are prisoners, it is clear that they have occasion and that they are wont to sigh, and that it is the part of the pious and faithful believer in God to bear this in mind, and, inasmuch as he has put on bowels of compassion, to say, as well for others as for himself, "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" Three things, then, are suggested by the first clause of the passage before us. The first is, that all who live in this world are prisoners . . . We would go on to remark, secondly, that these various prisoners have their respective

sorrowful sighings. Thirdly, then, let it be observed, will the believer, conscious of these several sighings of the crowd of prisoners whom he sees all around him, pray to the Almighty that they may come before his everlasting presence.—*W. C. Le Breton*. (1849.)

Verse 11. "*The sighing.*" The nature of a sigh will suggest to us some important particulars connected with the state of bondage spoken of in the text. A sigh is an *unexpressed declaration*. Although we do not speak, still we can tell a long tale of sorrow with a sigh. How often the mourner who will not tell a human being of his grief, will vent it when he is alone, with a long-drawn, an uneven sigh! Now, I direct your attention to this, because it is a perfect picture of the spiritual condition in which some men are. They are not loud in their complaints; they are not standing in the corners of the streets proclaiming their exceeding sinfulness; they are not continually making their neighbours and their friends hear them preach about their vileness—a vileness which, if any one else attributed to them, would stir up all their wrath. Theirs is not the character of men in strife; but of men bearing a heavy burden, which presses from them an evidence of what they endure. And if any of you, brethren, thus walk in sighs and sorrow before God, he takes these sighs as applications to him for relief. Your misery, if entirely pent in, would be obstinate impenitency, but if vented, even in a sigh, is a declaration of your need. Let me encourage you, brethren, not to spare these evidences of your state. There are times when you feel so dead that you cannot enter into long confessions; when the spirit is so weary that you feel that you cannot speak. Much might at such a season be spoken by a sign. "Destroy it not," we say, "for a blessing is in it:" pour it forth, find it will reach the throne. And here it will prove to be not only *an unexpressed declaration of your state*, but also *an unexpressed wish for deliverance* therefrom. When the captive gazes through the bars of iron which night and day stand like mute sentinels before the narrow window of his cell, and when his eyes fall upon the green fields and groves beyond, he sighs, and turns away from the scene with a wish. He spake not a word, yet he wished. That sigh was a wish that he could be set free. And such sighs as these are heard by God. Your longings, your sorrows, when they are not fulfilled, your sad thoughts,—*"Oh! when shall I be delivered from the burden of my sin, and from the coldness of my heart!"*—all these wishes were your sighs, and they have been heard on high.—*Philip Bennett Power*.

Verse 11. "*The prisoner.*" An eastern prison is still a place of great misery, chiefly from the limited supply of water to the prisoners.—*Daniel Cresswell*.

Verse 11. "*Come before thee.*"

Though not a human votes he hears,
And not a human form appears
His solitude to share,
He is not all alone—the eye
Of him who hears the prisoner's sigh

Is even on him there.

—*J. L. Chester.*

Verse 11. "Preserve thou those that are appointed to die." Ought not pious people more closely to imitate their heavenly Father in caring for those who have been condemned to die? An eminent Christian lady keeps a record of all who have been sentenced to death, so far as she hears of them, and prays for them every day till their end come. Is not such conduct in sympathy with the heart of God!—*William S. Plummer.*

Verse 12. "*Render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom,*" etc. This may seem to be contrary to common justice; because that the punishment should not exceed the fault. But here you are to know, that this hath not respect unto what the enemies of God's church have acted, but what they have deserved. And therefore when the prophet here says, "*Render unto our neighbours sevenfold,*" it is not sevenfold beyond their deserts; for one scorn that a wicked man poureth upon a child of God (and so upon God), cannot be recompensed with ten thousand reproaches poured upon wicked men. The least reproach poured upon God is an infinite wrong. And the reproach of his people is so much his, as he reckons it as his own; and will therefore render to their enemies their reproach "*sevenfold*" (and that's but equal) "*into their bosom.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 12. "*Unto our neighbours.*" Because their scorn was more intolerable, and also more inexcusable than the oppression of distant enemies.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 12. "*Into their bosom.*" An expression which originally seems to have had reference to the practice of carrying and holding things in the lap, or the front fold of the flowing oriental dress, has in usage the accessory sense of retribution or retaliation.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 4. Saints the subject of derision to sinners. When justly so. When unjustly. What do they see to excite ridicule; what shall we do under the trial; how will it end?

Verse 5.

1. The cause of anger: jealousy.
2. The moderation of it. If it continued for ever, the people would perish, the promises be unfulfilled, the covenant fail, and the Lord's honour be impeached.
3. The staying of it. By prayer; by pleading his name, his glory, and the blood of Jesus.

Verse 8. A sinner's confession, petition, and plea.

Verse 9. I. A threefold prayer. II. An encouraging title: "God of our salvation." III. A victorious plea.

Verse 10.

- I. The Prayer. "Help us," etc.
1. Purge away sin.

2. Deliver us from our troubles.
3. Help us to serve thee in future.

II. The Plea.

1. For thy name's sake.
2. The glory of thy name.
3. The glory of thy name as our salvation. The order in both cases is inverted.—*G. R.*

Verse 10. The revenge for the martyrs, which it is lawful and incumbent upon us to desire.

Verse 11.

- I. The prisoner.
 1. Under forced bondage to sin.
 2. Under the bondage of conviction.
 3. In the dungeon of despair.
- II. The prisoner's application for relief.
- III. The source from which he looked for help.—*P. B. Power.*

Verse 11.

- I. The degree of protection solicited: "According to the greatness of thy power."
- II. The protection itself: "Preserve thou."
- III. The objects of it: "Those that are appointed to die."—*W. C. Le Breton.*

Verse 11.

- I. Mournful condition. A prisoner, sighing, appointed to die.
- II. Hopeful facts: a God, a God hearing sighs, a God of great power.
- III. Suitable prayers: "come before thee": "preserve."

Verse 11. "*Appointed to die,*" used as a description of deep spiritual distress. Fears of the divine decree, of having apostatised, of having sinned away the day of grace, of the sin which is unto death, etc. How these cases can be effectually met.

Verse 13. The obligations of the Protestant church based on her martyrs' blood, her great deliverances, her nearness to God. She ought to secure gospel teaching to coming generations.

Verse 13.

- I. Relation claimed: "We thy people, the sheep of," etc.
- II. Obligation admitted: "So we," etc., when thou hast interposed for our deliverance, we will praise thee.
- III. Resolution formed. 1. To give thanks for ever. 2. To transmit his praise to generations following.—*G. R.*

WORK UPON THE SEVENTY-NINTH PSALM

"Prodromus, or the Literal Destruction of Jerusalem as it is *described in the 79th Psalm...1613*" (By JOHN DUNSTER.)

Psalm 80

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim Eduth.* For the fourth time we have a song upon Shoshannim, or the lilies; the former ones being Psalms 45, 60, and 69. Why this title is given it would be difficult to say in every case, but the delightfully poetical form of the present Psalm may well justify the charming title. *Eduth* signifies testimony. The Psalm is a testimony of the church as a "lily among thorns." Some interpreters understand the present title to refer to an instrument of six strings, and Schleusner translates the two words, "the hexachord of testimony." It may be that further research will open up to us these "dark sayings upon a harp." We shall be content to accept them as evidence that sacred song was not lightly esteemed in the days of old. *A Psalm of Asaph.* A latter Asaph we should suppose, who had the unhappiness to live, like the "last minstrel," in evil times. If by the Asaph of David's day, this Psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David.

DIVISION. The Psalm divides itself naturally at the refrain which occurs three times: "Turn us again, O God," etc. Ps 80:1-3 is an opening address to the Lord God of Israel; from Ps 80:4-7 is a lamentation over the national woe, and from Ps 80:8-19 the same complaint is repeated, the nation being represented in a beautiful allegory as a vine. It is a mournful Psalm, and its lilies are lilies of the valley.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel."* Hear thou the bleatings of thy suffering flock. The name is full of tenderness, and hence is selected by the troubled psalmist: broken hearts delight in names of grace. Good old Jacob delighted to think of God as the Shepherd of Israel, and this verse may refer to his dying expression: "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." We may be quite sure that he who deigns to be a shepherd to his people will not turn a deaf ear to their complaints. *"Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock."* The people are called here by the name of that renowned son who became a second father to the tribes, and kept them alive in Egypt; possibly they were known to the Egyptians under the name of "the family of Joseph," and if so, it seems most natural to call them by

that name in this place. The term may, however, refer to the ten tribes of which Manasseh was the acknowledged head. The Lord had of old in the wilderness led, guided, shepherded all the tribes; and, therefore, the appeal is made to him. The Lord's doings in the past are strong grounds for appeal and expectation as to the present and the future. *"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth."* The Lord's especial presence was revealed upon the mercyseat between the cherubim, and in all our pleadings we should come to the Lord by this way: only upon the mercyseat will God reveal his grace, and only there can we hope to commune with him. Let us ever plead the name of Jesus, who is our true mercyseat, to whom we may come boldly, and through whom we may look for a display of the glory of the Lord on our behalf. Our greatest dread is the withdrawal of the Lord's presence, and our brightest hope is the prospect of his return. In the darkest times of Israel, the light of her Shepherd's countenance is all she needs.

Verse 2. *"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us."*

It is wise to mention the names of the Lord's people in prayer, for they are precious to him. Jesus bears the names of his people on his breastplate. Just as the mention of the names of his children has power with a father, so it is with the Lord. The three names were near of kin; Ephraim and Manasseh represent Joseph, and it was meet that Benjamin, the other son of the beloved Rachel, should be mentioned in the same breath: these three tribes were wont to march together in the wilderness, following immediately behind the ark. The prayer is that the God of Israel would be mighty on behalf of his people, chasing away their foes, and saving his people. O that in these days the Lord may be pleased to remember every part of his church, and make all her tribes to see his salvation. We would not mention our own denomination only, but lift up prayer for all the sections of the one church.

Verse 3. *"Turn us again, O God."* It is not so much said, "turn our captivity," but "turn us." All will come right if we are right. The best turn is not that of circumstances but of character. When the Lord turns his people he will soon turn their condition. It needs the Lord himself to do this, for conversion is as divine a work as creation; and those who have been once turned unto God, if they at any time backslide, as much need the Lord to turn them again as to turn them at the first. The word may be read, "restore us; verily, it is a choice mercy that "he restoreth my soul." "And cause thy face to shine." Be favourable to us, smile upon us. This was the high priest's blessing upon Israel: what the Lord has already given us by our High Priest and Mediator we may right confidently ask of him. "And we shall be saved." All that is wanted for salvation is the Lord's favour. One glance of his gracious eye would transform Tophet into Paradise. No matter how fierce the foe, or dire the captivity, the shining face of God ensures both victory and liberty. This verse is a very useful prayer. Since we too often turn aside, let us often with our lips and heart cry, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

Verse 4. *"O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?"* How long shall the smoke of thy wrath drown the smoking incense of our prayers? Prayer would fain enter thy holy place, but thy wrath battles with it, and prevents its entrance. That God should be angry with us when sinning seems natural enough, but that he should be angry even with our prayers is a bitter grief. With many a pang may the pleader ask, "How long?" Commander of all the hosts of thy creatures, able to save thy saints in their extremity, shall they for ever cry to thee in vain?

Verse 5. *"Thou feedest them with the bread of tears."* Their meat is seasoned with brine distilled from weeping eyes. Their meals, which were once such pleasant seasons of social merriment, are now like funeral feasts to which each man contributes his bitter morsel. Thy people ate bread of wheat before, but now they receive from thine own hand no better diet than bread of tears. "And givest them tears to drink in great measure." Tears are both their food and their drink, and that without stint. They swallow tierces of tears, and swim in gulfs of grief, and all this by God's own appointment; not because their enemies have them in their power by force of arms, but because their God refuses to interpose. Tear bread is even more the fruit of the curse than to eat bread in the sweat of one's face, but it shall by divine love be turned into a greater blessing by ministering to our spiritual health.

Verse 6. *"Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours."* Always jealous and malicious, Edom and Moab exulted over Israel's troubles, and then fell to disputing about their share of the spoil. A neighbour's jeer is ever most cutting, especially if a man has been superior to them, and claimed to possess more grace. None are unneighbourly as envious neighbours. "And our enemies laugh among themselves." They find mirth in our misery, comedy in our tragedy, salt for their wit in the brine of our tears, amusement in our amazement. It is devilish to sport with another's griefs; but it is the constant habit of the world which lieth in the wicked one to make merry with the saints' tribulations; the seed of the serpent follow their progenitor and rejoice in evil.

Verse 7. *"Turn us again, O God of hosts."* The prayer rises in the form of its address to God. He is here the God of Hosts. The more we approach the Lord in prayer and contemplation the higher will our ideas of him become.

Verse 8. *"Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt."* There it was in unfriendly soil: the waters of the Nile watered it not, but were as death to its shoots, while the inhabitants of the land despised it and trampled it down. Glorious was the right hand of the Lord when with power and great wonders he removed his pleasant plant in the teeth of those who sought its destruction. "Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it." Seven nations were digged out to make space for the vine of the Lord; the old trees, which long had engrossed the soil, were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine. It was securely placed in its appointed position with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceeding weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by

incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruit bearing plant.

Verse 9. *"Thou preparedst room before it."* The weeds, brambles, and huge stones were cleared; the Amorites, and their brethren in iniquity, were made to quit the scene, their forces were routed, their kings slain, their cities captures, and Canaan became like a plot of land, made ready for a vineyard. "And didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land." Israel became settled and established as a vine well rooted, and then it began to flourish and to spread to every side. This analogy might be applied to the experience of every believer in Jesus. The Lord has planted us, we are growing downward, "rooting roots, "and by his grace we are also advancing in manifest enlargement. The same is true of the church in a yet closer degree, for at this moment through the goodwill of the dresser of the vineyard her branches spread far and wide.

Verse 10. *"The hills were covered with the shadow of it."* Israel dwelt up the mountains' summits, cultivating every foot of soil. The nation multiplied and became so great that other lands felt its influence, or were shadowed by it. "And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars." The nation itself was so great that even its tribes were powerful and worthy to take rank among the mighty. A more correct rendering describes the cedars as covered with the vine, and we know that in many lands vines climb the trees, and cover them. What a vine must that be which ascends the cedars of God, and even overtops them! It is a noble picture of the prosperity of the Israelitish people in their best days. In Solomon's time the little land of Israel occupied a high place among the nations. There have been times when the church of God also has been eminently conspicuous, and her power has been felt far and near.

Verse 11. *"She sent out her boughs unto the sea."* Along the Mediterranean and, perhaps, across its waters, Israel's power was felt. "And her branches unto the river." On her Eastern side she pushed her commerce even to the Euphrates. Those were brave days for Israel, and would have continued, had not sin cut them short. When the church pleases the Lord, her influence becomes immense, far beyond the proportion which her numbers or her power would lead us to expect; but, alas! when the Lord leaves her she becomes as worthless, useless, and despised as an untended vine, which is of all plants the most valueless.

Verse 12. *"Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?"* Thou hast withdrawn protection from her after caring for her with all this care; wherefore is this, O Lord? A vine unprotected is exposed to every form of injury; none regard it, all prey upon it: such was Israel when given over to her enemies; such has the church full often been. "So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her." Her cruel neighbours have a pluck at her, and marauding bands, like roaming beasts, must needs pick at her. With God no enemy can harm us, without him none are so weak as to be unable to do us damage.

Verse 13. *The boar out of the wood doth waste it.* Such creatures are famous for rending and devouring vines. Babylon, like a beast from the marshes of the Euphrates, came up and wasted

Judah and Israel. Fierce peoples, comparable to wild swine of the forest, warred with the Jewish nation, until it was gored and torn like a vine destroyed by greedy hogs. And the wild beast of the field doth devour it. First one foe and then another wreaked vengeance on the nation, neither did God interpose to chase them away. Ruin followed ruin; the fox devoured the young shoots which had been saved from the damage wrought by the boar. Alas, poor land. How low wast thou brought! An oak or cedar might have been crushed by such ravages, but how canst thou endure it, O weak and tender vine? See what evils follow in the train of sin, and how terrible a thing it is for a people to be forsaken of their God.

Verse 14. *Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts.* Turn thyself to us as well as us to thee. Thou hast gone from us because of our sins, come back to us, for we sigh and cry after thee. Or, if it be too much to ask thee to come then do at least give us some consideration and cast an eye upon our griefs. Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine. Do not close thine eyes; it is thy vine, do not utterly turn away from it as though it were quite gone from thy mind. Great Husbandman, at least note the mischief which the beasts have done, for then it may be thy heart will pity, and thy hand will be outstretched to deliver.

Verse 15. *And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted.* Shall all thy care be lost? Thou has done so much, wilt thou lose thy labour? With thy power and wisdom thou didst great things for thy people, wilt thou now utterly give them up, and suffer thine enemies to exult in the evil which they delight in? And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. A prayer for the leader whom the Lord had raised up, or for the Messiah whom they expected. Though the vine had been left, yet one branch had been regarded of the Lord, as if to furnish a scion for another vine; therefore, is the prayer made in this form. Let us pray the Lord, if he will not in the first place look upon his church, to look upon the Lord Jesus, and then behold her in mercy for his sake. This is the true art of prayer, to put Christ forward and cry, "Him and then the sinner see, Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

Verse 16. *It is burned with fire.* In broken utterances the sorrowful singer utters his distress. The vineyard was like a forest which has been set on fire; the choice vines were charred and dead. It is cut down. The cruel axe had hacked after its murderous fashion, the branches were lopped, the trunk was wounded, desolation reigned supreme. They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. God's rebuke was to Israel what fire and axe would be to a vine. His favour is life, and his wrath is as messengers of death. One angry glance from Jehovah's eye is sufficient to lay all the vineyards of Ephraim desolate. O Lord, look not thus upon our churches. Rebuke us, but not in anger.

Verse 17. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand.* Let thy power rest on thy true Benjamin, son of thy right hand; give a commission to some chosen man by whom thou wilt deliver. Honour him, save us, and glorify thyself. There is no doubt here an outlook to the Messiah, for whom believing Jews had learned to look as the Saviour in time of trouble. Upon the son of man whom thou madest

strong for thyself. Send forth thy power with him whom thou shalt strengthen to accomplish thy purposes of grace. It pleases God to work for the sons of men by sons of men. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Nations rise or fall largely through the instrumentality of individuals: by a Napoleon the kingdoms are scourged, and by a Wellington nations are saved from the tyrant. It is by the man Christ Jesus that fallen Israel is yet to rise, and indeed through him, who deigns to call himself the Son of Man, the world is to be delivered from the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin. O Lord, fulfil thy promise to the man of thy right hand, who participates in thy glory, and give him to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand.

Verse 18. So will not we go back from thee. Under the leadership of one whom God had chosen the nation would be kept faithful, grace would work gratitude, and so cement them to their allegiance. It is in Christ that we abide faithful; because he lives we live also. There is no hope of our perseverance apart from him. Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. If the Lord gives life out of death, his praise is sure to follow. The Lord Jesus is such a leader, that in him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is our life. When he visits our souls anew we shall be revived, and our praise shall ascend unto the name of the Triune God.

Verse 19. *Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts.* Here we have another advance in the title and the incommunicable name of Jehovah, the I AM is introduced. Faith's day grows brighter as the hours roll on; and her prayers grow more full and mighty. Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Even we who were so destroyed. No extremity is too great for the power of God. He is able to save at the last point, and that too by simply turning his smiling face upon his afflicted. Men can do little with their arm, but God can do all things with a glance. Oh, to live for ever in the light of Jehovah's countenance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. It is an Asaph prayer again, full of pleas in Israel's behalf. It is as if they had before them Isa 63:1, "Then he remembered the days of old." They call to his mind the days of *Joseph*, when (Ge 49:24) the Lord miraculously fed them in Egypt. And then the *tabernacle days*, when (first, since the days of Eden), the Lord was known to dwell between the cherubim, on the mercyseat. They call to his mind *wilderness times* (verse 2), when their march was gladdened by his presence, "Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh" looking on the Pillar of Glory as it rose before them, the guide and partner of their way (see Nu 10:32-34) "O God, bring us back again! Cause thy face to shine! and all shall be well again!" *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1. The prophet does not nakedly begin his prayer, but mingles therewith certain titles, by which he most aptly addresses God, and urges his cause. He does not say, O you who sustain and govern all things which are in heaven and in earth, who hast placed thy dwelling place above the heaven of

heavens; but, Thou who art the Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims. Those things which enhance the favour and providence of God revealed to Israel, he brings to remembrance that he might nourish and strengthen confidence in prayer...Let us learn from this example to feed and fortify our confidence in praying to God, with the marks of that divine and paternal kindness revealed to us in Christ our Shepherd and propitiation.
Musculus.

Verse 1. *"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel."* It is the part of the shepherd to give ear to the bleatings and cries of the sheep, to call them to mind, that he may readily run to their help. *Venema.*

Verse 1. *"O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock."* Yon shepherd is about to lead his flock across the river; and, as our Lord says of the good shepherd, you observe that he goes before, and the sheep follow. Not all in the same manner, however. Some enter boldly, and come straight across. These are the loved ones of the flock, who keep hard by the footsteps of the shepherd, whether sauntering through green meadows, by the still waters, feeding upon the mountains, or resting at noon beneath the shadow of great rocks. And now others enter, but in doubt and alarm. Far from their guide, they miss the ford, and are carried down the river, some more, some less, and yet, one by one, they all struggle over and make good their landing. Notice those little lambs. They refuse to enter, and must be driven into the stream by the shepherd's dog, mentioned by Job in his "parable." Poor things! how they leap and plunge, and bleat in terror! That weak one yonder will be swept quite away, and perish in the sea. But, no; the shepherd himself leaps into the stream, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it trembling to the shore. All safely over, how happy they appear. The lambs frisk and gambol about in high spirits, while the older ones gather round their faithful guide, and look up to him in subdued but expressive thankfulness.

Now, can you watch such a scene, and not think of that Shepherd who leadeth Joseph like a flock, and of another river which all his sheep must cross? He too, goes before, and, as in the case of this flock, they who keep near him fear no evil. They hear his sweet voice saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." With eyes fastened on him, they scarcely see the stream, or feel its cold and threatening waves. The great majority, however, "linger, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away." They lag behind, look down upon the dark river, and, like Peter on stormy Gennesaret, when faith failed, they begin to sink. Then they cry for help, and not in vain. The Good Shepherd hastens to their rescue, and none of all his flock can ever perish. Even the weakest lambkins are carried safely over. I once saw flocks crossing the Jordan "to Canaan's fair and happy land," and there the scene was even more striking and impressive. The river was broader, the current stronger, and the flocks larger, while the shepherd's were more picturesque and Biblical. The catastrophe, too, with which many more sheep were threatened—of being swept down into that mysterious sea of death, which swallows up the

Jordan itself,—was more solemn and suggestive. *W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 1. "*Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.*" Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock art considered by the unbelieving to have no thoughts for our affairs; therefore stretch forth thine hand for our assistance, that the mouth of them that speak iniquities may be shut. We seek not gold and riches, or the dignities of this world, but we long for thy light, we desire more ardently to know thee, therefore "shine forth." *Savonarola.*

Verse 1. "*Thou that dwellest between the cherubims.*" From this phrase the following ideas may be derived:

1. That God is a King, sitting on his throne, and surrounded by his "*ministers.*" His throne is the heavens, the symbol of which is the holy of holies, his "*ministers*" are "*angels,*" and are elsewhere distinguished by that name, as Genesis 3; Ps 18:11;

2. that God is the "*King*" of Israel, dwelling among them by the external symbol of his presence. His most illustrious ministers are depicted by the "*Cherubims,*" who comprehend his heavenly as well as earthly ministers;

3. that God is the covenant "*King*" of his people, and has fixed his dwelling place above the "*ark of the covenant,*" an argument that he will observe the covenant and fulfil its promises, that he will guard his people, and procure for them every felicity;

4. lastly, that God is willing to reveal to the people his *grace* and *mercy* through the covering of the ark, called the "*mercyseat,*" on which God sat. *Venema.*

Verse 2. "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh." The three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, the three sons of Rachel, went immediately behind the ark. Whenever the ark arose against the enemy, Moses used to exclaim, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The Psalmist repeats this exclamation. "Cause thy face to shine upon us," was the blessing of Aaron; the psalmist prays for the renewal of that blessing. *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 3. "*Turn us, and cause thy face to shine.*" To thyself convert us, from the earthly to the heavenly; convert our rebellious wills to thee, and when we are converted, show thy countenance that we may know thee; show thy power that we may fear thee; show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee; show thy goodness that we may love thee; show them once, show them a second time, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face, and be saved. When thou dost save, we shall be saved; when thou withdrawest thy hand, we cannot be saved. *Savonarola.*

Verse 4. "*Lord God of hosts.*" All creatures are mustered, and trained, and put into garrison, or brought forth into the field, by his command. Which way can we look beside his armies? If upward into heaven, there is a band of soldiers, even a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, Lu 2:13.

If to the lower heavens, there is a band of soldiers, Ge 2:1; it was *universa militia caeli*, to which those idolaters burnt incense. On the earth, not only men are marshalled to the service; so Israel was called the "host of the living God; "but even the brute creatures are ranged in arrays. So God did levy a band of flies against the Egyptians; and a band of frogs that marched into their bed chambers. He hath troops of locusts, Pr 30:27, and armies of caterpillars. Not only the chariots and horsemen of heaven to defend his prophet; but even the basest, the most indocible, and despicable creatures, wherewith to confound his enemies. If Goliath stalk forth to defy the God of Israel, he shall be confuted with a pebble. If Herod swells up to a god, God will set his vermin on him, and all the king's guard cannot save him from them. You have heard of rats that could not be beaten off till they had destroyed that covetous prelate; and of the fly that killed Pope Adrian. God hath more ways to punish than he hath creatures. "*The Lord God of Hosts*" is not properly a title of creation, but of Providence. All creatures have their existence from God as their Maker; but so have they also their order from him as their Governor. It refers not so much to their being as to their marshalling; not to their natural but militant estate; not only as creatures do they owe him for their making, but as they are soldiers for their managing. Their order is warlike, and they serve under the colours of the Almighty. So that here, God would be respected, not as a creator, but as a general. His *anger*, therefore, seems so much the more fearful, as it is presented to us under so great a title: "*the Lord God of Hosts*" is *angry*. They talk of Tamerlane that he could daunt his enemies with the very look of his countenance. Oh! then what terror dwells in the countenance of an offended God! The reprobates shall call to the rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Re 6:16. If *ira agni* doth so affright them, how terrible is *ira leonis*, the wrath of the lion? It may justly trouble us all to hear that the Lord, "*the Lord God of Hosts*, "is *angry*; in the sense whereof the prophet breaks forth here into this expostulation: "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth?" *Thomas Adams*.

Verse 4. "*Angry against the prayer of thy people.*" There may be infirmities enough in our very prayers to make them unacceptable. As if they be *Exanimis*, without life and soul; when the heart knows not what the tongue utters. Or *Perfunctoriae*, for God will have none of those prayers that come out of feigned lips. Or *Tentativae*, for they that will *petere tentando*, tempt God in prayer, shall go without. Or *Fluctuantes*, of a wild and wandering discourse, ranging up and down, which the Apostle calls "beating the air," as huntsmen beat the bushes, and as Saul sought his father's asses. Such prayers will not stumble upon the kingdom of heaven. Or if they be *Preproperae*, run over in haste, as some use to chop up their prayers, and think long till they have done. But they that pray in such haste shall be heard at leisure. Or *sine fiducia*; the faithless man had as good hold his peace as pray; he may babble, but prays not; he prays ineffectually, and receives not. He may lift up his hands, but he does not lift up his heart. Only the prayer of the righteous availeth, and only the believer is righteous. But the formal devotion of a faithless man is not worth the crust of bread which he asks. Or

sine humilitate, so the pharisee's prayer was not truly *supplicatio*, but *superlatio*. A presumptuous prayer profanes the name of God instead of adoring it. All, or any, of these defects may mar the success of our prayers. *Thomas Adams*.

Verse 5. "*In great measure.*" The Hebrew *shalish* is the name of a measure, so called of *three*, as containing a *third part of the greatest measure*, four times as big as the usual cup to drink in. *Henry Ainsworth*.

Verse 7. "*Turn us again, O God of hosts.*" See Ps 80:3 and observe that there it was only, "*Turn us again, O God,*" here "*O God of hosts,*" and Ps 80:19, "*O Lord God of hosts.*" As the bird by much waving gathers wind under the wing, and mounts higher, so does faith in prayer: *viresque acquirit eundo*. *John Trapp*.

Verse 7. Salvation may be certainly expected in God's order; and if we labour to be sure of our turning to God, and living in the sense of communion with him, we need not make question of salvation, for that shall follow infallibly on the former two. "*Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*" The last is not put up by way of prayer here, but promised to themselves, and put out of question, that it shall follow; "*Turn us, so shall we be saved,*" say they. *David Dickson*.

Verse 8. "*Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt,*" etc. The blessings are here placed before us in figurative language, taken from the *vine*, and the care usually expended upon it. They are,

1. The transplanting of the vine from an unfruitful to a very rich and fertile soil.
2. Its plantation and care.
3. Its incredible fruitfulness derived hence. *Venema*.

Verses 8-19. Mant's version of the passage is so exquisite that we quote it in full:

8. Thy hands from Egypt brought a goodly vine, And planted fair in fertile Palestine;
9. Cleared for its grasping roots the unpeopled land, And gave it high to rise, and firm to stand.
10. Far over the eternal hills her shadow spread, Her tendrils wreathed the cedar's towering head;
11. And, as the centre of the land she stood, Her branches reaches the sea, her boughs the eastern flood.
12. Why hast thou now her hedges rent away, And left her bare, the passing traveller's prey?
13. The field fed beast devours each tender shoot, Fierce from the wood the boar assails her root.
14. Return, O God; from heaven thine eyes incline; Behold, and visit this neglected vine:
15. Regard the plant, thou once didst love so well, And chief thy pleasant branch, the hope of Israel.
16. Burnt though she be and rent, her haughty foe The deathly terrors of thy wrath shall know.
17. But on the man, by thee with strength array'd, The Son of Man by thee for conquest made,
18. Thy hand shall rest; till we thy triumph see, Resound thy praise, and still remember thee.
19. Turn us again, thou God of heaven's high powers, Beam with thy radiance forth, and peace shall

still be ours.

Verse 14. *Look down from heaven, and behold.* This prayer is fit for none but the truly contrite, and those who are in heart returning. Otherwise, with what conscience could we entreat God to look down from heaven and behold our affairs? Should we not inflame his anger all the more, if, besides living in sin, we dared to challenge the all holy eyes of God to behold from heaven our wickedness? *Musculus.*

Verse 14. *Look down from heaven.* Thou hast gone far from us, thou hast ascended to heaven. Thou hast departed from us, look down at least upon us from heaven, if thou art not willing to descend to earth, if our sins do not merit this. *Savonarola.*

Verse 14. *Visit this vine.* Still it has roots, still some branches are living. In the beginning of the world it began, and never has failed, and never will. For thou hast said, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It may be diminished, it can never utterly fall. This vine is the vine which thou hast planted. There is one spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Lord of all, who is all in all. Visit, then, this vine, for thy visitation preserves her spirit; visit by thy grace, by thy presence, by thy Holy Spirit. Visit with thy rod, and with thy staff; for thy rod and thy staff comfort her. Visit with thy scourge that she may be chastened and purified, for the time of pruning comes. Cast out the stones, gather up the dry branches, and bind them in bundles for burning. Raise her up, cut off the superfluous shoots, make fast her supports, enrich the soil, build up the fence, and visit this vine, as now thou visitest the earth and watereth it. *Savonarola.*

Verse 17. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,* etc. Neither the church, nor any member thereof needeth any more security for their stability and perpetuation, but Christ; for now when the vineyard is burnt, and the visible church defaced, the remnant are content to rest satisfied with this, which also they take for granted, and do subscribe unto it: *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.* The consanguinity of Christ with the believer, and his humiliation in his human nature, are strong supporters of the faith and comfort of his people that do seek salvation through him; therefore do the faithful here fix themselves on this, that as he is God's Son, so he is a branch of their vineyard also; that as he is at the right hand of the Father as God, so he is *the man of his right hand* also; the Son of Man, or of *Adam*, partaker of flesh and blood with us, of the same stock that we are of, in all things like to us, except sin; for the *Son of Man* is the style whereby Christ styled himself in his humiliation. The perpetuity of the church, and the perseverance of the saints, is founded upon the sufficiency of Christ; and the unfeigned believer may assure himself, as of the continuance of the church, so of his own perseverance and constant communion with God through him. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, etc.; so will not we go back from thee. David Dickson.*

Verse 17. *The man of thy right hand... The Son of Man.* These striking expressions apply in the

fullest and most perfect sense to Christ. If *the Man of God's right hand* be the man placed there, to whom can the title apply but to him? for, *to which of the angels said God at any time, Sit thou on my right hand?* Heb 1:5; and much less has he said this of any Jewish king. As to the other appellation, *The Son of Man*, it is one of Christ's most definite titles, being given to him in Scripture no less than seventy-one times; in sixty-seven instances by himself; once by Daniel; once by the martyr Stephen; and twice by the Apostle John in the Revelation. He it is, too, whom the Father has made strong for the salvation of his church, and who will yet turn away captivity from the chosen people, and restore them to a place in the church, so that henceforth they *will not go back from God*. *Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 17. The man of thy right hand. The man of the right hand is,

1. *Most dear*, whom one holds equally dear with his own right hand, Mt 5:29-30. Jacob called the son of his most beloved wife, Benjamin, the son of his right hand, Ge 35:18, who was so dear to him that his life was bound up in the lad's life, Ge 44:30.

2. *Most honoured*; a man upon whom one wishes to confer the highest honour, is placed at the right hand as Solomon placed his mother, 1Ki 2:19, and the spouse stands at the right hand, Ps 45:10. Sitting down at the right hand is in Scripture a proof of the greatest honour.

3. *Allied*, because covenants and mutual agreements are ratified by giving the right hand, 2Ki 10:15. Jehu said to Jehonadab, *Is thy heart right?* and Jehonadab answered, *It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand.* The right hand used to be given, as in Ga 2:9. *The man of God's right hand*, therefore, is one most dear to God, most honoured and joined with him in covenant. *James Alting. 1618-1679.*

Verse 17. Though the phrase, *man of thy right hand*, may have an immediate reference to the King who ruled in Judah when this Psalm was penned, it must ultimately and most properly intend Jesus Christ, the great antitype of all the kings of David's line. The New Testament is the best interpreter of the Old; and it assures us that this highly dignified man is the Son of God. Heb 1:1,3,13. But if we would understand the genuine import of the phrase, we must attend to a custom which obtained in Judea and other eastern countries. At meals, the master of the feast placed the person whom he loved best on his right hand, as a token of love and respect; and as they sat on couches, in the intervals between the dishes, when the master leaned on his left elbow, the man at his right hand, leaning also on his, would naturally repose his head on the master's bosom, while at the same time the master laid his right hand on the favourite's shoulder or side, in testimony of his favourable regards. This custom is obviously referred to in Joh 21:20, where John is called *the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also leaned on his breast at supper*. Now, since Christ is called *the man of God's right hand*, this says that he is the object of his warmest and most honourable regards. In him he is well pleased, and in token of this, he has set him in the most honourable place. He is the Son of Man,

whom the Father made to stand strong for himself, *i.e.*, to support the honour and dignity of the divine character amidst a perverse and crooked generation: the consideration of the Father's right hand being upon him, or of the Father's satisfaction in him as our Surety, serves to animate and embolden our addresses to his throne, and is the keenest incitement to put in practice that resolution, *Henceforth will we not go back from thee. Alexander Pirie.*

Verse 18. *So will not we*, etc. How are we to understand the connection between this and the preceding words? It may be understood two ways.

1. *As it would oblige them to the yielding of steadfast obedience*; it would lay them under a special engagement never to revolt any more, as they had done; if God would grant this request, it would be a most eminent tie and bond upon them to the most constant and faithful service.

2. *As it would enable them to yield such obedience.* And this I conceive to be chiefly aimed at; if God would lay such help upon Christ for them, they should receive power by that means to discharge their duty to him better than ever heretofore; though they were very feeble and wavering, false and treacherous of themselves, yet here would be a successful remedy. *Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 19. During distress God comes; and when he comes it is no more distress. *Gaelic Proverb.*

Verse 19. *Turn us again.* How well that we can look to God when our face is set wrong, that he may turn us, and so his face shine on us, as to bring blessing and present deliverance to his people. *J. N. Darby.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. In what respects the Lord acted as a Shepherd to Israel, as illustrative of his dealings with his Church.

Verse 2. Salvation expected in connection with the people of God, their prayers, labours, and daily service.

Verse 3. The double work in salvation, (1) Turn us; (2) Turn to us.

Verse 4. What prayers they are which make God angry.

Verse 5. Unpalatable provender.

1. Analyze the Provision.
2. Note the hand which sends it.
3. Consider the healthfulness of the diet.
4. Remember the alleviating accompaniments.

Verse 7. Conversion, communion, confidence of salvation.

Verses 8-15. Parallel between the Church and a vine.

Verse 12.

1. The hedges of the Church.

2. Their removal.

3. The deplorable consequences.

Verse 13. What are the greatest enemies of the Church? Where do they come from? How shall we defeat them?

Verses 17-18. The power of God seen in Jesus, the cause of the perseverance of the saints.

Verse 18 (*last clause*). The need of quickening in order to acceptable worship.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTIETH PSALM

Hieronymi Savonarolae Ferrariensis Meditationes in Psalmos—*Miserere—In Te Domine Speravi, et Qui Regis Israel* (12mo. Leyden: 1633).

A Few Words on the Eightieth Psalm. By CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH. 1835.

Psalm 81

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. To the Chief Musician upon Gittith. Very little is known of the meaning of this title. We have given the best explanation known to us in connection with Psalm 8 in Vol. 1 of this work. If it be intended to indicate a vintage song, it speaks well for the piety of the people for whom it was written; it is to be feared that in few places even in Christian countries would holy hymns be thought suitable to be sung in connection with the winepress. When the bells upon the horses shall be holiness unto the Lord, then shall the juice of the grape gush forth to the accompaniment of sacred song. A Psalm of Asaph. This poet here again dwells upon the history of his country; his great forte seems to be rehearsing the past in admonitory psalmody. He is the poet of the history and politics of Israel. A truly national songster, at once pious and patriotic.

DIVISION. Praise is called for to celebrate some memorable day, perhaps the passover; whereupon the deliverance out of Egypt is described, Ps 81:1-7. Then the Lord gently chides his people for their ingratitude, and pictures their happy estate had they but been obedient to his commands.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Sing*, in tune and measure, so that the public praise may be in harmony; sing with joyful notes, and sounds melodious. Aloud. For the heartiest praise is due to our good Lord. His acts of love to us speak more loudly than any of our words of gratitude can do. No dulness should ever stupefy our psalmody, or half heartedness cause is to limp along. Sing aloud, ye debtors to sovereign grace,

your hearts are profoundly grateful: let your voices express your thankfulness. Unto God our strength. The Lord was the strength of his people in delivering them out of Egypt with a high hand, and also in sustaining them in the wilderness, placing them in Canaan, preserving them from their foes, and giving them victory. To whom do men give honour but to those upon whom they rely, therefore let us sing aloud unto our God, who is our strength and our song. Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. The God of the nation, the God of their father Jacob, was extolled in happy music by the Israelitish people; let no Christian be silent, or slack in praise, for this God is our God. It is to be regretted that the niceties of modern singing frighten our congregations from joining lustily in the hymns. For our part we delight in full bursts of praise, and had rather discover the ruggedness of a want of musical training than miss the heartiness of universal congregational song. The gentility which lisps the tune in well bred whispers, or leaves the singing altogether to the choir, is very like a mockery of worship. The gods of Greece and Rome may be worshipped well enough with classical music, but Jehovah can only be adored with the heart, and that music is the best for his service which gives the heart most play.

Verse 2. *Take a psalm.* Select a sacred song, and then raise it with your hearty voices. And bring hither the timbrel. Beat on your tambourines, ye damsels, let the sound be loud and inspiriting. "Sound the trumpets, beat the drums." God is not to be served with misery but with mirthful music, sound ye then the loud timbrel, as of old ye smote it by "Egypt's dark sea." The pleasant harp with the psaltery. The timbrel for sound, must be joined by the harp for sweetness, and this by other stringed instruments for variety. Let the full compass of music be holiness unto the Lord.

Verse 3. *Blow up the trumpet in the new moon.* Announce the sacred month, the beginning of months, when the Lord brought his people out of the house of bondage. Clear and shrill let the summons be which calls all Israel to adore the Redeeming Lord. In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. Obedience is to direct our worship, not whim and sentiment: God's appointment gives a solemnity to rites and times which no ceremonial pomp or hierarchical ordinance could confer. The Jews not only observed the ordained month, but that part of the month which had been divinely set apart. The Lord's people in the olden time welcomed the times appointed for worship; let us feel the same exultation, and never speak of the Sabbath as though it could be other than "a delight" and "honourable." Those who plead this passage will keep such feasts as the Lord appoints, but not those which Rome or Canterbury may ordain.

Verse 4. *For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.* It was a precept binding upon all the tribes that a sacred season should be set apart to commemorate the Lord's mercy; and truly it was but the Lord's due, he had a right and a claim to such special homage. When it can be proved that the observance of Christmas, Whitsuntide, and other Popish festivals was ever instituted by a divine statute, we also will attend to them, but not till then. It is as much our duty to reject the

traditions of men, as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. We ask concerning every rite and rubric, "Is this a law of the God of Jacob?" and if it be not clearly so, it is of no authority with us, who walk in Christian liberty.

Verse 5. *This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony.* The nation is called Joseph, because in Egypt it would probably be known and spoken of as Joseph's family, and indeed Joseph was the foster father of the people. The passover, which is probably here alluded to, was to be a standing memorial of the redemption from Egypt; and everything about it was intended to testify to all ages, and all peoples, the glory of the Lord in the deliverance of his chosen nation. When he went out through the land of Egypt. Much of Egypt was traversed by the tribes in their exodus march, and in every place the feast which they had kept during the night of Egypt's visitation would be a testimony for the Lord, who had also himself in the midnight slaughter gone forth through the land of Egypt. The once afflicted Israelites marched over the land of bondage as victors who trample down the slain.

Where I heard a language that I understood not. Surely the connection requires that we accept these words as the language of the Lord. It would be doing great violence to language if the "I" here should be referred to one person, and the "I" in the next verse to another. But how can it be imagined that the Lord should speak of a language which he understood not, seeing he knows all things, and no form of speech is incomprehensible to him? The reply is, that the Lord here speaks as the God of Israel identifying himself with his own chosen nation, and calling that an unknown tongue to himself which was unknown to them. He had never been adored by psalm or prayer in the tongue of Egypt; the Hebrew was the speech known in his sacred house, and the Egyptian was outlandish and foreign there. In strictest truth, and not merely in figure, might the Lord thus speak, since the wicked customs and idolatrous rites of Egypt were disapproved of by him, and in that sense were unknown. Of the wicked, Jesus shall say, "I never knew you;" and probably in the same sense this expression should be understood, for it may be correctly rendered, "a speech I knew not I am hearing." It was among the griefs of Israel that their taskmasters spake an unknown tongue, and they were thus continually reminded that they were strangers in a strange land. The Lord had pity upon them, and emancipated them, and hence it was their bounden duty to maintain inviolate the memorial of the divine goodness. It is no small mercy to be brought out from an ungodly world and separated unto the Lord.

Verse 6. *I removed his shoulder from the burden.* Israel was the drudge and slave of Egypt, but God gave him liberty. It was by God alone that the nation was set free. Other peoples owe their liberties to their own efforts and courage, but Israel received its Magna Charta as a free gift of divine power. Truly may the Lord say of everyone of his freed men, I removed his shoulder from the burden. His hands were delivered *from the pots*. He was no longer compelled to carry earth, and mould it, and bake it; the earth basket was no more imposed upon the people, nor the tale of bricks exacted, for they came out into the open country where none could exact upon them. How typical all this is of the

believer's deliverance from legal bondage, when, through faith, the burden of sin glides into the Saviour's sepulchre, and the servile labours of self righteousness come to an end for ever.

Verse 7. *Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee.* God heard his people's cries in Egypt, and at the Red Sea: this ought to have bound them to him. Since God does not forsake us in our need, we ought never to forsake him at any time. When our hearts wander from God, our answered prayers cry "shame" upon us. I answered thee in the secret place of thunder. Out of the cloud the Lord sent forth tempest upon the foes of his chosen. That cloud was his secret pavilion, within it he hung up his weapons of war, his javelins of lightning his trumpet of thunder; forth from that pavilion he came and overthrew the foe that his own elect might be secure. I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. They had proved him and found him faithful, he afterwards proved them in return. Precious things are tested, therefore Israel's loyalty to her King was put to trial, and, alas, it failed lamentably. The God who was adored one day for his goodness was reviled the next, when the people for a moment felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin; great is the mercy of our God: let us reflect upon both, and pause a while. Selah. Hurried reading is of little benefit; to sit down a while and meditate is very profitable.

Verse 8. *Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee.* What? Are the people so insensible as to be deaf to their God? So it would seem, for he earnestly asks a hearing. Are we not also at times quite as careless and immovable? O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me. There is much in this "if." How low have they fallen who will not hearken unto God himself! The deaf adder is not more grovelling. We are not fond of being upbraided, we had rather avoid sharp and cutting truths; and, though the Lord himself rebuke us, we fly from his gentle reproofs.

Verse 9. *There shall no strange god be in thee.* No alien god is to be tolerated in Israel's tents. Neither shalt thou worship any strange god. Where false gods are, their worship is sure to follow. Man is so desperate an idolater that the image is always a strong temptation: while the nests are there the birds will be eager to return. No other god had done anything for the Jews, and therefore they had no reason for paying homage to any other. To us the same argument will apply. We owe all to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the world, the flesh, the devil, none of these have been of any service to us; they are aliens, foreigners, enemies, and it is not for us to bow down before them. "Little children keep yourselves from idols," is our Lord's voice to us, and by the power of his Spirit we would cast out every false god from our hearts.

Verse 10. *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.* Thus did Jehovah usually introduce himself to his people. The great deliverance out of Egypt was that claim upon his people's allegiance which he most usually pleaded. If ever people were morally bound to their God,

certainly Israel was a thousand times pledged unto Jehovah, by his marvellous deeds on their behalf in connection with the Exodus. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Because he had brought them out of Egypt he could do great things for them. He had proved his power and his good will; it remained only for his people to believe in him and ask large things of him. If their expectations were enlarged to the utmost degree, they could not exceed the bounty of the Lord. Little birds in the nest open their mouths widely enough, and perhaps the parent birds fail to fill them, but it will never be so with our God. His treasures of grace are inexhaustible,

"Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins."

The Lord began with his chosen nation upon a great scale, doing great wonders for them, and offering them vast returns for their faith and love, if they would but be faithful to him. Sad, indeed, was the result of this grand experiment.

Verse 11. *But my people would not hearken to my voice.* His warnings were rejected, his promises forgotten, his precepts disregarded. Though the divine voice proposed nothing but good to them, and that upon an unparalleled scale of liberality, yet they turned aside. And Israel would none of me. They would not consent to his proposals, they walked in direct opposition to his commands, they hankered after the ox god of Egypt, and their hearts were bewitched by the idols of the nations round about. The same spirit of apostacy is in all our hearts, and if we have not altogether turned aside from the Lord, it is only grace which has prevented us.

Verse 12. *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust.* No punishment is more just or more severe than this. If men will not be checked, but madly take the bit between their teeth and refuse obedience, who shall wonder if the reins are thrown upon their necks, and they are let alone to work out their own destruction. It were better to be given up to lions than to our hearts' lusts. And they walked in their own counsels. There was no doubt as to what course they would take, for man is everywhere wilful and loves his own way,—that way being at all times in direct opposition to God's way. Men deserted of restraining grace, sin with deliberation; they consult, and debate, and consider, and then elect evil rather than good, with malice aforethought and in cool blood. It is a remarkable obduracy of rebellion when men not only run into sin through passion, but calmly "walk in their own counsels" of iniquity.

Verse 13. *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!* The condescending love of God expresses itself in painful regrets for Israel's sin and punishment. Such were the laments of Jesus over Jerusalem. Certain doctrinalists find a stumbling stone in such passages, and set themselves to explain them away, but to men in sympathy with the divine nature the words and the emotions are plain enough. A God of mercy cannot see men heaping up sorrow for themselves through their sins without feeling his compassion excited toward them.

Verse 14. *I should soon have subdued their enemies.* As he did in Egypt overthrow Pharaoh, so

would he have baffled every enemy. And turned my hand against their adversaries. He would have smitten them once, and then have dealt them a return blow with the back of his hand. See what we lose by sin. Our enemies find the sharpest weapons against us in the armoury of our transgressions. They could never overthrow us if we did not first overthrow ourselves. Sin strips a man of his armour, and leaves him naked to his enemies. Our doubts and fears would long ago have been slain if we had been more faithful to our God. Ten thousand evils which afflict us now would have been driven far from us if we had been more jealous of holiness in our walk and conversation. We ought to consider not only what sin takes from our present stock, but what it prevents our gaining: reflections will soon show us that sin always costs us dear. If we depart from God, our inward corruptions are sure to make a rebellion. Satan will assail us, the world will worry us, doubts will annoy us, and all through our own fault. Solomon's departure from God raised up enemies against him, and it will be so with us, but if our ways please the Lord he will make even our enemies to be at peace with us.

Verse 15. *The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him.* Though the submission would have been false and flattering, yet the enemies of Israel would have been so humiliated that they would have hastened to make terms with the favoured tribes. Our enemies become abashed and cowardly when we, with resolution, walk carefully with the Lord. It is in God's power to keep the fiercest in check, and he will do so if we have a filial fear, a pious awe of him. But their time should have endured for ever. The people would have been firmly established, and their prosperity would have been stable. Nothing confirms a state or a church like holiness. If we be firm in obedience we shall be firm in happiness. Righteousness establishes, sin ruins.

Verse 16. *He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat.* Famine would have been an unknown word, they would have been fed on the best of the best food, and have had abundance of it as their every day diet. And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee. Luxuries as well as necessaries would be forthcoming, the very rocks of the land would yield abundant and sweet supplies; the bees would store the clefts of the rocks with luscious honey, and so turn the most sterile part of the land to good account. The Lord can do great things for an obedient people. When his people walk in the light of his countenance, and maintain unsullied holiness, the joy and consolation which he yields them are beyond conception. To them the joys of heaven have begun even upon earth. They can sing in the ways of the Lord. The spring of the eternal summer has commenced with them; they are already blest, and they look for brighter things. This shows us by contrast how sad a thing it is for a child of God to sell himself into captivity to sin, and bring his soul into a state of famine by following after another god. O Lord, for ever bind us to thyself alone, and keep us faithful unto the end.

TITLE. It is remarkable that as Psalm 80 treats of the church of God under the figure of a vine, so the present is entitled, "*upon Gittith*," literally upon the winepress. Whether the expression was meant to refer to a musical instrument, or to some direction as to the tune, is uncertain. In our Saviour's adoption of the figure of a vineyard to represent his church, he speaks of a winepress dug in it, Mt 21:33. The idea refers itself to the final result in some sense, in a way of salvation of souls, as the same figure of a winepress is used in Revelation 16 of the final destruction of the ungodly. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 2. *Timbrel.* The *toph*, English version *tabret*, *timbrel*, LXX., *tumpanon*, once *qalthrion*. It was what would now be called a tambourine, being played by the hand; and was specially used by women. It is thrice mentioned in the Ps 81:2 Ps 149:3 150:4. *Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 2. *The Psaltery.* It is probably impossible to be sure as to what is intended by a psaltery. The Genevan version translates it *viol*, and the ancient viol was a six stringed guitar. In the Prayer book version, the Hebrew word is rendered *lute*, which instrument resembled the guitar, but was superior in tone. The Greek word "psalterion" denotes a stringed instrument played with the fingers. Cassidorus says that the psaltery was triangular in shape, and that it was played with a bow. Aben Ezra evidently considered it to be a kind of pipe, but the mass of authorities make it a stringed instrument. It was long in use, for we read of it in David's time as made of fir wood (2Sa 6:55), and in Solomon's reign, of algum trees (2Ch 9:11), and it was still in use in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3. *Blow up the trumpet*, etc. The Jews say this blowing of trumpets was in commemoration of Isaac's deliverance, a ram being sacrificed for him, and therefore they sounded with trumpets made of ram's horns: or in remembrance of the trumpet blown at the giving of the law; though it rather was an emblem of the gospel and ministry of it, by which sinners are aroused, awakened and quickened, and souls are charmed and allured, and filled with spiritual joy and gladness. *John Gill.*

Verse 3. *The trumpet.* The sound of the trumpet is very commonly employed in Scripture as an image of the voice or word of God. The voice of God, and the voice of the trumpet on Mount Sinai, were heard together (Ex 19:5,18-19), first the trumpet sound as the symbol, then the reality. So also John heard the voice of the Lord as that of a trumpet (Re 1:10 4:1), and the sound of the trumpet is once and again spoken of as the harbinger of the Son of Man, when coming in power and great glory, to utter the almighty word which shall quicken the dead to life, and make all things new (Mt 24:31 1Co 15:52; 1Th 4:16). The sound of the trumpet, then, was a symbol of the majestic, omnipotent voice or word of God; but of course only in those things in which it was employed in respect to what God had to say to men. It might be used also as from man to God, or by the people, as from one to another. In this case, it would be a call to a greater than usual degree of alacrity and excitement in regard to the work and service of God. And such probably was the more peculiar design of the blowing of trumpets at the festivals generally, and especially at the festival of trumpets on the first day of the second month. *Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 3. *"In the new moon, "etc.* The feast of the *new moon* was always proclaimed by sound of trumpet. For want of astronomical knowledge, the poor Jews were put to sad shifts to know the real time of the new moon. They generally sent persons to the top of some hill or mountain about the time which, according to their supputations, the new moon should appear. The first who saw it was to give immediate notice to the Sanhedrim; they closely examined the reporter as to his credibility, and whether his information agreed with their calculations. If all was found satisfactory, the president proclaimed the new moon by shouting out, *wdqm mikkodesh!* "It is consecrated." This word was repeated *twice* aloud by the people; and was then proclaimed everywhere by *blowing of horns*, or what is called the sound of *trumpets*. Among the Hindus some feasts are announced by the sound of the *conch*, or *sacred shell*. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3. In the time appointed. The word rendered *the time appointed*, signifies the *hidden or covered* period; that is, the time when the moon is concealed or covered with darkness. This day was a joyful festival, returning every month; but the first day of the seventh moon was most solemn of the whole; being not only the first of the moon, but of the civil year. This was called the feast of trumpets, as it was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets from sunrising to sun setting; according to the command, "It shall be a day of the blowing of trumpets to you." This joy was a memorial of the joy of creation, and the joy of giving the law; it also preindicated the blowing of the gospel trumpet, after the dark, the covered period of the death of Christ, when the form of the church changed, and the year of the "redeemed" began; and finally, it prefigured the last day, when the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. *Alexander Pirie.*

Verse 5. *I heard a language that I understood not.* The *language* that he then heard—the religious worship of idolaters,—vows offered up "to birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," Ro 1:23, and strength and mercy sought from every object in nature, *except himself*, —was a language unknown to him—"he knew it not." *William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 6. *Pots, or burden baskets.* Compare Ex 6:6-7. Rosellini gives a drawing of these baskets from a picture discovered in a tomb at Thebes. "Of the labourers," says he, "some are employed in transporting the clay in vessels, some in intermingling it with 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 dissimilarity to the Egyptians appears at the first view: their complexion, physiognomy and beard permit us not to be mistaken in supposing them to be Hebrews." *Frederic Fysh.*

Verse 6. *Pots.* The bricklayer's baskets; hanging one at each end of a yoke laid across the shoulders. *William Kay.*

Verse 7. To *answer in the secret place of thunder*, refers us to the pillar of cloud and fire, the habitation of the awful Majesty of God, whence God glanced with angry eyes upon the Egyptians,

filled them with consternation and overthrew them. *Venema*.

Verse 10. *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Surely this teaches us, that the greater and more valuable the blessings are which we implore from the divine beneficence, the more sure shall we be to receive them in answer to prayer...But, though men are to be blamed, that they so seldom acknowledge God in any thing, yet they are still more to be blamed, that they seek not from him the chief good. Men may, however, possibly cry to God for inferior things, and apply in vain. Even good men may ask for temporal blessings, and not receive them; because the things we suppose good, may *not* be good, or not good *for us*, or not good for us *at present*. But none shall seek God for the best of blessings in vain. If we ask *enough*, we shall have it. While the worldling drinks in happiness, if it will bear the name, with the mouth of an insect, the Christian imbibes bliss with the mouth of an angel. His pleasures are the same in kind, with the pleasure of the infinitely happy God. *John Ryland*.

Verse 10. *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* You may easily over expect the creature, but you cannot over expect God: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it; "widen and dilate the desires and expectations of your souls, and God is able to fill every chink to the vastest capacity. This honours God, when we greaten our expectations upon him, it is a sanctifying of God in our hearts. *Thomas Case (1598-1682), in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 10. *Open thy mouth wide.* This implies,

1. Warmth and fervency in prayer. To open the mouth is in effect to open the heart, that it may be both engaged and enlarged... We may be said to open our mouths wide when our affections are quick and lively, and there is a correspondence between the feelings of the heart and the request of the lips; or when we really pray, and not merely seem to do so. This is strongly and beautifully expressed in Ps 119:131: *I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.*

2. It implies a holy fluency and copiousness of expression, so as to order our cause before him, and fill our mouths with arguments. When the good man gets near to God, he has much business to transact with him, many complaints to make, and many blessings to implore; and, as such seasons do not frequently occur, he's the more careful to improve them. He then pours out his whole soul, and is at no loss for words; for when the heart is full, the tongue overflows. Sorrow and distress will even make those eloquent who are naturally slow of speech.

3. Enlarged hope and expectation. We may be too irreverent in our approaches to God, and too peremptory in our application; but if the matter and manner of our prayer be right, we cannot be too confident in our expectations from him... Open thy mouth wide then, O Christian; stretch out thy desires to the uttermost, grasp heaven and earth in thy boundless wishes, and believe there is enough in God to afford the full satisfaction. Not only come, but come with boldness to the throne of grace: it is erected for sinners, even the chief of sinners. Come to it then, and wait at it, till you obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Those who expect most from God are likely to receive

the most. The desire of the righteous, let it be ever so extensive, shall be granted. *Benjamin Beddome.*

Verse 10. *I will fill it.* Consider the import of the promise: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." Particularly,

1. If we open our mouths to God in prayer, he will fill them more and more with suitable petitions and arguments. When we attempt to open the mouth, God will open it still wider. Thus he dealt with Abraham when he interceded for Sodom; the longer he prayed, the more submissive and yet the more importunate he became. By praying we increase our ability to pray, and find a greater facility in the duty. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly."

2. God will fill the mouth with abundant thanksgivings. Many of David's psalms begin with prayer, and end with the most animated praises. No mercies so dispose to thankfulness as those which are received in answer to prayer; for according to the degree of desire will be the sweetness of fruition...

3. We shall be filled with those blessings we pray for, if they are calculated to promote our real good and the glory of God. Do we desire fresh communications of grace, and manifestations of divine love; a renewed sense of pardoning mercy, and an application of the blood of Christ? Do we want holiness, peace, and assurance? Do we want to hear from God, to see him, and be like him? The promise is, *My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*, Php 4:19. You shall have what you desire, and be satisfied: it shall be enough, and you shall think it so. "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Benjamin Beddome.

Verse 10. The custom is said still to exist in Persia that when the king wishes to do a visitor, an ambassador for instance, especial honour, he desires him to open his mouth wide; and the king then crams it as full of sweetmeats as it will hold; and sometimes even with jewels. Curious as this custom is, it is doubtless referred to in Ps 81:10: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;* not with baubles of jewels, but with far richer treasure. *John Gadsby.*

Verse 11. *My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.* Know, sinner, that if at last thou missest heaven, which, God forbid! the Lord can wash his hands over your head, and clear himself of your blood: thy damnation will be laid at thine own door: it will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the gospel, but thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary: *My people would have none of me.* So that, when the jury shall sit on thy murdered soul, to inquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thy own damnation. No one loseth God, but he that is willing to part with him. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 11. *And Israel would none of me.* It is added, *and Israel would none of me,* more closely, *was not borne to me by a natural bent.* For this is the original force of the word *hka*, as it still survives in

Job 9, where it is used of the ships borne outward by a favourable wind and tide. *Venema*.

Verse 11. *Israel would none of me.* That is, would not be content alone with me, would not *take quiet contentment in me* (as the Hebrew word signifies); the Lord was not good enough for them, but their hearts went out from him to other things. *Thomas Sheppard, 1605-1649.*

Verse 12. *So I gave them up.* The word *give up* suggests the idea of a *divorce*, whereby a husband sends away a capricious wife, and commands her to live by herself...Transferred to God, it teaches us nothing else than that God withdraws his *protecting* and *guiding* hand from the people, and leaves them to themselves; so that he ceases to chasten and defend them, but, on the other hand, suffers them *to become hardened and to perish.* *Venema.*

Verse 12. *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts,* etc. A man may be given up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved, but to be given up to sin is a thousand times worse, because that is the fruit of divine anger, in order to the damnation of the soul; here God wounds like an enemy and like a cruel one, and we may boldly say, God never punished any man or woman with this spiritual judgment in kindness and love. *John Shower (1657-1715), in "The Day of Grace."*

Verse 12. *I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts.* O dreadful word! The same will the Spirit do upon our rejecting or resisting of his leading. He may long strive, but he will "not always strive," Ge 6:3. If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more... Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you. You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How does he wander and bewilder himself, when the Spirit does not guide him! How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! How unable to go, when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's leading! Take a good man without this, and he is like a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a poor child that has none to sustain it, the rude multitude that have none to keep them in any order. What a sad difference is there in the same person, as to what he is when the Spirit *leads* him, and as to what he is when the Spirit *leaves* him!

OBJECTION.—"But does the Spirit at any time do this to God's people? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it?"

ANSWER.—Yes; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him; and when he is grieved he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally; yet for a time and in such a degree. As a guide, that is to

conduct the traveller; if this traveller shall refuse to follow him, or shall give unkind usage to him, what does the guide then do? Why, he receded, and leaves him to shift for himself. It is thus in the case in hand: if we comply with the Spirit, in his motions, and use him tenderly, he will hold on in his leading of us; but if otherwise, he will concern himself no more about us. O, take heed how you carry yourself towards him: not only upon ingenuousness, it is base to be unkind to our Guide, (*Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?* Jer 2:17,)but also upon the account of self love: for "as we behave ourselves to him, so he will behave himself to us:" *"Ita nos tractat, ut a nobis tractatur."* Thomas Jacombe (1622-1687), in *"Morning Exercises."*

Verse 12. *I gave them up...and they walked in their own counsels.* That was to give them up to a spirit of division, to a spirit of discontent, to a spirit of envy, and jealousy, to a spirit of ambition, of self seeking and emulation, and so to a spirit of distraction and confusion, and so to ruin and destruction. Such, and no better, is the issue, when God gives a people up to their own counsels; then they soon become a very chaos, and run themselves into a ruinous heap. As good have no counsel from man, as none but man's. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12. God calls upon Israel to hear and obey him, they will not: *But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.* What was the result of their refusal? *So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust: and they walked in their own counsels.* God doth not testify his anger for their contempt of him be sending plague, or flames, or wild beasts among them. He doth not say, Well, since they thus slight my authority, I will be avenged on them to purpose; I will give them up to the sword, or famine, or racking diseases, or greedy devouring lions, which would have been sad and grievous; but he executes on them a far more sad and grievous judgment, when he saith, *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.* God's leaving one soul to one lust, (One's soul to one's lust?) is far worse than leaving him to all the lions in the world. Alas! it will tear the soul worse than a lion can do the body, and rend it in pieces, when there is none to deliver it. God's giving them up to their own wills, that they walked in their own counsels, is in effect a giving them up to eternal wrath and woe. *George Swinnock.*

Verse 12. God moves everything on his ordinary providence according to their particular natures, God moves everything ordinarily according to the nature he finds it in. Had we stood in innocency, we had been moved according to that originally righteous nature; but since our fall we are moved according to that nature introduced into us with the expulsion of the other. Our first corruption was our own act, not God's work; we owe our creation to God, our corruption to ourselves. Now since God will govern his creature, I do not see how it can be otherwise, than according to the present nature of the creature, unless God be pleased to alter that nature. God forces no man against his nature; he doth not force the will in conversion, but graciously and powerfully inclines it. He doth never force nor

incline the will to sin, but leaves it to the corrupt habits it hath settled in itself: *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels;* counsels of their own framing, not of God's. He moves the will, which is *sponte mala*, according to its own nature and counsels. As a man flings several things out of his hand, which are of several figures, some spherical, tetragons, cylinders, conics, some round and some square, though the motion be from the agent, yet the variety of their motions is from their own figure and frame; and if any will hold his hand upon a ball in its motion, regularly it will move according to its nature and figure; and a man by casting a bowl out of his hand, is the cause of the motion, but the bad bias is the cause of its irregular motion. The power of action is from God, but the viciousness of that action from our own nature. As when a clock or watch hath some fault in any of the wheels, the man that winds it up, or putting his hand upon the wheels moves them, he is the cause of the motion, but it is the flaw in it, a deficiency of something, is the cause of its erroneous motion; that error was not from the person that made it, or the person that winds it up, and sets it on going, but from some other cause; yet till it be mended it will not go otherwise, so long as it is set upon motion. Our motion is from God,—Ac 17:28, *In him we move*, —but not the disorder of that motion. It is the fulness of a man's stomach at sea is the cause of his sickness, and not the pilot's government of the ship. God doth not infuse the lust, to excite it, though he doth present the object about which the lust is exercised. God delivered up Christ to the Jews, he presented him to them, but never commanded them to crucify him, nor infused that malice into them, nor quickened it; but he, seeing such a frame, withdrew his restraining grace, and left them to the conduct of their own vitiated wills. All the corruption in the world ariseth from lust in us, not from the objects which God in his providence presents to us: 2Pe 1:4, *The corruption that is in the world through lust.* Stephen Charnock.

Verse 13. *Oh that my people had hearkened unto me*, etc. God sometimes doth not mind his children when they cry, that they may hereby take occasion to remember how oft he hath cried and they have not minded him. Doth not the Lord cry out to his people of duty and they do not hear him? Doth he not complain here of this neglect, not only as a dishonour, but as a grief unto him? No marvel then if God let his people cry out of misery, and doth not hear them. The Lord shuts his ear that we might consider how we have shut our ears; yea, he shuts his ears that he may open ours. We are moved to hear and answer the call and command of God, though we find that he doth not hear nor answer our call and cry. If the Lord should always be swift to hear us, how slow should we be in hearing him, and while we have our desires, forget most of our duties. Abraham Wright.

Verse 13. *Oh that my people had hearkened*, etc. God speaks as if he were comforted when he is but heard, or as if we comforted him when we hear him. God beseecheth us, and speaks entreaties to us, that his counsels and commands may be heard: *Oh that my people had hearkened unto me.* The Lord tells them indeed it would have proved their consolation (Ps 81:14): *I should soon have*

subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. Yet while he speaks so pathetically, he seems to include his own consolation in it as well as theirs. *Oh that my people had hearkened unto me:* it would have been good for them, and it would have given high content to myself. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13. *Oh that my people had hearkened unto me,* etc. There is to us a deep mysteriousness in all this; but the desire of God for our salvation and right moral state, is here most obviously manifested: and let us proceed on that which is obvious, not on that which is obscure. *Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 13. *Walked in my ways.* None are found in the *ways* of God, but those who have *hearkened* to his words. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 14. *Turned my hand.* God expresseth the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people, but by the *turning of a hand:* if God do but turn his hand, they are all gone presently, soon subdued. If he do but touch the might, the pomp, the greatness, the riches and the power of all those in the world that are opposers of his church, presently they fall to the ground: a touch from the hand of God will end our wars. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16. *Honey out of the rock.* The rock spiritually and mystically designs Christ, the Rock of salvation, 1Co 10:4; the *honey* out of the rock, the fulness of grace in him, and the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David, and the precious promises of the everlasting covenant; and the gospel, which is sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb, and with these such are filled and satisfied who hearken to Christ and walk in his ways; for, as the whole of what is here said shows what Israel lost by disobedience, it clearly suggests what such enjoy who hear and obey. *John Gill.*

Verse 16. *Honey out of the rock.* God extracts honey out of the rock—the sweetest springs and pleasures from the hardness of afflictions; from mount Calvary and the cross, the blessings that give greatest delight; whereas the world makes from the fountains of pleasure stones and rocks of torment. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 16. *Honey out of the rock.* Most travellers who have visited Palestine in summer have had their attention directed to the abundance of honey, which the bees of the land have stored up in the hollows of trees and in crevices of the rock. In localities where the bare rocks of the desert alone break the sameness of the scene, and all around is suggestive of desolation and death, the traveller has God's care of his chosen people vividly brought to mind, as he sees the honey which the bees had treasured up beyond his reach, trickling in shining drops down the face of the rock. *John Duns.*

Verse 16. When once a people or a person are accepted of God, he spares no cost, nor thinks anything too costly for them. *He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.* I would not have fed thee with wheat only, that's good; but with the finest wheat, that's the best. We put in the margin, *with the fat of wheat;* they

should not have had the bran, but the flour, and the finest of the flour; they should have had not only honey, but honey out of the rock, which, as naturalists observe, is the best and purest honey. Surely God cannot think anything of this world too good for his people, who hath not thought the next world too good for them; certainly God cannot think any of these outward enjoyments too good for his people, who hath not thought his Son too good for his people; that's the apostle's argument, Ro 8:32: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? even the best of outward good things, when he seeth it good for us. Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. Congregational singing should be general, hearty, joyful. The reasons for this, and the benefits of it.

Verses 1-3.

1. Praise should be sincere. It can come from the people of God only.
2. It should be constant: they should praise God at all times.
3. It should be special. There should be seasons of special praise.
 - (a) Appointed by God, as Sabbaths and solemn feasts.
 - (b) Demanded by providence on occasion of special deliverances and special mercies.
4. It should be public: "sing aloud:" "bring hither, "etc. *G. R.*

Verse 4. The rule of ordinances and worship; pleas for going beyond it; instances in various churches; the sin and danger of such will worship.

Verse 5. What there is in the language of the world which is unintelligible to the sons of God.

Verse 6. The emancipation of believers. Law work is burdensome, servile, never completed, unrewarded, more and more irksome. Only the Lord can deliver us from this slavish toil, and he does it by grace and by power. We do well to remember the time of our liberation, exhibit gratitude for it, and live consistently with it.

Verse 7.

1. Answered prayers,—bonds of gratitude.
2. Former testing times,—warning memories.
3. The present a time for new answers as it is also for fresh tests.

Verse 7. *Waters of Meribah.* The various test points of the believer's life.

Verses 8-10.

1. A compassionate Father, calling to his child: *O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me.*
2. A jealous sovereign, laying down his law: *There shall no strange god be in thee.*

3. An all sufficient Friend, challenging confidence: *I am the Lord thy God: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Richard Cecil. 1748-1810.

Verses 8, 11, 13. The command, the disobedience, the regret.

Verses 11, 12.

1. The sin of Israel. They would not hearken. The mouth is opened in attentive hearing: *open thy mouth wide; but* my people, etc. Their sin was greatly aggravated

1. By what God had done for them.
2. By the gods they had preferred to him.
2. The punishment.

1. Its greatness: *I gave them up, etc.*
2. Its justice: *They would none of me.* G. R.

Verses 8, 11, 13. The command, the disobedience, the regret.

Verse 13. The excellent estate of an obedient believer.

1. Enemies subdued.
2. Enjoyments perpetuated.
3. Abundance possessed.

Verses 13-14. The sin and loss of the backslider.

Verse 14. Spiritual enemies best combatted by an obedient life.

Verse 16.

1. Spiritual dainties.
2. By whom provided.
3. To whom given.
4. With what result—"satisfied."

Psalm 82

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. A Psalm of Asaph. This poet of the temple here acts as a preacher to the court and to the magistracy. Men who do one thing well are generally equal to another; he who writes good verse is not unlikely to be able to preach. What preaching it would have been had Milton entered the pulpit, or had Virgil been an apostle.

Asaph's sermon before the judges is now before us. He speaks very plainly, and his song is rather

characterised by strength than by sweetness. We have here a clear proof that all psalms and hymns need not be direct expressions of praise to God; we may, according to the example of this psalm, admonish one another in our songs. Asaph no doubt saw around him much bribery and corruption, and while David punished it with the sword, he resolved to scourge it with a prophetic psalm. In so doing, the sweet singer was not forsaking his profession as a musician for the Lord, but rather was practically carrying it out in another department. He was praising God when he rebuked the sin which dishonoured him, and if he was not making music, he was hushing discord when he bade rulers dispense justice with impartiality.

DIVISION. The Psalm is a whole and needs no formal division.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty.* He is the overlooker, who, from his own point of view, sees all that is done by the great ones of the earth. When they sit in state he stands over them, ready to deal with them if they pervert judgment. Judges shall be judged, and to justices justice shall be meted out. Our village squires and country magistrates would do well to remember this. Some of them had need go to school to Asaph till they have mastered this psalm. Their harsh decisions and strange judgments are made in the presence of him who will surely visit them for every unseemly act, for he has no respect unto the person of any, and is the champion of the poor and needy. A higher authority will criticise the decision of petty sessions, and even the judgments of our most impartial judges will be revised by the High Court of heaven. He judgeth among the gods. They are gods to other men, but he is GOD to them. He lends them his name, and this is their authority for acting as judges, but they must take care that they do not misuse the power entrusted to them, for the Judge of judges is in session among them. Our puisne judges are but puny judges, and their brethren who administer common law will one day be tried by the common law. This great truth is, upon the whole, well regarded among us in these times, but it was not so in the earlier days of English history, when Jeffries, and such as he, were an insult to the name of justice. Oriental judges, even now, are frequently, if not generally, amenable to bribes, and in past ages it was very hard to find a ruler who had any notion of justice apart from his own arbitrary will. Such plain teaching as this psalm contains was needful indeed, and he was a bold good man who, in such courtly phrases, delivered his own soul.

Verse 2. *How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked?* It is indirectly stated that the magistrates had been unjust and corrupt. They not only excused the wicked, but even decided in their favour against the righteous. A little of this is too much, a short time too long. Some suitors could get their claims settled at once, and in their own favour, while others were wearing out their lives by waiting for an audience, or were robbed by legal process because their opponents had

the judge's ear: how long were such things to be perpetuated? Would they never remember the Great Judge, and renounce their wickedness? This verse is so grandly stern that one is tempted to say, "Surely an Elijah is here." Selah. This gives the offenders pause for consideration and confession.

Verse 3. *Defend the poor and fatherless.* Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Look not to the interests of the wealthy whose hands proffer you bribes, but protect the rights of the needy, and especially uphold the claims of orphans whose property too often becomes a prey. Do not hunt down the peasant for gathering a few sticks, and allow the gentlemanly swindler to break through the meshes of the law. Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Even they can claim from you as judge no more than justice; your pity for their circumstances must not make you hold the scales unfairly: but if you give them no more than justice, at least be sure that you give them that to the full. Suffer not the afflicted to be further afflicted by enduring injustice, and let not the needy long stand in need of an equitable hearing.

Verse 4. *Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.* Break the nets of the man catchers, the legal toils, the bonds, the securities, with which cunning men capture and continue to hold in bondage the poor and the embarrassed. It is a brave thing when a judge can liberate a victim like a fly from the spider's web, and a horrible case when magistrate and plunderer are in league. Law has too often been an instrument for vengeance in the hand of unscrupulous men, an instrument as deadly as poison or the dagger. It is for the judge to prevent such villainy.

Verse 5. *They know not, neither will they understand.* A wretched plight for a nation to be in when its justices know no justice, and its judges are devoid of judgment. Neither to know his duty nor to wish to know it is rather the mark of an incorrigible criminal than of a magistrate, yet such a stigma was justly set upon the rulers of Israel. They walk on in darkness. They are as reckless as they are ignorant. Being both ignorant and wicked they yet dare to pursue a path in which knowledge and righteousness are essential: they go on without hesitation, forgetful of the responsibilities in which they are involved, and the punishment which they are incurring. All the foundations of the earth are out of course. When the dispensers of law have dispensed with justice, settlements are unsettled, society is unhinged, the whole fabric of the nation is shaken. When injustice is committed in due course of law the world is indeed out of course. When "Justices' justice" becomes a byword it is time that justice dealt with justices. Surely it would be well that certain of "the great unpaid" should be paid off, when day after day their judgments show that they have no judgment. When peasants may be horsewhipped by farmers with impunity, and a pretty bird is thought more precious than poor men, the foundations of the earth are indeed sinking like rotten piles unable to bear up the structures built upon them. Thank God we have, as an almost invariable rule, incorruptible judges; may it always be so. Even our lesser magistrates are, in general, most worthy men; for which we ought to be grateful

to God evermore.

Verse 6. *I have said, ye are gods.* The greatest honour was thus put upon them; they were delegated gods, clothed for a while with a little of that authority by which the Lord judges among the sons of men. And all of you are children of the Most High. This was their *ex-officio* character, not their moral or spiritual relationship. There must be some government among men, and as angels are not sent to dispense it, God allows men to rule over men, and endorses their office, so far at least that the prostitution of it becomes an insult to his own prerogatives. Magistrates would have no right to condemn the guilty if God had not sanctioned the establishment of government, the administration of law, and the execution of sentences. Here the Spirit speaks most honourably of these offices, even when it censures the officers; and thereby teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, honour to the office even if we award censure to the officer bearer.

Verse 7. *But ye shall die like men.* What sarcasm it seems! Great as the office made the men, they were still but men, and must die. To every judge this verse is a *memento mori!* He must leave the bench to stand at the bar, and on the way must put off the ermine to put on the shroud. And fall like one of the princes. Who were usually the first to die: for battle, sedition, and luxury, made greater havoc among the great than among any others. Even as princes have often been cut off by sudden and violent deaths, so should the judges be who forget to do justice. Men usually respect the office of a judge, and do not conspire to slay him, as they do to kill princes and kings; but injustice withdraws this protection, and puts the unjust magistrate in personal danger. How quickly death unrobes the great. What a leveller he is. He is no advocate for liberty, but in promoting equality and fraternity he is a masterly democrat. Great men die as common men do. As their blood is the same, so the stroke which lets out their life produces the same pains and throes. No places are too high for death's arrows: he brings down his birds from the tallest trees. It is time that all men considered this.

Verse 8. *Arise, O God, and judge the earth.* Come thou Judge of all mankind, put the bad judges to thy bar and end their corruption and baseness. Here is the world's true hope of rescue from the fangs of tyranny. For thou shalt inherit all nations. The time will come when all races of men shall own their God, and accept him as their king. There is one who is "King by right divine," and he is even now on his way. The last days shall see him enthroned, and all unrighteous potentates broken like potter's vessels by his potent sceptre. The second advent is still earth's brightest hope. Come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Asaph, who has written so much in the previous Psalms of the coming of Christ in the flesh, now speaks of his second coming to judgment. *Josephus Maria Thomasius.* 1649-1713.

Verse 1. *God standeth.* He is said to *stand*, because of his immutability, his power, his abiding

presence, and also because of his promptness in act, to decide for the right, and to help the poor, as he did S. Stephen. But one commentator draws a yet deeper lesson from the word *stand*. He reminds us that it is for the judge to sit, and for the litigants or accused to stand; as it is written, *Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening*. Ex 18:13. It is then a solemn warning for judges to remember, that whatever cause is before them is God's cause, since right and wrong are at stake in it, and that by acquitting the guilty, or condemning the innocent, they pass sentence against God himself. *Albertus Magnus, Le Blanc, and Agellius, quoted by Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 1. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, or, of God.* These words are exegetical, and help to illustrate what he had said before: *God standeth in the congregation of God*. What is that? Why he judgeth as supreme amongst the judges of the world. He stands not as a cipher, or a bare spectator, but he himself makes one amongst them.

1. He judgeth actively amongst them. We look upon men, and think the judgment is theirs, but it is God that exerciseth judgment amongst them.

2. Passively, he is so in the midst of these earthly gods, that if they do unjustly he will execute justice on them, and judge the judges of the world; for though they be great, yet there is a greater than they, to whom they must shortly give an account. *Thomas Hall*. 1659-60.

Verse 1. *In the congregation.* Rulers must understand that they are not placed over stocks and stones, nor over swine and dogs, but over the congregation of God: they must therefore be afraid of acting against God himself when they act unjustly. *Martin Luther*.

Verse 2. *And accept the persons of the wicked.* The last clause exemplifies one of the most peculiar Hebrew idioms. The combination usually rendered *respect persons* in the English Bible, and applied to judicial partiality, means literally to *take (or take up) faces*. Some suppose this to mean the raising of the countenance, or causing to look up from dejection. But the highest philological authorities are now agreed, that the primary idea is that of accepting one man's face or person rather than another's, the precise form of expression, though obscure, being probably derived from the practice of admitting suitors to confer with governors or rulers, face to face, a privilege which can sometimes only be obtained by bribes, especially, though not exclusively, in oriental courts. *Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 3. It is said of Francis the First, of France, that when a woman kneeled to him to beg justice, he bade her stand up; for, said he, Woman, it is justice that I owe thee, and justice thou shalt have; if thou beg anything of me, let it be mercy. A happy place and people surely, where justice (as it seemeth), was not extorted, but dropt as kindly as honey from the comb; where there was no sale of offices, no exchanging of fees, no subtleties of delay, no trucking for expedition, no making snares of petty and penal statutes: where Justice had scales in her hand, not to weigh gold, but equity: where judges and magistrates were as Noah's ark, to take in weary doves, and as the horns of the altar, for

oppressed innocency to betake himself unto; where lawyers, advocates, pleaders, did not call evil good, or good evil, bitter sweet, etc., where plaintiffs and accusers did not inform or persecute through malice, envy, or for advantage; where subordinate officers durst not help potent delinquents out of the briars, nor suffer poor men, tempest tossed in law, to languish in their business within ken of harbour for want of giving a sop to Cerberus, or sacrificing to the great Diana of expedition; where those setting dogs, such as base, promoting informers, were not countenanced, and severely punished upon any false, unjust, or malicious information. To close up all, where the magistrate owed justice to the people, and paid it; where the people begged for *mercy* and had it. *William Price*. 1642.

Verses 3-4. The touchstone of magistrates' justice is in the causes and cases of the *poor, fatherless, afflicted, and needy*, who are not able to attend long their suits of law, have no friends nor money to deal for them; to whom, therefore, the mighty should be eyes to direct them, and a staff to their weakness, to support and help them in their right. *David Dickson*.

Verse 5. *They know not, neither will they understand*, etc. Every judge must have in him (as Baldus actually said) two kinds of salt; the first is *sal scientiae*, that he may know his duty; the second is *sal conscientiae*, that he may do his duty. Such as fail in the first, are censured here with a *nescierunt*, and *non intellexerunt*; such as fall in the second, are branded here with an *ambulant in tenebris*. The dangers upon this neglect of these duties are two: the one concerning the whole commonwealth, *All the foundations of the earth are out of course*; the other especially touching the private persons of the judges, at the seventh verse, *Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes*, and after death comes judgment, Ps 82:8: *Arise, O God, judge the earth*. Almighty God "standeth in the congregation of princes, and is a judge among gods; "he sits Chief Justice in every session and assize, to mark what matters pass, and how they pass, ready to judge those righteously, who judge others unjustly, "giving wrong judgment, and accepting the persons of the wicked." Ps 67:4 pros to krithrion tou yeou. Thus I have made the way plain before you; God infinitely rich in mercy grant, that both I in speaking, and you in hearing, may walk therein (as the blessed Apostle phraseth it, Ga 2:14) "with a right foot." *They know not, neither will they understand*. That is, they neither *know* God, who made them gods; nor yet *understand* his law, which is a lantern to their feet, and a light to their paths. Or, as Placidus Parmensis upon the place,—They neither consider how they that be called *gods*, as commissioners and ministers of God, ought to judge others; nor yet remember how they shall be judged themselves at the last day, when "all the foundations of the world shall be moved, "and God himself shall "arise to judge the earth." Or, they be so corrupt and abominable, that they will neither learn what is their office from others, nor yet understand it by themselves. Or briefly, to give that gloss (which fits best I think the text, I am sure the time), *Nescierunt quid facti, non intellexerunt quid juris*; they were both ignorant in the matter of fact, as not searching out the cause; and ignorant in the matter of law, sitting (as Paul said of Ananias) to give judgment according to the law, and yet commanding that which is contrary to

the law. The first concerns a good deal the jury, the second a great deal the judges; in both are condemned, as the nurses of all confusions in a commonwealth, *ignorantia simplex*, and *affectata*; simple ignorance, when as they be so shallow that they cannot; affected ignorance, when as they be so deep, that they will not understand what is right and reason. *John Boys, in "The Judge's Charge,"* 1618.

Verse 6. *Ye are gods*, etc. It is, of course, to civil governors, especially those entrusted with the administration of justice, that the prophet addresses this stern admonition. He calls them "the gods," and "the sons of the Most High." To the people of Israel this kind of appellation would not seem over bold: for it was applied to judges in well known texts of the Law of Moses. Thus, in the code of civil statutes delivered at Sinai, it is said, *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.* Ex 22:28. Nor is that the only instance of the kind. In two other passages of the same code (Ex 21:6 22:8-9), the word which our translators have rendered "the judges" is in the Hebrew, "the gods," or "God." Since the ordinary Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is almost always used in the plural form, it is hard to say whether it ought to be rendered in these passages in the singular or plural. The meaning is the same either way. It is a matter of indifference, for example, whether the law in Ex 21:6, be rendered thus, *His (the bondman's) master shall bring him to the gods*; or with the Septuagint, *his master shall bring him to the judgment seat of God.* (prosto krithrion tou Teou). In either case the terms used are plainly meant to imply that the Majesty of God is present in the place of judgment. As it is said of Solomon that he *sat on the throne of the LORD as King*, 1Ch 29:23, so it may be said of every magistrate that he sits in God's seat. God has put upon him a portion of his own dominion and authority; and has ordained that he is to be obeyed, not for wrath's sake only, but for conscience sake. The civil magistrate, in discharging his high function, may justly claim to govern with a divine right. No one needs to be told that this old doctrine of the divine right of rulers has been woefully abused. Sycophantic divines have often made of it a flattering unction for the care of princes; teaching them that they owed no obedience to the laws; that they were responsible to none but God for their administration; that any attempt on the part of the people to curb their tyranny, or to depose them from their seats when milder measures failed, was rebellion against God whose Viceregents they were. Even now, the same doctrine occasionally makes itself heard from the pulpit and the press; and thus men attempt to subject the consciences of the people to the caprices of tyrants. Let it be carefully observed that the harp of Asaph lends no sanction to this "right divine of kings to govern wrong." If the prophet testifies that princes are gods, he includes in the honour the humblest magistrate. The elders administering justice in the gate of Bethlehem, though their town be little among the thousands of Judah, sit in God's seat as truly as King Solomon on his ivory throne in the porch of judgment at Jerusalem. The common saying that "the divine right of kings is the divine right of constables," is a rough way of expressing a Bible truth. Let this be borne in mind, and no one will

allege Scripture in defence of royal claims to indefeasible and irresponsible authority, or claim for such authority the sanction of divine right. But while care ought to be taken to guard the divine right of civil government from abuse, the right itself is not to be forgotten. The state is an ordinance of God, having, like the family, its foundations in the very constitution of human nature. The officers of the state, whether supreme or subordinate, have a divine right to administer justice in the community over which Providence has placed them. They who resort to the civil magistrate for judgment, resort to the judgment seat of God; just as they who resort to the Ministry of the Word resort to the Great Prophet of the Church. Unless the magistrate had received a commission from God, he could not lawfully bear the sword. To take the life of an unarmed fellow man, without a commission from the Most High warranting the act, would be to commit murder. *William Binnie.*

Verse 6. In his *Lex Rex*, Rutherford argues from this psalm that judges are not the creatures of kings, to execute their pleasure, and do not derive their power from the monarch, but are authorized by God himself as much as the king, and are therefore bound to execute justice whether the monarch desires it or no.

Verse 6. *I have said, ye are gods.* Princes and judges are *gods (Elohim)*, on the ground that *unto them the word of God came* (Joh 10:35), constituting them such. Even here, where God is about to pass sentence on them, he begins with recognizing their divinely appointed dignity on which they presumed, as if giving them absolute power to do as they pleased, right or wrong; forgetting that high office has its *duties* as well as its *dignities*. *Sonship* is closely allied to *kingship* and *judgeship*. These combined dignities, which by all others have been abused, shall be realized in all their grandest ideal by the coming King, Judge, and Son of the Most High (Ps 2:6-7,10-12.) *A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 6. *I have said, ye are gods.* As parasites in base flattery and compliance with their pride, have vainly called some of them so, and as some princes have most wickedly and blasphemously affected to be called, yea to be adored, as gods, (God will take highest vengeance upon all those who take his name upon them, or submit to it when given them), so God himself hath put his own name upon magistrates, to mind them of their duty, or for a twofold end: First, that being called gods, they should judge and rule as God doth, or with a mind like God, free from the mixture of a private or passionate spirit, and filled with a love to, and a delight in, impartial judgment and righteousness. Secondly, that being called gods, all men might learn their duty, freely to submit to them and duly to honour them; seeing any dishonour done to them reflects upon God whose name they bear. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6. *Gods.* It is not *Jah* or *Jehovah*, a name of *essence*, but *Eloah* or *Elohim*, a name of *office* that is given them. *Thomas Gataker.*

Verses 6-7. Ye are gods; there he considered their pomp and dignity: *But ye shall die like men*; there he minds their end, that with the change of his note they might also change countenance. He tells them their honour, but withal their lot. In power, wealth, train, titles, friends, they differ from others; in

death they differ not from others. They are cold when winter comes, withered with age, weak with sickness, and melt away with death, as the meanest: all to ashes. *All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower*, 1Pe 1:24: the glory, that is, the best of it, but a flower. No great difference, the flower shows fairer, the grass stands longer, one scythe cuts down both. Beasts fat and lean, fed in one pasture, killed in one slaughter. The prince in his lofty palace, the beggar in his lowly cottage, have double difference, local and ceremonial height and lowness; yet meet at the grave, and are mingled in ashes. We walk in this world as a man in a field of snow; all the way appears smooth, yet cannot we be sure of any step. All are like actors on a stage, some have one part and some another, death is still busy amongst us; here drops one of the players, we bury him with sorrow, and to our scene again: then falls another, yea all, one after another, till death be left upon the stage. Death is that damp which puts out all the dim lights of vanity. Yet man is easier to believe that all the world shall die, than to suspect himself. *Thomas Adams*.

Verse 7. *Ye shall die like men*, etc. Even you which glisten like angels, whom all the world admires, and sues and bows to, which are called honourable, mighty and gracious lords, I will tell you to what your honour shall come: first, ye shall wax old like others, then ye shall fall sick, like others, then ye shall die like others, then ye shall be buried like others, then ye shall be consumed like others, then ye shall be judged like others, even like the beggars which cry at your gates: one sickens, the other sickens; one dies, the other dies; one rots, the other rots: look in the grave, and shew me which was Dives and which was Lazarus. This is some comfort to the poor, that once he shall be like the rich; one day he shall be as wealthy, and as glorious as a king: one hour of death will make all alike; they which crowed over others, and looked down upon them like oaks, others shall walk upon them like worms, and they shall be gone as if they had never been. *Henry Smith*.

Verse 7. *Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes*. The meditation of death would pull down the plumes of pride; thou art but dust animated; shall dust and ashes be proud? Thou hast a grassy body, and shall shortly be mowed down: *I have said, ye are gods*; but lest they should grow proud, he adds a corrective: *ye shall die like men*; ye are dying gods. *Thomas Watson*.

Verse 7. *And fall like one of the princes*. Tyrants seldom go to their graves in peace. Most of the Caesars fell by the hands of the people, *q.d.* If you be like tyrants in sin, expect to be like them in punishment; as I cast them out of their thrones for their insolence and violence, so will I cast you out, and you shall fall like one of these tyrannical princes. *Thomas Hall*.

Verse 7.

1. Ye shall fall from the highest pinnacle of honour and reputation. The place of magistracy, which knoweth you now, will know you no more. One of the ancients, standing by Caesars tomb, crieth out, *Ubi nunc pulchritudo Caesaris? quo abiit magnificentia ejus?* Where is now the beauty; what is become of the magnificence; where are the armies now; where the honours, the triumphs, the

trophies of Caesar? All was gone when Caesar was gone. Your honours and your worships, your power, and your places, all die with you, if not before you.

2. Ye fall from your greatest treasures and possessions. As ye brought nothing into the world, so it is certain ye shall carry nothing out of the world. 1Ti 6:7. Saladin, the mighty monarch of the east, is gone, and hath carried no more along with him than ye see—*i.e.*, a shirt hung up for that purpose—said the priest that went before the bier.

3. Ye fall from all your friends and relations; when ye die, they that were near and dear to you will leave you. *George Swinnock.*

Verse 7. *Impressiveness* is a leading characteristic of the "death" or "fall" of "princes:" such incidents, from a variety of causes, are most striking. But can the same remark be commonly made respecting the decease of the children of poverty? Regard being had to the startling effect which the demise of the potentate is calculated to produce,—has the departure of the *peasant*, for example, in itself, the same tendency to beget solemnity and awe, so that, even under this point of view, the peasant might be justly affirmed to *fall like one of the princes*. Indeed, if you think of the outward circumstances attending *his* last moments; and then, immediately afterwards, of those which belong to the close of the life of the dweller in regal or stately halls, there would seem to be hardly any ground here for instituting the slightest comparison: but I would have you to associate the man, as he lies on the eve of dissolution, not with others, his superiors in rank, in a similar case, but with *himself*, when, in the full vigour of existence, he walked to and fro, and performed his own humble but laborious share of this world's business; and, as you subsequently mark how the great Destroyer has crushed all his energies, and left but a corpse behind, you will surely admit that there is as wide a difference between the individual as he *was* and as he *is*, as there can possibly be between the scenes at the death beds, respectively, of princes and of the poor. Yes, and as *impressive* a difference too; so that you have only to allow the exhibition of the striking change to have its legitimate effect upon the mind, and then, so far as that effect will be concerned, you may declare of the rural labourer, that "*he has fallen like one of the princes*;" seeing that he has given a lesson every whit as awakening and as emphatic in its admonitions as could the other. *Hugh B. Moffatt, 1861.*

Verses 7-8. Your day is coming! The saints are raising the loud cry of Ps 82:8, inviting Messiah, the true God, the Son of the Most High (Joh 10:34), the Mighty One, the Judge and Ruler, to arise and take his *inheritance*, for he is the *heir of all things*, and to be the true Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel, who will *judge*, or govern and rule, a mismanaged earth. We sing this song of Zion in his ears, urging him to come quickly; and we sing it to one another in joyful hope, while the foundations of earth seem out of course, because here we find *Messiah the true Judge of a misgoverned world.* *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 8. *Arise, O God.* A metaphor taken from the common gesture of judges, whose usual manner

is to sit while they are hearing of cases; to arise and stand up when they come to give sentence.
Thomas Gataker.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The sovereignty of God over the most powerful and exalted. How that sovereignty reveals itself, and what we may expect from it.

Verse 1. The Lord's presence in cabinets and senates.

Verse 2. A common sin. Regard for the persons of men often influences our judgment of their opinions, virtues, vices, and general bearing; this involves injustice to others, as well as deep injury to the flattered.

Verse 3. A plea for orphans.

Verse 5.

1. The characters of wicked princes.

(a) Ignorance: *They know not.*

(b) Wilful blindness: *Neither will they, etc.*

(c) Unrestrained perverseness: *They walk on, etc.*

2. The consequences to others: *All the foundations, etc.*

(a) Of personal security.

(b) Of social comfort.

(c) Of commercial prosperity.

(d) Of national tranquillity.

(e) Of religious liberty; all are out of course. *G. R.*

Verse 5. (*middle clause*). A description of the pilgrimage of presumptuous sinners.

Verse 6. *Ye are gods.* The passage in the Old Testament which involves the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. *J. P. Lange.*

Verse 8.

1. The invocation: *Arise, etc.*

2. The prediction: *For thou shalt, etc.*—*G. R.*

WORK UPON THE EIGHTY-SECOND PSALM

"The Beauty of Magistracy. An Exposition of Psalm 82." By THOMAS HALL, B.D. 1659-60. (In SWINNOCK'S WORKS. Vol. 4. Nichol's Edition.)

Psalm 83

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. A Psalm or Song of Asaph. This is the last occasion upon which we shall meet with this eloquent writer. The patriotic poet sings again of wars and dangers imminent, but it is no godless song of a thoughtless nation entering upon war with a light heart. Asaph the seer is well aware of the serious dangers arising from the powerful confederate nations, but his soul in faith stays itself upon Jehovah, while as a poet preacher he excites his countrymen to prayer by means of this sacred lyric. The Asaph who penned this song was in all probability the person referred to in 2Ch 20:14, for the internal evidence referring the subject of the Psalm to the times of Jehoshaphat is overwhelming. The division in the camp of the confederate peoples in the wilderness of Tekoa not only broke up their league, but led to a mutual slaughter, which crippled the power of some of the nations for many years after. They thought to destroy Israel and destroyed each other.

DIVISION. An appeal to God in a general manner fills Ps 83:1-4; and then the psalmist enters into details of the league, Ps 83:5-8. This leads to an earnest entreaty for the overthrow of the enemy, Ps 83:9-15, with an expression of desire that God's glory may be promoted thereby.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Keep not thou silence, O God. Man is clamorous, be not thou speechless. He rails and reviles, wilt not thou reply? On word of thine can deliver thy people; therefore, O Lord, break thy quiet and let thy voice be heard. Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.* Here the appeal is to EL., the Mighty One. He is entreated to act and speak, because his nation suffers and is in great jeopardy. How entirely the psalmist looks to God; he asks not for "a leader bold and brave, "or for any form of human force, but casts his burden upon the Lord, being well assured that his eternal power and Godhead could meet every difficulty of the case.

Verse 2. *For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult.* They are by no means sparing of their words, they are like a hungry pack of dogs, all giving tongue at once. So sure are they of devouring thy people that they already shout over the feast. *And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.* Confident of conquest, they carry themselves proudly and exalt themselves as if their anticipated victories were already obtained. These enemies of Israel were also God's enemies, and are here described as such by way of adding intensity to the argument of the intercession. The adversaries of the church are usually a noisy and a boastful crew. Their pride is a brass which always sounds, a cymbal which is ever tinkling.

Verse 3. *They have taken crafty counsel against thy people.* Whatever we may do, our enemies use

their wits and lay their heads together; in united conclave they discourse upon the demands and plans of the campaign, using much treachery and serpentine cunning in arranging their schemes. Malice is cold blooded enough to plot with deliberation; and pride, though it be never wise, is often allied with craft. *And consulted against thy hidden ones.* Hidden away from all harm are the Lord's chosen; their enemies think not so, but hope to smite them; they might as well attempt to destroy the angels before the throne of God.

Verse 4. *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation.* Easier said than done. Yet it shows how thorough going are the foes of the church. Theirs was the policy of extermination. They laid the axe at the root of the matter. Rome has always loved this method of warfare, and hence she has gloated over the massacre of Bartholomew, and the murders of the Inquisition. *That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* They would blot them out of history as well as out of existence. Evil is intolerant of good. If Israel would let Edom alone yet Edom cannot be quiet, but seeks like its ancestor to kill the chosen of the Lord. Men would be glad to cast the church out of the world because it rebukes them, and is thus a standing menace to their sinful peace.

Verse 5. *For they have consulted together with one consent.* They are hearty and unanimous in their designs. They seem to have but one heart, and that a fierce one, against the chosen people and their God. *They are confederate against thee.* At the Lord himself they aim through the sides of his saints. They make a covenant, and ratify it with blood, resolutely banding themselves together to war with the Mighty God.

Verse 6. *The tabernacles of Edom.* Nearest of kin, yet first in enmity. Their sire despised the birthright, and they despise the possessors of it. Leaving their rock built mansions for the tents of war, the Edomites invaded the land of Israel. *And the Ishmaelites.* A persecuting spirit ran in their blood, they perpetuated the old grudge between the child of the bondwoman and the son of the freewoman. *Of Moab.* Born of incest, but yet a near kinsman, the feud of Moab against Israel was very bitter. Little could righteous Lot have dreamed that his unhallowed seed would be such unrelenting enemies of his uncle Abraham's posterity. *And the Hagarenes*—perhaps descendants of Hagar by a second husband. Whoever they may have been, they cast their power into the wrong scale, and with all their might sought the ruin of Israel. Children of Hagar, and all others who dwell around Mount Sinai, which is in Arabia, are of the seed which gendereth to bondage, and hence they hate the seed according to promise.

Verse 7. *Gebal* was probably a near neighbour of Edom, though there was a Gebal in the region of Tyre and Sidon. *And Ammon, and Amalek.* Two other hereditary foes of Israel, fierce and remorseless as ravaging wolves. In the roll of infamy let these names remain detestably immortalised. How thick they stand. Their name is legion, for they are many. Alas, poor Israel, how art thou to stand against such a Bloody League? Nor is this all. Here comes another tribe of ancient

foemen, *the Philistines*; who once blinded Samson, and captured the ark of the Lord; and here are old allies become new enemies; the builders of the temple conspiring to pull it down, even *the inhabitants of Tyre*. These last were mercenaries who cared not at whose bidding they drew sword, so long as they carved something for their own advantage. True religion has had its quarrel with merchants and craftsmen, and because it has interfered with their gains, they have conspired against it.

Verse 8. *Assur is also joined with them.* It was then a rising power, anxious for growth, and it thus early distinguished itself for evil. What a motley group they were; a league against Israel is always attractive, and gathers whole nations within its bonds. Herod and Pilate are friends, if Jesus is to be crucified. Romanism and Ritualism make common cause against the gospel. *They have holpen the children of Lot.* All these have come to the aid of Moab and Ammon, which two nations were among the fiercest in the conspiracy. There were ten to one against Israel, and yet she overcame all her enemies. Her name is not blotted out; but many, nay, most of her adversaries are now a name only, their power and their excellence are alike gone. *Selah.* There was good reason for a pause when the nation was in such jeopardy: and yet it needs faith to make a pause, for unbelief is always in a hurry.

Verse 9. *Do unto them as unto the Midianites.* Faith delights to light upon precedents, and quote them before the Lord; in the present instance, Asaph found a very appropriate one, for the nations in both cases were very much the same, and the plight of the Israelites very similar. Yet Midian perished, and the psalmist trusted that Israel's present foes would meet with the like overthrow from the hand of the Lord. *As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison.* The hosts were swept away by the suddenly swollen torrent, and utterly perished; which was a second instance of divine vengeance upon confederated enemies of Israel. When God wills it, a brook can be as deadly as a sea. Kishon was as terrible to Jabin as was the Red Sea to Pharaoh. How easily can the Lord smite the enemies of his people. God of Gideon and of Barak, wilt thou not again avenge thine heritage of their bloodthirsty foes?

Verse 10. *Which perished at Endor.* There was the centre of the carnage, where the heaps of the slain lay thickest. *They became as dung for the earth,* manuring it with man; making the earth, like Saturn, feed on its own children. War is cruel, but in this case its avengements were most just,—those who would not give Israel a place above ground are themselves denied a hiding place under the ground; they counted God's people to be as dung, and they became dung themselves. Asaph would have the same fate befall other enemies of Israel; and his prayer was a prophecy, for so it happened to them.

Verse 11. *Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb.* Smite the great ones as well as the common ruck. Suffer not the ringleaders to escape. As Oreb fell at the rock and Zeeb at the winepress, so do thou mete out vengeance to Zion's foes wherever thou mayest overtake them. They boastfully

compare themselves to ravens and wolves; let them receive the fate which is due to such wild beasts. *Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunnua.* These were captured and slain by Gideon, despite their claiming to have been anointed to the kingdom. Zebah became a sacrifice, and Zalmunna was sent to those shadowy images from which his name is derived. The psalmist seeing these four culprits hanging in history upon a lofty gallows, earnestly asks that others of a like character may, for truth and righteousness' sake, share their fate.

Verse 12. *Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.* Viewing the temple, and also the dwellings of the tribes, as all belonging to God, these greedy plunderers determined to push out the inhabitants, slay them, and become themselves landlords and tenants of the whole. These were large words and dark designs, but God could bring them all to nothing. It is in vain for men to say "Let us take, "if God does not give. He who robs God's house will find that he has a property reeking with a curse; it will plague him and his seed for ever. "Will a man rob God?" Let him try it, and he will find it hot and heavy work.

Verse 13. *O my God, make them like a wheel;* like a rolling thing which cannot rest, but is made to move with every breath. Let them have no quiet. May their minds eternally revolve and never come to peace. Blow them away like thistle down, *as the stubble before the wind.* Scatter them, chase them, drive them to destruction. Every patriot prays thus against the enemies of his country, he would be no better than a traitor if he did not.

Verse 14. *As the fire burneth a wood.* Long years have strewn the ground with deep deposits of leaves; these being dried in the sun are very apt to take fire, and when they do so the burning is terrific. The underwood and the ferns blaze, the bushes crackle, the great trees kindle and to their very tops are wrapped in fire, while the ground is all red as a furnace. In this way, O Lord, mete out destruction to thy foes, and bring all of them to an end. *The flame setteth the mountains on fire.* Up the hill sides the hanging woods glow like a great sacrifice, and the forests on the mountain's crown smoke towards heaven. Even thus, O Lord, do thou conspicuously and terribly overthrow the enemies of thine Israel.

Verse 15. *So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.* The Lord will follow up his enemies, alarm them, and chase them till they are put to a hopeless rout. He did this, according to the prayer of the present Psalm, for his servant Jehoshaphat; and in like manner will he come to the rescue of any or all of his chosen.

Verse 16. *Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.* Shame has often weaned men from their idols, and set them upon seeking the Lord. If this was not the happy result, in the present instance, with the Lord's enemies, yet it would be so with his people who were so prone to err. They would be humbled by his mercy, and ashamed of themselves because of his grace; and then they would with sincerity return to the earnest worship of Jehovah their God, who had delivered

them.

Verse 17. Where no good result followed, and the men remained as fierce and obstinate as ever, justice was invoked to carry out the capital sentence. *Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish.* What else could be done with them? It was better that they perished than that Israel should be rooted up. What a terrible doom it will be to the enemies of God to be "confounded, and troubled for ever, "to see all their schemes and hopes defeated, and their bodies and souls full of anguish without end: from such a shameful perishing may our souls be delivered.

Verse 18. *That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.* Hearing of the Lord's marvellous deeds in defeating such a numerous confederacy, the very heathen would be compelled to acknowledge the greatness of Jehovah. We read in 2Ch 20:30, that the fear of God was on all the neighbouring kingdoms when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. Jehovah is essentially the Most High. He who is self existent is infinitely above all creatures, all the earth is but his footstool. The godless race of man disregards this, and yet at times the wonderful works of the Lord compel the most unwilling to adore his majesty. Thus has this soul stirring lyric risen from the words of complaint to those of adoration; let us in our worship always seek to do the same. National trouble called out the nation's poet laureate, and well did he discourse at once of her sorrows, and prayers, and hopes. Sacred literature thus owes much to sorrow and distress. How enriching is the hand of adversity! The following attempt to verify the Psalm, and tune it to gospel purposes, is submitted with great diffidence.

O God, be thou no longer still,
Thy foes are leagued against thy law;
Make bare thine arm on Zion's hill,
Great Captain of our Holy War.
As Amalek and Ishmael
Had war for ever with thy seed,
So all the hosts of Rome and hell
Against the Son their armies led.
Though they are agreed in nought beside,
Against thy truth they all unite;
They rave against the Crucified,
And hate the gospel's growing might.
By Kishon's brook all Jabin's band
At thy rebuke were swept away;
O Lord, display thy mighty hand,

A single stroke shall win the day.
Come, rushing wind, the stubble chase!
Come, sacred fire, the forests burn!
Come, Lord, with all thy conquering grace,
Rebellious hearts to Jesus turn!
That men may know at once that thou,
Jehovah, lovest truth right well;
And that thy church shall never bow
Before the boastful gates of hell.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. "A Song or Psalm." When the two words (*Shir, Mizmor*,) occur together, the meaning seems to be, a lyric poem appointed to be sung. John Jebb.

Title. This Psalm, according to the title, was composed by Asaph. In accordance with this, we read, in 1Ch 20:14, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehasiel, of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. This Jehasiel is probably the author of the Psalm. Our Psalm is a true picture of the state of feeling which prevailed throughout the people during the danger under Jehoshaphat. According to the history of Chronicles, they praised God at that time, in the midst of their danger, with loud voice, 2Ch 20:19; and here in the title, which is an appendage to that of Psalm 48, the Psalm is called a *song of praise*; and it is such in reality, although it bears the form of a *prayer*, —a song of triumph sung before the victory,—no contest, no doubt, the distress is simply committed to God. The mention of the *Amalekites* among the enemies of Israel, in Ps 83:7, renders it impossible to come down to times later than that of Jehoshaphat. The last remains of the Amalekites were, according to 1Ch 4:43, rooted out by the Simeonites, under Hezekiah. From that time they disappear altogether from history. Ewald's assertion that Amalek stands here "only as a name of infamy applied to parties well known at the time," is to be considered as a miserable shift. The Psalm must have been composed previous to the extension of the empire of the Assyrians over Western Asia. For the Assyrians named last, in the eighth verse, appear here in the very extraordinary character of an ally of the sons of Lot. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1. *Keep not thou silence, O God.* In Scripture there are three reasons why the Lord *keeps silence* when his people are in danger, and *sits still* when there is most need to give help and assistance. One is, the Lord doth it *to try their faith*, as we clearly see, Mt 8:24, where it is said that our Lord Christ *was asleep: There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.* We read more fully in Mark 4 and Luke 8, he left them, when the ship was

covered with waves, and they were rowing for their lives, their Lord was *asleep* the while, and he said to them, *Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* Truly, the Lord will not suffer his people to be *overwhelmed*, that is certain, but he will suffer them to come very near, that the waves cover them, and fear and horror shall cover their souls, and all *to try their faith*. . . . I find another reason in Isaiah 59, and that is, the Lord doth keep silence in the midst of the troubles of his people, *to try men's uprightness of heart*. For if God should always *appear* for his cause, God and his cause should have many favourites and friends; but sometimes God leaves his cause, and leaves his people, and leaves his gospel, and his ordinances to the wide world, to see who will plead for it and stick to it. . . . There is a third reason: God, as it were, *keeps silence* in the midst of the greatest troubles, that he may, as it were, *gather the wicked into one faggot, into one bundle, that they may be destroyed together*. There is a great deal of ado to "*gather the saints*" in this world; and truly there is some ado to gather the *wicked*. So God withdraws himself from his people, yet he hath a *hook* within their hearts, he holds them up secretly by his Spirit, that they shall not leave him; yet the world shall not see but that God hath quite *left* them, and all their ordinances and his gospel and everything; and there the wicked *come together* and insult, whereby God may come upon them *at once*, and destroy them, as we find ten nations in the Psalm. And so in Genesis God stirs up the nations against Abraham and his posterity, and there are ten nations that God promised to cut off before Abraham at once, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Canaanites, etc. So God *heaps them together*, and burns them like stubble. Those that burn stubble have *rakes*, and they gather it *to heaps*, and then they fire it. This is the way of *God's keeping silence* among his people, and *sitting still* in the midst of their miseries, thus God gathers their enemies in heaps as stubble, that he may burn them together. *Gualter (Walter) Cradock, in "Divine Drops."* 1650.

Verse 1. *Keep not thou silence, etc.* The Hebrew words have great emphasis, and express the main *causes* of silence—closing the mouth, deafness of the ears, and a tranquility maintained to such an extent as to reject all disquietude.

The first clause, let not thy *mouth* be closed, and thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, immovably, properly denotes, from the inherent force of the word *jq̄s* whose root means to *fix to* and compact firmly, what is fastened with *lime* or daubed with plaster...

The second clause, *be not thou deaf*, properly pertains to the ears, as Mic 7:16, *Their ears shall be deaf*. The third, *be not still*, suggests the course of the thoughts of the mind when it is brought to a state of clear tranquility, all cares and commotions being laid aside. The word (Heb.) is properly *to settle, to settle down*, as when the disturbed dregs of liquor settle down and seek the bottom, whence it is applied to the mind when freed from a great fermentation of cares and the sediments of anxieties and bitterness, a mind serene, clear, and refined...

Let us now see what the poet had in mind when he poured out these prayers, or what he wished to indicate. He hinted, that the people were reduced to these earnest entreaties, because unless God should speedily bring help to them, it might seem that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is like the false gods, a sort of deity, either mute, or deaf, or at his ease. *Hermann Venema*.

Verse 1. Is the Lord silent? Then be not thou silent; but cry unto him till he breaks the silence. *Starke, in Lange's Bibelwerk*.

Verse 1. The reference to *tumult* in the following verse gives force to the earnest appeal in this. Amidst all the tumult of gathering foes, he earnestly calls on God to break his silence, and to speak to them in wrath. *W. Wilson*.

Verse 2. For, lo. The prayer begins with the particle *lo*, which has not only the force of *arousing* God, but also give the idea of *something present*, with the view of pointing out the opportune moment for God to gird himself for the work. *Hermann Venema*.

Verse 2. Thine enemies make a tumult. The whole world is but like an *army*, a *brigade* of men (as it were) under a *general*; and God is the Lord of Hosts, that is the Lord of *his armies*: now when there is a tumult in an army, they complain to the *officers*, to the *general* especially; and he must come and suppress it. Therefore, saith he, Thou Lord of hosts, thou art general of the world; lo, there is a *tumult* in the world, a *mutiny*. *Walter Cradock*.

Verse 3. Thy hidden ones. This representation of God's people is worthy our notice. It may be taken two ways. First, As referring to their *safety*. We often hide only to preserve. This is the meaning of the word in the parable, with regard to the discovery of the treasure in the field; "which, when a man hath found, he hideth it." His aim is not to conceal but to secure; and the cause is put for the effect. Thus God's people are hidden. He hid Noah in the Ark, and the waters that drowned the world could not *find* him. When his judgments were coming over the land, "Come, my people, "saith he, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thee also for a little season, until the indignation be overpast." Hence the promise, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Hence the confidence expressed by David, "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 upon a rock." The Saviour could say, "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." And, "All the saints are in his hand." They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. For he himself is their "refuge, "their "hiding place." They are his *hidden ones*. Secondly. As intimating their *concealment*. This is not absolute. But it holds in various respects and degrees. It is true with regard to the nature of the *spiritual life*. Our life, says the Apostle, is hid with Christ in God; and that he refers to its invisibleness, rather than to its safety, is obvious from the words following: "When he who is our life shall *appear*, we also shall *appear* with him in glory." ...The heart of the believer only knows his own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not

with his joy. The manna on which he feeds is hidden manna. And no one knoweth the new name in the white stone given him, but the receiver... They are sometimes hidden by *persecution*. For though this does not prevent their being Christians, it hinders them from appearing as such; especially by secluding them from their social and public assemblies... They are sometimes hidden by the obscurity of their stations. Not many of the wise, and mighty, and noble are called: but when they *are* called they are also *exhibited*. They are like cities set on hills, which cannot be hid. A little religion in high life goes a great way, and is much talked of, because it is so often a strange thing. But God has chosen the poor of this world; and they are often rich in faith. Yet how is their moral wealth to be known? How few opportunities have they for religious display or exertion! There may be the principle of benevolence, where there is no ability to give. And the Lord seeth the heart, but men can only judge from actions. Many who are great in the sight of the Lord are living in cottages and hovels; and are scarcely known, unless to a few neighbours equally obscure. They are sometimes hidden by their *disposition*. They are reserved, and shrink back from notice. They are timid and self diffident. This restrains them in religious conversation, especially as it regards their own experience. This keeps them from making a profession of religion, and joining a Christian church. Joseph of Arimathaea was a disciple of Jesus; but secretly, for fear of the Jews. And Nicodemus, from the same cause, came to Jesus by night. They had difficulties in their situations, from which others were free. They ought to have overcome them; and so they did at last, but it was a day of small things with them at first. Others are circumstanced and tried in a similar way: and we must be patient towards all men. They are sometimes hidden by their *infirmities*. We would not plead for sin; but grace may be found along with many imperfections. The possessors have what is essential to religion in them; but not everything that is ornamental, and lovely, and of good report. The same will also apply to *errors*. Here, again, we are far from undervaluing divine truth. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. But it is impossible for us to say how much ignorance, and how many mistakes, may be found, even in the Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. *William Jay*.

Verse 3. The less the world knows thee, the better for thee; thou mayest be satisfied with this one thing—God knows them that are his: not lost, although *hidden* is the symbol of a Christian. *Frisch, in Lange's Bibelwerk*.

Verse 4. *That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* This desperate and dreadful scheme, and wretched design of theirs, took not effect; but, on the contrary, the several nations hereafter mentioned, who were in this conspiracy, are no more, and have not had a name in the world for many hundreds of years; whilst the Jews are still a people and are preserved, in order to be called and saved, as all Israel will be in the latter day, Ro 11:25. So Diocletian thought to have rooted the Christian name out of the world; but in vain. *John Gill*.

Verse 5. *For they have consulted together with one consent.* Margin, as in Hebrew, *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 (Lu 23:12); and the world divided and hostile in other matters, has been habitually united in its opposition to Christ and to a pure and spiritual religion. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 5. *They have consulted together with one consent, etc.* To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5. *They have consulted together, etc.* Though there may fall out a private grudge betwixt such as are wicked, yet they will all agree and unite against the saints: if two greyhounds are snarling at a bone, yet put up a hare between them, and they will leave the bone, and follow after the hare; so, if wicked men have private differences amongst themselves, yet if the godly be near them, they will leave snarling at one another, and will pursue after the godly. *Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5. *They are confederate against thee.* "They have made a covenant, "vtyrkytyrk berith yachriths, "they have cut the covenant sacrifice." They have slain an animal, divided him in twain, and passed between the pieces of the victim; and have thus bound themselves to accomplish their purpose. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6. The tabernacle of Edom, etc. The prophet having entered his suit and complaint in general, he comes to particulars, and tells God who they are that had done this. God might say, Who are these that conspire against me, and against my people, and hidden ones? Lord, saith the prophet, I will tell thee who they are... He names some *ten nations* that joined together against *one poor Israel*. It is a thing you should observe, that when the people of God are conspired against, God rests not in *general complaints*, but he will know *who* they are. As I told you, He is the Lord of Hosts, the great *general*. When there is mutiny the general asks, what officer, or what corporal, or what sergeant, or who did begin the mutiny? and it is a fearful thing when the poor persecuted saint shall bring thy name as a persecutor before the God of heaven. When a poor saint shall go home and say, There is a confederacy in London, a conspiracy against the saints of God; and when a poor saint shall say, such a magistrate, such a minister, such a man in such a street, such a woman set her husband against the saints, and against thine ordinances; it is a fearful thing. Therefore I remember a blessed woman, if it be true that is reported of her in the *Book of Martyrs*, that when the wicked abused her, and reproached her, and oppressed her, she would say no more but this, "I will go home and tell my Father" give over, or else I will bring your names before God, and tell him: there was all, and that was

enough; for he would presently take it up. A man may better bear a pound of dirt on his *feet*, than a grain of dirt in his *eye*; the saints are "the apple of God's eye." *Walter Cradock*.

Verse 6. *Hagarenes*. These people dwelt on the east of Gilead; and were nearly destroyed in the days of Saul, being totally expelled from their country, 1Ch 5:10, but afterwards recovered some strength and consequence. *Adam Clarke*.

Verses 6-8. It may be observed that these were on all sides of the land of Israel; the Edomites, Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, were on the south; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hagarenes, were on the east; the Assyrians on the north; and the Philistines, Gebalites, and Tyrians, on the west; so that Israel was surrounded on all sides with enemies, as the Lord's people are troubled on every side, 2Ch 4:8; and so the Gog and Magog army, of which some understand this, will encompass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, Re 20:9. *John Gill*.

Verses 6-8. The enemies of Israel, as enumerated by the psalmist, fall into four main divisions: 1st, those most nearly connected with the Israelites themselves by the ties of blood relationship, the descendants of Esau and Ishmael; 2ndly, the two branches of the descendants of Lot along with their respective Arabian auxiliaries, viz., the Moabites, who had engaged the assistance of the Hagarenes, and the Ammonites, who had gathered round their standard the Giblites and Amalekites; 3rdly, the inhabitants of the coast, the Philistines and Tyrians; 4thly, the more distant Assyrians. Of all these the bitterest in their hostility to Israel were those who were the most nearly allied to them in blood,—the Edomites. Their hostility was founded upon hatred. From their conduct to the Israelites through a long course of years it would seem as though in them were lastingly perpetuated that older hatred wherewith their forefather Essau had hated Jacob because of Isaac's blessing. And though they had once and again succeeded, according to the prophecy, in breaking Israel's yoke from off their neck, yet they never could wrest away from Israel the possession of the birthright, and with it of the promises, which their ancestors had profanely despised; from Israel, not from Edom, was the Redeemer of the world to spring, and in Israel were all the families of the earth to be blessed. The Edomites may accordingly be appropriately viewed as the types of those whom the Church of Christ has ever found her bitterest foes, the sceptics who have refused to acknowledge that redemption through a personal Redeemer, on which, as on a basis, the church is founded, whose intellectual pride is offended by the humbling doctrines of Christianity, and who hate those that hold them for their possession of blessings which *they* have wilfully neglected; whose human learning has nevertheless all along been subservient on the whole to the edification of the church, in spite of the violence with which they have striven, and for a while, as it should sometimes appear, successfully, to gain the mastery over her by opposing her, and to exercise a temporary dominion. Dwelling themselves in tabernacles, they cannot bear that others, more blessed than they, should have the houses of God in possession: "owning themselves to be astray, and unable to find the way to the

truth, they are yet most importunate and imperious that others should come away from the ancient paths, and try to join them, or at least, wander as they are wandering." In conjunction with the Edomites, the psalmist makes mention of the Ishmaelites. And these, as the descendants of the bondwoman, may fitly represent those Jewish opponents of Christianity, still, perhaps, locally, if not generally, formidable, who in their rejection of Christian doctrine have been swayed by the same feelings of intellectual pride as the sceptics of Christian descent; who professing to hold fast to that covenant of Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, persecuted, so long as they were able, those born after the Spirit.

In the descendants of Lot and their Arabian auxiliaries, we have the types of a different class of foes. The historical origin of the former marks them as the appropriate representatives of the slaves of sinful lusts; who hate the church not for the humbling tone of her doctrines, but for the standard of holiness which she exacts and for which she is continually witnessing. And experience shews how such persons are wont, in their attacks upon the church, to enlist into their service those who are more wildly, but at the same time more ignorantly, unholy than themselves; how in order, if possible, to uproot those fences and safeguards of the law of holiness on which, having transgressed them, they hate to look, they appeal to the unbridled passions of the lawless multitude by whom the very existence of the fences had been utterly disregarded. From the enemies of the Church who are animated by feelings of positive hatred we pass to those who act from calculation rather than passion, and whose proceedings are all directed with a view to their own earthly aggrandisement. The Philistines and Tyrians had engaged in the hostile confederacy with the hope of obtaining Israelitish captives, from whom they might reap a profit by selling them abroad as slaves. It does not appear that they regarded the Israelites in themselves with other feelings than those of mere selfish indifference. Both nations had tendered their service to Israel in the days of Israel's prosperity; for the Philistines had probably furnished the Cherethites and Pelethites of David's body guard, and the Tyrians had furnished Solomon with materials and workmen for the building of the temple: both nations were now seeking to enrich themselves at Israel's expense in the days of Israel's adversity. And these then are the fitting types of all who in their varying professions of friendliness or hostility to the Church of God are actuated by the mere mercenary desire of lucre; favouring, and even zealously favouring her interests, when they can procure a good recompense for their services; unhesitatingly combining with her bitterest enemies to vilify and despoil her, whenever the opportunity offers of increasing their worldly substance thereby. The last class of enemies are those of whom Assyria is the type; the worldly potentates, whether ecclesiastical or temporal, papal or imperial, who are unscrupulously ready to employ all means for the ultimate accomplishment of their one object, that of extending and consolidating their dominion. Such potentates seem to represent most truly that determined and resolute selfishness, which, to eyes that are not dazzled by the

grandeur of its proportions or the gorgeousness in which it is arrayed, must ever appear as one of the most terrible embodiments of the enmity of the world to God. Pride of intellect and unbelief,—unholiness and lawlessness of life,—covetousness,—worldly ambition,—such are the characteristics of four important classes of those by whom God's church is threatened. *Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 7. Gebal.

1. It is generally supposed to indicate the mountainous tract extending from the Dead Sea southward to Petra, still named *Jebal*. But some of the best writers identify it with No. 2, as mentioned in conjunction with Tyre.

2. A place spoken of in connection with Tyre, Eze 27:9. Most probably the residence of the Giblites, and therefore to the north of Palestine, Jos 13:5. The Giblites were employed by Hiram, king of Tyre, in preparing materials for Solomon's temple, 1Ki 5:18, margin. The Greek name of this place was Byblus. The town is called *Jebeil*, and has a population of about six hundred. It is about seventeen miles north of Beyroot. The ancient ruins are very extensive. Immense numbers of granite columns are strewn about in the village and over the surrounding fields. These columns are mostly small, varying from one foot to two feet in diameter. Some of the stones measure nearly twenty feet in length. The citadel is the most remarkable ruin. The port is nearly choked up with sand and ruins.

George H. Whitney's "Hand Book of Bible Geography." 1872

Verse 8. Assur also, etc. This determines the date of this Psalm to the latter times of the Jewish kingdom; for the other nations here mentioned had molested them before, but the Assyrians not till towards the end. *William Wall, 1645 or 1646-1727-8.*

Verse 9. Do unto them as unto the Midianites. That is, dash their heads together, make their policies to cross one another. *Walter Cradock.*

Verse 9. *The brook of Kison.* The river Kishon traverses the plain (of Esdraelon) and terminates in the Bay of Acre or Akka. This is the stream regarding which it is written, after Barak and Deborah had gained their victory over Sisera, "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Although it is now no insignificant stream, yet it needs heavy rains to make it really considerable in magnitude: it is very unequal in size, and seems to be only temporary in its character. At any rate, when Robinson passed its head waters in midsummer, he found the channels all dry, and they had been so for a whole year. On the other hand, in the winter the waters are often exceedingly abundant; particularly in the northern and southern chief tributaries; so that, in 1799, at the time of the French invasion, many of the vanquished Turks perished in the floods which swept down from Deburieh, and which inundated the plain. It was a scene like that described in Judges 5 regarding the fate of Sisera's hosts. *Carl Ritter (1779-1859), in "The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula." Translated by William L.*

Gage. 1866.

Verse 10. They became as dung for the earth. The land was enriched or made fertile by their flesh, their blood, and their bones. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10. *They became as dung for the earth.* In the year 1830, it is estimated that more than a million bushels of "human and inhuman bones" were imported from the continent of Europe into the port of Hull. The neighbourhood of Leipsic, Austerlitz, Waterloo, etc., where the principal battles were fought some fifteen or twenty years before, were swept alike of the bones of the hero, and the horse which he rode. Thus collected from every quarter, they were shipped to Hull, and thence forwarded to the Yorkshire bone grinders, who, by steam engines and powerful machinery, reduced them to a granular state. In this condition they were sent chiefly to Doncaster, one of the largest agricultural markets of the country, and were there sold to the farmers to manure their lands. The oily substance gradually evolving as the bone calcines, makes better manure than almost any other substance—particularly human bones. *K. Arvine.*

Verse 11. The word *nobles* is placed in antithesis with the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb*. The word *mykyrg nobles*, denotes properly *liberal, munificent, and beneficent* men, such as princes and potentates ought to be among men, but the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb* have the very opposite signification, for the one signifies a *raven*, the other a *wolf*. When into such rapacious and truculent beasts their nobles have degenerated, as a just reward the hostile shock shall come upon them. *Hermann Venema.*

Verse 13. A wheel. What sort of vegetable is this whose stems our muleteers are cutting up and chewing with so much relish? It is a wild artichoke. We can amuse ourselves with it and its behaviour for a while, and may possibly extract something more valuable than the insipid juice of which our men are so fond. You observe than in growing it throws out numerous branches of equal size and length in all directions, forming a sort of sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter. When ripe and dry in autumn, these branches become rigid and light as a feather, the parent stem breaks off at the ground, and the wind carries these vegetable globes whithersoever it pleaseth. At the proper season thousands of them come scudding over the plain rolling, leaping, bounding with vast racket, to the dismay both of the horse and his rider. Once, on the plain north of Hamath, my horse became quite unmanageable among them. They charged down upon us on the wings of the wind, which broke them from their moorings, and sent them careening over the desert in countless numbers. Our excellent native itinerant, A—F—, had a similar encounter with them on the eastern desert beyond the Hauran, and his horse was so terrified that he was obliged to alight and lead him. I have long suspected that this wild artichoke is the *gulgal*, which, in Ps 83:13, is rendered *wheel*, and in Isa 17:13, *a rolling thing*. Evidently our translators knew not what to call it. The first passage reads thus: *O my God, make them like a wheel; second, Rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing—gulgal—before the*

whirlwind. Now, from the nature of the parallelism, the *gulgal* cannot be a *wheel*, but something corresponding to chaff. It must also be something that does not fly like the chaff, but in a striking manner *rolls* before the wind. The signification of *gulgal* in Hebrew and its equivalent in other Shemitic dialects, requires this, and this rolling artichoke meets the case most emphatically, and especially when it rolls before the whirlwind. In the encounter referred to north of Hamath, my eyes were half blinded with the stubble and chaff which filled the air; but it was the extraordinary behaviour of this *rolling thing* that riveted my attention. Hundreds of these globes, all bounding like gazelles in one direction over the desert, would suddenly wheel short round at the bidding of a counter blast, and dash away with equal speed on their new course. An Arab proverb addresses this "rolling thing" thus: "Ho! akkub, where do you put up tonight?" to which it answers as it flies, "Where the wind puts up." They also derive one of their many forms of cursing from this plant: "May you be whirled, like the akkub, before the wind, until you are caught in the thorns, or plunged into the sea." If this is not the *wheel* of David, and the *rolling thing* of Isaiah, from which they also borrowed their imprecations upon the wicked, I have seen nothing in the country to suggest the comparison. *W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 13. *Make them like a wheel.* That is, cause them to fall into such great calamities that they can find no counsel or remedy for their misfortunes, and that they may run hither and thither like a wheel or a ball, and yet see not where they ought to stop, or whither they ought to escape. Such are the minds of wicked men in calamities, wherever they turn they find no harbour wherein to rest, no certain consolation can they discover. They are tossed with perpetual disquietude; by running hither and thither and seeking various remedies they but weary themselves the more and plunge themselves the more deeply in their woes. This must necessarily happen to those who seek to cure evil with evil. Therefore Isaiah also says, *the wicked are like the troubled sea.* *Mollerus.*

Verse 13. *Like a wheel.* Mortals, like cylinders, are rolled hither and thither, oppressed with innumerable ills. *Aurea Carmina.—Pythagoras*

Verse 13. There is no greater evidence against error, than that it is not constant to itself, no greater argument against these pretended great spirits, than that they cannot sit, know not where to fix, are always moving, as if the psalmist's curse had taken hold of them, as if God had made them *like a wheel and as stubble before the wind*, that can sit nowhere, rest at nothing, but turn about from one uncertainty to another. The Holy Spirit is a spirit that will sit still, and be at peace, continue and abide. *Mark Frank.*

Verses 13-14. In imagery both obvious and vivid to every native of the gusty hills and plains of Palestine, though to us comparatively unintelligible, the psalmist describes them as driven over the uplands of Gilead like the clouds of chaff blown from the threshing floors; chased away like the spherical masses of dry weeds which course over the plains of Esdraelon and Philistia—flying with

the dreadful hurry and confusion of the flames, that rush and leap from tree and hill to hill when the wooded mountains of a tropical country are by chance ignited. *William Smith, in "A Dictionary of the Bible."* 1863.

Verse 14. Mountains on fire. Many of the mountains in this country are covered with dense forests. The leaves which fall every autumn accumulate, sometimes for years, until we have a particularly dry summer, when, somehow or other, either by accident or design, they are always set on fire, and burn sometimes for several days. The mountains in one of the States of the neighbouring Republic are on fire at this very moment while I am now writing, and have been burning for more than a week, and we can distinctly see the red glare in the sky above them, although from their great distance, even the tops of the mountains themselves from whence the flames arise are beyond the limits of our horizon. *From "Philip Musgrave: or Memoirs of a Church of England Missionary in the North American Colonies."* 1846.

Verse 14. Fire has greater force on a *mountain*, where the wind is more powerful, than upon a wood situated in a valley. *Honorius Augustodunensis.*

Verse 14. Humboldt saw forests on fire in South America and thus describes them. "Several parts of the vast forests which surround the mountain, had taken fire. Reddish flames, half enveloped in clouds of smoke, presented a very grand spectacle. The inhabitants set fire to the forests, to improve the pasturage, and to destroy the shrubs that choke the grass. Enormous conflagrations, too, are often caused by the carelessness of the Indians, who neglect, when they travel, to extinguish the fires by which they have dressed their food."

Verse 14. Let us pray the divine aid to break this power and enmity of the natural man; that it may yield unto the word of grace; and let the wood, hay and stubble of all false doctrine perish before the brightness of the face of God. *Edward Walter.* 1854.

Verse 18. That men may know that thou, whose name alone is *JEHOVAH*, etc. Early English History informs us, that some bloodthirsty persecutors were marching on a band of Christians. The Christians, seeing them approaching, marched out towards them, and at the top of their voices, shouted, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" (Praise Jehovah). The name of the Lord being presented, the rage of the persecutors abated. Josephus says, that the Great Alexander, when on his triumphal march, being met near Jerusalem by the Jewish high priest, on whose mitre was engraved the name of Jehovah, "approached by himself and adored that name, "and was disarmed of his hostile intent. There was significance and power in the glorious old name as written by the Jews. But the name of Jesus is now far more mighty in the world than was the name Jehovah in these earlier ages. *"The Dictionary of Illustrations,"* 1872.

Verse 18. *JEHOVAH* is one of the incommunicable names of God, which signifies his eternal essence. The Jews observe that in God's name *Jehovah* the Trinity is implied. *Je* signifies the

present tense, *ho* the preterperfect tense, *vah*, the future. The Jews also observe that in his name Jehovah all the Hebrew letters are *literae quiescentes*, that denotes rest, implying that in God and from God is all our rest. Every gracious soul is like Noah's dove, he can find no rest nor satisfaction but in God. God alone is the godly man's ark of rest and safety. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God, and is never attributed to any but God: *Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH.*

Verse 18. *The most high.* His being the High and lofty One, notes forth the transcendancy and super excellency of his divine being in himself, and that it is utterly of another kind from creatures, and indeed that it only is truly being. When the Psalmist says, *That men may know that thou, whose name alone in JEHOVAH art the MOST HIGH over all the earth,* he thereby argues his height from his name, that his name is alone Jehovah, and therefore he is most high, and in that very respect. Now Jehovah is the name of his essence, "I AM, " and he is MOST HIGH in respect of such a glorious being as is proper alone unto him. *Thomas Goodwin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The long silence of God, the reasons for it, and our reasons for desiring him to end it.

Verse 3. Thy hidden ones.

1. Hidden as to their new nature, which is an enigma to men.
2. Hidden for protection, as precious things.
3. Hidden, for solace and rest.
4. Hidden, because not yet fully revealed.

Verse 4. The immortality of the church.

Verse 5. The confederacies of evils against the saints.

Verses 13-15. The instability, restlessness and impotence of the wicked; their horror when God deals with them in justice.

Verse 16. A prayer for the Pope and his priests.

Verse 17. The righteous fate of persecutors, and troublers.

Verse 18. The Golden Lesson: how taught, to whom, by whom, through whom?

WORK UPON THE EIGHTY-THIRD PSALM

"Expositions and Observations on Psalm LXXXIII., "in "Divine Drops distilled from the Fountain of Holy Scriptures: delivered in several Exercises before Sermons, upon Twenty and Three Texts of Scripture. By that worthy Gospel Preacher, GUALTER CRADOCK, late Preacher at All Hallows Great in London... 1650."

Psalm 84

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. To the Chief Musician upon Gittith. A Psalm for the sons of Korah. This Psalm well deserved to be committed to the noblest of the sons of song. No music could be too sweet for its theme, or too exquisite in sound to match the beauty of its language. Sweeter than the joy of the wine press, (for that is said to be the meaning of the word rendered upon Gittith), is the joy of the holy assemblies of the Lord's house; not even the favoured children of grace, who are like the sons of Korah, can have a richer subject for song than Zion's sacred festivals. It matters little when this Psalm was written, or by whom; for our part it exhales to us a Davidic perfume, it smells of the mountain heather and the lone places of the wilderness, where King David must have often lodged during his many wars. This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called *The Pearl of Psalms*. If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred-and-third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of peace. Pilgrimages to the tabernacle were a grand feature of Jewish life. In our country, pilgrimages to the shrine of Thomas of Canterbury, and our Lady of Walsingham, were so general as to affect the entire population, cause the formation of roads, the erection and maintenance of hostelries, and the creation of a special literature; this may help us to understand the influence of pilgrimage upon the ancient Israelites. Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each halting place; they camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the slough, and as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten. One who was debarred the holy company of the pilgrims, and the devout worship of the congregation, would find in this Psalm fit expression for his mournful spirit.

DIVISION. We will make our pauses where the poet or the musician placed them, namely, of the Selahs.

EXPOSITION

Verse 2. *My soul longeth*, it pines, and faints to meet with the saints in the Lord's house. The desire was deep and insatiable—the very soul of the man was yearning for his God. Yea, even fainteth; as though it could not long hold out, but was exhausted with delay. He had a holy lovesickness upon him, and was wasted with an inward consumption because he was debarred the worship of the Lord in the appointed place. For the courts of the Lord. To stand once again in those areas which were

dedicated to holy adoration was the soul longing of the psalmist. True subjects love the courts of their king. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. It was God himself that he pined for, the only living and true God. His whole nature entered into his longing. Even the clay cold flesh grew warm through the intense action of his fervent spirit. Seldom, indeed, does the flesh incline in the right direction, but in the matter of Sabbath services our weary body sometimes comes to the assistance of our longing heart, for it desires the physical rest as much as the soul desires the spiritual repose. The psalmist declared that he could not remain silent in his desires, but began to cry out for God and his house; he wept, he sighed, he pleaded for the privilege. Some need to be whipped to church, while here is David crying for it. He needed no clatter of bells from the belfry to ring him in, he carried his bell in his own bosom: holy appetite is a better call to worship than a full chime.

Verse 3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house.* He envied the sparrows which lived around the house of God, and picked up the stray crumbs in the courts thereof; he only wished that he, too, could frequent the solemn assemblies and bear away a little of the heavenly food. And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young. He envied also the swallows whose nests were built under the eaves of the priest's houses, who there found a place for their young, as well as for themselves. We rejoice not only in our personal religious opportunities, but in the great blessing of taking our children with us to the sanctuary. The church of God is a house for us and a nest for our little ones. Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts. To the very altars these free birds drew near, none could restrain them nor would have wished to do so, and David wished to come and go as freely as they did. Mark how he repeats the blessed name of Jehovah of Hosts; he found in it a sweetness which helped him to bear his inward hunger. Probably David himself was with the host, and, therefore, he dwelt with emphasis upon the title which taught him that the Lord was in the tented field as well as within the holy curtains. My King and my God. Here he utters his loyalty from afar. If he may not tread the courts, yet he loves the King. If an exile, he is not a rebel. When we cannot occupy a seat in God's house, he shall have a seat in our memories and a throne in our hearts. The double "my" is very precious; he lays hold upon his God with both his hands, as one resolved not to let him go till the favour requested be at length accorded.

Verse 4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.* Those he esteems to be highly favoured who are constantly engaged in divine worship—the canons residentiary, yea, the pew openers, the menials who sweep and dust. To come and go is refreshing, but to abide in the place of prayer must be heaven below. To be the guests of God, enjoying the hospitalities of heaven, set apart for holy work, screened from a noisy world, and familiar with sacred things—why this is surely the choicest heritage a son of man can possess. They will be still praising thee. So near to God, their very life must be adoration. Surely their hearts and tongues never cease from magnifying the Lord. We fear David here drew rather a picture of what should be than of what is; for those occupied daily with the offices

needful for public worship are not always among the most devout; on the contrary, "the nearer the church the further from God." Yet in a spiritual sense this is most true, for those children of God who in spirit abide even in his house, are also ever full of the praises of God. Communion is the mother of adoration. They fail to praise the Lord who wander far from him, but those who dwell in him are always magnifying him. Selah. In such an occupation as this we might be content to remain for ever. It is worth while to pause and meditate upon the prospect of dwelling with God and praising him throughout eternity.

Verse 5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.* Having spoken of the blessedness of those who reside in the house of God, he now speaks of those who are favoured to visit it at appointed seasons, going upon pilgrimage with their devout brethren: he is not, however, indiscriminate in his eulogy, but speaks only of those who heartily attend to the sacred festivals. The blessedness of sacred worship belongs not to half hearted, listless worshippers, but to those who throw all their energies into it. Neither prayer, nor praise, nor the hearing of the word will be pleasant or profitable to persons who have left their hearts behind them. A company of pilgrims who had left their hearts at home would be no better than a caravan of carcasses, quite unfit to blend with living saints in adoring the living God. In whose heart are the ways of them, or far better, in whose heart are thy ways. Those who love the ways of God are blessed. When we have God's ways in our hearts, and our heart in his ways, we are what and where we should be, and hence we shall enjoy the divine approval.

Verse 6. *Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well.* Traversing joyfully the road to the great assembly, the happy pilgrims found refreshment even in the dreariest part of the road. As around a well men meet and converse cheerfully, being refreshed after their journey, so even in the vale of tears, or any other dreary glen, the pilgrims to the skies find sweet solace in brotherly communion and in anticipation of the general assembly above, with its joys unspeakable. Probably there is here a local allusion, which will never now be deciphered, but the general meaning is clear enough. There are joys of pilgrimage which make men forget the discomforts of the road. The rain also filleth the pools. God gives to his people the supplies they need while traversing the roads which he points out for them. Where there were no natural supplies from below, the pilgrims found an abundant compensation in waters from above, and so also shall all the sacramental host of God's elect. Ways, which otherwise would have been deserted from want of accommodation, were made into highways abundantly furnished for the travellers' wants, because the great annual pilgrimages led in that direction; even so, Christian converse and the joy of united worship makes many duties easy and delightful which else had been difficult and painful.

Verse 7. *They go from strength to strength.* So far from being wearied they gather strength as they proceed. Each individual becomes happier, each company becomes more numerous, each holy song more sweet and full. We grow as we advance if heaven be our goal. If we spend our strength in

God's ways we shall find it increase. Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. This was the end of the pilgrim's march, the centre where all met, the delight of all hearts. Not merely to be in the assembly, but to appear before God was the object of each devout Israelite. Would to God it were the sincere desire of all who in these days mingle in our religious gatherings. Unless we realise the presence of God we have done nothing; the mere gathering together is nothing worth.

Verse 8. *O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer.* Give me to go up to thy house, or if I may not do so, yet let my cry be heard. Thou listenest to the united supplications of thy saints, but do not shut out my solitary petition, unworthy though I be. Give ear, O God of Jacob. Though Jehovah of hosts, thou art also the covenant God of solitary pleaders like Jacob; regard thou, then, my plaintive supplication. I wrestle here alone with thee, while the company of thy people have gone on before me to happier scenes, and I beseech thee bless me; for I am resolved to hold thee till thou speak the word of grace into my soul. The repetition of the request for an answer to his prayer denotes his eagerness for a blessing. What a mercy it is that if we cannot gather with the saints, we can still speak to their Master. Selah. A pause was needed after a cry so vehement, a prayer so earnest.

Verse 9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.* Here we have the nation's prayer for David; and the believer's prayer for the Son of David. Let but the Lord look upon our Lord Jesus, and we shall be shielded from all harm; let him behold the face of his Anointed, and we shall be able to behold his face with joy. We also are anointed by the Lord's grace, and our desire is that he will look upon us with an eye of love in Christ Jesus. Our best prayers when we are in the best place are for our glorious King, and for the enjoyment of his Father's smile.

Verse 10. *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.* Of course the psalmist means a thousand days spent elsewhere. Under the most favourable circumstances in which earth's pleasures can be enjoyed, they are not comparable by so much as one in a thousand to the delights of the service of God. To feel his love, to rejoice in the person of the anointed Saviour, to survey the promises and feel the power of the Holy Ghost in applying precious truth to the soul, is a joy which worldlings cannot understand, but which true believers are ravished with. Even a glimpse at the love of God is better than ages spent in the pleasures of sense. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell *in the tents of wickedness*. The lowest station in connection with the Lord's house is better than the highest position among the godless. Only to wait at his threshold and peep within, so as to see Jesus, is bliss. To bear burdens and open doors for the Lord is more honour than to reign among the wicked. Every man has his choice, and this is ours. God's worst is better than the devil's best. God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury. Note how he calls the tabernacle the house of *my* God; there's where the sweetness lies: if Jehovah be our God, his house, his altars, his doorstep, all become precious to us. We know by experience that where Jesus is within, the outside of the house is better

than the noblest chambers where the Son of God is not to be found.

Verse 11. *For the Lord God is a sun and shield.* Pilgrims need both as the weather may be, for the cold would smite them were it not for the sun, and foes are apt to waylay the sacred caravan, and would haply destroy it if it were without a shield. Heavenly pilgrims are not left uncomforted or unprotected. The pilgrim nation found both sun and shield in that fiery cloudy pillar which was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and the Christian still finds both light and shelter in the Lord his God. A sun for happy days and a shield for dangerous ones. A sun above, a shield around. A light to show the way and a shield to ward off its perils. Blessed are they who journey with such a convoy; the sunny and shady side of life are alike happy to them. The Lord will give grace and glory. Both in due time, both as needed, both to the full, both with absolute certainty. The Lord has both grace and glory in infinite abundance; Jesus is the fulness of both, and, as his chosen people, we shall receive both as a free gift from the God of our salvation. What more can the Lord give, or we receive, or desire. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant blessing to us. What a wide promise! Some apparent good may be withheld, but no real good, no, not one. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." God has all good, there is no good apart from him, and there is no good which he either needs to keep back or will on any account refuse us, if we are but ready to receive it. We must be upright and neither lean to this or that form of evil: and this uprightness must be practical,—we must *walk* in truth and holiness, then shall we be heirs of all things, and as we come of age all things shall be in our actual possession; and meanwhile, according to our capacity for receiving shall be the measure of the divine bestowal. This is true, not of a favoured few, but of all the saints for evermore.

Verse 12. *O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.* Here is the key of the Psalm. The worship is that of faith, and the blessedness is peculiar to believers. No formal worshipper can enter into this secret. A man must know the Lord by the life of real faith, or he can have no true rejoicing in the Lord's worship, his house, his Son, or his ways. Dear reader, how fares it with thy soul?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. Here note, that the sons, that is, the posterity of wicked and rebellious Korah, have an honourable place in God's sacred and solemn service: for to them sundry of David's psalms are commended. . . . Here see the verifying of God's word, for the comfort of all godly children, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, Eze 18:14,17,20, if he see his father's sins and turn from them. *Thomas Pierson (1570-1633), in "David's Heart's Desire."*

Whole Psalm.

O Lord of hosts, how lovely in mine eyes
The tents where thou dost dwell!

For thine abode my spirit faints and sighs;
The courts I love so well.
My longing soul is weary
Within thy house to be;
This world is waste and dreary,
A desert land to me.
The sparrow, Lord, hath found a sheltered home,
The swallow hath her nest;
She layeth there her young, and though she roam,
Returneth there to rest.
I, to thine altar flying,
Would there for ever be;
My heart and flesh are crying,
O living God, for thee!
How blest are they who in thy house abide!
Thee evermore they praise.
How strong the man whom thou alone dost guide,
Whose heart doth keep thy ways.
A pilgrim and a stranger,
He leaneth on thine arm;
And thou, in time of danger,
Dost shield him from alarm.
From strength to strength through Baca's vale of woe,
They pass along in prayer,
And gushing streams of living water flow,
Dug by their faithful care;
Thy rain is sent from heaven
To fertilise the land,
And wayside grace is given
Till they in Zion stand.
Lord God of hosts, attend unto my prayer!
O Jacob's God, give ear!
Behold, O God, our shield, we through thy care,
Within thy courts appear!
Look thou upon the glory

Of thine Anointed's face;
In him we stand before thee,
To witness of thy grace!
One day with thee excelleth over and over
A thousand days apart;
In thine abode, within thy temple door,
Would stand my watchful heart.
Men tell me of the treasure
Hid in their tents of sin;
I look not there for pleasure,
Nor choose to enter in.
Own then the Lord to be thy Sun, thy Shield—
No good will he withhold;
He giveth grace, and soon shall be revealed
His glory, yet untold.
His mighty name confessing,
Walk thou at peace and free; O Lord, how rich the blessing
Of him who trusts in thee!
—*German Choral Music.*

Verse 1. *How amiable are thy tabernacles.* What was there in them that appeared so amiable? Perchance, the edifice was famed for the skill and cost bestowed on it? But the temple of extraordinary beauty was not yet constructed. The tabernacle was lowly, more suited to pilgrims than to a great people, and little becoming the king himself. Therefore to the pious there is no need of vast or sumptuous temples to the end that they should love the house of God. *Musculus.*

Verse 1. *How amiable are thy tabernacles.* What made the tabernacle of Moses lovely was not the outside, which was very mean, as the Church of God outwardly is, through persecution, affliction, and poverty; but what was within, having many golden vessels in it, and those typical of things much more precious; moreover, here the priests were to be seen in their robes, doing their duty and service, and, at certain times, the high priest in his rich apparel; here were seen the sacrifices slain and offered, by which the people were taught the nature of sin, the strictness of justice, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ: here the Levites were heard singing their songs, and blowing their trumpets: but much more amiable are the Church of God and its ordinances in Gospel times, where Christ, the Great High Priest, is seen in the glories of his person, and the fulness of his grace; where Zion's priests, or the ministers of the gospel, stand clothed, being full fraught with salvation, and the tidings of it; where Christ is evidently set forth, as crucified and slain, in the ministry of the word, and

the administration of ordinances; here the gospel trumpet is blown, and its joyful sound echoed forth, and songs of love and grace are sung by all believers; besides, what makes these tabernacles still more lovely are, the presence of God here, so that they are no other than the house of God, the gate of heaven; the provisions that are here made, and the company that is here enjoyed. *John Gill.*

Verse 1. Amiable. The adjective is rendered by the English versions *amiable*, in the sense of the French *amiable*, lovely. But the usage of the Hebrew word requires it to be understood as meaning *dear, beloved*, which is exactly the idea here required by the context. The plural, *dwellings*, has reference to the subdivisions and appurtenances of the sanctuary, and is applied to the tabernacle in Ps 48:3. Compare Ps 68:35. The divine titles are as usual significant. While one suggests the covenant relation between God and the petitioner, the other makes his sovereignty the ground for a prayer for his protection.. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1. Tabernacles. By the name of *tabernacles* we are put in mind of the church's peregrination and wandering from one place unto another, until she come unto her own true country. For as tabernacle and tents of war be removed hither and thither, so the Church of God in this life hath no sure and quiet abode, but often is compelled to change her seat. This pilgrimage, whereby indeed every man, as Augustine doth say, is a pilgrim in this world, doth admonish us of sin, which is the cause of this peregrination. For, because of sin, we are cast with our first parents out of Paradise into the land wherein we sojourn. So that we are removed from Jerusalem, that is, from the sight and fruition of peace, into Babylon, that is, into confusion and exile, wherein we wander far and wide. *Nicholas Heminge (Hemminguis) (1513-1600), in "The Faith of the Church Militant."*

Verses 1-2. When we cannot express the greatness of a thing in direct terms, we are fain to fly to wonder, and so doth David here, because he cannot express sufficiently how amiable the Tabernacles of the Lord are, he therefore falls to wondering, and helps himself with a question; How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But is not David's wondering itself wonderful, that the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts should be so wonderfully amiable? Is it not a wonder they should be amiable at all? For are not his tabernacles tents of war? and is there anything in war that can be amiable? If he had said: How *terrible* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; his wonder had been with some congruity; for the Lord of Hosts is terrible in all his works; but to say, How *amiable* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, seems to imply a contradiction; for though they may be amiable, as they are tabernacles, yet they must needs be terrible, as they are Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts; and when this terribleness hath made an abatement in their amiableness, what place will be left for wonder, to give cause to say, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But if he had said, How terrible are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; though it might have been wonderful in the degree, yet it could not be wonderful in the kind: for what wonder is it, if the Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts be terrible? But when he saith, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; this is

not only wonderful in the degree, but in the kind much more. For what can be more wonderful, than that being Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, they should be amiable, and so amiable as to be wondered at? But is it not, that God is in himself so amiable, that all things of His, even his terrors themselves, are amiable; his tabernacles and his tents, his sword and his spear, his darts and his arrows, all amiable; terrible no doubt to his enemies, but amiable, wonderfully amiable to all that love and fear him, and great reason they should be so, seeing they are all in their defence, and for their safeguard; though they be Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts to the wicked, yet they are Courts of the Prince of Peace to the godly, and this makes *my soul to long for the courts of the Lord*. For I desire indeed to be a courtier, yet not as I am now: God knows I am very unfit for it, but because God's Courts are such, they make any one fit, that but comes into them; they receive not men fit, but make them fit, and he that was before but a shrub in Baca, as soon as he comes into the Courts of the Lord is presently made a cedar in Lebanon. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 2. *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth*, etc. Every amiableness is not so great to make a longing, nor every longing so great to make a fainting; nor every fainting so great to make the soul to faint; Oh, then, consider how great this amiableness is, which makes my soul not only to long, but to faint with longing! And blame me not for fainting, as though it were my own fault for not restraining my longing; for seeing his Tabernacles are of infinite amiableness, they must need work in me an infinite delighting, and that delighting an infinite longing; and what restraint can there be of that which is infinite? No, alas, my fainting is but answerable to my longing, and my longing but answerable to the amiableness. If I had the offer made me, which was made to Christ, to enjoy all the kingdoms of the earth, but with condition to want the Courts of the Lord; this want would bring to my soul a greater grief than that enjoying would give it contentment: for seeing his Tabernacles are so amiable, where He is Lord of Hosts, how amiable must they needs be, where he is Prince of Peace? and Prince of Peace he is in his Courts, though in his camp he be Lord of Hosts. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 2. *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth*. The word *hlc* (fainteth) signifies to be consumed with longing, as the Latins say, *deperire aliquem amore* (he is dying of love), that is, he so vehemently loves, and is enflamed with so great a desire to obtain the loved object, that he wastes and pines away unless his wish is gratified. Therefore, an ardent longing is meant, which so torments and burns the mind, that flesh and marrow waste away, so long as it is not permitted to enjoy the thing desired. *Mollerus*.

Verse 2. *soul...heart...flesh*. Marking the whole man, with every faculty and affection. The verbs are also very expressive. The first *longeth*, means literally, "hath grown pale," as with the intensity of the feeling; the second, *fainteth*, is more exactly "faileth," or "is consumed." Job 19:27. *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 2. *Crieth*. The word that is here rendered *crieth*, is from (Heb.), that signifies to shout, shrill, or

cry out, as soldiers do at the beginning of a battle, when they cry out, Fall on, fall on, fall on, or when they cry out after a victory, Victory, victory, victory! The Hebrew word notes a strong cry, or to cry as a child cries when it is sadly hungry, for now very whit of the child cries, hands cry, and face cries, and feet cry. *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 2. *Living God.* Ps 42:2, *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God,* is the only other place in the Psalms where God is so named. This particular form of expression, *El Chay*, occurs but twice beside in the Bible, Jos 3:10 Ho 1:10. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3. *The sparrow hath found an house,* etc. The tender care of God, over the least of his creatures, is here most touchingly alluded to. The Psalmist, while an exile, envies them their privileges. He longs to be nestling, as it were, in the dwelling place of God. The believer finds a perfect home and rest in God's altars; or, rather, in the great truths which they represent. Still, his confidence in God is sweetened and strengthened by the knowledge of his minute, universal, providential care. It becomes his admiring delight. "God fails not, "as one has beautifully said, "to find a house for the most *worthless*, and a nest for the most *restless* of birds." What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of him who provides so fully for the need of all his creatures! We know what the expression of "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security, a shelter from storm, a covert to hide oneself in, from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, "a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in?" But there is one thing in these highly privileged birds which strike us forcibly in our meditations—they knew not him from whom all this kindness flowed—they knew neither his heart nor his hand. They enjoyed the rich provisions of his tender care; he thought of everything for their need, but there was no fellowship between them and the Great Giver. From this, O my soul, thou mayest learn a useful lesson. Never rest satisfied with merely frequenting such places, or with having certain privileges there; but rise, in spirit, and seek and find and enjoy direct communion with the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The heart of David turns to God himself. *My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Things New and Old.*

Verse 3. *The swallow a nest,* etc. The confidence which these birds place in the human race is not a little extraordinary. They not only put themselves, but their offspring in the power of men. I have seen their nests in situations where they were within the reach of one's hand, and where they might have been destroyed in an instant. I have observed them under a doorway, the eaves of a low cottage, against the wall of a tool shed, on the knocker of a door, and the rafter of a much frequented hay loft. *Edward Jesse, in "Gleanings in Natural History." 1856.*

Verse 3. *Even thine altars.* There were two altars; the "brazen altar, "and the "golden altar; "to those, no doubt, the psalmist refers. Both were of shittim wood, which sets forth the holy humanity—the perfect manhood, of the Lord Jesus. Incarnation lies at the foundation of all his work for us, and all

our blessing in him. The one altar was overlaid with brass, the other with pure gold. The *overlaying* shadows forth his Godhead, but in distinct aspects. We have the same Jesus in both, but shadowed forth in different circumstances. In the one, humiliation and suffering; in the other, exaltation and glory. *Things New and Old.*

Verse 3. *Thine altars.* There is in the original a pathetic, a vehement, a broken expressing, expressed, *O thine altars.* It is true (says David) thou art here in the wilderness, and I may see thee here, and serve thee here, but *O thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.* *John Donne.*

Verse 3. *Thine altars* is a poetical way of saying, *Thy house.* It is manifestly a special term, instead of a general. Yet it has been seriously argued, that no birds could or would ever be suffered to build their nests on the altar. Surely this sort of expression, which is hardly a figure, is common enough. *A parte apotiori fit denominato.* We say, "There goes a sail." What should we think of a man who should argue that a sail cannot go? The altars mean the temple. There was

"no jutting frieze,

Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but these birds

Had made their pendant bed; "

not to mention that trees grew within the sacred enclosure, where birds might have built their nests. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3. A custom, existing among several nations of antiquity, is deemed capable of illustrating the present passage. For birds, whose nests chanced to be built on the temples, or within the limits of them, were not allowed to be driven away, much less to be killed, but found there a secure and undisturbed abode. *William Keating Clay.*

Verse 4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;* etc. Alas, how happens this? There were *tabernacles* before, as belonging to a Lord; and *courts* as belonging to a king, and *altars* as belonging to a God; and now to be but a *house* as belonging to a private man; and so all this great rising to end in a fall? No, my soul, it is no fall, it is an aggregation rather of all the other; for where his *tabernacles* did but serve to shew his power, his *courts* but to shew his majesty; his *altars* but to shew his deity, his *house* serves to shew them all; for in his *house* there will still be praising him, and his praise and glory is the sum of all. Or is it that to dwell in God's house is a kind of appropriating him to ourselves, seeing his *tabernacles* and his *courts* lie open to strangers, his *house* open to none but his servants; and seeing in the nearness to God, and conversing with him, consists all true blessedness; therefore *Blessed are they that dwell in his house,* but how dwell in it? Not to look in sometimes as we pass by, or to stay in it a time, as we do at an inn, but to be constant abiders in it day and night, as to which we have devoted ourselves and bowed our service. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.* What was this house more to David than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the Divine Presence? So that here was a heart so

naturalized to this presence as to affect an abode in it, and that he might lead his life with God, and dwell with him all his days; he could not be content with giving a visit now and then. And why should this temper of spirit in the clearer light of the gospel be looked upon as an unattainable thing! A lazy despondency, and the mean conceit that it is modest not to aim so high, starve religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this then be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that you may get into the disposition of spirit toward God. *John Howe.*

Verse 4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house*, etc. Blessed indeed, we too may exclaim, and blessed shall they be for ever. They are *dwellers*, not *visitors*, in God's house. *I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* This is true, blessedly true, of all who trust in Jesus now. But though God's children are all priests by birth, as were the sons of Aaron, they are not all, alas! priests by consecration. (See Exodus 29.) Comparatively few know their priestly place at the golden altar. Many of them are doubting as to whether their sins, root and branch, were all consumed outside the camp; and, consequently, such are afraid to come within the court, and as for being assured of their full justification and sanctification in the risen One, they gravely doubt and fear that such blessedness can ever be their happy lot. Hence that state of soul which answers to priestly consecration at the laver, and happy worship at the golden altar, is unknown and unenjoyed. They are not priests by consecration. Our text is plain. *They will still be praising thee.* Doubts, fears, unsettled questions, all are gone. Such cannot exist in the holy place. All, of course, who are in Christ, must be in God's account where he is; but all who believe in Christ, do not know and believe that they are *in him*, as being *one with him now*. When the state of our souls answers to what is symbolized by the holy place, we can only praise: *They that dwell in thy house will be still praising thee.* Then we are happily near to God, and have communion with him, in the glorified Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost. *Things New and Old.*

Verse 4. *They will be still praising thee.* How appears it to be true, that they who dwell in God's house will always be praising him, seeing it is but seldom seen that servants be so forward to praise their masters? O my soul! it is not so much the good dispositions of the servants, as the infinite worthiness of the Master that makes them to praise him, for when they see the admirable economy of his government, when they see how sweetly he disposeth all things in weight and measure, when they find him to use them more like children than servants, what heart can be so ungrateful as not to praise him? And seeing by dwelling in God's house, they see these things continually, therefore they that dwell in his house will always be praising him. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4. *They will be still praising thee.* As having hearts full of heaven, and consciences full of comfort. There cannot but be music in the temple of the Holy Ghost. *John Trapp.*

Verse 4. *Still praising.* It is not enough to praise him, it must be a praising him *still*, before it will make a blessedness; and though to praise God be an easy matter, yet to *praise him still*, will be found a

busy work, indeed to flesh and blood a miserable work, for if I be still praising him, what time shall I have for any pleasures? O my soul, if thou make it not thy pleasure, thy chief, thy only pleasure to be praising him, thou art not like in haste to come to blessedness. And marvel not that David speaks thus under the law, when St. Paul under the Gospel saith as much: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let all be done to the glory and praise of God.* Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 5. *In whose heart are thy ways.* That is, who love the ways that lead to thy house. Earnest Hawkins.

Verse 5. *In whose heart are the ways of them.* Literally, *The steeps are on their hearts.* The steep ascents on which the tabernacle stood. Horsley renders, *They are bent on climbing the steep ascents.* Perhaps the (Heb.) were more properly the *raised causeways* or stairs leading up to Mount Zion, or all through the mountain country on the road to Jerusalem. John Fry.

Verse 5. *In whose heart are the ways.* The natural heart is a pathless wilderness, full of cliffs and precipices. When the heart is renewed by grace, *a road is made, a highway is prepared for our God.* See Isa 40:3-4. Frederick Fysh.

Verse 6. *Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well,* etc. I consider the valley here mentioned to be the same as the valley of *Bochim*, mentioned in Jud 2:1,5, which received its name from the *weeping* of the Jews, when they were rebuked by an angel for their disobedience to the commands of God. This valley is called m'kkh, *Habbcaim*, in 2Sa 5:24, the h of hkk *to weep* being changed into a. Josephus mentions, that the circumstance there related occurred en toiv alsesi toiv kaloumenoiv Klauqmwnsi. Antiquities Jud. lib 7 c 4. my'kkh, *Habb'caim*, is rendered in that verse by the LXX Klauqmwn, *weepings*; and in Jud 2:1 kykkh, *Habbocim*, is also rendered by the LXX. Klauqmwn, *weepings*. The valley mentioned in Ps 84:6 is called by the LXX. Klauqmwn. I am inclined therefore to think, that in this place, joining to'kkh the m of the following word, and supplying y before it, we ought to read nymy'kkh instead of ny`m'kkh... All the ancient versionists seem to have thought, that the valley in this verse received its name from hkk, *bacha*, *to weep*. I translate the verse, *Passing through the valley of Bochim, they will make it a fountain even of blessings; it shall be covered with the former rain.* The Psalm has been supposed to have been written by Jehoshaphat. Probably he passed through Bochim, which seems to have been an arid valley, when he marched against the Moabites and Ammonites; see 2 Chronicles 20. After the victory the army of Jehoshaphat assembled in a valley, where they blessed the Lord; and from this circumstance it received the name of Berachah: see 2Ch 20:26. Perhaps the word tvkrk in this verse has an allusion to that circumstance; and perhaps the valley of Berachah was, before that glorious occasion, called the valley of Bochim. Richard Dixon.

Verse 6. *Passing through the valley of weeping make him,* that is, Jehovah, *a fountain.* That is, they trust, and from him look for help, who having plain paths in their mind must pass through many

difficulties. Similar help is sought by those, who, suffering from a scanty supply of water, press on through a dry valley, and yet do not despair or grow weary, but have God for their fountain, from which they drink and are refreshed. *Venema*.

Verse 6. *The valley of Baca.* Valley of tear shrubs. *E. W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 6. *Baca*, signifieth a mulberry tree, which loves to grow in dry places that be sandy and barren, 2Sa 5:23-24, or 1Ch 14:14-15. Now they whose hearts be set upon God's house and holy worship, when they go thitherward through a sandy, dry, barren valley, do make it a well,—that is, repute and count it as a well, the word *rhtysy* signifieth to put or set, as Ge 3:15; Ps 21:6, 12 83:11, 13. For thus will they say with themselves, thinking upon the comfort of God's favour to whom they go, that it shall be to them as the rain of blessings, a plentiful and liberal rain upon the ground. *Thomas Pierson*.

Verse 6. *Make it a well.* That which seemed an impediment turns to a furtherance; at least, no misery can be so great, no estate so barren, but a godly heart can make it a well, out of which to draw forth water of comfort; either water to cleanse, and make it a way to repentance; or water to cool, and make it a way to patience; or water to moisten, and make it a way of growing in grace; and if the well happen to be dry, and afford no water from below, *yet the rain shall fill their pools*, and supply them with water from above. If natural forces be not sufficient, there shall be supernatural graces added to assist them, that though troubles of the world seem rubs in the way to blessedness, yet in truth they are none, they hinder not arriving at the mark we aim at, they hinder us not from being made members of Sion, they hinder us not from approaching the presence of God. No, my soul, they are rather helps, for by this means *we go from strength to strength*, from strength of patience, to strength of hope; from strength of hope, to strength of faith, to strength of vision; and then will be accomplished that which David speaks here; *Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart his ways are*. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 6. *The rain.* Little as there may be of water, that little suffices on their way. It is a *well* to them. They find only "*pools (which) the early rain has (barely) covered*"—but are content with the supply by the way. It is as good and sufficient to them as if showers of the heavy autumnal rains had filled the well. Pilgrims forget the scanty supply at an inn, when they have abundance in view at the end. Israelites going up to the Passover made light of deficient water, for their hearts were set on reaching Jerusalem. *Andrew A. Bonar*.

Verses 6-7. The most gloomy present becomes bright to them: passing through even a terrible wilderness, they turn it into a place of springs, their joyous hope and the infinite beauty of the goal, which is worth any amount of toil and trouble, afford them enlivening comfort, refreshing, strengthening in the midst of the arid steppe. Not only does their faith bring forth water out of the sand and rocks of the desert, but God also on his part lovingly anticipates their love, and rewardingly anticipates their faithfulness: a gentle rain, like that which refreshes the sown fields in the autumn,

descends from above and enwraps the valley of Baca in a fulness of blessing... the arid steppe becomes resplendent with a flowery festive garment (Isa 35:1-19), not to outward appearance, but to them spiritually, in a manner none the less true and real. And whereas under ordinary circumstances, the strength of the traveller diminishes in proportion as he has traversed more and more of his toilsome road, with them it is the very reverse; *they go from strength to strength*. Franz Delitzsch.

Verse 7. *They go from strength to strength*. Junius reads it, and so it is in the Hebrew, "They go from company to company." As they went up to Jerusalem they went in troops and companies. Possibly we translate it strength because much of our safety consisteth in good society. George Swinnock.

Verse 7. *Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God*. That is, every one of them answering to the character described. Others as well as they would appear in Zion before God; but not to enjoy his presence, and receive tokens of his favour. Blessedness was not to be enjoyed, but it could only be enjoyed by those who had been previously fitted for it by character and attainment. As certainly as these had been acquired, so certainly would the blessedness be enjoyed by each and by all of them.

Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. No one has perished by the way—none been devoured by wild beasts—none cut off by the wandering banditti—none become faint hearted and turned back. The whole bands are assembled—young and old, weak and strong; all answer to their names, and testify to the goodness of the Lord in bearing them up, and bringing through—in affording them rest, and yielding them pleasure. So shall it ever be with true spiritual pilgrims. The grace of God will always prove sufficient to preserve them, safe and blameless, to his heavenly kingdom and glory—troubles shall not overwhelm them—temptations not wholly overcome them—spiritual enemies shall not destroy them. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Lamb himself shall see to it that each of them is found in the day of account. Then shall he be able to say, *Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost*. "They are all here before God." William Makelvie. 1863.

Verse 8. There are two distinct thoughts of great practical value to the Christian, in this short prayer. There is the sense of *divine majesty*, and the consciousness of *divine relationship*. As *Lord of hosts*, he is almighty in power; as the *God of Jacob*, he is infinite in mercy and goodness to his people. *Things New and Old*.

Verse 9. While many, alas, are satisfied with mere formalities in religion, or with the dry discussion of doctrines, high or low, as they may be called, see thou and be occupied with Christ himself. It is the knowledge of his person that gives strength and joy to the soul. At all times, under all circumstances, we can say, *Look upon the face of thine Anointed*. We cannot always say, *Look on us*; but we may always say, *Look on Him*. In deepest sorrow through conscious failure, or in trials and difficulties through faithfulness to his name, we can ever plead with God what Christ is. God is ever well pleased

with him—ever occupied with him as risen from the dead and exalted to his own right hand in heaven; and he would have us also to be occupied with him as the heart's exclusive object. True faith can only rest on *God's estimate* of Christ, not on inward thoughts and feelings. That which may be called the faith of the formalist, rests on the ability of his own mind to judge of these matters. He trusts in himself. This is the essential difference between faith in appearance and faith in reality. *Things New and Old*.

Verse 9. *Look upon the face of thine anointed.* For I shall never come to look upon thy face, if thou vouchsafe not first to look upon mine: if thou afford me not as well the benefit of thine eyes, to look upon me, as the favour of thine ears, to hear me, I shall be left only to a bare expectation, but never come to the happiness of fruition; but when thou vouchsafest to look upon my face, that look of thine hath an influence of all true blessedness, and makes me find what a happiness it is to have the God of Jacob for my shield. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 10. *A day.* The least good look that a man hath from God, and the least good word that a man hears from God, and the least love letter and love token that a man receives from God is exceedingly precious to that man that hath God for his portion. *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.* He doth not say, One year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but *One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere; nor doth he say, One quarter of a year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere;* nor doth he say, One month is better than a thousand elsewhere, but *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere,* to shew that the very least of God is exceeding precious to a gracious soul that hath God for his portion. *Thomas Brooks*.

Verse 10. Another sign of God's children is, to delight to be much in God's presence. Children are to be in the presence of their father; where the King is, there is the court; where the presence of God is, there is heaven. God is in a special manner present in his ordinances, they are the Ark of his presence. Now, if we are his children, we love to be much in holy duties. In the use of ordinances we draw near to God, we come into our Father's presence; in prayer we have secret conference with God; the soul while it is praying, is as it were parleying with God. In the word we hear God speaking from heaven to us; and how doth every child of God delight to hear his Father's voice! In the sacrament God kisseth his children with the kisses of his lips; he gives them a smile of his face, and a privy seal of his love: oh, it is good to draw near to God. It is sweet being in his presence: every true child of God saith, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand!" *Thomas Watson*.

Verse 10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper,* etc. Some read it, "I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of the wicked; "alluding to the law concerning servants, who if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door post, Ex 21:5-6. David loved his Master, and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever,

to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account is comparable to that in communion with God. *Matthew Henry*.

Verse 10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper.* In the sense that Christ is a Door, David may well be content to be a Door Keeper, and though in God's house there be many mansions, yet seeing all of them are glorious, even the door keeper's place is not without its glory. But if you think the office to be mean, consider then whose officer he is, for even a door keeper is an officer in God's house, and God never displaceth his officers unless it be to advance them to a higher; whereas, in the courts of princes, the greatest officers are oftentimes displaced, turned off often with disgrace. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,* etc. Happy are those persons, whom God will use as besoms to sweep out the dust from his temple; or who shall tug at an oar in the boat where Christ and his church are embarked. *William Secker, in "The Nonsuch Professor."*

Verse 10. *Doorkeeper.* This is a Korhite psalm, and the descendants of Korah were, in fact, porters, and "keepers of the gates of the tabernacle, and keepers of the entry, "as well as being permitted to swell the chorus of the inspired singers of Israel. *Bossuet, quoted by Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 10. Instead of, *I had rather be a doorkeeper,* the margin has, according to the Hebrew, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold." Ainsworth's translation is: "I have chosen to sit at the threshold, in the house of my God; "and Dr. Boothroyd's is: "Abide, or sit, at the threshold." See 2Ki 12:9 22:4 25:18 1Ch 9:19 2Ch 23:4; Es 2:21 6:2. In all these passages the marginal reading is *threshold*. I think the word *door keeper* does not convey the proper meaning of the words, "to sit at the threshold; " because the preference of the Psalmist was evidently given to a very *humble* position; whereas that of a door keeper, in Eastern estimation, is truly respectable and confidential. The marginal reading, however, "to sit at the threshold, "at once strikes on an Eastern mind as a situation of deep humility. See the poor heathen devotee; he goes and sits near the threshold of his temple. Look at the beggar; he sits, or prostrates himself, at the threshold of the door or gate, till he shall have gained his suit. *Joseph Roberts*.

Verse 10. *House. Tents.* Observe the force of the contrasted expressions. The *house* is the Lord's; the *tents* are of the wicked. The pleasures of sin are for a season only; the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof. *Arthur Pridham*.

Verse 10. *The tents.* It is not any tents, or tents of any ordinary kind, that are understood, but rich, powerful, glorious, and splendid tents. *Venema*.

Verse 11. *The Lord God is a sun,* conveys a striking and impressive truth, when we think of the sun only in his obvious character as a source of light and heat. But what new energy is given to this magnificent emblem, when we learn from astronomy that he is a grand center of attraction, and when we, in addition, take in that sublime generalization that the sun is the ultimate source of every form of

power existing in the world! The wind wafts the commerce of every nation over the mighty deep; but the heat of the sun has rarefied that air, and set that wind in motion. The descending stream yields a power which grinds your grain, turns your spindles, works your looms, drives your forges; but it is because the sun gathered up the vapour from the ocean, which fell upon the hills, and is finding its way back to the source whence it came. The expansive energy of steam propels your engine; but the force with which it operates is locked up in the coal (the remains of extinct forests stored among your hills), or is derived from the wood that abounds in your forests, which now crown and beautify their summits. Both these primeval and these existing forests drew their substance from the sun: it is the chemical force resident in his rays which disengaged their carbon from the atmosphere, and laid it up as a source of power for future use. The animal exerts a force by muscular contraction; he draws it from the vegetable on which he feeds; the vegetable derives it from the sun, whose rays determine its growth. Every time you lift your arm, every time you take a step, you are drawing on the power the sun has given you. When you step into the railway carriage, it is the sun power that hurries you along. When gentle breezes fan your languid cheek, and when the restless tornado levels cities in its fury, they are the servants of the sun. What an emblem of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being! *Professor Green.*

Verse 11. The *sun*, which among all inanimate creatures is the most excellent, notes all manner of excellency, provision, and prosperity; and the *shield*, which among all artificial creatures is the chiefest, notes all manner of protection whatsoever. Under the name of *grace*, all spiritual good is wrapped up; and under the name of *glory*, all eternal good is wrapped up; and under the last clause, *No good thing will he withhold*, is wrapped up all temporal good: all put together speaks out God to be an all sufficient portion. *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 11. *The Lord God is a shield.* He is a shield to our *persons*: "Touch not," said he, "mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." "The Lord," said Moses in his name, "the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, lest at any time thou shalt dash thy foot against a stone. Hast thou considered my servant Job? said God to Satan:—Yes, replied Satan, I have; thou hast set a hedge about him." Yes, brethren: *the Lord God is a shield.* He is a shield to our *graces*. The dislike and malice of Satan is principally levelled at us when we become subjects of divine influence. "Simon, Simon," said our Saviour, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but," he adds, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There was a shield to the good man's faith, or he and it too had been gone. You may remember the name of Little Faith in Bunyan's Pilgrim. It appears that Hopeful was greatly surprised that the robbers had not taken his jewels from him; but he was given to understand that *they* were not in his own keeping. Yes, Christian, HE shall be thy "*shield*" to cover thy hope when it appears to thee to be giving up the ghost... Yes, and He will be a shield *to thy property.*

"Hast thou not set a hedge about *all* that he hath?" Though Job was tried a little while, his property was only put out to interest; by and by it came back cent per cent; and he gained, besides, a vast increase of knowledge and of grace. *Matthew Wilks. 1746-1829.*

Verse 11. Turn your thoughts to the combination; *the Lord God is a sun and shield.* As a sun he shows me more and more of my sinfulness; but then as a shield, he gives me power to oppose it and assurance that I shall conquer. As a sun, he discloses so much of the enormity of guilt, that I am forced to exclaim, "Mine iniquities are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear; "but then as a shield, he shows me that he has laid the load on a Surety, who bore it into a land of forgetfulness. As a sun, he makes me daily more and more sensible of the utter impossibility of my working out a righteousness of my own; but then, as a shield, he fastens constantly my thoughts on that righteousness of his Son, which is meritoriously conveyed to all who believe on his name. As a sun, in short, he brings fact to my knowledge, (inasmuch as he brings myself and mine enemies to my knowledge,) which would make the matter of deliverance seem out of reach and hopeless, if he were not at the same time a shield; but seeing that he is both a shield as well as a sun, the disclosures which he makes as a sun only prepare me for the blessings which he imparts as a shield. Who then shall wonder, that after announcing the character of God, the psalmist should break into expressions of confidence and assurance? It may be, that as the corruption of nature is brought continually before me, deeper and wider and darker, Satan will ply me with the suggestion; "The guiltiness is too inveterate to be eradicated, and too enormous to be pardoned; "and if God were a sun, and nothing more, it might be hard to put away the suggestion as a device of the father of lies. I might then fear. I might fear God's holiness, thinking I should never be fitted for communion with Deity; I might fear God's justice, thinking I should never find acquittal at the last dread assize. But can I fear either, when besides a sun, God is also a shield? Can I fear God's justice, when as a shield he places sufferings to my account, which satisfy the law, even to the last penalty? Can I fear his holiness, when he gives me interest in an obedience which fulfils every precept? Does not the one character, that of a shield, help me to scatter those solitudes, which may well be excited through the operation of the other character, that of a sun? And am I not warranted—nay, am I not living far below my privilege—if I fail in deriving from the combination of character a boldness and a confidence, not to be overborne by those suspicions, which have Satan for their author? As a sun, God shows me myself; as a shield, God shows me himself. The sun discloses mine own nothingness; the shield, Divine sufficiency. The one enables me to discern that I deserve nothing but wrath and can earn nothing but shame; the other, that I have a title to immortality, and may lay claim to an enduring inheritance in heaven. I learn, in short, from God as a *Sun*, that if I have "wages, "I must have eternal death; but from God as a *Shield*, that if I will receive the "free gift, "I may have "eternal life." Whom then shall I fear? Myself—confessedly my worst enemy? "The Sun" makes a man start from himself; the "Shield"

assures him that he shall be protected against himself and builded up "for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Shall I shrink from Satan and the hosts of principalities and powers? The "Sun" shows them awful in their might and vehement in their malice; but the "Shield" exhibits them spoiled and led captive, when Christ died and rose again. Shall I dread death? Indeed the "Sun" makes death terrible, forcing me to read God's curse in the motionless limbs and mouldering features; but then the "Shield" displays the open sepulchre, the quickened dust, the marvels of a resurrection, the mountain and the ocean and the valley yielding up the sleeping generations. Is death to be dreaded? Take the catalogue of things, which, inasmuch as we are fallen creatures, God, as our "Sun," instructs us to fear; and we shall find, that insomuch as we are redeemed creatures, God as our "Shield" enables us to triumph over all our fears. Who therefore shall hesitate to agree, that there results from this combination of character exactly that system of counterpoise, which we affirm to be discoverable in grace as well as in providence? Who can fail, if indeed he have been disciplined by that twofold tuition, which informs man first that he has destroyed himself and then that God hath "laid help on One that is mighty," the former lesson humiliating, the latter encouraging, the one making way for the other, so that the scholar is emptied of every false confidence that he may be fitted to entertain the true—oh! who, we say, can fail to gather from the combination of Divine character the inference drawn by the Psalmist? to exclaim (that is), after recording that "the Lord God is a Sun and a Shield"—*He will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly?* Henry Melvill.

Verse 11. The words of the text are as a voice from heaven, inviting me up thither, and answering all the doubts and fears of such as believe and follow the joyful sound. Am I in *darkness*, and fear I shall never find the way? Open thine eye, O my soul! look up to the Father of lights: *the Lord is a sun*, whose steady beams shall direct thy steps. Is there an inward veil to be removed from my mind, as well as obscurity from my path? He is sufficient for both. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, and lead on to it. (Co 4:6.) He can make the day dawn, and the day star to arise in our hearts; (2Pe 1:19), and by *both*, guide our feet into the way of peace. (Lu 1:79.) Doth the same light that discovers my way, discover what opposition I am like to meet with? what enemies and dangers I am to go through? Hear, O my soul, *the Lord is a shield*. Light and strength are conjoined; none can miscarry under his conduct, nor have any reason to be discouraged. With this he comforteth Abraham. Ge 15:1, *Fear not: I am thy shield*. Do I groan under a sense of my unmeetness for the heavenly kingdom? Let this support my soul, *the Lord will give grace*. Am I altogether unworthy of so high a happiness? It springs from his own most free, unbounded love; *the Lord will give glory*. Am I urged with a thousand wants that need supply, what more can be added? *No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*. Nothing that is evil can be desired; and nothing that is good shall be denied. Here, O my soul, is a

fountain opened; here thy eager thirst may be fully satisfied; thy largest desires filled up; and thy mind be ever at rest. *Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 11. Why need a saint fear darkness, when he has such a sun to guide him? Or dread dangers, when he has such a shield to guard him? *William Secker.*

Verse 11. *The Lord will give glory.* "Man, "says a wise author, "is the glory of this lower world; the soul is the glory of man; grace is the glory of the soul; and heaven is the glory of grace." Heaven, or glory, is grace matured and brought to infinite perfection; there we shall see his face, and have his name written in our foreheads; and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. *Matthew Wilks.*

Verse 11. *No good thing will he withhold.* etc. But how is this true, when God oftentimes withholds riches and honours, and health of body from men, though they walk never so uprightly; we may therefore know that honours and riches and bodily strength, are none of God's good things; they are of the number of things indifferent which God bestows promiscuously upon the just and unjust, as the rain to fall and the sun to shine. The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience and the joy in the Holy Ghost in this life; fruition of God's presence, and vision of his blessed face in the next, and these good things God never bestows upon the wicked, never withholds from the godly, and they are all cast up in one sum where it is said, *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt: Blessed are the pure in heart (and such are only they that walk uprightly) for they shall see God.* But is walking uprightly such a matter with God, that it should be so rewarded? Is it not more pleasing to God to see us go stooping than walking uprightly, seeing stooping is the gait of humility, than which there is nothing to God more pleasing? It is no doubt a hard matter to stoop and go upright both at once, yet both must be done, and both indeed are done, are done at once by every one that is godly; but when I say they are done both at once, I mean not of the body, I know two such postures in the body both at once are impossible; but the soul can do it, the soul can stoop and go upright both at once; for then doth the soul walk upright before God, when it stoops in humility before God and men. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 11. This is an immense fountain; the Lord fill all the buckets of our hearts at the spring, and give us capacious souls, as he hath a liberal hand. *Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. Why called Tabernacles? To include

(a) the holiest of all;

(b) The holy place;

(c) The court and precincts of the Tabernacle. Amiable is predicated of these. The courts amiable—the holy place more amiable—the holiest of all most amiable.

2. Why called the Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts? To denote

(a) Its connection with the boundless universe.

(b) Its distinction from it. Present everywhere where God is peculiarly present here.

3. Why called *amiable*?

(a) Because of the character in which God dwells here. Is condescension amiable? Is love? Is mercy? Is grace? These are displayed here.

(b) Because of the purpose for which he resides here. To save sinners: to comfort saints.

Verses 1-3. The Titles for God in these three verses are worth dwelling upon. *Jehovah of Hosts; the living God; my King and my God.* G. R.

Verse 3.

1. The Eloquence of Grief. David in his banishment envies the sparrows and the swallows that had built their nests by the house of God, more than Absalom who had usurped his palace and his throne.

2. The Ingenuity of Prayer. Why should sparrows and swallows be nearer to thy altars than I am, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God! "Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows." G. R.

Verse 4.

1. The Privilege suggested—dwelling in the house of God. Some birds fly over the house of God—some occasionally alight upon it—others build their nests and train up their young there. This was the privilege which the Psalmist desired.

2. The Fact asserted. *Blessed are they that dwell, etc.*, who make it the spiritual home of themselves and their children.

3. The Reason given. *They will be still, etc.*

(a) They will have much for which to praise God;

(b) They will see much to praise in God. G. R.

Verse 5. Man is blessed,

1. When his strength is in God. Strength to believe, strength to obey, strength to suffer.

2. When God's ways are in him. *In whose heart, etc.* When the doctrines, precepts, and promises of God are deeply engraved upon the heart. G. R.

Verse 5. The preciousness of intensity and enthusiasm in religious belief, worship, and life.

Verses 5-7. The blessed people are described,

1. By their earnest desire and resolution to take this journey, though they dwelt far off from the tabernacle, Ps 84:5.

2. By their painful passage, yet some refreshments by the way, Ps 84:6.

3. By their constant progress, till they came to the place they aimed at, Ps 84:7. T. Manton.

Verse 6. As the valley of weeping symbolizes dejection, so a "well" symbolizes ever flowing salvation and comfort (compare Joh 4:14 Isa 12:3).

Verse 6.

1. *The valley of Baca.* Of this valley we may observe,

- (a) It is much frequented.
- (b) Unpleasant to flesh and blood.
- (c) Very healthful.
- (d) Very safe.
- (e) Very profitable.

2. The toilsome effort: *make it a well.*

- (a) Comfort may be obtained in the deepest trouble.
- (b) Comfort must be obtained by exertion.
- (c) Comfort obtained by one is of use to others, as a well may be.

3. The heavenly supply. *The rain also filleth the pools.* All is from God; effort is of no avail without him.

Verse 7.

1. Trusting God in trouble brings present comfort—Who passing, etc.

2. Present comfort ensures still larger supplies—*The rain also*, etc. *G. R.*

Verse 8. There is,

1. Progression. *They go*;

- (a) The people of God cannot remain stationary;
- (b) They must not recede;
- (c) They should always be advancing.

2. Invigoration. *From strength to strength.*

- (a) From one ordinance to another;
- (b) from one duty to another;
- (c) from one grace to another;
- (d) from one degree of grace to another. Add faith to faith, virtue to virtue, knowledge to knowledge, etc.

3. Completion. *Every one of them*, etc. *G. R.*

Verse 8.

1. Prayer is not confined to the Sanctuary. David, in his banishment, says, *Hear my prayer.*

2. Help is not confined to the Sanctuary. The Lord of hosts is "here," as well as in his tabernacle. See Ps 84:1.

3. Grace is not confined to the Sanctuary. Here, too, in the wilderness is the covenanting God, the God of Jacob. *G. R.*

Verse 8. Pleas for answers to prayer in the titles here used.

1. He is JEHOVAH, the living, all wise, all powerful, faithful, gracious, and immutable God.

2. He is God of hosts, having abundant agencies under his control; he can send angels, restrain devils, actuate good men, overrule bad men, and govern all other agents.

3. He is the God of Jacob, of chosen Jacob, as seen in Jacob's dream; God of Jacob in his banishment, in his wrestling (and so a God overcome by prayer), God pardoning Jacob's sins, God preserving Jacob and his seed after him.

Verse 9. Observe,

1. The Faith. Our shield is thine anointed—Thine Anointed is our Shield. This is not David, because he says *our* Shield, but David's greater Son. A gleam of Gospel light through the thick clouds.

2. The Prayer. *Behold, O God, etc. Look, etc.* Look upon him as our Representative, and look upon us in him.

3. The Plea.

(a) He has engaged to be our defence from thine anger;

(b) he has been anointed to this office by thee. *G. R.*

Verse 9.

1. What God is to us.

2. What we would have him look at.

3. Where we would be: hidden behind the shield—seen in the person of Christ.

Verse 10. Here is,

1. A comparison of Places. *A day in thy courts, etc.* How much more a day in heaven! What, then, must an eternity in heaven be!

2. A comparison of Persons. *I would rather be a doorkeeper, etc.* Better be the least in the Church than the greatest in the world. If "better reign in hell than serve in heaven" was Satan's first thought after he fell, it was the first thought only. *G.R.*

Verse 10.

1. Days in God's courts. Days of hearing, of repenting, of believing, of adoration, of communion, of revival, etc.

2. Their preciousness. Better than a thousand days of victory, of pleasure, of money making, of harvest, of discussion, of travelling amid beauties of nature.

3. Reasons for this preciousness. They are more pleasurable, more profitable now, and more preparatory for the future and for heaven. The employment, the society, the enjoyment, the result, etc., are all better.

Verse 11.

1. What God is to his people. *A sun and shield.*

(a) The source of all good;

(b) a defence from all evil.

2. What he gives.

- (a) Grace here;
- (b) glory hereafter.

3. What he withholds. All that is not good. If he withholds health or wealth, or his own smiles from us, it is because they are not good for us at that particular time. *G. R.*

Verse 12.

1. The one thing that makes man blessed. Trust in God. Blessed, etc.

- (a) For all things;
- (b) at all times;
- (c) in all circumstances.

2. The Blessing contained in that one thing. God himself becomes ours;

- (a) his mercy for our pardon;
- (b) his power for our protection;
- (c) his wisdom for our guidance;
- (d) his faithfulness for our preservation;
- (e) his all sufficiency for our supply.

3. The certainty of the blessing.

- (a) From David's own experience;
- (b) from the solemn appeal to God respecting it. O Lord God of hosts, etc. *G. R.*

Verse 12. The blessedness of the life of faith over that of carnal enjoyment, religious feeling, self confidence, living upon marks and evidences, trusting in man, etc.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM

The Faith of the Church Militant, made moste effectualie described in this exposition of the 84. Psalme, by that reverend Pastor, and publike Professor of God's word, in the famous universitie of Haffine in Denmarke, NICHOLAS HEMMINGIVS. A treatise written as to the instruction of the ignorant in the groundes of religion, so to the confutation of the Jews, the Turkes, Atheists, Papists, Heretiks, and all other adversaries of the trueth whatsoever. Translated out of Latin into English, &c. by THOMAS ROGERS. At London, printed by H. Middleton for Andrew Maunsel. Anno. 1581.

David's Heart's Desire; or An Exposition of Psalm 84.; in Excellent Encouragments against Afflictions... by Thomas Pierson, M.A. (Reprinted in Nichol's Series of Puritan Commentaries.)

An Exposition upon some select Psalms of David... By ROBERT ROLLOCK. 1600. 16mo.

Meditations and Disquisitions upon seven Consolatorie Psalmes of David... By Sir RICHARD BAKER, Knight. 1640. (pg 119-142.)

Meditations on the Eighty-fourth Psalm, in "Things New and Old. A Monthly Magazine." Vol. IX. 1866.

Psalm 85

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. To the Chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. There is no need to repeat our observations upon a title which is of so frequent occurrence; the reader is referred to notes placed in the headings of preceding psalms. Yet it may not be out of place to quote Ne 12:46. *In the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.*

OBJECT AND OCCASION. It is the prayer of a patriot for his afflicted country, in which he pleads the Lord's former mercies, and by faith foresees brighter days. We believe that David wrote it, but many question that assertion. Certain interpreters appear to grudge the psalmist David the authorship of any of the psalms, and refer the sacred songs by wholesale to the times of Hezekiah, Josiah, the Captivity, and the Maccabees. It is remarkable that, as a rule, the more sceptical a writer is, the more resolute is he to have done with David; while the purely evangelic annotators are for the most part content to leave the royal poet in the chair of authorship. The charms of a new theory also operate greatly upon writers who would have nothing at all to say if they did not invent a novel hypothesis, and twist the language of the psalm in order to justify it. The present psalm has of course been referred to the Captivity, the critics could not resist the temptation to do that, though, for our part we see no need to do so: it is true a captivity is mentioned in Ps 85:1, but that does not necessitate the nation's having been carried away into exile, since Job's captivity was turned, and yet he had never left his native land: moreover, the text speaks of the captivity of *Jacob* as brought back, but had it referred to the Babylonian emigration, it would have spoken of Judah; for Jacob or Israel, as such, did not return. The first verse in speaking of "the land" proves that the author was not an exile. Our own belief is that David penned this national hymn when the land was oppressed by the Philistines, and in the spirit of prophecy he foretold the peaceful years of his own reign and the repose of the rule of Solomon, the psalm having all along an inner sense of which Jesus and his salvation are the key. The presence of Jesus the Saviour reconciles earth and heaven, and secures to us the golden age, the balmy days of universal peace.

DIVISION. In Ps 85:1-4 the poet sings of the Lord's former mercies and begs him to remember his people; from Ps 85:5-7 he pleads the cause of afflicted Israel; and then, having listened to the sacred oracle in Ps 85:8, he publishes joyfully the tidings of future good, Ps 85:9-13.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land.* The self-existent, all-sufficient JEHOVAH is addressed: by that name he revealed himself to Moses when his people were in bondage, by that name he is here pleaded with. It is wise to dwell upon that view of the divine character which arouses the sweetest memories of his love. Sweeter still is that dear name of "Our Father," with which Christians have learned to commence their prayers. The psalmist speaks of Canaan as the Lord's land, for he chose it for his people, conveyed it to them by covenant, conquered it by his power, and dwelt in it in mercy; it was meet therefore that he should smile upon a land so peculiarly his own. It is most wise to plead the Lord's union of interest with ourselves, to lash our little boat as it were close to his great barque, and experience a sacred community in the tossings of the storm. It is *our* land that is devastated, but O Jehovah, it is also *thy* land. The psalmist dwells upon the Lord's favour to the chosen land, which he had shewed in a thousand ways. God's past doings are prophetic of what he will do; hence the encouraging argument—"Thou hast been favourable unto thy land," therefore deal graciously with it again. Many a time had foes been baffled, pestilence stayed, famine averted, and deliverance vouchsafed, because of the Lord's favour; that same favourable regard is therefore again invoked. With an immutable God this is powerful reasoning; it is because he changes not that we are not consumed, and know we never shall be if he has once been favourable to us. From this example of prayer let us learn how to order our cause before God. It is clear that Israel was not in exile, or the prayer before us would not have referred to *the land* but to the nation. Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. When down-trodden and oppressed through their sins, the Ever-merciful One had looked upon them, changed their sad condition, chased away the invaders, and given to his people rest: this he had done not once, nor twice, but times without number. Many a time have we also been brought into soul-captivity by our backslidings, but we have not been left therein; the God who brought Jacob back from Padanaram to his father's house, has restored us to the enjoyment of holy fellowship;—will he not do the like again? Let us appeal to him with Jacob-like wrestlings, beseeching him to be favourable, or sovereignly gracious to us notwithstanding all our provocations of his love. Let declining churches remember their former history, and with holy confidence plead with the Lord to turn their captivity yet again.

Verse 2. *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.* Often and often had he done this, pausing to pardon even when his sword was bared to punish. Who is a pardoning God like thee, O Jehovah? Who is so slow to anger, so ready to forgive? Every believer in Jesus enjoys the blessing of pardoned sin, and he should regard this priceless boon as the pledge of all other needful mercies. He should plead it with God—"Lord, hast thou pardoned me, and wilt thou let me perish for lack of grace, or fall into mine enemies' hands for want of help. Thou wilt not thus leave thy work unfinished." Thou

hast covered all their sin. All of it, every spot, and wrinkle, the veil of love has covered all. Sin has been divinely put out of sight. Hiding it beneath the propitiatory, covering it with the sea of the atonement, blotting it out, making it to cease to be, the Lord has put it so completely away that even his omniscient eye sees it no more. What a miracle is this! To cover up the sun would be easy work compared with the covering up of sin. Not without a covering atonement is sin removed, but by means of the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, it is most effectually put away by one act, for ever. What a covering does his blood afford!

Verse 3. *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.* Having removed the sin, the anger is removed also. How often did the longsuffering of God take away from Israel the punishments which had been justly laid upon them! How often also has the Lord's chastising hand been removed from us when our waywardness called for heavier strokes! Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. Even when judgments had been most severe, the Lord had in mercy stayed his hand. In mid volley he had restrained his thunder. When ready to destroy, he had averted his face from his purpose of judgment and allowed mercy to interpose. The book of Judges is full of illustrations of this, and the psalmist does well to quote them while he interceded. Is not our experience equally studded with instances in which judgment has been stayed and tenderness has ruled? What a difference between the fierce anger which is feared and deprecated here, and the speaking of peace which is foretold in verse 8. There are many changes in Christian experience, and therefore we must not despair when we are undergoing the drearier portion of the spiritual life, for soon, very soon, it may be transformed into gladness.

"The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night.
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
To rivers of delight."

Verse 4. *Turn us, O God of our salvation.* This was the main business. Could the erring tribes be rendered penitent all would be well. It is not that God needs turning from his anger so much as that we need turning from our sin; here is the hinge of the whole matter. Our trials frequently arise out of our sins, they will not go till the sins go. We need to be turned from our sins, but only God can turn us: God the Saviour must put his hand to the work: it is indeed a main part of our salvation. Conversion is the dawn of salvation. To turn a heart to God is as difficult as to make the world revolve upon its axis. Yet when a man learns to pray for conversion there is hope for him, he who turns to prayer is beginning to turn from sin. It is a very blessed sight to see a whole people turn unto their God; may the Lord so send forth his converting grace on our land that we may live to see the people flocking to the loving worship of God as the doves to their cotes. And cause thine anger toward us to cease. Make an end of it. Let it no longer burn. When sinners cease to rebel, the Lord ceases to be angry

with them; when they return to him he returns to them; yea, he is first in the reconciliation, and turns them when otherwise they would never turn of themselves. May all those who are now enduring the hidings of Jehovah's face seek with deep earnestness to be turned anew unto the Lord, for so shall all their despondencies come to an end. Thus the sweet singer asks for his nation priceless blessings, and quotes the best of arguments. Because the God of Israel has been so rich in favour in bygone years, therefore he is entreated to reform and restore his backsliding nation.

Verse 5. *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?* See how the psalmist makes bold to plead. We are in time as yet and not in eternity, and does not time come to an end, and therefore thy wrath! Wilt thou be angry always as if it were eternity? Is there no boundary to thine indignation? Will thy wrath never have done? And if for ever angry, yet wilt thou be angry with us, thy favoured people, the seed of Abraham, thy friend? That our enemies should be always wroth is natural, but wilt *thou*, our God, be always incensed against us? Every word is an argument. Men in distress never waste words. Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Shall sons suffer for their father's faults, and punishment become an entailed inheritance? O merciful God, hast thou a mind to spin out thine anger, and make it as long as the ages? Cease thou, as thou hast ceased aforetime, and let grace reign as it has done in days of yore. When we are under spiritual desertion we may beg in the like manner that the days of tribulation may be shortened, lest our spirit should utterly fail beneath the trial.

Verse 6. *Wilt thou not revive us again?* Hope here grows almost confident. She feels sure that the Lord will return in all his power to save. We are dead or dying, faint and feeble, God alone can revive us, he has in other times refreshed his people, he is still the same, he will repeat his love. Will he not? Why should he not? We appeal to him—Wilt thou not? That thy people may rejoice in thee. Thou lovest to see thy children happy with that best of happiness which centres in thyself, therefore revive us, for revival will bring us the utmost joy. The words before us teach us that gratitude has an eye to the giver, even beyond the gift—thy people may rejoice *in thee*. Those who were revived would rejoice not only in the new life but in the Lord who was the author of it. Joy in the Lord is the ripest fruit of grace, all revivals and renewals lead up to it. By our possession of it we may estimate our spiritual condition, it is a sure gauge of inward prosperity. A genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers, or daydawn without light. If, either in our own souls or in the hearts of others, we see declension, it becomes us to be much in the use of this prayer, and if on the other hand we are enjoying visitations of the Spirit and bedewings of grace, let us abound in holy joy and make it our constant delight to joy in God.

Verse 7. *Shew us thy mercy, O LORD.* Reveal it to our poor half blinded eyes. We cannot see it or believe it by reason of our long woes, but thou canst make it plain to us. Others have beheld it, Lord shew it to us. We have seen thine anger, Lord let us see thy mercy. Thy prophets have told us of it,

but O Lord, do thou thyself display it in this our hour of need. And grant us thy salvation. This includes deliverance from the sin as well as the chastisement, it reaches from the depth of their misery to the height of divine love. God's salvation is perfect in kind, comprehensive in extent, and eminent in degree; grant us this, O Lord, and we have all. Having offered earnest intercession for the afflicted but penitent nation, the sacred poet in the true spirit of faith awaits a response from the sacred oracle. He pauses in joyful confidence, and then in ecstatic triumph he give utterance to his hopes in the richest form of song.

Verse 8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak.* When we believe that God hears us, it is but natural that we should be eager to hear him. Only from him can come the word which can speak peace to troubled spirits; the voices of men are feeble in such a case, a plaister far too narrow for the sore; but God's voice is power, he speaks and it is done, and hence when we hear him our distress is ended. Happy is the suppliant who has grace to lie patiently at the Lord's door, and wait until his love shall act according to its old wont and chase all sorrow far away. For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints. Even though for a while his voice is stern with merited rebuke, he will not always chide, the Great Father will reassume his natural tone of gentleness and pity. The speaking of peace is the peculiar prerogative of the Lord Jehovah, and deep, lasting, ay, eternal, is the peace he thus creates. Yet not to all does the divine word bring peace, but only to his own people, whom he means to make saints, and those whom he has already made so. But let them not turn again to folly. For if they do so, his rod will fall upon them again, and their peace will be invaded. Those who would enjoy communion with God must be jealous of themselves, and avoid all that would grieve the Holy Spirit; not only the grosser sins, but even the follies of life must be guarded against by those who are favoured with the delights of conscious fellowship. We serve a jealous God, and must needs therefore be incessantly vigilant against evil. Backsliders should study this verse with the utmost care, it will console them and yet warn them, draw the back to their allegiance, and at the same time inspire them with a wholesome fear of going further astray. To turn again to folly is worse than being foolish for once; it argues wilfulness and obstinacy, and it involves the soul in sevenfold sin. There is no fool like the man who will be a fool cost him what it may.

Verse 9. *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him.* Faith knows that a saving God is always near at hand, but *only* (for such is the true rendering) to those who fear the Lord, and worship him with holy awe. In the gospel dispensation this truth is conspicuously illustrated. If to seeking sinners salvation is nigh, it is assuredly very nigh to those who have once enjoyed it, and have lost its present enjoyment by their folly; they have but to turn unto the Lord and they shall enjoy it again. We have not to go about by a long round of personal mortifications or spiritual preparations, we may come to the Lord, through Jesus Christ, just as we did at the first, and he will again receive us into his loving embrace. Whether it be a nation under adversity, or a single individual under chastisement, the sweet

truth before us is rich with encouragement to repentance, and renewed holiness. That glory may dwell in our land. The object of the return of grace will be a permanent establishment of a better state of things, so that gloriously devout worship shall be rendered to God continuously, and a glorious measure of prosperity shall be enjoyed in consequence. Israel was glorious whenever she was faithful—her dishonour always followed her disloyalty; believers also live glorious lives when they walk obediently, and they only lose the true glory of their religion when they fall from their steadfastness. In these two verses we have, beneath the veil of the letter, an intimation of the coming of THE WORD OF GOD to the nations in times of deep apostacy and trouble, when faithful hearts would be looking and longing for the promise which had so long tarried. By his coming salvation is brought near, and glory, even the glory of the presence of the Lord, tabernacles among men. Of this the succeeding verses speak without obscurity.

Verse 10. *Mercy and truth are met together.* In answer to prayer, the exulting psalmist sees the attributes of God confederating to bless the once afflicted nation. Mercy comes hand in hand with Truth to fulfil the faithful promise of their gracious God; the people recognise at once the grace and the veracity of Jehovah, he is to them neither a tyrant nor a deceiver. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The Lord whose just severity inflicted the smart, now in pity sends peace to bind up the wound. The people being now made willing to forsake their sins, and to follow after righteousness, find peace granted to them at once. "The war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled; " for idolatry was forsaken, and Jehovah was adored. This appears to be the immediate and primary meaning of these verses; but the inner sense is Christ Jesus, the reconciling Word. In him, the attributes of God unite in glad unanimity in the salvation of guilty men, they meet and embrace in such a manner as else were inconceivable either to our just fears or to our enlightened hopes. God is as true as if he had fulfilled every letter of his threatenings, as righteous as if he had never spoken peace to a sinner's conscience; his love in undiminished splendour shines forth, but no other of his ever blessed characteristics is eclipsed thereby. It is the custom of modern *thinkers(?)* to make sport of this representation of the result of our Lord's substitutionary atonement; but had they ever been themselves made to feel the weight of sin upon a spiritually awakened conscience, they would cease from their vain ridicule. Their doctrine of atonement has well been described by Dr. Duncan as the admission "that the Lord Jesus Christ did something or other, which somehow or other, was in some way or other connected with man's salvation." This is their substitute for substitution. Our facts are infinitely superior to their dreams, and yet they sneer. It is but natural that natural men should do so. We cannot expect animals to set much store by the discoveries of science, neither can we hope to see unspiritual men rightly estimate the solution of spiritual problems—they are far above and out of their sight. Meanwhile it remains for those who rejoice in the great reconciliation to continue both to wonder and adore.

Verse 11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth.* Promises which lie unfulfilled, like buried seeds, shall spring up and yield harvests of joy; and men renewed by grace shall learn to be true to one another and their God, and abhor the falsehood which they loved before. And righteousness shall look down from heaven, as if it threw up the windows and leaned out to gaze upon a penitent people, whom it could not have looked upon before without an indignation which would have been fatal to them. This is a delicious scene. Earth yielding flowers of truth, and heaven shining with stars of holiness; the spheres echoing to each other, or being mirrors of each other's beauties. "Earth carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness, "shall be a nether heaven. When God looks down in grace, man sends his heart upward in obedience. The person of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ explains this verse most sweetly. In Him truth is found in our humanity, and his deity brings divine righteousness among us. His Spirit's work even now creates a hallowed harmony between his church below, and the sovereign righteousness above; and in the latter day, earth shall be universally adorned with every precious virtue, and heaven shall hold intimate intercourse with it. There is a world of meaning in these verses, only needing meditation to draw it out. Reader, "the well is deep, "but if thou hast the Spirit, it cannot be said, that "thou hast nothing to draw with."

Verse 12. *Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good.* Being himself pure goodness, he will readily return from his wrath, and deal out good things to his repenting people. Our evil brings evil upon us, but when we are brought back to follow that which is good, the Lord abundantly enriches us with good things. Material good will always be bestowed where it can be enjoyed in consistency with spiritual good. And our land shall yield her increase. The curse of barrenness will fly with the curse of sin. When the people yielded what was due to God, the soil would recompense their husbandry. See at this day what sin has done for Palestine, making her gardens a wilderness; her wastes are the scars of her iniquities: nothing but repentance and divine forgiveness will reclaim her desolations. The whole world also shall be bright with the same blessing in the days yet to come,—

"Freed from the curse, the grateful garden gives
Its fruit in goodly revenue. Nor frost,
Nor blight, nor mildew fall, nor cankerworm,
Nor caterpillar, mar one ripening hope.
The clouds drop fatness. The very elements
Are subject to the prayerful will of those
Whose pleasure is in unison with God's."

Verse 13. *Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.* God's march of right will leave a track wherein his people will joyfully follow. He who smote in justice will also bless in justice, and in both will make his righteousness manifest, so as to affect the hearts and lives of all his people. Such are the blessings of our Lord's first advent, and such shall be yet more conspicuously

the result of his second coming. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This beautiful psalm, like some others, has come down to us without name or date; the production of some unknown poetic genius, touched, purified, and exalted by the fire of celestial inspiration; a precious relic of that golden age, when the Hebrew music was instinct with a spirit such as never breathed on Greece or Rome. It is interesting to reflect on the anonymous origin of some of the psalms; to remember how largely the church of God is indebted to some nameless worthies who wrote for us hymns and spiritual songs, full of richer strains than were ever poured forth by the most illustrious of pagan name. These holy men are passed away, they have left no record of their history; but they have bequeathed legacies of rich, varied, and inspired sentiments, which will render the church debtors to them to the end of time. *John Stoughton. 1852.*

Whole Psalm. This Psalm may be thus divided: Ps 85:1-3, express the thanks of the people for their return from captivity; Ps 85:4-6, their prayer for their own *reformation*; in Ps 85:7, they pray for the coming of *Messiah*; Ps 85:8 contains the *words of the High priest*, with *God's Gracious answer*; which answer is followed by the grateful acclamation *of the people*, to the end of the Psalm. To prepare for this interpretation, let us observe, how very strangely the words are expressed at present—*I will hear what God the Lord will say: FOR he shall speak peace unto his people*. But surely, God could not be consulted, *because* it was unnecessary; nor could the High priest possibly say, that he would ask of God, *because* he knew what God would answer; especially, as we have now *a question to God* proposed, and yet no *answer from God* given at all. Under these difficulties we are happily relieved; since it appears, on satisfactory authorities, that, instead of the particle rendered *for*, the word here originally signified *in or by me*, which slight variation removes the obscurity, and restores that very light which has long been wanted. The *people* having prayed for the speedy arrival of their great *salvation*; the *High priest* says, (as it should be here expressed), *I will hear what the Almighty sayeth.—Jehovah, BY ME sayeth, PEACE unto his people, even unto his saints: but let them not turn again to folly*. Whereupon, as the Jews understood *peace* to comprehend *every blessing*, and of course *their greatest blessing*, they at once acknowledged the *certainty* of this salvation, the *glory* of their land—they proclaim it as *nigh at hand*—and then, in rapture truly prophetic, they see this glory as actually arrived, as already *dwelling* in Judea—they behold God in fulfilling most strictly what he had promised most graciously—they see therefore the *mercy* of God, and the *truth* of God met together—they see that scheme perfected, in which the *righteousness* (*i.e.* the justice) of God harmonizes with the *peace* (*i.e.* the happiness) of man; so that righteousness and peace *salute* each other with the tenderest affection. In short, they see TRUTH *flourishing out of the earth*; *i.e.* they see *him*, who is *the way, the truth, and the life*, born here *on earth*; and they even see the *righteousness*,

or justice of God, looking down from *heaven*, as being well pleased. Ps 85:12 is at present translated so unhappily, that it is quite despoiled of all its genuine glory. For, could the prophet, after all the rapturous things said before, coldly say here, that God *would give what was good* and that *Judea* should have a *plentiful harvest*? No: consistency and good sense forbid it; and truth confirms their protest against it. The words here express the reasons of all the preceding energies, and properly signify—*Yea, Jehovah granteth THE BLESSING; and our land granteth HER OFFSPRING*. And what can be *the blessing*—what, amidst these sublime images, can be *Judea's offspring*—but HE, and HE only, who was *the blessing of all lands* in general, and *the glory of Judea* in particular? And what says the verse following? *Righteousness goeth before HIM*—certainly, not before *the fruit of the earth*—but certainly before that illustrious person, even the MESSIAH. *Righteousness goeth before HIM, and directeth his goings in the way*. As to the word rendered *the blessing*, and applied to the redemption; the same word is so used by Jeremiah, thus: *Behold, the days come, that I will perform that good thing (the blessing) which I have promised... at that time will I cause to grow up unto David the Branch of righteousness* (Jer 33:14-15). And as to the Messiah being here described, partly as springing up from the earth; so says Isaiah: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious; and *the fruits of the earth* shall be excellent and comely." But this evangelical prophet, in another place, has the very same complication of images with that found in the psalm before us. For Isaiah also has *the heavens*, with their *righteousness*; and *the earth*, with *its salvation*: "Drop down, ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let *the earth* open, and let *them* bring forth salvation." But, "let *them* bring forth"—who, or what can be here meant by *them*, but *the heavens* and the *earth*? It is heaven and earth which are here represented as *bringing forth*, and introducing the Saviour of the world. For what else can be here meant as *brought forth by them*? What, but HE alone; who, deriving his *divine* nature from heaven, and his *human* from the earth was (what no other being ever was) both GOD and MAN. *Benjamin Kennicott*.

Verse 1. *Thy land*. The land of Jehovah the poet calls it, in order to point out the close relation of God to it, and to the people thereof, and so confirm the *favour* of God towards it. For this land God has chosen as the dwelling place of his people, true religion, and his own presence; this also in his own time He himself had trodden in the person of his Son, and in it He first gathered and founded his Church. *Venema*.

Verse 1. *The captivity of Jacob*. All true believers are the sons of Jacob, and the seed of Abraham; as well as the believing Gentiles, who are the sons of Jacob according to the Spirit, as the believing Jews the sons of Jacob according to the flesh; and the Church of these true Jacobins and Israelites is the land of the Lord, and the *captivity* here mentioned is bondage under sin. In this captivity Satan is the gaoler, the flesh is our prison, ungodly lusts are the manacles, a bad conscience the tormentor, all of them against us; only Christ is *Emmanuel*, God with us; he turneth away the captivity of Jacob

in forgiving all his offences, and in covering all his sins. *Abraham Wright.*

Verse 2. *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity.* nvs tsn, *nasatha avon*, *Thou hast borne, or carried away, the iniquity.* An allusion to the ceremony of the scapegoat. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2. *Thou hast covered all their sin.* When God is said *to cover sin*, he does so, not as one would cover a sore with a plaster, thereby merely hiding it only; but he covers it with a plaster that effectually cures and removes it altogether. *Bellarmino.*

Verse 2. *Selah.* Rabbi Kimchi regards it as a sign to elevate the voice. The authors of the Septuagint translation appear to have regarded it as a musical or rythmical note. Herder regarded it as indicating a change of note; Mathewson as a musical note, equivalent, perhaps, to the word *repeat*. According to Luther and others, it means *silence*. Gesenius explains it to mean, "Let the instruments play and the singers stop." Wocher regards it as equivalent to *sursum corda*—up, my soul! Sommer, after examining all the seventy four passages in which the word occurs, recognises in every case "an actual appeal or summons to Jehovah." They are calls for aid and prayers to be heard, expressed either with entire directness, or if not in the imperative, "Hear, Jehovah!" or Awake, Jehovah! and the like, still earnest addresses to God that he would remember and hear, &c. The word itself he regards as indicating a blast of the trumpets by the priests. *Selah*, itself, he thinks an abridged expression, used for *Higgaion Selah*—*Higgaion* indicating the sound of the stringed instruments and *Selah* a vigorous blast of trumpets. *From the "Bibliotheca Sacra," quoted by Plumer.*

Verse 3. *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.* Or *gathered* it; sin occasions wrath, and the people of God are as deserving of it as others; but the Lord has gathered it up, and poured it forth upon his Son, and their Surety; hence nothing of this kind shall ever fall upon them, either here or hereafter; and it is taken away from them, so as to have no sense, apprehension, or conscience of it, which before the law had wrought in them, when pardon is applied unto them, which is what is here meant. *John Gill.*

Verse 3. *Thou hast turned thyself.* Here are six *hasts* drawing in the next *turn*, Ps 85:4. God hath, and therefore God will is a strong medium of hope, if not a demonstration of Scripture logic. See 2Co 1:10. *John Trapp.*

Verse 4. *Cause thine anger toward us to cease.* The phrase, *break thine indignation towards us*, (that is, wherewith thou art angry with us, in order that it may cease of itself,)comprehends the abolition of the signs and the effects of anger. The word *drk*, for this is the root to be taken, properly denotes a *breaking* by means of *notches* and *gaps*, as when the *edge* of anything is broken by many notches and gaps, and it is made utterly worn and useless. *Indignation*, so long as it is vigorous and spreads its effects, has an *edge*, which smites and pierces; but it is considered blunt and broken, when it ceases to exert itself, and produces evils no longer, this they affirm of the *anger* of God. *Venema.*

Verse 6. *Wilt thou not revive us again?* The Hebrew is, *Wilt thou not return and revive us?* We translate the verb *return* by the adverb *again*: *Wilt thou not revive us again?* Thou hast given us many *revives*: when we were as *dead men*, and like carcasses rotting in the grave, thou didst revive us, wilt thou not revive us once more, and act over those powerfully merciful works and strong salvations once more, or again? *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6. *That thy people may rejoice in thee.* Bernard in his 15th Sermon on Canticles says Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, joy in the heart. Is any among us sad? Let Jesus enter the heart, and thence spring to the countenance, and behold, before the rising brightness of his name, every cloud is scattered, serenity returns. Origen in his 10th Hom on Genesis, has the remark, Abraham rejoiced not in present things, neither in the riches of the words, nor deeds of time. But do you wish to hear, whence he drew his joy? Listen to the Lord speaking to the Jews, Joh 8:56: *Your father, Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad: hope heaped up his joys. Le Blanc.*

Verse 6. *That thy people may rejoice in thee.* When God changeth the cheer of his people, their joy should not be in the gift, but in the Giver. *David Dickson.*

Verse 6. It is the most natural thing, the most delightful thing, for the people of God to rejoice in God. God is the fountain of joy, and whom should he fill with it but his people? And whom should his people breathe it into again but him? This posture God delights to have them in; this posture they delight to be in; but this cannot be in that estate of death and captivity wherein God for a long season shutteth them up. "The living, the living shall praise thee, "but alas, the dead cannot. *John Pennington, 1656.*

Verse 6. Truly sin kills. Men are dead in trespasses and sins, dead in law, dead in their affections, dead in a loss of comfortable communion with God. Probably the greatest practical heresy of each age is a low idea of our undone condition under the guilt and dominion of sin. While this prevails we shall be slow to cry for *reviving* or *quickenings*. What sinners and churches need is quickening by the Holy Ghost. *William S. Plumer.*

Verses 6-7. *Wilt thou not revive us, by the first and spiritual resurrection, and so thy people, quickened from a life of sin to a life of grace, will rejoice in thee, not in themselves, presuming nothing on their own power. And in order that these things may be fulfilled in us, Shew us, O Lord, thy mercy,* that is, Christ, through whom thou hast pitied the human race, shew him to us after this exile that we may see him face to face. *Richardus Hampolus.*

Verse 7. *Thy mercy.* It is not merely of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but all is mercy, from first to last,—mercy that met us by the way,—mercy that looked upon us in our misery,—mercy that washed us from our sins in his own blood,—mercy that covered our nakedness and clad us in his own robe of righteousness,—mercy that led and guided us by the way,—and mercy that will never

leave nor forsake us till mercy has wrought its perfect work in the eternal salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ. *Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 8. *I will hear*, etc. The true attitude for a sinner to take in the presence of divine revelation, is that of a *listener*. To enter the place of a *doer* before you have occupied that of a *listener*, is to reverse God's order, and throw everything into confusion. Adam tried this plan, and found it a failure. He tried "works." He "sewed fig leaves together," but it was no use. He could not even satisfy his own conscience, or remove his guilty fear. He had to listen to the voice of God—to hearken to divine revelation. "*Things New and Old.*" 1859.

Verse 8. *I will hear*, etc. The eye as a mere organ of sense must give place to the ear. Therefore it is wittily observed, that our Saviour commanding the amputation of the offending hand, foot, and eye, (Mr 9:43-47), yet never spake of the ear. If thy hand, thy foot, or thine eye, cause thee to offend, deprive thyself of them; but part not with thine ear, for that is an organ to derive unto thy soul's salvation. As Christ says there, a man may enter into heaven, lamed in his feet, as Mephibosheth, blind in his sight, as Barzillai, maimed in his hand, as the dry handed man in the gospel; but if there be not an ear to hear of the way, there will be no foot to enter into heaven. If God be not first in the ear, he is neither sanctifiedly in the mouth, nor comfortably in the heart. The Jews had eyes to see Christ's miracles, but because they had no ears to hear his wisdom, therefore they had no feet to enter into his kingdom. The way into the house is by the door, not by the window: the eye is but the window of the heart, the ear is the door. Now Christ stands knocking at the door, not at the window. Re 3:20. And he will not come in at the window, but at the door. "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." Joh 10:2. He comes now in by his oracles, now by his miracles. "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice," Joh 10:3. The way to open and let him in is by the door; to hear his voice. There was a man in the gospel blind and deaf; blind eyes is ill; but deaf ears, worse. It is bad to have the eyes sealed (*Seel*, to close up: a term in falconry), but worse to have the ears sealed up. Open your ears therefore to this heavenly voice. Bernard hath this description of a good ear: Which willingly hears what is taught, wisely understands what it heareth, and obediently practises what it understandeth. O give me such an ear, and I will hang on it jewels of gold, ornaments of praise. *Thomas Adams.*

Verse 8. *I will hear*, etc. My text carries in it a poetical allusion to the consulting of the cloud of glory, which was between the cherubims, and to the receiving answer from it, upon all critical occasions. David turned his thoughts from all the other views he might have, to this, *I will hear what God the Lord will speak* and that so he might depend wholly on the assurances that he should receive of God's favour, upon the repentance and prayers of the people; and in consideration of God's covenant with them, he knew the answer would be *peace*; which being the form of salutation in those ages, among friends, imported as entire reconciliation. So that by *speaking peace* is to be understood as

assurance of God's love and favour *to his people, and to his saints*: that is, to the people that was *sanctified*, and dedicated to the service of God by so many federal rites. *Gilbert Burnet, 1643-1714/5.*

Verse 8. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak.* Carnal men speak peace to themselves on account of some supposed goodness in themselves. And unsound professors steal peace from God's promises, such as Isa 55:7 Ho 14:4. But an upright heart will not be satisfied without hearing God speak peace to his heart by his Spirit. And for this he will pray, and wait, and hearken, and when God speaks peace, there comes such sweetness with it, and such discovery of his love, as lays a powerful influence on the soul not to turn again to folly. This peace is an humbling, melting peace, which brings humiliation to the soul as well as joy; but this never happens when men speak peace to themselves. *John Berridge, 1716-1793.*

Verse 8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak,* etc. His prayer being finished, and he having spoke, he now stands and listens, as you used to do when you expect an echo, what echo he should have, what answer would be returned from heaven, whether his prayer had already come: *I will hear what the Lord will speak*; or, as some read it, *I will hear what the Lord doth speak*: for sometimes there is a present echo, a speedy answer returned to a man's heart, even ere the prayer is half finished. *He will speak peace.* When the child of God wants peace, he can have no peace till God speaks it... Let God's people be in never so great distress, yet it is an easy thing for God to give peace to them. Mark the expression here used: it is but *speaking* peace, that is, it is as easy for him to give peace as it is for you to speak a word; it is no more to him. Then our comfort is, that as he only must do it, so he easily can do it, even with a word. *Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8. *He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints,* etc. The voice of the Lord is comfortable, and his words are sweet to those that fear him. It is a plain sign that all is not well with us, when the voice of God doth cast us into fear, when we are afraid to hear the word preached, when just reproofs of our sins are unwelcome to us, and anger us, and make us think the less of our minister that chideth and threateneth us. A good life and a well governed conversation doth not fear the voice of God; the word of God is the light which God hath set up in his church, to guide her feet in the ways of peace. They that do evil hate the light, and will not come near it, lest their works should be reprov'd; the children of the light resort to it, and call upon God: "Search my veins and my heart, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me." *Edward Marbury.*

Verse 8. *To his people and to his saints.* He will give *prosperity to the people* in general; and to *his saints*—his followers, in particular. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8. *To his saints.* It is remarkable that we have the suffrage of a celebrated Jewish writer, Kimchi, to understand the word rendered *saints* in this place, of the godly among the Gentiles, as distinguished from the Lord's people, the Jews. *John Fry.*

Verse 8. *He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not return again to folly.*

This imports that if his *saints turn again to folly*, which by woeful experience we find too frequently done, God may *change his voice*, and turn his peace, formerly spoken, into a warlike defiance to their conscience. *Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 8. *But let them not turn again to folly.* If God did not in the end speak peace, they would indeed return to folly. For his end of speaking peace is, that they might not return to folly: Ps 125:3, "The rod of the wicked shall not always be upon the righteous, lest they put forth their hand to iniquity; therefore, at the last verse, "peace shall be upon Israel." As it is a rule in physic still to maintain nature, and therefore when that shall be in hazard to be destroyed, they leave giving purging physic, and give cordials; so doth God with his people: though with purging physic he often brings their spirits very weak and low, yet he will uphold and maintain their spirits, so as they shall not fail and be extinguished, but then he will give cordials to raise them up again. *Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8. It is hard to know, in spiritual exercises, whether is be more difficult to attain some good frame, or to keep and maintain it when it is attained; whether more seriousness is required for making peace with God, or for keeping of it when made; whether more diligence should be in preparing for a communion, or more watchfulness after it: sure both are required; and it was our blessed Lord's word, Mt 26:41, after the first celebration of his supper, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Here that saying holds eminently: "*Non minor est virtus, quam quaerere, parta tueri:*" no less virtue and valour is requisite to maintain, than to make a purchase or conquest. In the words there are,

1. A great mercy promised from the Lord to his people, viz., *He will speak peace to them.*
2. A special caveat and advertisement given them, pointing at their hazard: *But let them not turn again to folly:* that is, let not his people and saints to whom he hath spoken peace, return to sin; let them beware of bourding (Bourding—jesting), and dallying with God's mercy, and of turning his grace into wantonness, of cooling in their affections to him, of slipping back to their old way, and of embracing their old lovers and idols: for that is folly, even in folio, to speak so. *James Durham, in "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ."*

Verse 9. *That glory may dwell in our land.* What land the true church of Christ, the saints and they that fear God, do dwell in; there doth *glory* dwell: there God, there Christ by his Spirit bringing righteousness and salvation to such a society, is glorious; and for his presence the people are glorious; and the land glorious above all other lands whatsoever. *David Dickson.*

Verse 10. *Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace.* Note, four virtues stand out prominently in the incarnation; namely, mercy, truth, righteousness and peace, or love producing peace. These were like four steps of the throne of Christ, or four princes standing near and accompanying Him.

1. On the right hand, is mercy presenting the olive.
2. On the left, truth holding the white lily.

3. Before Him walks justice bearing the balance.

4. Peace follows Him, having a *cornucopiae* full of flowers, and scattering the flowers around. *Le Blanc*.

Verse 10. *Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace.* These four divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ. Mercy was ever inclined to save man, and Peace could not be his enemy; but Truth extracted the performance of God's threat,—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die; "and Righteousness could not but give to every one his due, Jehovah must be true in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Now there is no religion on earth, except the Christian, which can satisfy the demands of all these claimants, and restore an union between them; which can show how God's word can be true, and his work just, and the sinner, notwithstanding, find mercy, and obtain peace. *George Horne*.

Verse 10. This is a remarkable text, and much has been said on it; but there is a beauty in it which, I think, has not been noticed. *Mercy and peace* are on one side; *truth and righteousness* on the other. *Truth* requires *righteousness*; *mercy* calls for *peace*. They meet together on the way; one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences on certain considerations, not here particularly mentioned, are adjusted; and their mutual claims blended together in one common interest; on which *peace* and *righteousness* immediately embrace. Thus, *righteousness* is given to *truth*, and *peace* is given to *mercy*. Now, *where* did these meet? In Christ Jesus. *When* were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary. *Adam Clarke*.

Verse 10. *Mercy and truth are met together.*

1. They meet together *in God*; for *all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth*, Ps 25:9; *mercy* in making, and *truth* in keeping his promise to his people. Paul saith, Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision to the *truth* of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his *mercy*. Ro 15:8. God promised his Son unto the Jews, and he gave him in the fulness of time to be both a light to the Gentiles, and glory to his people Israel; herein shewing his *mercy* more principally to the Gentiles, his *truth* unto the Jews, and so his mercy and truth embraced each other so that he made both people but one, to wit, one flock, in one sheepfold, under one shepherd. If we take *truth and righteousness* for God's justice in punishing, *mercy and peace* for his graciousness in pardoning; yet as they meet together in all his ways unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For as the mercies of the wicked are full of cruelty, so the very judgments of God upon his servants are full of mercy. In his wrath he remembers pity; punishing a little, that he may pardon a great deal; destroying the flesh only to save the spirit, 1Co 5:5. *Misericordiae est aliquando subtrahere misericordiam*. It was good for Joseph that he was a captive; good for Naaman that he was a leper; good for Bartimaeus that he was blind, and for David that he was in trouble. Bradford thanked God more of his prison, than of any parlour or pleasure. All things are for the best unto the

faithful, and so God's *mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*, his mercy being just, and his justice being merciful; but God in giving his only Son unto the world, more abundantly shewed his *mercy and justice kissing one another*. His *justice* that every soul that sins should die; but his *mercy* desires not the death of a sinner. Eze 33:11...

2. Righteousness and peace meet together *in man*; so Augustine expounds it: an unjust man is full of quarrels, like Ishmael, "every man's hand is against him, and his hand against every man; "but he who is righteous, and giveth every man his due, shall have peace, so much as is possible with all men, especially with his own self and soul. Righteousness and peace are so near, so dear, that thou canst not have the one without the other.

3. Righteousness and peace meet *in Christ*, God's man; for by these two, some divines understand the Old Testament and the New. The Law doth exact *justice*, requiring of a malefactor "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot; "but the Gospel is full of *mercy and peace*, saying unto the sinner, who truly repenteth him of his sins, and unfeignedly believes the word of promise, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee; ""Daughter be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole; ""Go thy way, thy belief hath saved thee; ""Behold, thou art now made whole, sin no more." These two testaments meet together in Christ, as in their proper centre, they *kissed each other* on this (Christmas) day, because the gospel performed what the law promised. *John Boys*.

Verse 10. When our Lord spake that parable of the prodigal son, and represented the Father as seeing his child afar off in his misery, and how he had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, one cannot but feel what a touching and tender illustration he has given of this most exquisite passage of his own word: *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 10-11. Mercy and Peace if they had met, or Truth and Righteousness, either of the two, it had not been strange. But for these that seem to be in opposition to do it, that makes this meeting marvellous in our eyes. Will you stay a little and take a view of the parties? Four they are. These four,

1. Mercy, and

2. Truth,

3. Righteousness, and

4. Peace. Which quaternion at the first sight divides itself into two and two. Mercy and Peace, they two pair well; they be *collectanae*, as Bernard saith of them in one place, `bed fellows, 'sleep together; *collectanae*, as in another place, `sucked one milk, one breast' both. And as these two, so the other two; Truth and Righteousness seem to be of one complexion and disposition, and commonly take part together. Of these Mercy seems to favour us; and Peace no enemy to us or to any (seeing we must speak of them as of persons); mild and gentle persons both. For Righteousness I know not well what to say: *gestat gladium*, (bears the sword), and I fear *non frustra* (not in vain). Nor

of Truth, who is *vera* and *severa*, 'severe' too otherwise. These I doubt are not like affected. The reason of my doubt. One of them, Righteousness, it is told here for great news, that she but "looked down hitherwards from heaven." Before then she would not have done that. A great sign it is of heart burning, when one will not do so much as look at another—not endure his sight. We cannot promise ourselves much of her. No, nor of Truth. One was so bold in a place to say, *omnis homo mendax* (Ro 3:4), and feared no challenge for it. By that it seems all stands not well with her neither. So then two for us, two against us. For their order. Mercy is first, and Peace last. With both ends we shall do well enough. God send us to do but so with the midst! Yet this is not amiss that they which favour us less are in the midst; hemmed in on both sides, closed about with those that wish us well; and they between us and them. On the one side, Mercy before; on the other, Peace behind another; that in this double meeting Mercy sorts not herself, goes not to Righteousness; nor Righteousness to her, but to Peace. A kind of cross meeting, as it were, there is—the better hope of accord. Mercy and Righteousness have no symbolizing quality at all, no hope of them; but Truth with Mercy hath. There is truth as well in the promise of Mercy as in the threat of justice. *Lancelot Andrewes*.

Verse 11. *Truth shall spring.* The literal sense is, that the promises which for a long time are not fulfilled, and seem like seeds or roots hidden and concealed under ground, when they shall be fulfilled, shall be considered to spring up, to grow, etc. *Lorinus*.

Verse 11. *Spring.* The Metaphor is taken from flowers and trees. In the Greek the expression is *aneile*, that is, *has sprung* like the morning, for *anatllw* and *anatolh* are properly said of the rising of the sun and moon. *Le Blanc*.

Verse 11. *Shall look down.* This looking *down*, *pqsg* rendered generally *parakuptw* in the Greek, implies such a look as in 1Pe 1:12, angels give into the things of salvation, and such a look as the disciples gave into the sepulchre. It is really the *Righteous One* who is resting over them in complacent love, not as in Ps 14:2 53:2, but fulfilling Ps 102:19-20. *Andrew A. Bonar*.

Verse 12. It has sometimes been objected that the Christian doctrine of a Millennium cannot be true, for the earth could not support the teeming millions that would naturally be found upon it, if wars and vice should cease to waste its population. But omitting other and pertinent answers that have been given, we find one here that covers the whole ground, *the earth shall yield her increase*. Now and then the season is unusually propitious, and we have a specimen of what God can do when he chooses. He can without any miracle make it many times more fruitful than it has ever been. *William S. Plumer*.

Verse 13. *Righteousness shall go before him*, etc. The meaning of this difficult verse may probably be as follows:—Righteousness shall go before Him (Jehovah), and shall make his footsteps a pathway for his servants to walk in.—*Ernest Hawkins*.

Verse 13. *Shall set us in the way of his steps.* It is reported in the Bohemian History, that St.

Wenceslaus, their king, one winter night going to his devotions, in a remote church, barefooted in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant Podavivus, who waited upon his master's piety, and endeavoured to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold; till the king commanded him to follow him, and set his feet in the same footsteps, which his feet should mark for him: the servant did so, and either fancied a cure, or found one; for he followed his prince, helped forward with shame and zeal to his imitation, and by the forming footsteps for him in the snow. In the same manner does the blessed Jesus; for, since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objections and danger, apt to be mistaken, and to affright our industry, he commands us to mark his footsteps, to tread where his feet have stood, and not only invite us forward by the argument of his example, but he hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier and fit for our feet. For he knows our infirmities, and himself hath felt their experience in all things but in the neighbourhoods of sin; and therefore he hath proportioned a way and a path to our strength and capacities, and like Jacob, hath marched softly and in evenness with the children and the cattle, to entertain us by the comforts of his company, and the influence of a perpetual guide. *Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 13. (*last clause*). The sinner who feels his need of salvation, is *set—in the way of his steps*; as Bartimaeus sat by the way side begging, by which way Jesus walked; and when he came where he was, heard his prayer, and restored him his sight. *Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. There is,

1. Captivity.

(a) Of the people of God.

(b) Although they are the people of God.

(c) Because they are the people of God. *You only have I known*, etc.

2. Restoration from Captivity: *Thou hast brought back*, etc.

(a) The fact.

(b) The Author: *Thou*: by thine own power; in thine own manner; at thine own time.

3. The cause of the Restoration; the favour of God: *Thou hast been favourable*.

(a) On account of favour past: "Thou hast."

(b) On account of favour in reserve.

Verse 2.

1. The subjects of forgiveness: *Thy people*.

(a) By choice.

(b) By redemption.

(c) By effectual calling.

2. The time of forgiveness: *Thou hast forgiven*, etc.

3. The method of forgiveness.

(a) Forgiven. Hebrew, borne, same word as in Le 16:22: "The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities."

(b) Covered; as the mercy seat covered the law that had been broken. IV. The extent of forgiveness: *all their sin*.

Verse 3.

1. The language of penitence. It is implied here that the wrath was,

(a) Great:

(b) Just *thy wrath*.

2. The language of faith.

(a) In the grace of pardon: *Thou hast turned away wrath*. We could not, by anything we could do or suffer.

(b) In the method of pardon: *Turned away*. Turned it from us to our Surety.

3. The language of praise: *Thou hast—thou hast*.

Verse 4.

1. In what salvation consists.

(a) In the removal of God's enmity from us.

(b) In the removal of our enmity to him.

2. By whom it is accomplished. By the God of salvation.

(a) He causes his anger toward us to cease, and

(b) Our anger toward him.

3. How is it obtained? By prayer: "Turn us, "etc.

Verse 6.

1. Revivals imply decline.

(a) That there is grace to be revived.

(b) That this grace has declined.

2. Revivals are from God: *Wilt not thou*, etc.: they cannot be got up by men.

3. Revivals are frequently needed: *Wilt not thou revive us again*.

4. Revivals are in answer to prayer: *Wilt thou not*, etc.

5. Revivals are occasions for great joy.

(a) *To* the saints.

(b) *In* God.

Verse 7.

1. Salvation is God's work: *Thy salvation.*

- (a) The plan is his.
- (b) The provision is his.
- (c) The condition is his.
- (d) The application is his.
- (e) The consummation is his.

2. Salvation is God's gift.

- (a) Of his mercy: *Show us thy mercy.*
- (b) Of his grace: *Grant us, etc.*

3. Salvation is God's answer to prayer.

- (a) It is the first object of prayer.
- (b) It includes every other.

Verse 8.

1. We should look for an answer to prayer. Having spoken to God, we should hear what he has to say to us in reply.

- (a) In his word.
- (b) In his providence.
- (c) By his Spirit in our own souls.

2. We should look for an answer of peace: *He will speak peace.*

3. We should avoid whatever might deprive us of that peace: *But let them not turn, etc. G. R.*

Verse 8. *Thomas Goodwin* has three sermons upon this verse, (*First clause*), entitled *The Return of Prayers. (Second clause)*.—*Tidings of Peace. (Last clause)*—*The Folly of Relapsing after Peace spoken.*

Verse 8. (*last clause*). They should not turn again to folly,

1. Because it will be a greater aggravation in sinning. It is made the aggravation of Solomon's sin (1Ki 11:9), that "God had appeared to him twice."

2. The second reason is intimated in the word *folly*: as if the Lord should have said, Set aside the unkindness and wrong you do to me, yet therein you befool yourselves; you will have the worst of it.

T. Goodwin.

Verse 10.

1. The attributes displayed in man's salvation.

- (a) Mercy in the promise.
- (b) Truth in its fulfilment.
- (c) Righteousness in the manner of its fulfilment.
- (d) Peace in its results.

2. These attributes harmonized in man's salvation.

(a) How? *Met together—kissed each other.*

(b) Why? Each on its own account. All on each others' account.

(c) Where? Met and kissed—(1.) In the covenant. (2.) At the incarnation. (3.) At the cross. (4.) At the conversion of every sinner. (5.) At the completion of the saints in heaven. *G. R.*

Verse 10. The Pulpit, vol. 28, 1836, contains a sermon by R. W. Sibthorpe, in which the preacher,

1. Considers the harmony of the divine perfections in the redemption of a sinner.

2. The wisdom of the divine dealings in *the calling* and guidance of the believer; so that mercy, truth, etc., each becomes in turn conspicuous in our experience.

3. The completeness of the divine image *in the sanctified soul*, so that the perfected saint abounds in mercy and truth, is filled with peace, and is conformed to his righteous Lord.

Verse 12.

1. All spiritual good is from God: *The Lord will give, etc.*

(a) Is repentance a good thing? The Lord will give repentance.

(b) Is pardon? *The Lord, etc.*

(c) Is faith?

(d) Is justification?

(e) Is regeneration?

(f) Is growth in grace?

(g) Is preservation unto the end?

(h) Is eternal glory? *The Lord will give, etc.*

2. All temporal good is from God. *Our land, etc.*

(a) In a lawful manner *our land.*

(b) In the use of appointed means: *Shall yield her increase, etc.*

(c) In dependence upon the divine blessing. "Who giveth fruitful seasons, "etc. Spiritual good is not less given in the use of appointed means. *G. R.*

Verse 12. The fertility of our spheres of labour the gift of God.

Verse 13.

1. The righteousness by which we are justified long precedes our justification: this righteousness is gone before, etc.

2. Our justification by that righteousness precedes our sanctification.

3. The righteousness of sanctification invariably follows that of justification. *G. R.*

WORK UPON THE EIGHTY-FIFTH PSALM

In an old quarto volume of 788 pages, containing Expositions of several passages of Scripture, is a

short Exposition of this Psalm (pp. 452-64) entitled "*A Taste of the Breathings, Pantings, Waitings, and Hopes of Israel after the true Saviour, and his effectual Redemption.*" There is no Author's name, but some previous owner has written "*John Pennington*" on the title page: date 1656.

Psalm 86

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. A Prayer of David. We have here one of the five psalms entitled *Tephillahs* or prayers. This psalm consists of praise as well as prayer, but it is in all parts so directly addressed to God that it is most fitly called "a prayer." A prayer is none the less but all the more a prayer because veins of praise run through it. This psalm would seem to have been specially known as David's prayer; even as the ninetieth is "the prayer of Moses." David composed it, and no doubt often expressed himself in similar language; both the matter and the wording are suitable to his varied circumstances and expressive of the different characteristics of his mind. In many respects it resembles Ps 17:1-15, which bears the same title, but in other aspects it is very different; the prayers of a good man have a family likeness, but they vary as much as they agree. We may learn from the present psalm that the great saints of old were accustomed to pray very much in the same fashion as we do; believers in all ages are of one genus. The name of God occurs very frequently in this psalm, sometimes it is Jehovah, but more commonly Adonai, which it is believed by many learned scholars was written by the Jewish transcribers instead of the sublimer title, because their superstitious dread led them to do so: we, labouring under no such tormenting fear, rejoice in Jehovah, our God. It is singular that those who were so afraid of their God, that they dared not write his name, had yet so little godly fear, that they dared to alter his word.

DIVISION. The psalm is irregular in its construction but may be divided into three portions, each ending with a note of gratitude or of confidence: we shall therefore read from Ps 86:1-7, and then, (after another pause at the end of Ps 86:13), we will continue to the end.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me.* In condescension to my littleness, and in pity to my weakness, "bow down thine ear, O Lord." When our prayers are lowly by reason of our humility, or feeble by reason of our sickness, or without wing by reason of our despondency, the Lord will bow down to them, the infinitely exalted Jehovah will have respect unto them. Faith, when she has the loftiest name of God on her tongue, and calls him Jehovah, yet dares to ask from him the most tender

and condescending acts of love. Great as he is he loves his children to be bold with him. For I am poor and needy—doubly a son of poverty, because, first, poor and without supply for my needs, and next needy, and so full of wants, though unable to supply them. Our distress is a forcible reason for our being heard by the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, for misery is ever the master argument with mercy. Such reasoning as this would never be adopted by a proud man, and when we hear it repeated in the public congregation by those great ones of the earth who count the peasantry to be little better than the earth they tread upon, it sounds like a mockery of the Most High. Of all despicable sinners those are the worst who use the language of spiritual poverty while they think themselves to be rich and increased in goods.

Verse 2. *Preserve my soul.* Let my life be safe from my enemies, and my spiritual nature be secure from their temptations. He feels himself unsafe except he be covered by the divine protection. For I am holy. I am set apart for holy uses, therefore do not let thine enemies commit a sacrilege by injuring or defiling me: I am clear of the crimes laid to my charge, and in that sense innocent; therefore, I beseech thee, do not allow me to suffer from unjust charges: and I am inoffensive, meek, and gentle towards others, therefore deal mercifully with me as I have dealt with my fellow men. Any of these renderings may explain the text, perhaps all together will expound it best. It is not self righteous in good men to plead their innocence as a reason for escaping from the results of sins wrongfully ascribed to them; penitents do not bedaub themselves with mire for the love of it, or make themselves out to be worse than they are out of compliment to heaven. No, the humblest saint is not a fool, and he is as well aware of the matters wherein he is clear as of those wherein he must cry "*peccavi.*" To plead guilty to offences we have never committed is as great a lie as the denial of our real faults. O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Lest any man should suppose that David trusted in his own holiness he immediately declared his trust in the Lord, and begged to be saved as one who was not holy in the sense of being perfect, but was even yet in need of the very clements of salvation. How sweet is that title, "my God", when joined to the other, "thy servant"; and how sweet is the hope that on this ground we shall be saved; seeing that our God is not like the Amalekitish master who left his poor sick servant to perish. Note how David's poor *I am* (or rather the *I* repeated without the *am*) appeals to the great *I AM* with that sacred boldness engendered by the necessity which breaks through stone walls, aided by the faith which removes mountains.

Verse 3. *Be merciful unto me, O Lord.* The best of men need mercy, and appeal to mercy, yea to nothing else but mercy; they need it for themselves, and crave it eagerly of their God as a personal requisite. For I cry unto thee daily. Is there not a promise that importunity shall prevail? May we not, then, plead our importunity as an argument with God? He who prays every day, and all the day, for so the word may mean, may rest assured that the Lord will hear him in the day of his need. If we cried sometimes to man, or other false confidences, we might expect to be referred to them in the hour of

our calamity, but if in all former times we have looked to the Lord alone, we may be sure that he will not desert us now. See how David pleaded, first that he was poor and needy, next that he was the Lord's set apart one, then that he was God's servant and had learned to trust in the Lord, and lastly that he had been taught to pray daily; surely these are such holy pleadings as any tried believer may employ when wrestling with a prayer hearing God, and with such weapons the most trembling suppliant may hope to win the day.

Verse 4. *Rejoice the soul of thy servant.* Make my heart glad, O my Maker, for I count it my honour to call myself again and again thy servant, and I reckon thy favour to be all the wages I could desire. I look for all my happiness in thee only, and therefore unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. As the heliotrope looks to the sun for its smile, so turn I my heart to thee. Thou art as the brazen serpent to my sick nature, and I lift up my soul's eye to thee that I may live. I know that the nearer I am to thee the greater is my joy, therefore be pleased to draw me nearer while I am labouring to draw near. It is not easy to lift a soul at all; it needs a strong shoulder at the wheel when a heart sticks in the miry clay of despondency: it is less easy to lift a soul up to the Lord, for the height is great as well as the weight oppressive; but the Lord will take the will for the deed, and come in with a hand of almighty grace to raise his poor servant out of the earth and up to heaven.

Verse 5. *For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.* Good at giving and forgiving; supplying us with *his* good, and removing *our* evil. Here was the great reason why the Psalmist looked to the Lord alone for his joy, because every joy creating attribute is to be found in perfection in Jehovah alone. Some men who would be considered good are so self exultingly indignant at the injuries done them by others, that they cannot forgive; but we may rest assured that the better a being is, the more willing he is to forgive, and the best and highest of all is ever ready to blot out the transgressions of his creatures. And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. God does not dispense his mercy from a slender store which perchance may be so impoverished as to give out altogether, but out of a cornucopiae he pours forth the infinite riches of his mercy: his goodness flows forth in abounding streams towards those who pray and in adoring worship make mention of his name. David seems to have stood in the cleft of the rock with Moses, and to have heard the name of the Lord proclaimed even as the great lawgiver did, for in two places in this psalm he almost quotes *verbatim* the passage in Ex 34:6—"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

Verse 6. *Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer.* Even the glory which his spirit had beheld did not withdraw him from his prayer, but rather urged him to be more fervent in it; hence he implores the Lord to hear his requests. Attend to the voice of my supplications. Here are repetitions, but not vain repetitions. When a child cries it repeats the same note, but it is equally in earnest every time, and so was it with the suppliant here. Note the expression, "the voice of my supplications", as if they were

not all voice but were partly made up of inarticulate noise, yet amid much that was superfluous there really was a distinct voice, an inner meaning, a living sense which was the heart's intention. This he would have the Lord sift out from the chaff, and hear amid the mingled din. May our prayers never be voiceless; may the soul's intent always give them a live core of meaning.

Verse 7. *In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.* A pious resolve backed by a judicious reason. It is useless to cry to those who cannot or will not hear; once convince men that prayer has no effect upon God, and they will have no more of it. In these busy days and especially in troublous times, men cannot afford to waste time in entreaties which must be unavailing. Our experience confirms us in the belief that Jehovah the living God really does aid those who call upon him, and therefore we pray and mean to pray, not because we are so fascinated by prayer that for its own sake we would continue in it if it proved to be mere folly and superstition, as vain philosophers assert; but because we really, indeed, and of a truth, find it to be a practical and effectual means of obtaining help from God in the hour of need. There can be no reason for praying if there be no expectation of the Lord's answering. Who would make a conscience of pleading with the winds, or find a solace in supplicating the waves? The mercy seat is a mockery if there be no hearing nor answering. David, as the following verses show, believed the Lord to be a living and potent God, and indeed to be "God alone", and it was on that account that he resolved in every hour of trouble to call upon him.

Verse 8. *Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord.* There are gods by delegated office, such as kings and magistrates, but they are as nothing in the presence of Jehovah; there are also gods by the nomination of superstition, but these are vanity itself, and cannot be compared with the living and true God. Even if the heathen idols were gods, none of them in power or even in character, could be likened unto the self-existent, all-creating God of Israel. If every imaginary deity could start into actual existence, and become really divine, yet would we choose Jehovah to be our God, and reject all others. Neither are there any works like unto thy works. What have the false gods ever made or unmade? What miracles have they wrought? When did they divide a sea, or march through a wilderness scattering bread from the skies? O Jehovah, in thy person and in thy works, thou art as far above all gods as the heavens are above the nethermost abyss.

Verse 9. *All nations whom thou hast made,* and these include all mankind, since they all come of the first Adam—thy creature, and their lives are all distinct creations of thine omnipotence. All these *shall come with penitent hearts, in thine own way, to thine own self, and worship before thee, O Lord.* Because thou art thus above all gods, the people who have been so long deceived shall at last discover thy greatness, and shall render thee the worship which is thy due: thou hast created them all, and unto thee shall they all yield homage. This was David's reason for resorting to the Lord in trouble, for he felt that one day all men would acknowledge the Lord to be the only God. It makes us

content to be in the minority today, when we are sure that the majority will be with us tomorrow, ay, and that the truth will one day be carried unanimously and heartily. David was not a believer in the theory that the world will grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness, and idolatry. Earth's sun is to go down amid tenfold night if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Saviour, shall worship thee alone, O God, *and shall glorify thy name*. The modern notion has greatly damped the zeal of the church for missions, and the sooner it is shown to be unscriptural the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honours God, nor inspires the church with ardour. Far hence be it driven.

Verse 10. *For thou art great.* He had before said, "thou art good"; it is a grand thing when greatness and goodness are united; it is only in the Divine Being that either of them exists absolutely, and essentially. Happy is it for us that they both exist in the Lord to an equal degree. To be great and not good might lead to tyranny in the King, and for him to be good and not great might involve countless calamities upon his subjects from foreign foes, so that either alternative would be terrible; let the two be blended, and we have a monarch in whom the nation may rest and rejoice. And doest wondrous things. Being good, he is said to be ready to forgive: being great, he works wonders: we may blend the two, for there is no wonder so wonderful as the pardon of our transgressions. All that God does or makes has wonder in it; he breathes, and the wind is mystery; he speaks, and the thunder astounds us; even the commonest daisy is a marvel, and a pebble enshrines wisdom. Only to fools is anything which God has made uninteresting: the world is a world of wonders. Note that the verb *doest* is in the present, the Lord is doing wondrous things, they are transpiring before our eyes. Where are they? Look upon the bursting buds of spring or the maturing fruits of autumn, gaze on the sky or skim the sea, mark the results of providence and the victories of grace, everywhere at all times the great *Thaumaturge* stretches forth his rod of power.

Thou art God alone. Alone wast thou God before thy creatures were; alone in godhead still art thou now that thou hast given life to throngs of beings; alone for ever shalt thou be, for none can ever rival thee. True religion makes no compromises, it does not admit Baal or Dagon to be a god; it is exclusive and monopolizing, claiming for Jehovah nothing less than all. The vaunted liberality of certain professors of modern thought is not to be cultivated by believers in the truth. "Philosophic breadth" aims at building a Pantheon, and piles a Pandemonium; it is not for us to be helpers in such an evil work. Benevolently intolerant, we would, for the good of mankind, as well as for the glory of God, undeceive mankind as to the value of their compromises,—they are mere treason to truth. Our God is not to be worshipped as one among many good and true beings, but as God alone; and his gospel is not to be preached as one of several saving systems, but as the one sole way of salvation. Lies can face each other beneath one common dome; but in the temple of truth the worship is one

and indivisible.

Verse 11. *Teach me thy way, O LORD.* Instruct me thus at all times, let me live in thy school; but teach me now especially since I am in trouble and perplexity. Be pleased to shew me the way which thy wisdom and mercy have prepared for my escape; behold I lay aside all wilfulness, and only desire to be informed as to thy holy and gracious mind. Not *my* way give me, but *thy* way teach me, I would follow thee and not be wilful. I will walk in thy truth. When taught I will practise what I know, truth shall not be a mere doctrine or sentiment to me, but a matter of daily life. The true servant of God regulates his walk by his master's will, and hence he never walks deceitfully, for God's way is ever truth. Providence has a way for us, and it is our wisdom to keep in it. We must not be as the bullock which needs to be driven and urged forward because it likes not the road, but be as men who voluntarily go where their trusted friend and helper appoints their path. Unite my heart to fear thy name. Having taught me one way, give me one heart to walk therein, for too often I feel a heart and a heart, two natures contending, two principles struggling for sovereignty. Our minds are apt to be divided between a variety of objects, like trickling streamlets which waste their force in a hundred runnels; our great desire should be to have all our life floods poured into one channel and to have that channel directed towards the Lord alone. A man of divided heart is weak, the man of one object is *the* man. God who created the bands of our nature can draw them together, tighten, strengthen, and fasten them, and so braced and inwardly knit by his uniting grace, we shall be powerful for good, but not otherwise. To fear God is both the beginning, the growth, and the maturity of wisdom, therefore should we be undividedly given up to it, heart, and soul.

Verse 12. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart.* When my heart is one, I will give thee all of it. Praise should never be rendered with less than all our heart, and soul, and strength, or it will be both unreal and unacceptable. This is the second time in the psalm that David calls the Lord "my God", the first time he was in an agony of prayer (Ps 86:2), and now he is in an ecstasy of praise. If anything can make a man pray and praise, it is the knowledge into that the Lord is his God. And I will glorify thy name for evermore, eternity gratitude will prolong its praise. God has never done blessing us, let us never have done blessing him. As he ever gives us grace, let us ever render to him the glory of it.

Verse 13. *For great is thy mercy toward me.* Personal experience is ever the master singer. Whatever thou art to others, to me thy mercy is most notable. The psalmist claims to sing among the loudest, because his debt to divine mercy is among the greatest. And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. From the direst death and the deepest dishonour David had been kept by God, for his enemies would have done more than send him to hell had they been able. His sense of sin also made him feel as if the most overwhelming destruction would have been his portion had not grace prevented, therefore does he speak of deliverance from the nethermost abode of lost spirits.

There are some alive now who can use this language unfeignedly, and he who pens these lines most humbly confesses that he is one. Left to myself to indulge my passions, to rush onward with my natural vehemence, and defy the Lord with recklessness of levity, what a candidate for the lowest abyss should I have made myself by this time. For me, there was but one alternative, great mercy, or the lowest hell. With my whole heart do I sing, "Great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." The psalmist here again touches a bold and joyful note, but soon he exchanges it for the mournful string.

Verse 14. *O God, the proud are risen against me.* They could not let God's poor servant alone, his walk with God was as smoke to their eyes, and therefore they determined to destroy him. None hate good men so fiercely as do the high minded and domineering. And the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul. Unitedly oppressors sought the good man's life; they hunted in packs, with keen scent, and eager foot. In persecuting times many a saint has used these words in reference to Papal bishops and inquisitors. And have not set thee before them. They would not have molested the servant if they had cared one whit for the master. Those who fear not God are not afraid to commit violent and cruel acts. An atheist is a misanthrope. Irreligion is akin to inhumanity.

Verse 15. *But thou, O Lord.* What a contrast! We get away from the hectorings and blusterings of proud but puny men to the glory and goodness of the Lord. We turn from the boisterous foam of chafing waves to the sea of glass mingled with fire, calm and serene. "Art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." A truly glorious doxology, in which there is not one redundant word. As we have before observed, it is mainly transcribed from Ex 34:6. Here is compassion for the weak and sorrowing, grace for the undeserving, longsuffering for the provoking, mercy for the guilty, and truth for the tried. God's love assumes many forms, and is lovely in them all. Into whatsoever state we may be cast, there is a peculiar hue in the light of love which will harmonize with our condition; love is one and yet sevenfold, its white ray contains the chromatic scale. Are we sorrowful? We find the Lord full of compassion. Are we contending with temptation? His grace comes to our aid. Do we err? He is patient with us. Have we sinned? He is plenteous in mercy. Are we resting on his promise? He will fulfil it with abundant truth.

Verse 16. *O turn unto me.* As though the face of God had been before averted in anger, the suppliant pleads for a return of conscious favour. One turn of God's face will turn all our darkness into day. And have mercy upon me, that is all he asks, for he is lowly in heart; that is all he wants, for mercy answereth all a sinner's needs. Give thy strength unto thy servant. Gird me with it that I may serve thee, guard me with it that I may not be overcome. When the Lord gives us his own strength we are sufficient for all emergencies, and have no cause to fear any adversaries. And save the son of thine handmaid. He meant that he was a home born servant of God. As the sons of slaves were their master's property by their birth, so he gloried in being the son of a woman who herself belonged to

the Lord. What others might think a degrading illustration he uses with delight, to show how intensely he loved the Lord's service; and also as a reason why the Lord should interpose to rescue him, seeing that he was no newly purchased servant, but had been in the house from his very birth.

Verse 17. *Shew to me a token for good.* Let me be assured of thy mercy by being delivered out of trouble.

That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed.

"Some token of thy favour show,
Some sign which all my foes may see;
And filled with blank confusion know,
My comfort and my help in thee."

What bodes good to me shall make them quail and blush. Disappointed and defeated, the foes of the good man would feel ashamed of what they had designed. "Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me." God doth nothing by halves, those whom he helps he also consoles, and so makes them not merely safe but joyful. This makes the foes of the righteous exceedingly displeased, but it brings to the Lord double honour. Lord, deal thou thus with us evermore, so will we glorify thee, world without end. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE.—The prophet David has penned two psalms, which he has eminently appropriated to himself as his own: the one is styled *David's prayer*, though many other psalms are prayers—it is Ps 86:1-17; the other *David's praise*, Ps 145:1-21. The first his *tephilla*, the latter his *tehilla*; in each of these he makes a solemn rehearsal of the very words of Moses, in Ex 34:6-7. In Ps 86:1-17 he brings them in as they were a support unto his faith in his distresses from sins and miseries, to which use he puts them, Ps 86:3-4 6-7. And again, Ps 86:16-17, he makes a plea of these words by way of prayer. In Ps 145:1-21, he brings them in as they are an *elogium* or celebration of the glorious nature and excellencies of God, to excite the sons of men to love and praise him.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Title.—This Psalm was published under the title of *A Prayer of David*; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expression of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.—*Matthew Henry*.

Title.—There was much, very much, of God's peculiar character, his glorious name, brought to view in the close of the last Psalm. This may account for its being followed by another, *A Prayer of David*, almost equally full of the character of Jehovah. The key note of this Psalm is Jehovah's name.—*Andrew A. Bonar*.

Whole Psalm. Christ prays throughout the whole of this Psalm. All the words are spoken exclusively by Christ, who is both God and man.—*Psalt. Cassiodori*, 1491.

Whole Psalm. In this Psalm Christ the Son of God and Son of Man, one God with the Father, one man with men, to whom we pray as God, prays in the form of a servant. For he prays for us, and he prays in us, and he is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our Priest. He prays in us as our Head. He is prayed to by us as our God.—*Psalt. Pet. Lombard*. 1474.

Verse 1. *Bow down thine ear, O Lord.* As the careful physician doth to his feeble patient: so Basil glosseth here.—*John Trapp*.

Verses 1-4. Poor, *holy, trusteth, I cry.* The petitioner is first described as *poor*, then *holy*, next *trusting*, after that *crying*, finally, *lifted up to God*. And each epithet has its fitting verb; *bow down* to the poor, *preserve the holy*, *save the trusting*, *be merciful* to him who cries, *rejoice* the lifted up. It is the whole gamut of love from the Incarnation to the Ascension; it tells us that Christ's humiliation will be our glory and joy.—*Neale and Littledale's Commentary*.

Verse 2. Holy. The word has been variously translated:—*Godly*, De Muis, Ainsworth and others; *charitable*, or *beneficent*, Piscator; *merciful* or *tenderhearted*, Mariana; *diligently* or *earnestly* *compassionate*, Vatablus; *meek*, Calvin; *a beloved one*, Version of American Bible Union; *one whom thou lovest*, Perowne; *a devoted or dedicated man*, —*Weiss*.

Verse 2. *For I am Holy.* Some have objected to David's pleading his own good character; but if he did not go beyond the truth, and the occasion called for it, there was nothing wrong in his so doing. Job, David, Peter, John and Paul all did it, Job 27:5 Ps 116:16 Joh 21:15-17 Re 1:10 1Co 9:1. Nor is it presumptuous to ask God to show mercy to us for we show it to others; or to forgive us for we forgive others, Mt 5:7 6:14-15.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 2. *I am holy...thy servant which trusteth in thee.* They that are holy, yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 2. *Save thy servant that trusteth in thee.* When God saves his servant, he saves what belongs to himself; and, when he saves him that trusts in him, he shows himself to be just and faithful, in carrying out what he promised.—*Bellarmino*.

Verses 2-5. The aspirations after holiness which are found in this Psalm, coupled with its earnest invocation of mercy from the God with whom there is forgiveness, render it peculiarly applicable to those whose daily access is to a throne of needed grace. Christians know that while their *standing* is the blameless perfection of the Lord their righteousness, they are in many things offenders still. Nor do we ever fully prove the preciousness of Jesus as our portion, except we are drawn to him by that Spirit which reveals to us a nakedness and poverty within ourselves, which his blessed fulness can alone redress. There is a consciousness of personal sanctification through faith (Ps 86:2) associated with an acutely sensitive perception of intrinsic worthlessness, such as only finds relief in the

remembrance of unaltered grace (Ps 86:5), which, to the exercised spirit of one really growing in the knowledge of God, will address itself with an especial acceptance.—*Arthur Pridham*.

Verse 3. *Be merciful unto me.* Lest any should by the former words, ("*I am holy*",) suspect him to be a merit monger, he beggeth mercy with instancy and constancy of request.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 3. *I cry unto thee daily.* A great difference between saints and sinners in prayer is that sinners who pray at all, pray only when they are in *trouble*, whereas saints cry daily unto God. Compare Job 27:10.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 4. *Rejoice the soul of thy servant,* etc. As I have not found rest in anything created, I have raised up my soul on the wings of thought and desire to thee my Creator. Love bears one's soul up; and it has been truly said, that the soul is more where it loves, than where it actually is. Thought and desire are the wings of love; for he that loves is borne on to, and abides in, what he loves, by thinking constantly on, and longing for, the object of his love. Whoever truly, and from his heart, loves God, by thinking on him and longing for him lifts up his soul to God; while, on the contrary, whoever loves the earth, by thinking on and coveting the things of the earth, lets his soul down to its level.—*Bellarmino*.

Verse 4. *Unto thee, Lord, do I lift my soul.* If thou hadst corn in thy rooms below, thou wouldest take it up higher, lest it should grow rotten. Wouldest thou remove thy corn, and dost thou suffer thy heart to rot on the earth? Thou wouldest take thy corn up higher: lift up thy heart to heaven. And how can I, dost thou say? What ropes are needed? What machines? What ladders? Thy affections are the steps; thy will the way. By loving thou mountest, by neglect thou descendest. Standing on the earth thou art in heaven, if thou lovest God. For the heart is not so raised as the body is raised: the body to be lifted up changes its place: the heart to be lifted up changes its will.—*Augustine*.

Verse 4. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift my soul,* intimates that he had brought himself to the Lord as a living sacrifice, even as the *heave offering* in the tabernacle—to show that it belonged to God and to his altar, and, that man had no part in it—was lifted up by the hands of the priests.—*Benjamin Weiss*.

Verse 4. —*I lift up my soul.* It denotes the devotion, fervency, heartiness, and sincerity of his prayer; the doing of it with a true heart, the lifting up of the heart with the hands unto God, La 3:41; or by way of offering unto the Lord, not the body only, but the soul or heart also; or as a deposition committed into his hands.—*John Gill*.

Verse 4. *Lord.* Here, and in all the verses in this psalm where ynda *Adonai*, occurs, many MSS read hwhy, *Yehovah*. The Jews, out of reverence to the incommunicable name Jehovah pronounce ynda where hwhy is in the text. It is, therefore, not improbable that hwhy is in the true reading in all these places.—*Note to Calvin in loc*.

Verse 5. *For thou, Lord, art good,* and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house keeper?—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 5. *Ready to forgive.* The mercy of God is a ready mercy, and his pardons are ready for his

people; his pardons and mercies are not to seek, he hath them at hand, he is *good and ready to forgive*. Whereas most men, though they will forgive, yet they are not *ready* to forgive, they are hardly brought to it, though they do it at last. But God is "*ready to forgive*"; he hath, as it were, pardons ready drawn (as a man who would be ready to do a business, he will have such writings as concern the passing of it ready); there is nothing to do but to put in the date and the name; yea indeed, the date and the name are put in from all eternity. Thus the Scripture speaks to show how forward God is to do good; he needs not set his heart to it; his heart is ever in the exactest fitness.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 5. *Plenteous in mercy*. It is a thing marvellously satisfactory and pleasing to the heart of a man to be still taking from a great heap; and upon this ground are those proverbial sayings, There is no fishing like to a fishing in the sea; no service like the service of a king: because in one there is the greatest plenty and abundance of that kind of pleasure that fishers look after; and for them that serve, and must live by their service, there is none like that of princes, because they have abundance of reward and opportunity whereby to recompense the services of those that do wait and attend upon them. . . . And upon the same ground is it that the Scriptures, in several places, do not only assert and testify that God is merciful and gracious, but abundant in mercy and full of grace; and not simply that there is redemption in him, but *plenteousness* of redemption: Ps 103:8 130:7 Isa 55:7; "Let the wicked forsake his way", etc.; "Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The commodity which we stand in need of is mercy and the pardon of our sins, in case we have been unholy and ungodly creatures; this commodity is abundantly in God. There it is treasured up as waters are in the store house of the sea; there is no end of the treasures of his grace, mercy, pardon, and compassion. There is no man, being in want, but had ten times rather go to a rich man's door to be relieved, than to the door of a poor man, if he knoweth the rich man to be as liberal and bountifully disposed as the poor man can be.—*John Goodwin*.

Verse 6. Supplications *ytnwxt*, *deprecations*. The Psalmist forms a peculiar Hebrew word, feminine plural, not found elsewhere, to convey more impressively the idea of suppliant weakness.—*A.R. Fausset*.

Verses 8-10.—There are two kinds of doubt which are wont in the hour of temptation to assail the soul: the doubt as to God's *willingness*, and the doubt as to God's *power* to succour. The first of these the Psalmist has already put from him; he now shows that he has overcome the second. God is able as well as willing to help, and every being on the face of the earth who receives help, receives it from the hand of Him who is the only God, and who shall one day be recognized (so speaks the strong prophetic hope within him, Ps 86:9) as the only God.—*J.J.S. Perowne*.

Verses 9-10. All nations shall worship before thee, because as *King of Nations*, thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy Majesty terrible and unsupportable, thy power universal

and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, *thou doest wondrous things*, which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that *thou art God alone*; not only none like thee, but none beside thee.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 11. *Teach me thy way. I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart.* Here is the "Via, Veritas, Vita" of the Gospel (Joh 14:6). "Via tua, Veritas tua, Vita tua, Christus." Christ is our Way, Truth, and Life, because he is Man united to God, and is one substance with the Father.—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 11. *Teach me.* There is no point on which the world is more dark than that of its own ignorance—we might truly say, "it is ignorant of its ignorance"—it knows enough when it learns by rote a few first principles of religion; it comforts itself that it is not atheistical because it believes that there is a God; but as to knowing his ways, laws, mind, or any such things, with them it has nothing at all to do. The people of the world do not care for enlightenment; they feel no pressing need for it; in all probability they have an instinctive feeling that if enlightened they would know a little more than they wish to know, that their newly acquired knowledge would interfere with their old habits and ways, and this is one reason why all spiritual teaching which goes beneath the surface is distasteful to the majority of men. They cannot bear to be brought into contact with God, in anything but a general way; the particulars of his character may not agree over well with the particulars of their lives! It is the fashion in the present day to talk of man's enlightenment, and to represent human nature as upheaving under its load, as straining towards a knowledge of truth; such is not in reality the case, and whenever there is an effort in the mind untaught of the Spirit, it is directed towards God as the great *moral* and not as the great *spiritual* Being. A man untaught of the Holy Ghost may long to know a *moral*, he can never desire to know a *spiritual* Being.—*John Hyatt, 1767-1826*.

Verse 11. *Teach.* The common version of the verb here is too vague, as it fails to bring out the peculiar suitableness of the term to express the kind of teaching here specifically meant. The original meaning of the Hebrew word is *to point out* or *mark* the way.—*J.A. Alexander*.

Verse 11. *I will walk in thy truth.* Conform to Scripture. Let us lead Scripture lives. Oh that the Bible might be seen to be printed in our lives! Do what the Word commands. Obedience is an excellent way of commenting upon the Bible. Let the Word be the sun dial by which you set your life. What are we the better for having the Scriptures, if we do not direct all our speeches and actions according to it? What is a carpenter better for his rule about him, if he sticks it at his back, and never makes use of it for measuring and squaring? So, what are we the better for the rule of the Word, if we do not make use of it, and regulate our lives by it?—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 11. *I will walk in thy truth.* *Walking*, in the Scripture, takes in the whole of our conversation or conduct: and to walk *in* anything, intends a fulness of it. For a man to *walk in* pride, is something more than to be proud: it says, that pride is his way, his element; that he is wholly under the influence of

it.—*William Jay.*

Verse 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name.* The *end* which he desired to secure was that he might truly fear God, or properly reverence and honour him; 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*—*dxy, yahhad*—occurs as a verb only in three places. In Ge 49:6 it is rendered *united*: "Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou *united*." In Isa 14:20 it is translated *joined*: "Thou shalt not be *joined* unto them." The *adverb*—*dxy ya-hhad*—occurs often, and is rendered together, Ge 13:6 22:6,8,19 36:7; *et soepe*. 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 unity of purpose, and that nothing may be allowed to interfere with that one supreme purpose.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 11. *Unite my heart, etc.* Sincerity drives but one design, and that is to please and enjoy God; and what can more establish and fix the soul in the hour of temptation than this? The reason why the hypocrite is unstable in all his ways, is given us by the apostle: he is "a double minded man", a man of two souls in one body; as a profane wretch once boasted, that he had one soul for God, and another for anything. But all the designs of a gracious heart are united in one; and so the entire stream of his affections runs strong. It is base by ends and self interests, that, like a great many ditches cut out of the bank of a river, draw away the stream out of its proper channel, and make its waters fail. But if the heart be united for God, then we may say of such a Christian, as was said of a young Roman, "What he does is done with all his might." A man of only one design, puts out all his strength to carry it; nothing can stand before him. Sincerity brings a man's will into subjection to the will of God; and this being done, the greatest danger and difficulty is over with such a man. This is that holy oil which makes the wheels of the soul run nimbly, even in the difficult paths of obedienee.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 11. *Unite my heart.*

Give me thine heart but as I gave it thee:

Or give it me at least as I

Have given mine

To purchase thine.

I halved it not when I did die;

But gave myself wholly to set thee free.

The heart I gave thee was a living heart;

And when thy heart by sin was slain,
I laid down mine
To ransom thine,
That thy dead heart might live again,
And live entirely perfect, not in part.
But whilst thine heart's divided, it is dead;
Dead unto me, unless it live
To me alone,
It is all one
To keep all, and a part to give:
For what's a body worth without an head!
Yet, this is worse, that what thou keepest from me
Thou dost bestow upon my foes
And those not mine
Alone, but thine;
The proper causes of thy woes,
From whom I gave my life to set thee free.
Have I betrothed thee to myself, and shall
The devil, and the world, intrude
Upon my right,
Een in my sight?
Think not thou canst me so delude:
I will have none, unless I may have all.
I made it all, I gave it all to thee,
I gave all that I had for it:
If I must lose,
I would rather choose
Mine interest in all to quit:
Or keep it whole, or give it whole to me.

—Francis Quarles, in *"The School of the Heart."*

Verse 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name.*

In knotts, to be loosed never,
Knitt my heart to thee forever,
That I to thy name may beare
Fearful love and loving feare.

—Francis Davison.

Verse 12. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name.* We glorify God by praising him. Doxology, or praise, is a God exalting work. Ps 50:23. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." The Hebrew word, *Bara*, to create, and *Barak*, to praise, are little different, because the end of creation is to praise God. Though nothing can add to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. When we praise God, we spread his fame and renown, we display the trophies of his excellency. In this manner the angels glorify him; they are the choristers of heaven, and do trumpet forth his praise. Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels. Believers are called "temples of God", 1Co 3:16. When our tongues praise, then the organs of God's spiritual temple are sounding. How sad it is that God hath no more glory from us in this way! Many are full of murmuring and discontent, but seldom bring glory to God, by giving him the praise due to his name. We read of the saints having harps in their hands, the emblems of praise. Many have tears in their eyes and complaints in their mouths, but few have harps in their hands, blessing and glorifying God. Let us honour God this way. Praise is the quit rent we pay to God: while God renews our lease, we must renew our rent.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 12. *I will praise thee, O Lord, & c.* Such a soul as David was is enlarged to talk high of God: *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore.* Alas! poor creature, how canst thou proclaim him "*for evermore*"? A soul fired with desire to praise God, burns after both more perfect things and more lasting than it is able to perform. "To will is present with it", etc. See but the reachings and longings of such a soul, how it swells in desires to glorify God!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12. *With all my heart.* When my *heart* is *united* to fear thy name, then shall I praise thee with my whole heart.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13. *Hell* is put metaphorically for great and extreme dangers, or miseries which seem irrecoverable and remediless; these are figuratively called hell, because *hell*, properly taken, is a place from whence there is no recovery. There's no release from the chains of darkness: all changes are on earth; heaven and hell know none. When David praises the Lord *for delivering his soul from the lowest hell*, he meaneth an estate on earth of the lowest and deepest danger imaginable: mercy helped him at the worst. To be as low as hell, is to be at the lowest.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13. *The lowest hell.* According to Jewish traditions, there are seven different regions, in the abode of departed souls.—*Daniel Creswell.*

Verse 13. *Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.* Someone having a troublesome cause was to be sent to prison: another comes and defends him; what does he say when he thanks him? Thou hast delivered my soul out of prison. A debtor was to be tortured: his debt is paid; he is said to be delivered from being tortured. They were not in all these evils; but because they were in such due course towards them, that unless aid had been brought, they would have been in them, they rightly

say that they are delivered from thence, whither they were not suffered by their deliverers to be taken.—*Augustine*.

Verses 13, 16. There is no stronger argument of God's infallible readiness to grant our requests, than the experience of his former concessions. So David reasons, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine", 1Sa 17:37. This is the argument *a priori*, the voice of a strong faith, that persuades the conscience God will be gracious to him, because he hath been gracious. The prophet thus often comforted his soul: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress"; therefore, "have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer", Ps 4:1. So, *Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell; therefore, O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me.* Let the justiciaries deduce arguments from their own present merits, my soul from God's former mercies. Thou, O Lord, madest me good, restoredst me when I was evil; therefore have mercy upon me, miserable sinner, and give me thy salvation. Thus Paul grounded his assurance: because the Lord had stood with him, and delivered him out of the lion's mouth; therefore the Lord shall deliver me still, from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. 2Ti 4:17-18.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 15. *Thou, O Lord, Adonai, art a God; El, the strong God, full of compassion;* the same words as Moses useth. Instead of *Jehovah*, *Adonai* is used, "O Lord"; but then *El*, strong God, is the same word. The meaning is, let all the strength and power thou the strong God hast in thee be for my advantage. Now, is it not a bold request to say, Lord, wilt thou give me all thy strength to help me? A very bold request indeed; but his mercy moves him to grant it. Thus then petition him: Thou art a God merciful and gracious, give thy strength to me! Thou, O God, givest all thy attributes up to thy children, to serve their advantage, as well as to serve thy own glory; give me thy strength!—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 15. *Full of compassion.* The original word *Rachum* is very emphatical; it signifies such tenderness as parents have toward their children when their bowels yearn within them.—"*Critical and Practical Exposition of the Pentateuch.*" 1748.

Verse 16. *Save the son of thine handmaid.* Deliver me, who am as completely thy property, as the offspring of a female slave born in her master's house, and which belongs of right to him. Ge 14:14 Jer 2:14.—*William Keatinge Clay*.

Verse 17. *Shew me a token for good.* These words do not, as some think, necessarily imply David's asking for some specific or miraculous token; he regards deliverance itself as a token. We ask whether it be not true, that in the same measure as we recognise the mysteriously governing influence of God in every day events, we regard those things as signs and miracles, which to others appear common place?—*Augustus F. Tholuck*.

Verse 17. Perhaps, the *token for good* means that spiritual joy which he asked for in the beginning of

the Psalm, when he said, "*Rejoice the soul of thy servant*" for such joy to a holy soul in tribulation is the clearest sign of the grace of God, and on the sight of it all manner of persecutors are confounded; and then the meaning would be, "*shew me a token for good*"; give me the grace of that spiritual joy that will appear exteriorly in my countenance, "that they which hate me may see" such calmness and tranquillity of soul, "*and be confounded*"; for thou, O Lord, hast helped me in the struggle, consoled me in my sorrow, and hast already converted my sadness into interior joy and gladness.—*Robert Bellarmine*.

Verse 17. *Shew me a token for good*, may be rendered "make me a sign for good." Weiss paraphrases it, "make of me such a sign or monument of good that all my enemies may be arrested by it, and be daunted at injuring a man so assisted by the Lord."

Verse 17. *Hast holpen me*, in struggle; *and comforted me*, in sorrow.—*Augustine*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. A singular request—that the Lord should bow his ear.
2. A singular plea—"I am poor and needy."
3. The singular grace of God will answer the request, because singular grace has made the petitioner feel his need.

Verse 2.

1. The blessing sought is present, spiritual, complete and final preservation.
2. Our reasons for expecting it are—
 - (a) Our belonging to God—"I am holy."
 - (b) God's belonging to us—"my God."
 - (c) Our faith, which has the promise.
 - (d) Our fruits, which prove our faith—"thy servant"

Verse 3.—Importunity.

1. When she pleads—"daily."
2. How she pleads—"I cry."
3. To whom she pleads—"unto thee."
4. For what she pleads—"be merciful."

Verse 3.—*I will cry daily* for pardoning, sanctifying, assisting, preserving, providing and guiding mercy.—*William Jay*.

Verse 4.

1. The believer's joy is from God—"Rejoice", & c.
2. The believer's joy is in God—"unto thee", & c.—G.R.

Verse 4.

1. The great lift.
2. The heavy weight—"*my soul*".
3. The weak worker—"*I lift*".
4. The great height—"*unto thee*".
5. The appointed machinery—means of grace; and,
6. The expected aid—"*Rejoice*", etc.

Verse 5.—Encouraging thoughts of God.

1. He has goodness in his essence.
2. He has forgiveness in readiness.
3. He has mercy in action, flowing forth from him plenteously.
4. His very discrimination is gracious—"all them that call upon him."

Verse 6. The praying man desires above all things an answer. Objections to such an expectation. Grounds for continuing to expect, and duties incumbent upon those who realise such expectations.

Verse 6. *The voice of supplication.* It is the voice of weakness, of penitence, of faith, of hope, of the new nature, of knowledge, & c.

Verse 7.

1. Help needed.
2. Help sought.
3. Help found.—G.R.

Verse 7.

1. A time to be expected—"*day of my trouble*."
2. A resolve to be practised—"*I will call upon thee*."
3. A result to be experienced—"*thou wilt answer me*."

Verse 7.—Prayer is the design of trouble, the evidence that it is sanctified, its solace, and the medium of deliverance from it.—*William Jay*.

Verse 8.

1. God is one; the only God: characters of false gods inferior far.
2. His works are unique. Nature, providence, grace, all peculiar in many respects. A good theme for a thoughtful preacher.

Verse 9. The certain conversion of the world as opposed to modern theories.

Verse 10.

1. God is "*great*", therefore great things may be expected of him.
2. He is unsearchable, therefore "*wondrous things*" may be expected of him.
3. He is irresistible, therefore impossibilities to others may be expected of him: "*Thou art God*"

alone".—G.R.

Verse 11. In the disposition of mind which is expressed in these words, the believer stands opposed to four descriptions of character.

1. The ignorant and thoughtless sinner, who neither regards his way nor his end.
2. The Antinomian, who is zealous for doctrines, and averse from the practice of religion.
3. The Pharisee, who disregards religious sentiment, and makes practice all in all.
4. The hypocrite, who appears to be divided between religion and the world.—*John Hyatt*, 1811.

Verse 11. The Christian as a scholar, a man of action, and a man of devotion.

Verse 11. Holiness taught, truth practised, God adored; and thus the life perfected.

Verse 11. (*middle clause*). We should walk in the belief of the truth, its practice, enjoyment, and profession.—*William Jay*.

Verse 11. (*third clause*). The necessity, benefit, and reasonableness of whole heartedness in religion.

Verse 12.—The art of praising God by heart.

Verse 13.

1. Where I might have been—"*the lowest hell.*"
2. What thou hast done for me—"*hast delivered.*"
3. What thou art doing—"*great is thy mercy.*"

Verse 13. (*first clause*).—God's mercy *great* in election, redemption, calling, pardon, upholding, etc. It is so, at this very moment, in supplying my needs, preserving from danger, consoling in sorrow, etc. Great is thy mercy *towards me*—so great a sinner, with such needs, so provoking, so full of doubts, etc.

Verses 13-15. The three verses describe salvation, consequent persecution, and all sufficient consolation.

Verse 15. The shades of the light of love. Compassion upon suffering, grace towards unworthiness, long suffering to provocation, mercy towards sin, truth towards the promise.

Verse 16.

1. My pedigree—"*son of thine handmaid.*"
2. My occupation—"thy servant."
3. My character—needing "*mercy.*"
4. My request "*turn unto me.*"

Verse 16. In what respects a servant of God may be girt with divine power.

Verse 17. What inward feelings and outward providences are "*tokens for good.*"

Psalm 87

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah. A sacred hymn and a national lyric. A theocracy blends the religious and the patriotic ideas in one; and in proportion as nations become Christianized, their popular songs will become deeply imbued with pious sentiments. Judged by this standard, our own land is far in arrears. This "Psalm or song" was either composed by the sons of Korah, or dedicated to them: as they kept the doors of the house of the Lord, they could use this beautiful composition as a Psalm within the doors, and as a song outside.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. The song is in honour of Zion, or Jerusalem, and it treats of God's favour to that city among the mountains, the prophecies which made it illustrious, and the honour of being a native of it. Many conceive that it was written at the founding of David's city of Zion, but does not the mention of Babylon imply a later date? It would seem to have been written after Jerusalem and the Temple had been built, and had enjoyed a history, of which glorious things could be spoken. Among other marvels of God's love in its later history, it had been untouched by Sennacherib when other cities of Israel and Judah had fallen victims to his cruelty. It was in Hezekiah's reign that Babylon became prominent, when the ambassadors came to congratulate the king concerning his recovery, at that time also Tyre would be more famous than at any period in David's day. But as we have no information, and the point is not important, we may leave it, and proceed to meditate upon the Psalm itself. We have no need to divide so brief a song.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *His foundation is in the holy mountains.* The Psalm begins abruptly, the poet's heart was full, and it gained vent on a sudden.

"God's foundation stands forever

On the holy mountain towers;

Sion's gates Jehovah favours

More than Jacob's thousand bowers."

Sudden passion is evil, but bursts of holy joy are most precious. God has chosen to found his earthly temple upon the mountains; he might have selected other spots, but it was his pleasure to have his chosen abode upon Zion. His election made the mountains holy, they were by his determination ordained and set apart for the Lord's use. The foundation of the church, which is the mystical Jerusalem, is laid in the eternal, immutable, and invincible decrees of Jehovah. He wills that the

church shall be, he settles all arrangements for her calling, salvation, maintenance and perfection, and all his attributes, like the mountains round about Jerusalem, lend their strength for her support. Not on the sand of carnal policy, nor in the morass of human kingdoms, has the Lord founded his church, but on his own power and godhead, which are pledged for the establishment of his beloved church, which is to him the chief of all his works. What a theme for meditation is the founding of the church of God in the ancient covenant engagements of eternity; the abrupt character of this first verse indicates long consideration on the part of the writer, leading up to his bursting forth in wonder and adoration. Well might such a theme cause his heart to glow. Rome stands on her seven hills and has never lacked a poet's tongue to sing her glories, but more glorious far art thou, O Zion, among the eternal mountains of God: while pen can write or mouth can speak, thy praises shall never lie buried in inglorious silence.

Verse 2. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the *dwellings of Jacob*. The gates are put for the city itself. The love of God is greatest to his own elect nation, descended from his servant Jacob, yet the central seat of his worship is dearer still; no other supposable comparison could have so fully displayed the favour which Jehovah bore to Jerusalem,—he loves Jacob best and Zion better than the best. At this hour the mystical teaching of these words is plain, God delights in the prayers and praises of Christian families and individuals, but he has a special eye to the assemblies of the faithful, and he has a special delight in their devotions in their church capacity. The great festivals, when the crowds surrounded the temple gates, were fair in the Lord's eyes, and even such is the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. This should lead each separate believer to identify himself with the church of God; where the Lord reveals his love the most, there should each believer most delight to be found. Our own dwellings are very dear to us, but we must not prefer them to the assemblies of the saints; we must say of the church—

"Here my best friends, my kindred dwell:

Here God, my Saviour reigns."

Verse 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. This is true of Jerusalem. Her history, which is the story of the nation of which she is the capital, is full of glorious incidents, and her use and end as the abode of the true God, and of his worship, was preeminently glorious. Glorious things were taught in the streets, and seen in her temples. Glorious things were foretold of her, and she was the type of the most glorious things of all. This is yet more true of the church: she is founded in grace, but her pinnacles glow with glory. Men may glory in her without being braggarts, she has a lustre about her brow which none can rival. Whatever glorious things the saints may say of the church in their eulogies, they cannot exceed what prophets have foretold, what angels have sung, or what God himself has declared. Happy are the tongues which learn to occupy themselves with so excellent a subject, may they be found around our fire sides, in our market places, and in all the spots where

men most congregate. Never let thy praises cease, O thou bride of Christ, thou fairest among women, thou in whom the Lord himself hath placed his delight, calling thee by that pearl of names, Hephzibah,—“for my delight is in her.” Since the Lord has chosen thee, and deigns to dwell in thee, O thou city of beauty, none can rival thee, thou art the eye of the world, the pearl, the queen of all the cities of the universe; the true “eternal city”, the metropolitan, the mother of us all. The years to come shall unveil thy beauties to the astonished eyes of all peoples, and the day of thy splendour shall come to its sevenfold noon. Selah. With the prospect before him of a world converted, and the most implacable foes transformed into friends, it was meet that the Psalmist should pause. How could he sing the glories of new born Tyre and Ethiopia, received with open arms into union with Zion, until he had taken breath and prepared both voice and heart for so divine a song.

Verse 4. *I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me.* This shall be a glorious subject to speak of concerning Zion, that her old foes are new born and have become her friends, worshipping in the temple of her God. Rahab or Egypt which oppressed Israel shall become a sister nation, and Babylon in which the tribes endured their second great captivity, shall become a fellow worshipper; then shall there be mention made in familiar talk of the old enmities forgotten and the new friendships formed. Some consider that these are the words of God himself, and should be rendered “I will mention Rahab and Babylon as knowing me”: but we feel content with our common version, and attribute the words to the Psalmist himself, who anticipates the conversion of the two great rival nations and speaks of it with exultation. Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia. These also are to bow before the Lord. Philistia shall renounce her ancient hate, Tyre shall not be swallowed up by thoughts of her commerce, and distant Ethiopia shall not be too far off to receive the salvation of the Lord. This man was born there. The word *man* is inserted by the translators to the marring of the sense, which is clear enough when the superfluous word is dropped,—“Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this was born there”—i.e., this nation has been born into Zion, regenerated into the church of God. Of the new births of nations we will make mention, for it is at once a great blessing and a great wonder. It is a glorious thing indeed when whole nations are born unto God.

“Mark ye well Philistia's legions,
Lo, to seek the Lord they came;
And within the sacred regions
Tyre and Cush have found a home.”

Many understand the sense of these verses to be that all men are proud of their native country, and so also is the citizen of Zion, so that while of one it is said, “he was born in Egypt” and of another, “he came from Ethiopia”, it would be equally to the honour of others that they were home born sons of the city of God. The passage is not so clear that any one should become dogmatical as to its meaning, but we prefer the interpretation given above.

Verse 5. *And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her.* Not as nations only, but one by one, as individuals, the citizens of the New Jerusalem shall be counted, and their names publicly declared. Man by man will the Lord reckon them, for they are each one precious in his sight; the individual shall not be lost in the mass, but each one shall be of high account. What a patent of nobility is it, for a man to have it certified that he was born in Zion; the twice born are a royal priesthood, the true aristocracy, the imperial race of men. The original, by using the noblest word for man, intimates that many remarkable men will be born in the church, and indeed every man who is renewed in the image of Christ is an eminent personage, while there are some, who, even to the dim eyes of the world, shine forth with a lustre of character which cannot but be admitted to be unusual and admirable. The church has illustrious names of prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, missionaries and the like, which bear comparison with the grandest names honoured by the world, nay, in many respects far excel them. Zion has no reason to be ashamed of her sons, nor her sons of her. "Wisdom is justified of her children." And the highest himself shall establish her—the only establishment worth having. When the numbers of the faithful are increased by the new birth, the Lord proves himself to be the builder of the church. The Lord alone deserves to wear the title of Defender of the Faith; he is the sole and sufficient Patron and Protector of the true church. There is no fear for the Lord's heritage, his own arm is sufficient to maintain his rights. The Highest is higher than all those who are against us, and the good old cause shall triumph over all.

Verse 6. *The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.* At the great census which the Lord himself shall take, he will number the nations without exception and make an exact registry of them, whether they were by their natural descent Babylonians or Tyrians, or other far off heathen. May it be our happy lot to be numbered with the Lord's chosen both in life and death, in the church roll below, and in the church roll above. Jehovah's census of his chosen will differ much from ours; he will count many whom we should have disowned, and he will leave out many whom we should have reckoned. His registration is infallible. Let us pray then for that adoption and regeneration which will secure us a place among the heaven born. It was thought to be a great honour to have one's name written in the golden book of the Republic of Venice, kings and princes paid dearly for the honour, but the book of life confers far rarer dignity upon all whose names are recorded therein.

Verse 7. In vision the Psalmist sees the citizens of Zion rejoicing at some sacred festival, and marching in triumphant procession with vocal and instrumental music:—As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there. Where God is there must be joy, and where the church is increased by numerous conversions the joy becomes exuberant and finds out ways of displaying itself. Singers and dancers, Psalmists and pipers, united their efforts and made a joyful procession to the temple, inspired not by Bacchus, or by the Castalian fount, but by draughts from the sacred

source of all good, of which they each one sing All my springs are in thee. Did the poet mean that henceforth he would find all his joys in Zion, or that to the Lord he would look for all inspiration, comfort, strength, joy, life and everything. The last is the truest doctrine. Churches have not such all sufficiency within them that we can afford to look to them for all, but the Lord who founded the church is the eternal source of all our supplies, and looking to him we shall never flag or fail. How truly does all our experience lead us to look to the Lord by faith, and say "all my fresh springs are in thee." The springs of my faith and all my graces; the springs of my life and all my pleasures; the springs of my activity and all its right doings; the springs of my hope, and all its heavenly anticipations, all lie in thee, my Lord. Without thy Spirit I should be as a dry well, a mocking cistern, destitute of power to bless myself or others. O Lord, I am assured that I belong to the regenerate whose life is in thee, for I feel that I cannot live without thee; therefore, with all thy joyful people will I sing thy praises.

"With joy shall sing the choral train,
The minstrels breathe the answering strain:
`O Zion, Zion fair, I see
The fountains of my bliss in thee."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

TITLE. —*A Psalm or Song for the Sons of Korah.* The title prefixed is "A Psalm to be sung by the sons of Korah", i.e. of fallen man. Korah signifies the state in which trees are during winter, when stript of their verdure and fruit. In the same sense it is used for the bald head, when age or sickness has deprived it of its glory and left it without hair. This is a lively description of fallen man. He has lost his pristine beauty and fruitfulness. When he left God and turned to his own ways, he became like the trees of the field in winter, from which the genial warmth of the sun is withdrawn, or like the head, which by the abating of the natural heat and rigour is left naked and bald. But being brought to a light sense of this, and finding himself stript of all the glory which the first Adam had in paradise, he has been led to seek the restoration of his nature, and has obtained of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, a much better state than he had lost. Every such person is entitled to sing this sacred hymn, and he is called upon to do it. The name of the person whom he is to celebrate is not mentioned at first, but is soon discovered by the character given of him.—*William Romaine.*

Whole Psalm —Bishop Bruno entitles this Psalm, "The voice of prophecy concerning the heavenly Jerusalem", that is, the Church of Christ.

Verse 1. —*His foundation is in the holy mountains.* The foundation that God has given his city is in "the holy mountains." What are these holy mountains? What can they be but the eternal purpose of Jehovah—the purpose out of which the being of the Church and the whole dispensation of Divine love have sprung? What but those attributes of mercy, justice, holiness, and sovereignty, from the

ineffable embrace and holy cooperation of which it comes to pass that his chosen people are redeemed? What but the promise of life that was given in Christ to the elect before the world began? What but the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things and sure" from which grace and salvation proceed? What but these things, and Christ himself, the Rock of Ages, on which rock we know that the Church is so firmly founded, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her? Yes, these are the holy mountains, whereon the city of God is built, and in which its deep and sure foundations are laid. The sure decree, the divine perfections, the promise of him that cannot lie, the oath and covenant of God, and the incarnate Son himself, are the holy mountains, the perpetual hills, whose summits are gloriously crowned by the city of the Great King. There the city sits securely, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.—*Andrew Gray*.

Verse 1. Mountains. The situation of Jerusalem is in several respects singular amongst the cities of Palestine. Its elevation is remarkable, occasioned, not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judaea, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest table lands of the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet; and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side, the ascent is perpetual; and, to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must always have presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may add, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of the Jordan or of the coast, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness. In this respect it concentrated in itself the character of the whole country of which it was to be the capital—the "mountain throne", the "mountain sanctuary", of God. "The `mount' of God is as the `mount' of Bashan; an high mount as the mount of Bashan. Why leap ye so, ye high `mountains'? this is the `mountain' which God desireth to dwell in" ...It was emphatically the lair of the lion of Judah, of "Ariel", the Lion of God. "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem is his `leafy covert', and his `rocky den' in Zion...Thou art more glorious and excellent than the `mountains of the robbers'". And this wild and fastness like character of Jerusalem was concentrated yet again in the fortress, the "stronghold" of Zion. That point, the highest in the city, the height which most readily catches the eye from every quarter, is emphatically the "hill fort", the "rocky hold" of Jerusalem—the refuge where first the Jebusite, and then the Lion of God, stood at bay against the hunters.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*.

Verses 1-2.—If we suppose the Psalm to have been composed in the days of Hezekiah, it will appear quite intelligible that the Psalmist should break out so suddenly at the beginning with praise of the *security* of Zion: he merely lends his mouth in this case to the full heart of the people; *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, is seen in its true light, for this preference for Zion was at that time *verified*—its gates remained closed upon the enemies, while all

the rest of the country was subject to their sway.—*E.W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2. *The Lord loveth the gates*, etc. The gates of a walled city give access to it and power over it, and are therefore naturally here put for the whole. The Hebrew participle (*loving*) implies constant and habitual attachment.—*J.A. Alexander.*

Verse 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion.* Because of the going out and coming in of the people of God. Thus indeed the disposition of lovers is shown, that they are filled with a remarkable affection of love towards those places through which those whom they love frequently pass, as doors and gates, and those ways which they daily traverse. What other reason could God have for loving the gates of Zion?—*Musculus.*

Verse 2. *The gates of Zion* are the doctrines of the Gospel, *the tabernacles of Jacob* are the teachings of the law, the law was accomplished in the gospel; therefore it is said that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."—"Plain, Commentary", 1859.

Verse 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more*, etc. No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir, his saints' prayers in concert together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels make but one concert.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all*, etc. It is here assumed that the Lord loves the dwellings of Jacob—he loves those that are true Israelites. These are succeeded by the name *Christian*, for the Christian Church is now become the true Israel of God. He loves his saints on account of that image of himself which they bear; he loves them on account of those graces which are infused into them when they are renewed by the Spirit; he loves them on account of the relation they stand in to him as his people, and as his church, who are qualified for the duties of the relation by that love of their Father, that reliance upon his care, that delight in his person, that enjoyment in his service, which belongs to dutiful and affectionate children. He loves them because they imitate his perfections in some humble measure—because they receive the word of his mouth—because they are ready to obey every call of his providence, setting themselves in the paths of his testimony wherever he may direct—because they yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their bodies as instruments of righteousness, no longer walking after the deeds of the flesh, but after the will of God. He takes a delight in them; the Lord delighteth in the righteous; he knoweth their way; he loves, approves, and confirms them. The most common occupations of life—the honest industry of the servants of God, is looked upon by him with approbation. By these they show forth their Father, and the praises of him who called them from darkness to light. The most

ordinary duties of our calling become sacrifices to God, and religious duties, when performed in the Spirit, and directed to the great end of glorifying God. He looks with peculiar complacency on the dwellings of his people on account of those domestic devotional acknowledgments of his majesty which are there maintained, when the head walks before his family as a priest to offer praise and thanksgiving; this attracts peculiar approbation and delight. He loves to see his people training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and their children walking after them in the paths of that obedience which he has enjoined. He delights to see the course of purity which runs in Christian families. He loves to see the progress which the younger parts of religious families make in piety, while they grow in grace, and in favour with God and man. He looks down with peculiar delight on such circles as these: there he deigns his presence, and bestows peculiar blessings. However obscure the dwellings of Jacob may be, to him they are open and manifest at all times; and whether in cottages or in palaces, his eye rests there with complacency; and he says of such places, "Here will I dwell forever and ever." Prayer and devotion sanctify every family, and diffuse a spirit of piety through all the avocations of life, so that we need not retire from the world, but are rather called to show forth the virtues of the Christian life in it. But it is said, that, although "he loves the dwellings of Jacob", yet "*he loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*"—that nothing in the dwellings of Jacob so much attracts his attention as the people of God connected together in a spiritual capacity.

1. In the first place, the Divine Being regards with peculiar complacency the worship of his saints on its own account.
2. On account of that union of mind and consent of heart, evinced in the assembling of God's people together, and constituting themselves into a church.
3. Because of the testimony which the church bears toward the truth.
4. Upon account of that deference to his authority, which is evinced by maintaining and keeping up the practice of those institutes which rest entirely on that authority.
5. By making the assembly of the saints the grand means of conversion.
6. That peculiar presence of God is generally vouchsafed to his saints, and made manifest to them, although it be hidden from the world, which induces the conviction that God is present of a truth.
7. The Divine Being shows his preference of the gates of Zion to the dwellings of Jacob, by continually maintaining in operation those gifts which are for the edification of the saints, and without which the union of the saints would be with difficulty maintained.
8. The Divine Being shows his preference to Zion by that marvellous protection which is afforded to the interests of the church of God: whereby, though weak, and frequently reduced to a handful of disciples, yet they have been protected, and their society on earth continued.—*Robert Hall*.

Verse 2. Some absent themselves from public worship, under pretence that they can serve the Lord

at home as well in private. How many are apt to say, they see not but their time may be as well spent at home, in praying, reading some good book, or discoursing on some profitable subject, as in the use of ordinances in public assemblies! They see not but private prayer may be as good to them as public, or private reading and opening the Scripture as profitable as public preaching; they say of their private duties, as Naaman of the waters of Damascus, 2Ki 5:12: May I not serve the Lord as acceptably, with as much advantage, in private exercises of religion? May I not wash in these and be clean? They see not the great blessings God has annexed to public worship more than to private. Oh, but if it be thus, if one be as good as the other, what means the Lord to prefer one before the other? To what purpose did the Lord choose the gates of Zion, to place his name there, if he might have been worshipped as well in the dwellings of Jacob? How do men of this conceit run counter to the Lord? He prefers the gates of Zion, not only before one or some, but before all the dwellings of Jacob; and they prefer one such dwelling before the gates of Zion.—*David Clarkson*.

Verse 3. *Glorious things are spoken* of the people of God. Take the church for a visible congregation, a mixed congregation; glorious things are spoken of that. It is the house of God. Take it as visible, 'the vessels of honour and dishonour', 2Ti 2:20, and the field, the 'tares and the wheat', Mt 13:1 etc., it is God's field. Though we take the church as visible, it hath a glorious name for the good that is in it, especially for the wheat. But take the church of God for the company of his children that are gathered by the means of grace, dwelling in the visible church, enjoying the ordinances: so they are the house and temple of Christ, 'the temple of the Holy Ghost, the body of Christ, the spouse of Christ.' They are God's delight, they are spiritual kings and priests, etc. The most glorious things that can be, all other excellencies in the world are but titular things, mere shadows of things. There is some little reality in earthly things, but it is nothing in comparison, it is scarce worth the name of reality, but Solomon calls them "vanity of vanities." In comparison of the excellencies of the church all is nothing. I might be large in these particulars. It is enough to give you the generals of the delights and excellencies of God's house, "the beauty of the Lord."—*Richard Sibbes*.

Verse 3. *The glories of the wilderness are in thee.* The Schechinah, which appeared upon Sinai, and marshalled the army of the Israelites upon their journey through the wilderness, has now fixed its residence in thee, O city of God. Compare Ps 68:17.—*Samuel Horsley*

Verse 4. —*I will make mention*, etc. As if he had said, I do not deny the due praises which belong to other places and countries, but rather am wont to make honourable mention of them among my acquaintance; and to allow that *this man*, that is, some notable person, though comparatively of no great value, was born in them.—*Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 4. *Rahab*, a poetical name of *Egypt*. The same word signifies "fierceness, insolence, pride"; if Hebrew when applied to Egypt, it would indicate the national character of the inhabitants.—*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*.

Verse 4.—It should comfort the church that God is able to make her chiefest enemies to become converts, and that he hath done it sundry times, and will yet do it more; and that he can take order with those enemies which shall not be converted, as he did with *Rahab* and *Babylon*; for, *I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me*, signifieth a mention making of them; viz., to the edification of the church's children, both concerning what God had done in those nations in justice; and what he would do to them in mercy, or unto other enemies like unto them.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 4. *Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia.* This is the glory of the Church, that into her the fulness of the nations shall enter,—the proud from Egypt, who for her haughtiness is called Rahab,—the worldly from Babylon, the city of confusion,—the wrathful from Philistia, so long the enemies of Israel,—the covetous from Tyre, the rich city of the traders,—and the slaves of ignorance from Cush, and from the land of Ham,—all these shall learn the love of Christ and confess his truth, and shall enter into that all glorious city, and be admitted and acknowledged as citizens of the celestial Sion.—"*Plain Commentary*".

Verse 4.—By this testimony of the nations here mentioned, we may understand the testimony of the Gentile Christians in general, though, perhaps, a special reference is had to that extraordinary scene which took place at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in his own tongue, wherein we were born?" Ac 2:5-8. The reader will find that there is a remarkable agreement between the nations specified in the book of the Acts, and the nations pointed out in the Psalm before us. Rahab, that is, Egypt, is first mentioned; and in the Acts we find enumerated, "Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene"; next Babylon is in the record; and the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, were inhabitants of what once was the Babylonian empire: Philistia is also mentioned; and "dwellers in Judea" are spoken of in the Acts—"dwellers in Judea" speaking a different language from what was common at Jerusalem. Who could these be, so probably, as the inhabitants of the ancient Philistia, which was in the precincts of the allotment of Judah? Here, too, perhaps, on account of its port of Joppa, was a grand resort of "Cretes and Arabians", and "strangers of Rome." The Grecian settlements of Asia Minor are the only ones specified in the Acts of the Apostles, which we have not noticed in the Psalm—"Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia": but what could so probably indicate these countries, and all who spoke the dialects of the Grecian tongue, as the great mart of Tyre, in frequenting which, the Jews would have the most frequent opportunity of intercourse with these nations?—*John Fry*.

Verse 4. *Born in her.* The Missionary Society set forth in the Prophets, by our Lord and by his apostles, is, the Church; and so, whereas our natural state, after Adam's fall, was alienation from God, and disunion among ourselves, would He restore "glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men", by binding us up in one holy fellowship, and making the continuance of his blessings dependent upon that unity, which he imparted and preserves. To adduce the whole proof for this, would be to go through the whole Old Testament; for the Old Testament is direct prophecy and type, is one large prophecy of the Redeemer and his Kingdom or Church. No sooner had disunion multiplied with the multiplying of men, but in the second generation from Adam, he formed union through a Church, and "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Ge 4:26), *i.e.*, they began to unite in worshipping the Lord, and amid the growing corruption, religion was no longer entrusted to the insulated care of single families, but concentrated in a church. And when, after the flood, one righteous man was called out of the fast corrupting world, unity was preserved, in that one only was called, but in that one a church was founded; for this was the reason assigned by God himself: "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord", (Ge 18:18-19). "God called Abraham *alone*, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isa 51:2), and formed the Jewish Church out of him, that however largely it might spread, it might be bound in one by its origin of one; and he gave it also outward marks and signs between him and it, which by severing it from others, might keep it one in itself. The temporal people had their union through a temporal birth of one, and outward signs; the Christian Church has its unity by a spiritual birth, and inward graces, through the power deposited in her to give spiritual birth, so that through one mother, we are all born of one Father, God, and amongst ourselves are brethren, by being members of One, our ever blessed Lord. The unity of the Christian Church and her office of gathering all nations unto the Lord, are set forth, in many ways, in prophecy. Thus, in our Psalm, Zion is set forth as the special object of God's love, as having (in language which anticipates the Gospel) been "founded" by him "on the holy mountains", as the "city of God", whereof "glorious things are spoken." And what are these? That she should be the spiritual birthplace of all nations. It is not merely said, as in other places, that they should "come to her", should "flow into her", but that they should be "born in her." "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man (*i.e.* all, one by one) was born in her; "and whence? all the nations of the earth, Rahab or Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Ethiopia, Philistia, the most learned, the most powerful, the wealthiest, the furthest, and her nearest, oldest and bitterest enemy Philistia, all, being already born after the flesh, as Egyptians, Babylonians, Ethiopians, Tyrians, Philistines, should be "born in her", and by being "born there", should become children of God, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, written by God in the roll of his book. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there"; he shall account them as his, being reborn in his Church. In like manner, with regard to every

prophecy, whereat men's hearts beat, as an encouragement to Missionary labours. Throughout, it is the Lord and Saviour of the Church, or the Church itself, filled with his Spirit, and restored and enlarged, and widening herself by his favour, and gathering his people into herself, his fold.—*E.B. Pusey, in a Sermon entitled, "The Church the Converter of the Heathen."* 1838.

Verses 4-6. It is made the honour and dignity of Sion, that is, of the true Church of God, to have such and such born in it: "*this and that man was born in her.*" There are two things signified in this expression, as branches of their honour; the one is the *quality* of the persons; and the other is the *number* of them. For the *quality* of them, *this*; for the number of them, *this and that*. To have both of these born in Sion, persons of *note and eminency*, and a *multitude and plurality* of such persons; this is a part of that dignity and renown which belongs unto it. . . . And so for the noun, *man*; the Hebrew word *vya* which is here used for a man, except qualified by some other word as joined with it, signifies a man of *worth*, not a common or ordinary person. The Church brings forth such as these, *Mvh yvna*, men of renown, famous and eminent men, and that in all kinds of perfections, whether natural, or civil, or spiritual; men of parts, or men of power, or men of piety. There are those in all these excellencies which have been and still are born in her.

First, take it for *natural* or *acquired* abilities; men of parts, and knowledge, and wisdom, and improved understandings; the church is not without these: *this man, i.e., this learned man, or this wise man* was born in Sion. All are not idiots who are Christians; no, but there are some of very rare and admirable accomplishments in all kinds and pieces of learning and secular knowledge, which are graciously qualified. There's Paul with his parchments, and Peter with his fisher's net.

So also secondly, take it for civil or secular qualifications; men of dignity, and power, and estate: "*this man*", *i.e., this honourable man*, *Mynp awvn*, eminent in countenance, as he is called, Isa 3:2, *he* is likewise born in Sion; the mighty man, and the man of war. The Syriac interpreter was so far sensible of this, as that he expresses it in the very text; and therefore instead of saying, "*This man was born there*", he says, "*A potent man was born there, and he has established it; whereby (as I conceive),* he takes in the word *highest*, which follows afterwards in the verse, and refers it here to this place...And again, the Chaldee paraphrast in the text, "*This King was born there*", understanding thereby Solomon, as most conceive and apprehend it.

Thirdly, take it for *spirituals*, and for these accomplishments especially; *This man, i.e., this godly man*; this is that which is most proper and essential to Sion, and to the being born in it; yea, it is that which *makes Sion* itself, in the sense we now take it. It is the highest perfection of it, and the greatest commendation to it of any thing else. This is the great honour of the church, that it forms men to such qualities and dispositions as those are, which no other place does beside...As for other places, they may perhaps now and then reach to some *other principles*, and those likewise very glorious in the eyes of the *world*—morality, and civility, and ingenuity, and smoothness of behaviour. The school of

nature and common reason may sometimes come up to these, and that in a very great measure; yea, but now go a little higher, to brokenness of heart, to self denial, to love of enemies, to closing with Christ, the frame and spirit of the gospel; this is to be found nowhere but only *in Sion*. And here it is: "*This man was born there.*"

Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born *there*. Here's the excellency of the ordinances, and that power and energy which is stirring in the Church of Christ; that it is able to work such a miraculous alteration as *this*; to bring men from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from a state of sin and corruption and unregeneracy, to a state of grace and holiness and regeneration; yea, from the lowest degree of the one to the highest degree of the other. That *Philistia* should turn into *Palestina*, *Tyre* into *Jerusalem*, *Ethiopia* into *Judea*; here's the wonder of all; the reconciling of these two opposite terms thus both together. That "princes should come out of *Egypt*", and that *Ethiopia* should stretch out her hands to God, as it is in Ps 68:31; that the blackamoor should change his skin, and that the leopard should change his spots; and that this Ethiopian should become this Christian; "that he which was born *there*, should be born *here*." *Thomas Horton, in "Zion's Birth Register unfolded in a Sermon to the native citizens of London."* 1656.

Verses 4-6. Foreign nations are here described not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons. Even the worst enemies of their race, the tyrants and oppressors of the Jews, Egypt and Babylon, are threatened with no curse, no shout of joy is raised at the prospect of their overthrow, but the privileges of citizenship are extended to them, and they are welcomed as brothers. Nay more, God himself receives each one as a child newly born into his family, acknowledges each as his son, and enrols him with his own hand on the sacred register of his children. It is the mode of anticipating a future union and brotherhood of all the nations of the earth, not by conquest, but by incorporation into one state, and by a birthright so acquired, which is so remarkable. In some of the prophets, more especially in Isaiah, we observe the same liberal, conciliatory, comprehensive language towards foreign states, as Tyre and Ethiopia, and still more strikingly toward Egypt and Assyria (Isa 19:22-25). But the Psalm stands alone amongst the writings of the Old Testament, in representing this union of nations as a new birth unto the city of God ...It is the first announcement of that great amity of nations, or rather of that universal common citizenship of which heathen philosophers dreamt, which was "in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world", which had become a common place of Stoic philosophy, which Judaism tried finally to realize by the admission of proselytes, through baptism, into the Jewish community; which Rome accomplished, so far as the external semblance went, first by subduing the nations, and then by admitting them to the rights of Roman citizenship. But the true fulfilment of this hope is to be found only in that kingdom which Christ has set up. He has gathered into his commonwealth all the

kingdoms of the earth. He has made men one, members of the same family, by teaching them to feel that they are all children of the same Father. He has made it evident that the hope of the Jewish singer is no false hope; that there is a Father in heaven who cares for all, whatever name they bear. Thus the Psalm has received a better and higher fulfilment than that which lies on the surface of its words. It was fulfilled in Christ.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 4-7. The main thought is that contained in Ps 87:4-7, the glorifying of Sion by the reception of the heathen into the number of its citizens; and a well defined form and arrangement of this thought forms the proper kernel of the Ps 87:1-7, "Sion, the *birth place* of the nations", which occurs in every one of the three verses (Ps 87:4-6), which are bounded by a *Selah* behind and before.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5. *This man.* The word rendered "*Man*" is generally used for a person of eminence; and the clause "this and that man", is simply, "a Man and a Man", which some think is used as a peculiar superlative, and means, *the most eminent of men*, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and they suppose that He, in his divine nature, is *the Highest* who "*shall establish the church.*" No doubt he is the glory of the church, and of his people Israel; but his crucifixion was the deepest disgrace imaginable to Jerusalem itself.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 5. *This man.* It is well to observe that the word for *man*, used here, is not *Mda adam*, the common name for man, but *vya ish*, which is usually employed when a name is introduced to be designated with distinction and honour. There are in Hebrew, in fact, three words to designate man, with varied signification—*Mda adam*, the common name; *vya ish*, the name of excellency and honour; and *vwna enosh*, man in his weak and inferior character, as liable to misfortune, misery, and death. The illustrative discrimination with which these words are respectively employed, gives to many passages of the Hebrew Scriptures a force and significance which cannot be preserved in translation into a language which has but one word to represent all these meanings—or indeed has no word for man but the one answering to *Adam*, unless indeed our "male", in a sense of dignity and strength, answers in some measure to *ish*.—*John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 6.—The Lord will *count (rpoy) record it in a book, when he writes up the people (Myme bwtkb) registers the several nations* of the earth; that "*this man, was born in*" Sion. The Psalmist here describes the peculiar regard of God to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and figuratively represents him, as keeping a register of all the nations of the earth, and marking, as it were, in that register every one that was a citizen of *Jerusalem*, as thereby entitled to his distinguishing favour and protection.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 6. —*This man was born there.* When events shall be traced to their principles at the last day, many a scene will come forth into prominence, which now is of little regard. Humble churches will then prove to have been the birthplace, and stately palaces the graves of many an immortal soul,

while every saved soul will ascribe its springs of glory to its Redeemer, through the instrumentality of that church, which he has ordained.—*Edward Garrard Marsh*.

Verse 6.—*Selah*. The Hebrew text addeth "*Selah*", which St. Jerome translates *semper* (always). For the Church, as a bride glorious in her husband, shall evermore be preached of; glorious things shall be spoken of her, and in her shall be continually sung the ineffable glory of the everlasting grace of God in Christ our Lord. And so the Jews for the most part interpret the word "*Selah*" by "*everlasting*". This is evident in their epitaphs, even as the Jewish epitaph is in Hebrew at Basle—"His soul continues in Paradise, Amen, Amen, Amen, forever and ever."—*Urbanus Regius (Le Roi) (1541) in "The Solace of Sion."*

Verse 7. *The singers; the players on instruments*. Song and music were prominent features of Divine worship in David's time. This is evident from the large number of two hundred and eighty-eight Levites who were expressly appointed for singing and the performance of music. Not less than two hundred and fifty-five singing men and singing women returned from the exile...The chief instruments used by the Levites were, according to the records of the Books of Chronicles, cymbals, harps, and lutes: according to Ps 5:1-12 (title), we should add the flute, which is frequently noticed on Egyptian monuments.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*.

Verse 7. (*First clause*). *For all its inhabitants are expert musicians; lit. Sing like flute players*. The Hebrews seem to have surpassed all nations in the skill of poetry and music; and every citizen could sing and dance. This preeminence the Psalmist seems to hint at.—*Alexander Geddes*.

Verse 7. *All my springs are in thee*. The original word *ynyem*, which we render "*springs*", is used in a figurative sense, to denote *any one's posterity*. Thus Pr 5:16, "Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad"; *i.e.*, thy posterity be exceeding numerous. And thus in the place before us: the inhabitants of Jerusalem should triumph and sing, "*All my springs*", or fountains, all my friends, my family, my children, are in thee, are thy citizens, enjoy the glorious privileges thou art favoured with, are all inserted in God's register, and entitled to his protection and favour. Thus there is a harmony and connection between all the parts of this ode, which I think is very intelligible and poetical.—*Samuel Chandler*.

Verse 7. *All my springs are in thee*. Whatever conduit pipe be used, Christ is the fountain and foundation of every drop of comfort; Christ is the God of all true consolation. It is not in the power of all the angels of heaven to give any soul one drop of comfort, nor can all on earth give you one drop of comfort. They can speak the words of comfort, but they cannot cause the soul to receive comfort. God comforts by them, 2Co 7:6. Titus was but an instrument. Comforting is called frequently in Scripture the speaking to the heart, Ho 2:14. Who is able to speak to the heart but he who is the Lord and commander of the heart? God hath put all the oil of spiritual joy into the hands of Christ, Isa 61:3, and none but he can give it out. He that wants comfort must go to Christ, he that hath received any

true comfort must ascribe it to Christ. "All my springs", saith the Church, "are in thee."—*Ralph Robinson*.

Verse 7. The silver springs of grace, and the golden springs of glory are in him.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 7. Springs. The meaning of this verse is obscure, partly from its abrupt brevity, and partly from the ambiguity of one word. The word "*springs*" is, beyond all controversy, to be here taken metaphorically; but interpreters are not agreed as to the explanation of the metaphor. Some understand it as denoting *hopes*, some *affections*, and others *thoughts*. Did the idiom of the language admit, I would willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who translate it *melodies* or *songs*. But as this might be considered unsupported by the usage of the Hebrew term, I am rather inclined to adopt, as most suitable to the subject in hand, the opinion that *lookings* is the proper translation, the root of the word signifying *an eye*. It is as if the Psalmist had said, I will always be earnestly looking, as it were, with fixed eyes upon thee.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 7. My springs.

Whether songs or melodies

In Thee are all my well springs.

This passage is given obscurely in most of the versions; it is here rendered strictly, and, as the author hopes, perspicuously. As the Greeks had their Pierian springs, their fountains of Aganippe dedicated to the Muses, Jerusalem had, in like manner, her sacred springs, her fountains of inspiration, in a much higher degree. It is to these the holy bard alludes in the passage before us, as Milton does in the following, who has perhaps copied from the present in his address to the "Heavenly Muse":

"Or if Zion's hill

Delight thee more, or *Silva's fount that flowed*

Hard by the oracle of God, I thence

Invoke thine aid to my adventurous song."

—*John Mason Good*.

Verse 7. —*All my springs.* Fitley may we here quote the delightful hymn of Robert Robinson which has puzzled so many, but which has in it a fine classical allusion to Hippocrene and Mount Parnassus.

"Come, thou fount of every blessing,

Tune my heart to sing Thy grace,

Streams of mercy, never ceasing,

Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,

Sung by flaming tongues above:

Praise the mount—oh fix me on it,

Mount of God's unchanging love."—*C.H.S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verses 2-3.

1. The foundation of Zion.

- (a) It is but one: "*foundation.*"
- (b) It is the Lord's: "*his.*"
- (c) It is in conformity with holiness: "*holy mountains.*"
- (d) It consists of eternal purposes.
- (e) It is built up on immutable principles.
- (f) It is situated in a glorious position.

2. The favour enjoyed by Zion.

- (a) God "loves the dwellings of Jacob." He led, fed, guarded, lighted, visited them.
- (b) He loves Zion "better"; and gives all those blessings in a richer form.
- (c) There are more to love.
- (d) Their occupations are more spiritual.
- (e) Their songs and worship are more enthusiastic.
- (f) Their testimony is more powerful.
- (g) Their knowledge of truth is more clear.
- (h) Their fellowship is on a scale more heavenly. Let us be in the Church, and love her.

3. The fame of Zion. "Glorious things are spoken",

- (a) *of* her in history;
- (b) *in* her by ministry;
- (c) *for* her by Jesus;
- (d) *about* her in prophecy.

Here is a fruitful theme.

Verse 3. The idea of the text presents the Church as "the city of God": let us touch upon some of the "glorious things" that are spoken of it.

1. There are glorious things with respect to the *erection* of the city.

(a) There is the plan of its erection. There was never a plan so faultless, so complete, so wonderful for its beauty and grandeur. The gates, the walls, the buildings, the streets, the monuments, the fountains, the gardens, unite to proclaim it a master piece of skill. The Architect was he who built the skies.

(b) There is the *site* where the city is erected. See Ps 87:1.

(c) There is the *date* of the city's erection. A halo and a glory attach, in a case like this, to great antiquity. Now it is long since the city was built. It was standing in the days of Paul "Ye are come unto

the city of the living God." Heb 12:22. David was well acquainted with it. Ps 46:1-11.

(d) It was standing before the flood. Noah, Enoch, Abel, dwelt in it. It is almost as old as the creation.

2. There are glorious things to tell of the *defences* of the city. It has been besieged ever since it was a city at all, and it is not taken to this hour. "We have a strong city", etc.

3. There are glorious things in connection with the *stores* and *supplies* on which the city depends;

(a) their excellence;

(b) their abundance;

(c) their source.

4. There are glorious things respecting the *King* of the city; his name, person, character, etc.

5. There are glorious things in connection with the *citizens* of the day.—*Andrew Gray*, 1805-1861.

Verse 3.

1. Observe, that a city is not like a flower, a tree, or a plant—something that grows out of the earth, and is nourished from the earth, and dependent wholly on its juices. It is an artificial thing, constructed by wisdom and raised by power, as it was designed by genius and forethought.

2. A city upon earth is surrounded generally by walls.

3. Jerusalem (the most celebrated of cities, from which this figure is obviously drawn) was built upon the brow of a hill, an extremely conspicuous and beautiful object.

4. In a city there are various buildings, and structures of various shapes, materials and value: illustrate by the different denominations, & c.

5. A city has municipal laws.

6. It has also trade, traffic, & c.

7. The figure, as applied to the Church of Christ, involves the idea of safety or security, honour, & c.

8. There is also the idea of fewness.—*John Cumming*, 1843.

Verse 3. The things "spoken" of the city of God.

1. It shall be the permanent and the peculiar residence of God.

2. It shall be the scene of delightful privileges and blessings.

3. It shall be invested with absolute and inviolable security.

4. It shall possess renown and empire throughout the whole world.

5. Its institutions and existence shall be perfected in the celestial state.—*James Parsons*, 1839.

Verse 4. (*last clause*).

1. Behold what the "man" was: a native of "Philistia", a heathen, and an enemy to God.

2. Behold what happened to him: he "was born there," *i.e.* new born in Zion.

3. Behold what he became—he became by his new birth a freeman and burgess of Zion, & c.

Verses 4-5.

1. What is not the most honourable birth place—not Rahab nor Egypt, nor Babylon, nor any earthly

palace or kingdom.

2. What is? "Of Zion", & c.

(a) Because it is a nobler birth; a being born again of the Spirit of God.

(b) Because it is a nobler place; the residence of the Highest, and established for ever.

(c) Because it brings nobler rank and privileges.—*G.R.*

Verses 4-7.

1. Zion shall produce many good and great men.

2. Zion's interest shall be established by divine power.

3. Zion's sons shall be registered with honour.

4. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 4-7.

1. The excellence of the church is here stated.

2. Her enlargement is here promised.—*J. Scholefield, 1825.*

Verse 5. The renowned men of the church of God.

1. Great warriors, who have fought with temptation.

2. Great poets, whose lives were Psalms.

3. Great heroes, who have lived and died for Jesus.

4. Great kings, who have ruled themselves, & c. Apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, men renowned for virtues such as only grace can produce.

Verse 5. *This and that man.* The individuality of true religion.

1. Each soul sins for itself.

2. Rejects or accepts the Saviour for itself.

3. Must be judged, and

4. Saved or lost individually. The consequent need of personal piety; the temptations to neglect it; and the habits which promote it.

Verse 5. (*last clause*). The Established Church of God—her Head, her protection, her power. & c.

Verse 6.

1. "The Lord" will make the Census.

2. He will "count" whether a man be rightly there or no.

3. Every man truly born in Zion shall be admitted on the register.

Verse 6.

1. The time referred to. "When he writeth up", & c.; when all the true Israel is saved.

2. The account to be taken: "When he writeth up", & c., i.e. revises and reenters the names in the Lamb's Book of Life. Compares the called with the chosen.

3. The test to be applied.

(a) Their being in Zion, or having the means of grace.

(b) Their being born there.

4. The completion of their number: "The Lord shall count." An exact number of stones in a perfect building and of members in a perfect body. So in Christ's Church. All make one bride.

5. The notice taken of each one: "This man was born there." Men fell as a whole; they are saved individually. —G.R.

Verse 7.

1. In God our joy.

2. From God our supplies.

3. To God our praise.

Verse 7. (*last clause*).—All the springs within me, all the springs which flow for me, are in my God. There are "upper and nether springs", springs "shut up", "valley" springs (Ps 104:10), rock springs, & c.; but all these flow from the Lord.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH PSALM

In *"Sermons preached before the University of Oxford ...by John Eveleigh, D.D., 1815, "is "Sermon, twelve, in which is proposed a New Interpretation of the Eighty-Seventh Psalm."*

The Solace of Sion, and Joy of Jerusalem. Or consolation of God's Church in the latter age, redeemed by the preaching of the Gospel universally. Being a godly and learned exposition of the Eighty-Seventh Psalme of the Princelye Prophet David: Written in Letine by the reverend Doctor Urbanus Regius, Pastor of Christes Church at Zelle, in Saxonie 1536. Translated into English by R. Robinson, Citizen of London, 1587.

Psalm 88

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah. This sad complaint reads very little like a Song, nor can we conceive how it could be called by a name which denotes a song of praise or triumph; yet perhaps it was intentionally so called to show how faith "glories in tribulations also." Assuredly, if ever there was a song of sorrow and a Psalm of sadness, this is one. The sons of Korah, who had often united in chanting jubilant odes, are now bidden to take charge of this mournful dirge like hymn. Servants and singers must not be choosers. To the chief Musician. He must superintend the singers and see that they do their duty well, for holy sorrow ought to be expressed with quite as much care as

the most joyful praise; nothing should be slovenly in the Lord's house. It is more difficult to express sorrow fitly than it is to pour forth notes of gladness. Upon Mahalath Leannoth. This is translated by Alexander, "concerning afflictive sickness", and if this be correct, it indicates the mental malady which occasioned this plaintive song. Maschil. This term has occurred many times before, and the reader will remember that it indicates an instructive or didactic Psalm:—the sorrows of one saint are lessons to others; experimental teaching is exceedingly valuable. Of Heman the Ezrahite. This, probably, informs us as to its authorship; it was written by Heman, but which Heman it would not be easy to determine, though it will not be a very serious mistake if we suppose it to be the man alluded to in 1Ki 4:31, as the brother of Ethan, and one of the five sons of Zerah (1Ch 2:6), the son of Judah, and hence called "the Ezrahite": if this be the man, he was famous for his wisdom, and his being in Egypt during the time of Pharaoh's oppression may help to account for the deep bass of his song, and for the antique form of many of the expressions, which are more after the manner of Job than David. There was, however, a Heman in David's day who was one of the grand trio of chief musicians, "Heman, Asaph, and Ethan" (1Ch 15:19), and no one can prove that this was not the composer. The point is of no consequence; whoever wrote the Psalm most have been a man of deep experience, who had done business on the great waters of soul trouble.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. This Psalm is fragmentary, and the only division of any service to us would be that suggested by Albert Barnes, viz.—A description of the sick man's sufferings (Ps 88:1-9), and a prayer for mercy and deliverance (Ps 88:10-18). We shall, however, consider each verse separately, and so exhibit the better the incoherence of the author's grief. The reader had better first peruse the Psalm as a whole.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *O Lord God of my salvation.* This is a hopeful title by which to address the Lord, and it has about it the only ray of comfortable light which shines throughout the Psalm. The writer has salvation, he is sure of that, and God is the sole author of it. While a man can see God as his Saviour, it is not altogether midnight with him. While the living God can be spoken of as the life of our salvation, our hope will not quite expire. It is one of the characteristics of true faith that she turns to Jehovah, the saving God, when all other confidences have proved liars unto her. I have cried day and night before thee. His distress had not blown out the sparks of his prayer, but thickened them into a greater ardency, till they burned perpetually like a furnace at full blast. His prayer was personal—whoever had not prayed, he had done so; it was intensely earnest, so that it was correctly described as a cry, such as children utter to move the pity of their parents; and it was unceasing, neither the business of the day nor the weariness of the night had silenced it: surely such entreaties could not be in vain. Perhaps, if Heman's pain had not been incessant his supplications might have been intermittent; it is

a good thing that sickness will not let us rest if we spend our restlessness in prayer. Day and night are both suitable to prayer; it is no work of darkness, therefore let us go with Daniel and pray when men can see us, yet, since supplication needs no light, let us accompany Jacob and wrestle at Jabbok till the day breaketh. Evil is transformed to good when it drives us to prayer. One expression of the text is worthy of special note; "before thee" is a remarkable intimation that the Psalmist's cries had an aim and a direction towards the Lord, and were not the mere clamours of nature, but the groanings of a gracious heart towards Jehovah, the God of salvation. Of what use are arrows shot into the air? The archer's business is to look well at the mark he drives at. Prayers must be directed to heaven with earnest care. So thought Heman—his cries were all meant for the heart of his God. He had no eye to onlookers as Pharisees have, but all his prayers were before his God.

Verse 2. *Let my prayer come before thee.* Admit it to an audience; let it speak with thee. Though it be my prayer, and therefore very imperfect, yet deny it not thy gracious consideration. Incline thine ear unto my cry. It is not music save to the ear of mercy, yet be not vexed with its discord, though it be but a cry, for it is the most natural expression of my soul's anguish. When my heart speaks, let thine ear hear. There may be obstacles which impede the upward flight of our prayers—let us entreat the Lord to remove them; and as there may also be offences which prevent the Lord from giving favourable regard to our requests—let us implore him to put these out of the way. He who has prayed day and night cannot bear to lose all his labour. Only those who are indifferent in prayer will be indifferent about the issue of prayer.

Verse 3. *For my soul is full of troubles.* I am satiated and nauseated with them. Like a vessel full to the brim with vinegar, my heart is filled up with adversity till it can hold no more. He had his house full and his hands full of sorrow; but, worse than that, he had his heart full of it. Trouble in the soul is the soul of trouble. A little soul trouble is pitiful; what must it be to be sated with it? And how much worse still to have your prayers return empty when your soul remains full of grief. And my life draweth nigh unto the grave. He felt as if he must die, indeed he thought himself half dead already. All his life was going, his spiritual life declined, his mental life decayed, his bodily life flickered; he was nearer dead than alive. Some of us can enter into this experience, for many a time have we traversed this valley of death shade, aye and dwelt in it by the month together. Really to die and be with Christ will be a gala day's enjoyment compared with our misery when a worse than physical death has cast its dreadful shadow over us. Death would be welcomed as a relief by those whose depressed spirits make their existence a living death. Are good men ever permitted to suffer thus? Indeed they are; and some of them are even all their life time subject to bondage. O Lord, Be pleased to set free thy prisoners of hope! Let, none of thy mourners imagine that a strange thing has happened unto him, but rather rejoice as he sees the footprints of brethren who have trodden this desert before.

Verse 4. *I am counted with them that go down into the pit.* My weakness is so great that both by

myself and others I am considered as good as dead. If those about me have not ordered my coffin they have at least conversed about my sepulchre, discussed my estate, and reckoned their share of it. Many a man has been buried before he was dead, and the only mourning over him has been because he refused to fulfil the greedy expectations of his hypocritical relatives by going down to the pit at once. It has come to this with some afflicted believers, that their hungry heirs think they have lived too long. I am as a mat, that hath no strength. I have but the name to live; my constitution is broken up; I can scarce crawl about my sick room, my mind is even weaker than my body, and my faith weakest of all. The sons and daughters of sorrow will need but little explanation of these sentences, they are to such tried ones as household words.

Verse 5. *Free among the dead.* Unbound from all that links a man with life, familiar with death's door, a freeman of the city of the sepulchre, I seem no more one of earth's drudges, but begin to anticipate the rest of the tomb. It is a sad case when our only hope lies in the direction of death, our only liberty of spirit amid the congenial horrors of corruption. Like the slain that lie in the grave, whom you remember no *more*. He felt as if he were as utterly forgotten as those whose carcasses are left to rot on the battle field. As when a soldier, mortally wounded, bleeds unheeded amid the heaps of slain, and remains to his last expiring groan unpitied and unsuccoured, so did Heman sigh out his soul in loneliest sorrow, feeling as if even God himself had quite forgotten him. How low the spirits of good and brave men will sometimes sink. Under the influence of certain disorders everything will wear a sombre aspect, and the heart will dive into the profoundest deeps of misery. It is all very well for those who are in robust health and full of spirits to blame those whose lives are sicklied over with the pale cast of melancholy, but the evil is as real as a gaping wound, and all the more hard to bear because it lies so much in the region of the soul that to the inexperienced it appears to be a mere matter of fancy and diseased imagination. Reader, never ridicule the nervous and hypochondriacal, their pain is real; though much of the evil lies in the imagination, it is not imaginary. And they are cut off from thy hand. Poor Heman felt as if God himself had put him away, smitten him and laid him among the corpses of those executed by divine justice. He mourned that the hand of the Lord had gone out against him, and that he was divided from the great author of his life. This is the essence of wormwood. Man's blows are trifles, but God's smitings are terrible to a gracious heart. To feel utterly forsaken of the Lord and cast away as though hopelessly corrupt is the very climax of heart desolation.

Verse 6. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.* What a collection of forcible metaphors, each one expressive of the utmost grief. Heman compared his forlorn condition to an imprisonment in a subterranean dungeon, to confinement in the realms of the dead, and to a plunge into the abyss. None of the similes are strained. The mind can descend far lower than the body, for it there are bottomless pits. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more, but the

soul can bleed in ten thousand ways, and die over and over again each hour. It is grievous to the good man to see the Lord whom he loves laying him in the sepulchre of despondency; piling nightshade upon him, putting out all his candles, and heaping over him solid masses of sorrow; evil from so good a hand seems evil indeed, and yet if faith could but be allowed to speak she would remind the depressed spirit that it is better to fall into the hand of the Lord than into the hands of man, and moreover she would tell the despondent heart that God never placed a Joseph in a pit without drawing him up again to fill a throne; that he never caused a horror of great darkness to fall upon an Abraham without revealing his covenant to him; and never cast even a Jonah into the deeps without preparing the means to land him safely on dry land. Alas, when under deep depression the mind forgets all this, and is only conscious of its unutterable misery; the man sees the lion but not the honey in its carcass, he feels the thorns but he cannot smell the roses which adorn them. He who now feebly expounds these words knows within himself more than he would care or dare to tell of the abysses of inward anguish. He has sailed round the Cape of Storms, and has drifted along by the dreary headlands of despair. He has groaned out with one of old—"My bones are pierced in me in the night season; and my sinews take no rest. I go morning without the sun. Terrors are turned upon me, they pursue my soul as the wind." Those who know this bitterness by experience will sympathise, but from others it would be idle to expect pity, nor would their pity be worth the having if it could be obtained. It is an unspeakable consolation that our Lord Jesus knows this experience, right well, having, with the exception of the sin of it, felt it all and more than all in Gethsemane when he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

Verse 7. *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.* Dreadful plight this, the worst in which a man can be found. Wrath is heavy in itself; God's wrath is crushing beyond conception, and when that presses hard the soul is oppressed indeed. The wrath of God is the very hell of hell, and when it weighs upon the conscience a man feels a torment such as only that of damned spirits can exceed. Joy or peace, or even numbness of indifference, there can be none to one who is loaded with this most tremendous of burdens. And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves, or *all thy breakers*. He pictures God's wrath as breaking over him like those waves of the sea which swell, and rage, and dash with fury upon the shore. How could his frail barque hope to survive those cruel breakers, white like the hungry teeth of death. Seas of affliction seemed to rush in upon him with all the force of omnipotence; he felt himself to be oppressed and afflicted like Israel in Egypt, when they cried by reason of their afflictions. It appeared impossible for him to suffer more, he had exhausted the methods of adversity and endured *all* its waves. So have we imagined, and yet it is not really quite so bad. The worst case might be worse, there are alleviations to every woe; God has other and more terrible waves which, if he chose to let them forth, would sweep us into the infernal abyss, whence hope has long since been banished. Selah. There was need to rest. Above the breakers the swimmer lifts his head and looks

around him, breathing for a moment, until the next wave comes. Even lamentation must have its pauses. Nights are broken up into watches, and even so mourning has its intervals. Such sorrowful music is a great strain both on voices and instruments, and it is well to give the singers the relief of silence for a while.

Verse 8. *Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me.* If ever we need friends it is in the dreary hour of despondency and the weary time of bodily sickness; therefore does the sufferer complain because divine providence had removed his friends. Perhaps his disease was infectious or defiling, so that he was legally separated from his fellow men, perhaps their fears kept them away from his plague stricken house, or else his good name had become so injured that they naturally avoided him. Lost friends require but small excuse for turning their backs on the afflicted. The swallows offer no apology for leaving us to winter by ourselves. Yet it is a piercing pain which arises from the desertion of dear associates; it is a wound which festers and refuses to be healed. Thou hast made me an abomination unto them. They turned from him as though he had become loathsome and contaminating, and this because of something which the Lord had done to him; therefore, he brings his complaint to the prime mover in his trouble. He who is still flattered by the companions of his pleasure can little guess the wretchedness which will be his portion should he become poor, or slanderously accused, for then one by one the parasites of his prosperity will go their way and leave him to his fate, not without cutting remarks on their part to increase his misery. Men have not so much power to bless by friendship as to curse by treachery. Earth's poisons are more deadly than her medicines are healing. The mass of men who gather around a man and flatter him are like tame leopards; when they lick his hand it is well for him to remember that with equal gusto they would drink his blood. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man." I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. He was a prisoner in his room, and felt like a leper in the lazaretto, or a condemned criminal in his cell. His mind, too, was bound as with fetters of iron; he felt no liberty of hope, he could take no flights of joy. When God shuts friends out, and shuts us in to pine away alone, it is no wonder if we water our couch with tears.

Verse 9. *Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.* He wept his eyes out. He exhausted the lachrymal glands, he wore away the sight itself. Tears in showers are a blessing, and work our good; but in floods they become destructive and injurious. Lord, I have called daily upon thee. His tears wetted his prayers, but did not damp then fervour. He prayed still, though no answer came to dry his eyes. Nothing can make a true believer cease praying; it is a part of his nature, and pray he must. I have stretched out my hands unto thee. He used the appropriate posture of a suppliant, of his own accord; men need no posture maker, or master of the ceremonies, when they are eagerly pleading for mercy, nature suggests to them attitudes both natural and correct. As a little child stretches out its hands to its mother while it cries, so did this afflicted child of God. He prayed all over, his eyes wept,

his voice cried, his hands were outstretched, and his heart broke. This was prayer indeed.

Verse 10. *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* Wherefore then suffer me to die? While I live thou canst in me display the glories of thy grace, but when I have passed into the unknown land, how canst thou illustrate in me thy love? If I perish thou wilt lose a worshipper who both revered, and in his own experience illustrated, the wonders of thy character and acts. This is good pleading, and therefore he repeats it. Shall the dead arise and praise thee? He is thinking only of the present, and not of the last great day, and he urges that the Lord would have one the less to praise him among the sons of men. Shades take no part in the quires of the Sabbath, ghosts sing no joyous Psalms, sepulchres and vaults send forth no notes of thanksgiving. True the souls of departed saints render glory to God, but the dejected Psalmist's thoughts do not mount to heaven but survey the gloomy grave: he stays on this side of eternity, where in the grave he sees no wonders and hears no songs. Selah. At the mouth of the tomb he sits down to meditate, and then returns to his theme.

Verse 11. *Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?* Thy tender goodness—who shall testify concerning it in that cold abode where the worm and corruption hold their riot? The living may indite "meditations among the Tombs", but the dead know nothing, and therefore can declare nothing. Or thy faithfulness in destruction? If the Lord suffered his servant to die before the divine promise was fulfilled, it would be quite impossible for his faithfulness to be proclaimed. The poet is dealing with this life only, and looking at the matter from the point of view afforded by time and the present race of men; if a believer were deserted and permitted to die in despair, there could come no voice from his grave to inform mankind that the Lord had rectified his wrongs and relieved him of his trials, no songs would leap up from the cold sod to hymn the truth and goodness of the Lord; but as far as men are concerned, a voice which loved to magnify the grace of God would be silenced, and a loving witness for the Lord removed from the sphere of testimony.

Verse 12. *Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?* If not here permitted to prove their goodness of Jehovah, how could the singer do so in the land of darkness and death shade? Could his tongue, when turned into a clod, alarm the dull cold ear of death? Is not a living dog better than a dead lion, and a living believer of more value to the cause of God on earth than all the departed put together? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? What shall be told concerning thee in the regions of oblivion? Where memory and love are lost, and men are alike unknowing and unknown, forgetful and forgotten, what witness to the divine holiness can be borne? The whole argument amounts to this—if the believer dies unblessed, how will God's honour be preserved? Who will bear witness to his truth and righteousness?

Verse 13. *But unto thee have I cried, O LORD;* I have continued to pray for help to thee, O Jehovah, the living God, even though thou hast so long delayed to answer. A true born child of God may be known by his continuing to cry; a hypocrite is great at a spurt, but the genuine believer holds on till he

wins his suit. And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. He meant to plead on yet, and to increase his earnestness. He intended to be up betimes, to anticipate the day light, and begin to pray before the sun was up. If the Lord is pleased to delay, he has a right to do as he wills, but we must not therefore become tardy in supplication. If we count the Lord slack concerning his promise we must only be the more eager to outrun him, lest sinful sloth on our part should hinder the blessing.

"Let prayer and holy hymn

Perfume the morning air; Before the world with smoke is dim

Bestir thy soul to prayer."

"While flowers are wet with dew

Lament thy sins with tears,

And ere the sun shines forth anew

Tell to thy Lord thy fears."

Verse 14. *LORD, why castest thou oft my soul?* Hast thou not aforetime chosen me, wilt thou now reject me? Shall thine elect ones become thy reprobates? Dost thou, like changeable men, give a writing of divorcement to those whom thy love has espoused? Can thy beloveds become thy cast offs? Why hidest thou thy face from me? Wilt thou not so much as look upon me? Canst thou not afford me a solitary smile? Why this severity to one who has in brighter days basked in the light of thy favour? We may put these questions to the Lord, nay, we ought to do so. It is not undue familiarity, but holy boldness. It may help us to remove the evil which provokes the Lord to jealousy, if we seriously beg him to shew us wherefore he contends with us. He cannot act towards us in other than a right and gracious manner, therefore for every stroke of his rod there is a sufficient reason in the judgment of his loving heart; let us try to learn that reason and profit by it.

Verse 15. *I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.* His affliction had now lasted so long that he could hardly remember when it commenced; it seemed to him as if he had been at death's door ever since he was a child. This was no doubt an exaggeration of a depressed spirit, and yet perhaps Heman may have been born under the cypress, and have been all his days afflicted with some chronic disease or bodily infirmity; there are holy men and women whose lives are a long apprenticeship to patience, and these deserve both our sympathy and our reverence,—our reverence we have ventured to say, for since the Saviour became the acquaintance of grief, sorrow has become honourable in believers' eyes. A life long sickness may by divine grace prove to be a life long blessing. Better suffer from childhood to old age than to be let alone to find pleasure in sin. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Long use had not blunted the edge of sorrow, God's terrors had not lost their terror; rather had they become more overwhelming and had driven the man to despair. He was unable to collect his thoughts, he was so tossed about that he could not judge and weigh his own condition in a calm and rational manner. Sickness alone will thus distract the mind; and when a

sense of divine anger is added thereto, it is not to be wondered at if reason finds it hard to hold the reins. How near akin to madness soul depression sometimes may be, it is not our province to decide; but we speak what we do know when we say that a feather weight might be sufficient to turn the scale at times. Thank God O ye tempted ones who yet retain your reason! Thank him that the devil himself cannot add that feather while the Lord stands by to adjust all things. Even though we have grazed upon the rock of utter distraction, we bless the infinitely gracious Steersman that the vessel is seaworthy yet, and answers to her helm: tempest tossed from the hour of her launch even to this hour, yet she mounts the waves and defies the hurricane.

Verse 16. *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.* What an expression, "fierce wrath", and it is a man of God who feels it! Do we seek an explanation? It seemed so to him, but "tidings are not what they seem." No punitive anger ever falls upon the saved one, for Jesus shields him from it all; but a father's anger may fall upon his dearest child, none the less but all the more, because he loves it. Since Jesus bore my guilt as my substitute, my Judge cannot punish me, but my Father can and will correct me. In this sense the Father may even manifest "fierce wrath" to his erring child, and under a sense of it that dear broken down one may be laid in the dust and covered with wretchedness, and yet for all that he may be accepted and beloved of the Lord all the while. Heman represents God's wrath as breaking over him as waves over a wreck. Thy terrors have cut me off. They have made me a marked man, they have made me feel like a leper separated from the congregation of thy people, and they have caused others to look upon me as no better than dead. Blessed be God this is the sufferer's idea and not the very truth, for the Lord will neither cast off nor cut off his people, but will visit his mourners with choice refreshments.

Verse 17. *They came round about me daily like water.* My troubles, and thy chastisement poured in upon me, penetrating everywhere, and drowning all. Such is the permeating and pervading power of spiritual distress, there is no shutting it out; it soaks into the soul like the dew into Gideon's fleece; it sucks the spirit down as the quicksand swallows the ship; it overwhelms it as the deluge submerged the green earth. They compassed me about together. Grievances hemmed him in. He was like the deer in the hunt, when the dogs are all around and at his throat. Poor soul! and yet he was a man greatly beloved of heaven!

Verse 18. *Lover and friend: hast thou put far from me.* Even when they are near me bodily, they are so unable to swim with me in such deep waters, that they stand like men far away on the shore while I am buffeted with the billows; but, alas, they shun me, the dearest lover of all is afraid of such a distracted one, and those who took counsel with me avoid me now! The Lord Jesus knew the meaning of this in all its wormwood and gall when in his passion. In dreadful loneliness he trod the wine press, and all his garments were distained with the red blood of those sour grapes. Lonely sorrow falls to the lot of not a few; let them not repine, but enter herein into close communion with that

dearest lover and friend who is never far from his tried ones. And mine acquaintance into darkness, or better still, *my acquaintance is darkness*. I am familiar only with sadness, all else has vanished. I am a child crying alone in the dark. Will the heavenly Father leave his child there? Here he breaks off, and anything more from us would only spoil the abruptness of the unexpected FINIS.

(We have not attempted to interpret this Psalm concerning our Lord, but we fully believe that where the members are, the Head is to be seen preeminently. To have given a double exposition under each verse would have been difficult and confusing; we have therefore left the Messianic references to be pointed out in the Notes, where, if God the Holy Ghost be pleased to illustrate the page, we have gathered up more than enough to lead each devout reader to behold Jesus, the man of sorrows and the acquaintance of grief.)

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. *Mahalath Leannoth* I lean to the idea, that the words *Mahalath Leannoth*, are intended to denote some musical instrument of the plaintive order, and in this opinion *Kimchi* and other Jewish writers perfectly agree. They assert that it was a wind instrument, answering very much to the flute, and employed mainly in giving utterance to sentiments of grief, upon occasions of great sorrow and lamentation. With this view of the title, I should look for no new translation, but should just read it substantially as our translators here: "A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah", to the giver of victory, upon Mahalath Leannoth, an instruction for Heman, the Ezrahite.—*John Morison*.

Title. *Leannoth* is variously rendered, according as it is derived from *hne, anah, to suffer, be afflicted*, or from *hne anah, to chant, sing*. Gesenius, De Wette, Dr. Davies, and others take the latter view; while Mudge, Hengtenberg, Alexander, and others take the former. Mudge translates, *to create dejection*; Alexander renders, *mahalath leannoth, concerning afflictive sickness*; Hengstenberg reads, *upon the distress of oppression*. The Septuagint (*apokryhnaï*) and the Vulgate (*respondendum*) indicate a *responsive* song, and Houbigant translates the words in question, *for the choirs, that they may answer*. Many etymologists consider the primary idea of *hne, anah, to sing*, that of *answering*. The tone of the Psalm in question, however, being decidedly that of *sadness and dejection*, it appears more probable that *leannoth* denotes the strictly elegiac character of the performance, and the whole title may read therefore, "A Song or Psalm, for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician, upon the flutes (or the hollow instruments,) to afflict (or cause dejection,) a didactic Psalm of Heman, the Ezrahite."—*F.G. Hibbard, in "The Psalms chronologically arranged, with Historical Introductions."* New York, 1856.

Title. The explanation:—to be performed mournfully with subdued voice, agrees with the mournful contents, whose tone is even more gloomy than that of Ps 77:1-20.—*From "The Psalms, by C.B. Moll."* (*Lange's Series of Commentaries.*)

Title.—*Heman*.

1. David was not the only man acquainted with sad exercise and affliction of spirit, for here is another, to wit, *Heman the Ezrahite*, as deep in trouble of spirit as he or any other beside.

2. They are not all men of weak minds and shallow wit who are acquainted with trouble of spirit, and borne down with the sense of God's wrath; for here is *Heman*, one amongst the wisest of all Israel, (and inferior to none for wisdom, except to Solomon alone), under the heaviest exercise we can imagine possible for a saint.

3. When it pleaseth God to exercise a man of parts, of great gifts and graces, he can make his burden proportionable to his strength, and give him as much to do with the difficulties he puts him to, as a weaker man shall find in his exercise, as appeareth in the experience of *Heman*.

4. Wise men in their trouble must take the same course with the simpler sort of men; that is, they must run to God as others do, and seek relief only in his grace, who as he distributeth the measures of trouble, can also give comfort, ease, and deliverance from them, as the practice of *Heman* doth teach us.

5. What trouble of wounded spirit some of God's children have felt in former times, others dear to God may find the like in after ages, and all men ought to prepare for the like, and should not think the exercise strange when it cometh, but must comfort themselves in this, that other saints whose refines are recorded in Scripture, have been under like affliction; for the Psalm is appointed "to give instruction"; it is *Maschil of Heman*.

6. What is at one time matter of mourning to one of God's children, may become matter of joy and singing afterward, both to himself and to others, as this sad anguish of spirit in *Heman* is made a song of joy unto God's glory, and the comfort of all afflicted souls, labouring under the sense of sin and felt wrath of God, unto the world's end; it is *A Song, a Psalm for the sons of Korah*.

7. Such as are most heartily afflicted in spirit, and do flee to God for reconciliation and consolation through Christ, have no reason to suspect themselves, that they are not esteemed of and loved as dear children, because they feel so much of God's wrath: for here is a saint who hath drunken of that cup (as deep as any who shall read this Psalm,) here is one so much loved and honoured of God, as to be a penman of Holy Scripture, and a pattern of faith and patience unto others; even *Heman the Ezrahite*. —*David Dickson*.

Whole Psalm. "We have in this Psalm the voice of our suffering Redeemer", says Horne; and the contents may be thus briefly stated—

1. *The plaintive wailing* of the suffering one, Ps 88:1-2. It strongly resembles Ps 22:1-2.

2. *His soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death*, Ps 88:3-5. The word "free" in our version, is vpx, properly denoting separation from others, and here rendered by Junius and Tremellius, "set aside from intercourse and communication with men, having nothing in common with them, like those who

are afflicted with leprosy, and are sent away to separate dwellings." They quote 2Ch 26:21.

3. *His feelings of hell*, Ps 88:6-7. For he feels God's prison, and the gloom of God's darkest wrath. And *Selah* gives time to ponder.

4. *His feelings of shame and helplessness*, Ps 88:8. "His own receive him not."

5. *The effects of soul agony upon his body*, Ps 88:9.

6. *His submission to the Lord*, Ps 88:9. It is the very tone of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, *not my will!*"

7. *The sustaining hope of resurrection*, Ps 88:10 (with a solemn pause, "*Selah*"), Ps 88:11-12. The "*land of forgetfulness*", and "*the dark*", express the unseen world, which, to those on this side of the veil, is so unknown, and where those who enter it are to us as if they had forever been forgotten by those they left behind. God's wonders shall be made known there. There shall be victory gained over death and the grave: God's "*lovingkindness*" to man, and his "*faithfulness*", pledge him to do this new thing in the universe. Messiah must return from the abodes of the invisible state; and in due time, Heman, as well as all other members of the Messiah's body, must return also. Yes, God's *wonders* shall be known at the grave's mouth. God's *righteousness*, in giving what satisfied justice in behalf of Messiah's members, has been manifested gloriously, so that resurrection must follow, and the land of forgetfulness must give up its dead. O morning of surpassing bliss, hasten on! Messiah has risen; when shall all that are his arise? Till that day dawn, they must take up their Head's plaintive expostulations, and remind their God in Heman's strains of what he has yet to accomplish. "*Wilt thou show wonders to the dead*", etc.

8. *His perseverance in vehement prayer*, Ps 88:13-14.

9. *His long continued and manifold woes*, Ps 88:15-17.

10. *His loneliness of soul*, Ps 88:18.

Hengstenberg renders the last clause of this verse more literally—"The dark kingdom of the dead is instead of all my companions." What unutterable gloom! completed by this last dark shade—all sympathy from every quarter totally withdrawn! Forlorn, indeed! Sinking from gloom to gloom, from one deep to another, and every billow sweeping over him, and wrath, like a tremendous mountain, "*leaning*" or resting its weight on the crushed worm. Not even Ps 22:1-31 is more awfully solemnising, there being in this deeply melancholy Psalm only one cheering glimpse through the intense gloom, namely, that of resurrection hoped for, but still at a distance. At such a price was salvation purchased by him who is the resurrection and the life. He himself wrestled for life and resurrection in our name—and that price so paid is the reason why to us salvation is free. And so we hear in solemn joy the harp of Judah struck by Heman, to overawe our souls not with his own sorrows, but with what Horsley calls "The lamentation of Messiah", or yet more fully, *The sorrowful days and nights of the Man of Sorrows*.—Andrew A. Bonar.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm stands alone in all the Psalter for the unrelieved gloom, the hopeless

sorrow of its tone. Even the very saddest of the others, and the Lamentations themselves, admit some variations of key, some strains of hopefulness; here only all is darkness to the close.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Whole Psalm. The prophecy in the foregoing Psalm of the conversion of all nations is followed by this Passion Psalm, in order that it may never be forgotten that God has purchased to himself an universal church, by the precious blood of his dear Son.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm. All the misery and sorrow which are described in this Psalm, says Brentius, have been the lot of Christ's people. We may therefore take the Psalm, he adds, to be common to Christ and his church.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 1. *My* That little word "my" opens for a moment a space between the clouds through which the Sun of righteousness casts one solitary beam. Generally speaking, you will find that when the Psalm begins with lamentation, it ends with praise; like the sun, which, rising in clouds and mist, sets brightly, and darts forth its parting rays just before it goes down. But here the first gleam shoots across the sky just as the sun rises, and no sooner has the ray appeared, than thick clouds and darkness gather over it; the sun continues its course throughout the whole day enveloped in clouds; and sets at last in a thicker bank of them than it ever had around it during the day. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." In what a dark cloud does the sun of Heman set!—*J.C. Philpot.*

Verse 1. *Before thee.* He had not recklessly poured forth his complaints, or cast them to the winds, as many are wont to do, who have no hope in their calamities; but he had always mingled with his complaining prayers for obtaining deliverance, and had directed them to God, where faith assured him his prayers would be seen again. This must be attentively noted, since herein is seen of what kind the complaints of the saints are.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1. *Before thee.* Other men seek some hiding place where they may murmur against God, but the Psalmist comes into the Lord's presence and states his grievances. When a man dares to pour out his complaint before the Lord's own face, his woes are real, and not the result of petulance or a rebellious spirit.—*C.H.S.*

Verses 1-2. *Before thee.* Not seeking to be seen by human eye, but by God alone, therefore, *let my prayer come before thee*, that is, let it be acceptable before thee, after the similitude of ambassadors who are admitted to audience; and when my prayer has entered *incline thine ear unto my cry*, because thou hearest the desire of the afflicted.—*Richardus Hampolus.*

Verse 2. *Incline thine ear*, etc. It is necessary that God should incline his ear unto our prayer, else it would be in vain to come before Him. The prodigal did not venture to present his prayer before the father ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. For then he said, Lu 15:21, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight", etc...and so he obtained mercy. Esther did not present her prayer

to Ahasuerus before he descended from his throne and inclined himself to her. Es 5:2, etc.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 3. *My soul is full of troubles.* The Lord Jesus emptied himself of glory, that he might be full of trouble. His soul, which was free from human sin, was full of human troubles, that we who are full of sin might be free from trouble; his life drew nigh to the terrors of the unseen world, that we might not be its spoil and prey.—"*Plain Commentary*."

Verse 3. *My soul is full of troubles.* Hear into what a depth of spiritual distress three worthy servants of God in these later times were plunged and pressed down under the sense of God's anger for sin. Blessed *Mistress Brettergh* upon her last bed was horribly hemmed in with the sorrows of death; the very grief of hell laid hold upon her soul; a roaring wilderness of woe was within her, as she confessed of herself. She said, her sin had made her a prey to Satan; and wished that she had never been born, or that she had been made any other creature rather than a woman. She cried out many times, woe, woe, woe, etc.; a weak, a woeful, a wretched, a forsaken woman; with tears continually trickling from her eyes. *Master Peacock*, that man of God, in that his dreadful visitation and desertion, recounting some smaller sins, burst out in these words: "And for these", saith he, "I feel now a hell in my conscience." Upon other occasions he cried out, groaning most pitifully, "Oh me, wretch! Oh mine heart is miserable! Oh, oh, miserable and woeful! The burden of my sin lieth so heavy upon me, I doubt it will break my heart. Oh how woeful and miserable is my state that I am hunted by hell hounds!" When bystanders asked if he would pray, he answered, "I cannot". Suffer us, say they, to pray for you. "Take not", replied he, "the name of God in vain, by praying for a reprobate."

What grievous pangs, what sorrowful torments, what boiling heats of the fire of hell that blessed saint of God, *John Glover*, felt inwardly in his spirit, saith *Foxe*, no speech outwardly is able to express. Being young, saith he, I remember I was once or twice with him, whom partly by his talk I perceived, and partly by mine own eyes saw to be so worn and consumed by the space of five years, that neither almost any brooking of meat, quietness of sleep, pleasure of life, yea, and almost no kind of senses was left in him. Upon apprehension of some backsliding, he was so perplexed, that if he had been in the deepest pit of hell, he could almost have despaired no more of his salvation; in which intolerable griefs of mind, saith he, although he neither had, nor could have any joy of his meat, yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to the end to defer the time of his damnation so long as he might; thinking with himself, but that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of his body. I dare not pass out of this point, lest some child of God should be here discouraged, before I tell you that every one of these three was at length blessedly recovered, and did rise most gloriously out of their several depths of most extreme spiritual misery, before their end.

Hear, therefore, *Mistress Brettergh's* triumphant songs and ravishments of spirit, after the return of her well beloved: "O Lord Jesus, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how

wonderful! How wonderful are thy mercies! Oh thy love is unspeakable, thou hast dealt so graciously with me! O my Lord and my God, blessed be thy name for evermore, which hast showed me the path of life. Thou didst, O Lord, hide thy face from me for a little season, but with everlasting mercy thou hast had compassion on me. And now, blessed Lord, thy comfortable presence is come; yea, Lord, thou hast had respect unto thine handmaid, and art come with fulness of joy, and abundance of consolation. O blessed be thy name, my Lord and my God. O the joys that I feel in my soul! They be wonderful. O Father, how merciful and marvellously gracious art thou unto me! yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy and I am assured of thy love; and so certain am I thereof, as Thou art the God of truth, even so sure do I know myself to be thine, O Lord my God, and this my soul knoweth right well. Blessed be the Lord that hath thus comforted me, and hath brought me now to a place more sweet unto me than the garden of Eden. Oh the joy, the delightsome joy that I feel! O praise the Lord for his mercies, and for this joy which my soul feels full well; praise his name forever more."

Hear with what heavenly calmness and sweet comforts Master Peacock's heart was refreshed and ravished when the storm was over: "Truly, my heart and soul", saith he, (when the tempest was something allayed) "have been far led and deeply troubled with temptations, and stings of conscience, but I thank God they are eased in good measure. Wherefore I desire that I be not branded with the note of a castaway or reprobate. Such questions, oppositions, and all tending thereto, I renounce. Concerning mine inconsiderate speeches in my temptation, I humbly and heartily ask mercy of God for them all." Afterward by little, and little, more light did arise in his heart, and he brake out into such speeches as these: "I do, God be praised, feel such comfort from that, what shall I call it?" "Agony", said one that stood by. "Nay", quoth he, "that is too little; that had I five hundred worlds, I could not make satisfaction for such an issue. Oh, the sea is not more full of water, nor the sun of light, than the Lord of mercy; yea, his mercies are ten thousand times more. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God, that hath humbled such a wretched miscreant, and of so base condition, to an estate so glorious and stately. The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness! I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy that I feel in mine heart is incredible." For the third, (namely, *John Glover*) hear Mr. Foxe: "Though this good servant of God suffered many years so sharp temptations, and strong buffeting of Satan; yet the Lord, who graciously preserved him all the while, not only at last did rid him out of all discomfort, but also framed him thereby to such mortification of life, as the like lightly hath not been seen; in such sort, as he being like one placed in heaven already, and dead in this world both in word and meditation, led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in his mind all profane doings."—*Robert Bolton* (1572-1631), in, "Instructions for a right Comforting afflicted Consciences."

Verse 3. *My life.* The Hebrew word rendered *life* is in the plural number, as in Ge 2:7 3:14,17 6:17 7:15 *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, 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*. 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.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 3. *The grave.* The word which is rendered "hell" in the Prayer Book translation, and "*the grave*" in the Bible version, and which is usually translated either as *hell* or *the grave*, is in the Hebrew *lav* and in the Greek "*Hades*." "*Hades*" signifies "the unseen world." The word "*Sheol*" is literally "the Devouring, or the Insatiable." (Compare Hab 2:5) "who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied"; and also (Pr 3:15-16.) "*Sheol*" seems to have presented itself to the thoughts of the ancient Hebrews as a gloomy, silent, inevitable, and mysterious abode, situated within the earth, whither the souls of the departed were compelled to repair and to dwell, upon their being separated from the body. (Isa 14:9-20). They believed that the spirits of all human kind were contained there in a state of waiting, and there especially dwelt the souls of the giants before the flood (1Pe 3:19-20), and of the great ones of old, the *Rephaim*, whom they pictured to themselves as fearful and gigantic spectres (Compare Pr 2:18). These ideas became modified and developed with the increasing clearness of divine teaching; and they divided the abode of the dead into different states of hope and comfort, which they called Abraham's bosom and paradise (Lu 16:22-23 23:43); and of misery and suffering, (Pr 3:1). Life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour, and also judgment and Hell—the *Gehenna* of everlasting punishment, as distinguished from the Unseen World. (Compare Re 20:13-14). From these speculations of Jewish Rabbis respecting *Sheol* the church of Rome appears to have developed the doctrine of Purgatory. It should be added that it was a received opinion among the followers of Rabbinical teaching, that all of the seed of Abraham, though they would be dwellers in *Sheol* before the general resurrection, would finally escape the *Gehenna* of everlasting fire. The rich man (Lu 16:23) is in Hades in torments when he calls to Abraham his father.—"*Plain Commentary*."

Verse 4. *I am counted with them that go down into the pit.* Not only myself, says he, but others also now despair of my life, and number me with those whose corpses are borne forth to burial. For now all my powers have failed and my vital spirits become quenched. He uses the word *rbg* which indicates fortitude rather than *Mda* or *wya* in order to show how great the severity of these evils was, and the vehemence of his griefs, which had broken even a most robust man.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 4. *I am counted with them that go down into the pit.* Next to the troubles of Christ's soul, are mentioned the disgrace and ignominy to which he submitted: He who was the fountain of immortality, from whom no one could take his life, who could in a moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to his aid, or have caused heaven and earth, at a word speaking, to fly away before him, he

was counted among them that go down into the pit; he died, to all appearance, like the rest of mankind, nay, he was forcibly put to death, as a malefactor; and seemed, in the hands of his executioners, as a man that had no strength, no power, or might, to help and save himself. His strength went from him; he became weak, and like another man. The people shook their heads at him, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."—*Samuel Burder*.

Verse 4. There is in the original an antithesis, which cannot be conveyed by mere translation, arising from the fact that the first word for man is one implying strength.—*J.A. Alexander*.

Verse 5. *Free among the dead.* In the former verse he had said that he had approached very near to death, now he is plainly dead: there he was about to be buried, here he is laid in the sepulchre: thus had his sufferings increased. *Free* is to be understood of the affairs of this life, as when it is said, Job 3:19, "And the servant is free from his master."—*Martin Bucer, 1491-1551*.

Verse 5. *Free among the dead.* *yvpx Mytmg bammethim chopshji*, I rather think, means *stripped among the dead*. Both the *fourth* and *fifth* verses seem to allude to a *field of battle*: the *slain* and the *wounded* are found scattered over the plain; the *spoilers* come among them, and strip, not only the dead, but those also who appear to be mortally wounded and cannot recover, and are so feeble as not to be able to resist. Hence the Psalmist says, "*I am as a man that hath no strength*", Ps 88:4.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 5. *Free.* There is no immunity so long as we are in the flesh, there is no truce, but constant unrest distracts us. Liberty, therefore, is given to us after death, because we rest from our labourers.—*Franciscus Vatablus*.

Verse 5. *Cut off from the hand.* Beware how you ever look upon yourself as *cut off* from life and from enjoyment; you are not cut off, only taken apart, laid aside, it may be but for a season, or it may be for life; but still you are part of the body of which Christ is the Head. Some must suffer and some must serve, but each one is necessary to the other, "the whole body is fitly framed together by that which every joint supplieth", "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you:" Eph 4:16 1Co 12:21. Your feet may be set fast; they may have run with great activity, and you sorrow now, because they can run no more. But do not sorrow thus, do not envy those who are running; you have a work to do; it may be the work of the head, or of the eye, it surely is whatever work God gives to you. It may be the work of lying still, of not stirring hand or foot, of scarcely speaking, scarcely showing life. Fear not: if He your heavenly Master has given it to you to do, it is *His* work, and He will bless it. Do not repine. Do not say, *This* is work, and, *this* is *not*; how do you know? What work, think you, was Daniel doing in the lion's den? Or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace? Their work was glorious, "laudable, and honourable", they were glorifying God in suffering.—*From "Sickness, its Trials and Blessings."* (Anon.) 1868.

Verse 6. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit*, etc. He expands his meaning by another similitude. For

he compares himself to a captive who has been cast into a deep, foul, dark, and slimy pit, where he is shut up and plunged in filth and darkness, having not a remnant of hope and life; after the manner of Jeremiah's sufferings. Jer 37:1-21. By this simile he means that he was in the greatest anxieties and sorrows of mind, destitute of every hope and sense of consolation, and that the terrors of death continually increased and augmented.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 6. When a saint is under terrible impressions of Jehovah's infinite wrath, he cannot but be under great horror of conscience, and in perplexing depths of mental trouble. The sense which he hath of avenging wrath, occasions a conflict in his spirit, inexpressibly agonizing and terrible. When his troubled conscience is inflamed, by a sense of the fiery indignation of God Almighty, the more he thinks of him as his infinite enemy, the more he is dismayed: every thought of *Him*, brings doleful tidings, and pours oil upon the raging flame. Trouble of conscience for sin, is indeed very disquieting; but, a sense of the vindictive wrath of God, kindled in the conscience, is still more dreadful. No words can express the direful anguish, which the disconsolate soul then feels. The Christian cannot at that time think so much as one quiting, one cheering thought. What he first thinks of is tormenting to his wounded spirit: he changes that thought for another, and that is still more tormenting. He finds himself entangled, as in the midst of a thicket of thorns so that, which way soever he turns himself, he is pierced and grieved afresh. This dismal thought often arises in his troubled mind,—That if death were, in his present condition, to surprise and cut him off, he should sink forever and ever, under the intolerable wrath of the infinite Jehovah. The most exquisite torment of body is almost nothing, in comparison of the anguish of his spirit at such times. Oh! how inconceivable is the anguish, the agony, especially of a holy soul, when it is conflicting with the tremendous wrath of the eternal God! The bodily torture even of crucifixion, could not extort from the holy Jesus the smallest sigh or complaint; but the sense of his Father's wrath in his soul, wrung from him that doleful outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—*John Colquhoun, in "A Treatise on Spiritual Comfort."* 1814.

Verse 7. *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.* Others read, *sustains itself, or bears up itself upon me*, which is as if a giant should with his whole weight stay himself upon a child.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 7. There are some that feel the wrath of God on their souls and consciences, and yet are not under wrath, but are true saints of God. Examples ye have in Paul, that chosen vessel of God to bear the name of Jesus among the Gentiles, he had fightings without and terrors within. Heman the Ezrahite said, 'The waves of the Lord's indignation are gone over my head, so that they are like to drown me; I suffer terrors and doubtings from my very youth, so that I can never be quit of them.' And both these were the dear children of God. Now, if you feel nothing but wrath, and thou dost ask how thou shalt judge of thy state when thou art bearing such a wrath, that put all the sand of the sea in balance with it, it would outweigh it; and when thou hast such a fire in thy conscience, that, put iron

and brass in that fire, it would melt them, for they were not able to abide it: how then shalt thou know, in this case, that thou art loved of God, and that he hath chosen thee to eternal life? I tell thee, if thou art the chosen child of God, and a vessel of mercy, under a sense of wrath, in this estate this will be thy disposition. First, Thou wilt hate and detest thy sin, which is the cause of thy misery, and hath brought thee to this pain. Secondly, Thou wilt have some dolour and sorrow for thy sin, and thou wilt lament because thou hast provoked God to anger against thee. Thirdly, Thou wilt have a desire to be reconciled to God; and thou wouldst gladly be at peace with him, that thy sins may be taken away out of his sight. Fourthly, There will be hunger and thirst for the blood of Christ to quench that wrath, and for his righteousness to cover thy soul. Fifthly, There will be a patient waiting upon the Lord's deliverance, and when thou canst not get to this persuasion, then there will be a hope above hope, and thou wilt say with Job, (Job 13:15), 'Lord, I will trust in thee, though thou shouldst slay me.'—*John Welch*.

Verse 8. There are times when an unspeakable sadness steals upon me, an immense loneliness takes possession of my soul, a longing perchance for some vanished hand and voice to comfort me as of old, a desolation without form and void, that wraps me in its folds, and darkens my inmost being. It was not thus in the first days of my illness. Then all was so new and strange, that a strange spiritual strength filled my soul, and seemed to bear me up as with angel hands. The love and kindness that my sickness called forth, came to me with a sweet surprise; tender solicitude made my very pain into an occasion of joy to me; and hope was strong and recovery was near, only a few brief weeks between me and returning health, with nothing of sickness remaining, but the memory of all that love and sympathy, like a line of light my Saviour's feet had left, as he walked with me on the troubled sea. But now that hope is deferred, and returning health seems to loiter by the way, and recovery is delayed, and the trial lengthens out like an ever lengthening chain, my soul begins to faint and tire, and the burden to grow heavier. Even to those who love me most, my pain and helplessness is now an accustomed thing, while to me it keeps its keen edge of suffering, but little dulled by use. My ills to them are a tedious oft told tale which comes with something of a dull reiterance. It has become almost a matter of course that in the pleasant plan I should be left out, that in the pleasant walk I should be left behind; a matter of course that the pleasures of life should pass me by with folded hand and averted face; and sickness, and monotonous days, and grey shadows should be my portion...

And O my God, my spirit sometimes faints beneath a nameless dread that this loneliness will grow deeper and deeper, if it be thy will that my sickness should continue, or recovery be long delayed. I can no longer be the companion of those I love; shall I be as dear to them as if I could have kept by their side, and been bound up with all their active interests and pleasures? I have to see others take my place, and do my work for them; shall I not suffer loss in their eyes, and others enter into the

heritage of love which might have been mine? Will they not grow weary of me, weary of the same old ills, oft repeated, but ever new, and turn with an unconscious feeling of relief, to brighter hearts, and more joyous lives? My God, my God, to whom can I turn for comfort but unto thee, thou who didst drink the bitter cup of human loneliness to the dregs that thou mightest make thyself a brother to the lonely, a merciful and faithful High Priest to the desolate soul; thou who alone canst pass within, the doors being shut to *all* human aid, into that secret place of thunder, where the tempest tossed soul suffers and struggles alone; thou who alone canst command the winds and tempests, and say unto the sea "Be still!" and unto the wind, "Blow not!" and there shall be a great calm. As a child alone in the dark, my heart cries out for thee, cries for thine embracing arms, for thy voice of comfort, for thy pierced heart on which to rest my aching head, and feel that Love is near.—*From "Christ the Consoler. A Book of Comfort for the Sick." Anon. 1872.*

Verse 8. *Thou hast put away mine acquaintance.* This tempest of afflictions is all the heavier, because, First, all my acquaintance departed far from me, like swallows in winter time: Pr 14:20. *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour, but, but the rich hath many friends.* Seneca wisely admonishes: *Flies follow honey, wolves corpses, ants food, the mob follows the pay, not the man.* Job said, (Job 19:13), He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. Secondly, not only do they often depart from the afflicted, but they themselves add to his trouble, and precipitate his falling fortune. A rich man beginning to fall is held up by his friends; but a poor man being down, is thrust away by those who once pretended to love him.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 8. *Thou hast made me an abomination unto them: lit,* "abominations", as if I were one great mass of abominations. (Ge 46:34 43:32). As Israel was an abomination to the Egyptians, so Messiah, the antitypical Israel, was to the world.—*A.R. Fausset.*

Verse 8. *An abomination.* As one who is unclean,—excluded from social intercourse; Ge 46:34. Compare Job 9:31 19:19 30:10. *"I cannot come forth."* The man suspected of leprosy was "shut up seven days"; Le 13:4.—*William Kay.*

Verse 9. *Mine eye mourneth, ...I have called.* Weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: "Mine eye mourns", but "I cry unto thee daily." Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9. The first clause seems literally to mean the soreness and dimness of sight caused by excessive weeping, and is so taken by many of the commentators, and Lorinus aptly quotes a Latin poet, *Catullus*, in illustration:—

Moesta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fletu Cessarent.

Nor my sad eyes to pine with constant tears Could cease.

—*Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 10. He assures himself God would not fail to comfort him before he died; and again, that the Lord would rather miraculously raise him from the dead, than not glorify himself in his deliverance: and in this also he taketh a safe course, for he seeks for what he might expect, rather in an ordinary way, than by looking for miracles.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 10. *Shall the dead arise and praise thee?* So far from this being an argument against the resurrection, it is Messiah's own most powerful plea for it—that otherwise man would be deprived of salvation, and God of the praise which the redeemed shall give for it to all eternity. Thou canst not show wonders to the dead as such; for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Mt 22:32.) Or even if thou wert to show thy wonders, it is only by their rising to life again that they can duly praise thee for them.—*A.R. Fausset*.

Verse 10. *The dead.* The word comes from a root which expresses what is weak and languid, and at the same time stretched out and long extended, and which can accordingly be employed to describe the shadowy forms of the under world as well as the giants and heroes of the olden time.—*Carl Bernhard Moll, in Lange's Commentary*.

Verse 10. *The dead.* An attentive consideration seems to leave little room for doubt that the dead were called Rephaim (as Gesenius also hints) from some notion of Scheol being the residence of the fallen spirits or buried giants.—*F.W. Farrar, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*.

Verses 10-11. Can my soul ever come to think I shall live in thy favour, in thy free grace and lovingkindness, to be justified by it, to apprehend myself a living man, and all my sins forgiven? To do this, saith he, is as great a wonder as to raise a man up from death to life; therefore he useth that expression, *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* He calleth it a wonder; for of all works else, you shall find in Scripture the resurrection from the dead counted the greatest wonder. The phrase in Ps 88:10, as the Septuagint translates it, is exceeding emphatic. Saith he, "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the physicians arise and praise thee?" So they read it, and so some good Hebreccians read it also; that is, Go send for all the college of physicians, all the angels out of heaven, all the skilful ministers and prophets that were then upon the earth, Gad and David, for he lived in David's time; send for them all. All these physicians may come with their cordials and balms; they will never cure me, never heal my soul, never raise me up to life again, except thou raise me; for I am "free among the dead", saith he. Now then, to work faith in such a one; for this poor soul, being thus dead, to go out of himself, and by naked and sheer faith to go to Jesus Christ alone, whom God raised from the dead, and to believe on him alone; this is now as great a power as indeed to raise a man up from death to life.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verses 10-12. In these verses we find mention made of four things on the part of God: "wonders", "lovingkindness", "faithfulness", and "righteousness". These were four attributes of the blessed Jehovah which the eyes of Heman had been opened to see, and which the heart of Heman had been

wrought upon to feel. But he comes, by divine teaching, into a spot where these attributes seem to be completely lost to him; and yet, (so mysterious are the ways of God!) that spot was made the very place where those attributes were more powerfully displayed, and made more deeply and experimentally known to his soul. The Lord led the blind by a way that he knew not into these spots of experience, that in them he might more fully open up to him those attributes of which he had already gained a glimpse; but the Lord brought him in such a mysterious way, that all his former knowledge was baffled. He therefore puts up this inquiry to the Lord, how it was possible that in those spots where he now was, these attributes could be displayed or made known? He begins—*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* He is speaking here of his own experience; *he* is that "dead" person to whom those "wonders" are to be shown. And being in that state of experience, he considered that every act of mercy shown to him where he then was, must be a "wonder". *Shall the dead arise and praise thee?* What! the dark, stupid, cold, barren, helpless soul, that cannot lift up one little finger, that cannot utter one spiritual word, that cannot put forth one gracious desire, that cannot lift up itself a hair's breadth out of the mass that presses it down—"Shall it *arise?*" and more than that, "*praise thee?*" What! can lamentation ever be turned into praise. Can complaint ever be changed into thanksgiving? Can the mourner ever shout and sing? Oh, it is a wonder of wonders, if "the dead" are to "arise", if "the dead" are to "praise thee"; if the dead are to stand upon their feet, and shout victory through thy blood!—*J.C. Philpot.*

Verse 11. *In the grave.* Here is a striking figure of what a living soul feels under the manifestations of the deep corruptions of his heart. All his good words, once so esteemed; and all his good works, once so prized; and all his prayers, and all his faith, and hope, and love, and all the imaginations of his heart, are not merely paralysed and dead, not merely reduced to a state of utter helplessness, but also in soul feeling turned into rottenness and corruption. When we feel this we are spiritually brought where Heman was, when he said, "Shall thy lovingkindness be *declared* in the grave?" What! wilt thou manifest thy love to a stinking corpse? What! is thy love to be shed abroad in a heart full of pollution and putrefaction? Is thy lovingkindness to come forth from thy glorious sanctuary, where thou sittest enthroned in majesty, and holiness, and purity,—is it to leave that eternal abode of ineffable light and glory, and enter into the dark, polluted, and loathsome "grave"? What! is thy lovingkindness to come out of the sanctuary into the charnel house? Shall it be "declared" *there*—revealed there—spoken there—manifested there—made known there? For nothing else but the *declaration* of it there will do. He does not say, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the Scriptures?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in Christ?" ... "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared by the mouth of ministers?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in holy and pure hearts?"—but he says, "Shall thy lovingkindness be *declared*", uttered, spoken, revealed, manifested, "in the *grave?*" where everything is contrary to it, where everything is unworthy of it,—the last of all places fit for the

lovingkindness of an all pure God to enter.—*J.C. Philpot.*

Verse 11. *Thy faithfulness in destruction.* You will see God's faithfulness to have been manifested most,—in destruction. You will see God's faithfulness to his covenant most clearly evidenced in destroying your false religion, in order to set up his own kingdom in your soul; in destroying everything which alienated and drew away your affections from him, that he alone might be enshrined in your hearts; and you will say, when the Lord leads you to look at the path he has led you, in after years, "Of all God's mercies his greatest have been those that seemed at the time to be the greatest miseries; the richest blessings which he has given us, are those which came wrapped up in the outside covering of curses; and his faithfulness has been as much or more manifested in destruction, than in restoration."—*J.C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—It is not by leaving man in the "destruction" which sin and death produce, that God will declare his "faithfulness" to his promises which have flowed out of his "lovingkindness"; for instance, his promise that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head (Ge 13:15 and Ho 13:14).—*A.R. Faussett.*

Verse 12. *Wilt thou show thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?* where I have forgotten thee, where I turned aside from thee, where I have let slip out of my memory all thy previous dealings with me—and shall thy righteousness be manifested even there? Wilt thou prove thine equity in showing forth mercy, because for me a sacrifice has been offered, thy righteousness running parallel with the atoning stream of Christ's blood? When I have forgotten thee and forsaken thee, and turned my back upon thee, can thy righteousness be there manifested? What! righteousness running side by side with mercy! and righteousness still preserving all its unbending strictness, because this very backsliding of heart, this very forgetfulness of soul, this very alienation of affection, this very turning my back upon thee, have all been atoned for; and righteousness can be still shown "in the land of forgetfulness", because all my sins committed in the land of forgetfulness have been atoned for by redeeming blood!—*J.C. Philpot.*

Verse 13. *But,* etc. That "but" seems to come in as an expression of his resolution hitherto, that though these were his apprehensions of his condition, yet he had sought the Lord, and would go on to do the same. Suppose thou findest no relish in the ordinances, yet use them; thou art desperately sick, yet eat still take all that is brought thee, some strength will come of it. Say, Be I damned or saved, hypocrite or no hypocrite, I resolve to go on.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 13. *In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.* The morning prayer is the best...In the morning God gave various gifts. First, the manna, Ex 16:13, *And in the morning the dew lay round about the host:* He who is in the camp of God, and bravely fights, receives from God dew and consolation, if in the morning, that is, in the beginning of temptation, he prays. In the evening flesh was given, whence death overtook them, but in another case in the morning the manna was given,

whereby life was sustained, until they came into the land of promise. Secondly, the law was given in the morning, Ex 19:16, 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 the trumpet exceeding loud. In morning devotion the thunders of God, that is, his judgments, are more distinctly heard; his lightnings, that is, his divine enlightenments, are best seen; the thick cloud upon the mount, that is, the divine overshadowing of the soul, is perceived; and the voice of the trumpet is best heard, that is, inspiration then with greater force moves the mind. Thirdly, in the morning, very early, the children of Israel went forth from Egypt; for in the middle of the night God smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, Ex 12:29 ...In the morning pray, and you shall conquer your daily and nightly foes; and the Red Sea itself, that is the place of temptation, shall be to thee a field of glory, of victory and exultation and all things shall go well with thee.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 13. *Unto thee have I cried, O Lord.* There is something comitant with the Christian's present darkness of spirit that distinguishes it from the hypocrite's horror; and that is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very visible, when his peace and former comfort are most questioned by him; the less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy; the further Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer, as we see in Heman here. O the fervent prayers that then are shot from his troubled spirit to heaven, the pangs of affection which are springing after God, and his face and favour! Never did a banished child more desire admittance into his angry father's presence, than he to have the light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now veiled from him.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 14. *Why hidest thou thy face from me?* Numerous are the complaints of good men under this dark cloud; and to a child of light it is indeed a darkness that may be felt; it beclouds and bewilders the mind; the brightest evidences are in a great measure hid; the Bible itself is sealed, and fast closed; we see not our signs, nor our tokens for good; every good thing is at a distance from us, behind the cloud, and we cannot get at it; there is a dismal gloom upon our path; we know not where we are, where to step, nor which way to steer; which way God is gone we know not, but he knoweth the way that we take; and such a prayer as this suits us well,—Seek thy servants, for we are lost. Christ is hid, and there is a frowning cloud upon the sweet countenance of God, in which he hides his blessed face; or, as he did to the disciples, holds our eyes, that we should not see him. But, though this is often the case with believers, and they cannot see one beam of light before them; though all evidences are hid, and the light of the Lord's countenance is withdrawn; though no signs nor love tokens appear; and though the life giving commandment is hid from them, and he shows them no wonders out of his law; yet, these Israelites have light in their dwellings—they have light to see the corruptions of their own hearts; to see the Workings of unbelief, legal pride, enmity, rebellion, the

double diligence of Satan, and the wretched advantages he takes of them in these dark seasons.—*William Huntington.*

Verse 15. *I am afflicted.* (Vulg. *Pauper sum ego.*) God more readily hears the poor, and gives himself wholly to them. First, his eyes, to behold them, Ps 11:5, "*His eyes behold the poor.*" Secondly, his ears, to hear them, Ps 10:17, "*Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ears to hear.*" Thirdly, his hand, to help, Ps 107:41, "*Yet setteth he the poor on high from his affliction.*" Fourthly, his breast and his arms, to receive the fugitives and those in peril, Ps 60:9, "*The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.*" Fifthly, memory to recollect for them, Ps 9:18, "*The needy shall not always be forgotten.*" Sixthly, intellect, to care for them, and watch over their comfort, Ps 40:17, "*But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*" Seventhly, goodwill, to love their prayers, Ps 22:24, "*For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him.*" Eighthly and lastly, he gives himself wholly to them, to preserve them, Ps 72:13, "*He shall save the souls of the needy.*"—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 15. *I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.* How much some suffer! I have seen a child, who at the age of twenty months had probably suffered more bodily pain than the whole congregation of a thousand souls, where its parents worshipped. Asaph seems to have been of a sad heart. Jeremiah lived and died lamenting. Heman seems to have been of the same lot and of the same turn of mind.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 15. (*First clause*). We found the heat more oppressive this day than we had yet experienced it. The hillocks of sand between which we were slowly moving at the usual camel's pace, reflected the sun's rays upon us, till our faces were glowing as if we had been by the side of a furnace... Perhaps it was through this part of the desert of Shur that Hagar wandered, intending to go back to her native country; and it may have been by this way that Joseph carried the young child Jesus when they fled into the land of Egypt. Even in tender infancy the sufferings of the Redeemer began, and he complains, "*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" Perhaps these scorching beams beat upon his infant brow, and this sand laden breeze dried up his infant lips, while the heat of the curse of God began to melt his heart within. Even in the desert we see the suretyship of Jesus.—*R.M. Macheyne's "Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews."*

Verse 15. *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.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15. *While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.* The word doth not signify properly the distraction

of a man that is mad, but the distraction of a man that is in doubt. It is the distraction of a man who knows not what to do, not of a man who knows not what he doth, and yet that distraction doth often lead to a degree of this; for a man who is much troubled to know what to do, and cannot know it, grows at last to do he knows not what.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 15. *While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.* The Psalm hath this striking peculiarity in it, namely, that it not only hath reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and him alone; but that he himself is the sole speaker from the beginning to the end. And although the whole of the Psalms are of him, and concerning him, more or less, and he is the great object and subject of all; yet, secondarily and subordinately we meet with many parts in the Psalms where his church is also noticed, and becomes concerned, from union with him, in what is said. But in this Psalm there is allusion to no other. (We differ from Dr. Hawker in his exclusion of the saints from this Psalm. Where the Head is the members are never far away.—ED.) All is of him and his incommunicable work. All is of the Son of God in our nature. It contains an account of the cries of the Lord Jesus "when in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears." The soul agonies of Christ even from the moment of his incarnation to his death, may be contemplated, or read, from the sacred records of Scripture, but cannot come within the province of any created power to conceive, much less unfold. It is remarkable that whatever the Lord meant to convey by the phrase, "*I am distracted*", this is the only place in the whole Bible where the word "*distracted*" is used. Indeed the inspired writers have varied their terms of expression; when speaking of Christ's sufferings, as if unable to convey any full idea. Matthew renders it that the Lord Jesus said: "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!*" (Mt 26:38.) Mark describes him as "being sore amazed, and very heavy!" (Mr 14:33.) And Luke: his "being in an agony!" (Lu 22:44.) But here we must rest, in point of apprehension, for we can proceed no further.—*Robert Hawker*.

Verse 15. O Lord, the monotony of my changeless days oppresses me, the constant weariness of my body weighs me down. I am weary of gazing on the same dull objects: I am tired of going through the same dull round day after day; the very inanimate things about my room, and the patterns on the walls, seem quickened with the waste of my life, and, through the power of association, my own thoughts and my own pain come back upon me from them with a dull reverberation. My heart is too tired to hope; I dare not look forward to the future; I expect nothing from the days to come, and yet my heart sinks at the thought of the grey waste of years before me; and I wonder how I shall endure, whether I shall faint by the way, before I reach my far off home.—*From "Christ the Consoler."*

Verse 16. *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.* Like a sea of liquid fire; (Ps 42:7)—Heb. "Thy hot wraths." LXX (Septuagint) ai orgai sou —*William Kay*

Verse 16. *Thy terrors have cut me off.* In the Hebrew verb the last syllable is repeated for the purpose of putting vehemence into the expression. The word *tme* signifies, to shut up and press into

some narrow place, in order that; one may not breathe or escape...In this sense Gregory Nazianzen in his first oration concerning peace, calls grief (the prison of the heart).—*Mollerus*.

Verse 17. *Like water*, not merely because it drowns, but because it searches every crevice, goes to the very bottom, and makes its way on all sides when once it obtains an entrance, thus fitly denoting the penetrating force of temptation and trouble.—*Hugo Cardinalis*.

Verse 18. *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me*, etc. Next to the joys of religion, those of friendship are most rational, sublime, and satisfactory. But they, like all other earthly joys, have their mixtures and alloys, and are very precarious. We are often called to weep with our friends, and sometimes to weep over them. Grief and tears for their death are the sad tribute we pay for loving and being beloved, and living long in this world. This seems to have been the case with the author of this melancholy Psalm, where our text is. He was exercised with great afflictions of body, and deep distress of mind. "His soul was full of troubles, and his life drew nigh to the grave. He was shut up and confined by weakness and pain, and could not go forth", to his business or pleasure, to the social or solemn assembly, Ps 88:3-8. He adds, that "he had been afflicted and read to die from his youth" in Ps 88:15; which seems to intimate that he was now an old man. Some of his acquaintance and friends had deserted him, and he was "become an abomination to them", Ps 88:8. They would not assist him, nor afford him the comfort of a friendly visit, and the cheap kindness of a soft, compassionate word. Others of them, who would have been faithful and kind to him in his distress, were taken out of the world; and this at a time when, through age and infirmities, he peculiarly needed their company and assistance. To this he refers in the text; and with this he concludes the Psalm, as the heaviest stroke of all, "*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance late darkness.*" This is a common case; and frequently the case of the aged. It is no unusual thing for old people to outlive their nearest relations; the companions of their lives; their children, and sometimes their grandchildren too; and they are, as the Psalmist expresses it, "like a sparrow alone upon the house top." . . .

What chiefly afflicted the Psalmist, and will afflict every generous heart, was, that his friends and lovers were removed into "*darkness*"; that is, to the grave, which is called in Scripture, "the land of darkness and the shadow of death, without any order or succession; and where the light is as darkness." Job 10:21-22. They were put so far from him, that he could see them no more; were dead and buried out of his sight; neither would one of their friends on earth any more behold them. Thus are our friends put into darkness. The eyes that used to sparkle with pleasure, when we met after a long absence, are closed in death. The voice that used to delight and edify us is sealed up in everlasting silence. There is no conversing with them personally nor by letters. Not lands and seas divide us from them, but regions of vast, unknown space, which we cannot yet pass over; and which they cannot and indeed would not tread back, as much as they loved us. We have no way of

conveying intelligence to them or receiving it from them. Perhaps they were put far away from us in their youth, or in the midst of their days and usefulness; when we promised ourselves many years of pleasure in their friendship and converse, and expected many years of service from them, for their families, for the church, and the world. Alas! one awful, fatal stroke hath broken down all the pleasing fabric of love and happiness.

But these are reflections which must not be dwelt upon. When they begin to grow very painful, as they soon will, it is time to turn our thoughts to that which is the second thing observable in the text; namely, the Psalmist's devout acknowledgment of the hand of God in this affliction. "*Thou hast put them far from me.*" This good man, through the whole Psalm, ascribes all his afflictions, and particularly the death of his friends, to the hand of God. He takes no notice of their diseases; he neither blames them for imprudence and delay, nor those who attended them for neglect or misapplication; but looks beyond all second causes to the great Lord of all; owns him as the supreme sovereign of every life, and disposer of every event. And we shall do well to make this idea of the blessed God familiar to our minds, as it is at once most instructive and most comfortable. The holy Scriptures confirm the dictates of reason upon this subject; assuring us that God "maketh peace and createth evil"; that "out of the mouth of the Lord proceedeth evil and good"; that the most casual events are under his direction, so that "not a sparrow falleth to", nor lighteth on, "the ground without him; "much less do his rational creatures and children die without his notice and appointment. By whatever disease or casualties they die, it is God who "taketh away their breath, changeth their countenance, and sendeth them into darkness." With awful majesty God claims this as his prerogative; "I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (De 32:39.) He removeth our friends who hath a right to do it. They were our friends, but they are his creatures; and may he not do what he will with his own? He gave them life of his free goodness, and he hath a right to demand it when he pleaseth. Dear as they were to us, we must acknowledge they were sinners; and, as such, had forfeited their lives to the justice of God: and shall not he determine when to take them away? They were our friends; but do we not hope and believe that, by repentance, faith in Christ, and sanctifying grace, they were become his friends too; dear to him by many indissoluble ties? Hath he not then a superior claim to them, and a greater interest in them? Is it not fit that he should be served first? May he not call home his friends when he pleaseth? Shall he wait for, or ask, our consent first? He doth it, whom we cannot, dare not, gainsay. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?" (Job 9:12.) He doth it, who is infinitely good and wise; and doth everything in the best time and manner. His knowledge is perfect and unerring; his goodness boundless and never failing. Though his judgments are a great deep, and his schemes utterly unsearchable by us; yet we may reasonably believe that he consulteth the happiness of his servants in what is most mysterious and most grievous; and his word giveth us the strongest

assurance of it. So that whether we exercise the faith of Christians, or the reason of men, we must acknowledge the hand of God, yea, his wisdom and goodness, in removing our acquaintance into darkness.—*Job Orton, 1717-1783.*

Verse 18. *Mine acquaintance late darkness. Rather, my acquaintanceship is darkness, that is, darkness is all I have to converse with; my circle of acquaintance is comprised in blank darkness.—Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 18. To be discountenanced or coldly treated by Christian friends, is often a consequence of a believer's having forfeited his spiritual comfort. When the Lord is angry with his rebellious child, and is chastening him, he not only giveth Satan leave to trouble him, but permits some of the saints who are acquainted with him, to discountenance him, and by their cold treatment of him, to add to his grief. When the father of a family resolves the more effectually to correct his obstinate child, he will say to the rest of the household, "Do not be familiar with him; shew him no countenance; put him to shame." In like manner, when the Lord is smiting, especially with spiritual trouble, his disobedient child, he, as it were, saith to others of his children, "Have for a season no familiarity with him; treat him with coldness and neglect; in order that he may be ashamed, and humbled for his iniquity." Job, under his grievous affliction, complained thus, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me", & c. (Job 19:13-19). And likewise Heman, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness" When the favour of God to the soul is clouded, the comfort of Christian society is also obscured. When He frowns on one, his children commonly appear to frown likewise; and when he makes himself strange to one, so for the most part do they. If a holy man, then, under trouble of spirit, begins to be treated with disregard, and even with contempt, by some of his Christian brethren, he ought not to be surprised; neither should he take occasion to be angry, or to quarrel with them; but he should look above them, and take the afflictive dispensation, only out of the hand of the Lord, as a necessary part of the chastisement intended for him. He ought to say with respect to them, as David concerning Shimei, "The Lord hath bidden them;" or, as Heman did, "*THOU hast put away my acquaintance far from me.*"—*John Colquhoun.*

Verse 18. The very rhythm of the last line shows that the piece is not complete. The ear remains in suspense; until the majestic Ps 89:1-52 shall burst upon it like a bright Resurrection morning.—*William Kay.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. Confidence in prayer,—*"God of my salvation."*
2. Earnestness in prayer,—*"I have cried."*
3. Perseverance in prayer,—*"Day and night."*—*G.R.*

Verse 2.—Prayer as an ambassador.

1. An audience sought, or the benefit of access.
2. Attention entreated, or the blessing of success.
3. The Process explained, or prayer comes and God inclines.

Verse 3.

1. A good man is exposed to inward troubles.
 - (a) To soul troubles.
 - (b) To the soul full of troubles.
2. To outward troubles. "My life", etc.
 - (a) From outward persecutions.
 - (b) From inward griefs.
3. To both inward and outward troubles at the same time. "Soul full", etc., "*and* my life", etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 4. (*last clause*).—Conscious weakness, painfully felt, at certain times, in various duties. Intended to keep us humble, to drive us to our knees, and to bring greater glory to God.

Verses 4-5.

1. The resemblance of the righteous man to the wicked.
 - (a) In natural death.
 - (b) In bodily infirmities.
2. His difference from them. He is "counted with them" but is not of them.
 - (a) He experiences natural death only.
 - (b) His strength is perfected in weakness.
 - (c) For him to die is gain.—*G.R.*

Verses 6-7.

1. What the afflictions of the people of God appear to be to themselves.
 - (a) Extreme,—"*laid me in the lowest pit.*"
 - (b) Inexplicable,—"*in darkness.*"
 - (c) Humiliating,—"*in the deeps.*"
 - (d) Severe,—"*thy wrath lieth hard.*"
 - (e) Exhaustive,—"*afflicted with all thy waves.*"
2. What they are in reality.
 - (a) Not extreme but light.
 - (b) Not inexplicable, but according to the will of God.
 - (c) Not humiliating, but elevating. "*Humble yourselves under*", etc.
 - (d) Not severe but gentle. Not in anger but in love.
 - (e) Not exhaustive but partial. Not all thy waves, but a few ripples only. The slight motion in the

harbour when there is a boisterous ocean beyond.—*G.R.*

Verse 8. (*last clause*).—This may describe us when despondency is chronic, when trouble is overwhelming, when sickness detains us at home, when we feel restrained in Christian labour, or hampered in prayer.

Verse 9.

1. Sorrow before God,—“Mine eye”, etc.
2. Prayer to God,—“have called”, etc.
3. Waiting for God,—“called daily”.
4. Dependence on God,—“I have stretched”, etc. These hands can do nothing without thee.—*G.R.*

Verses 10-12.

1. The supposition.
 - (a) That a child of God should be wholly dead.
 - (b) That he should remain forever in the grave.
 - (c) That he should be destroyed.
 - (d) That he should always remain in darkness.
 - (e) That he should be entirely forgotten, as though he had never existed.
2. The consequences involved in this supposition.
 - (a) God's wonders to them would cease.
 - (b) His praise from them would be lost.
 - (c) His lovingkindness to them would be unknown.
 - (d) His faithfulness destroyed.
 - (e) His wonders to them would be lost to others.
 - (f) His former righteousness to them would be forgotten.
3. The plea founded upon these consequences,—“Wilt thou”, etc. It cannot be that thy praise for grace shown to thy people can be lost, and none can render it but themselves. “Then what wilt thou do unto thy great name?”—*G.R.*

Verse 13.

1. Blessings delayed to prayer,—“Unto thee”, etc.
2. Blessings anticipated by prayer,—“in the morning”, etc. Daily mercies anticipated by morning prayers.—*G.R.*

Verse 13. (*last clause*).—The advantages of early morning prayer meetings.

Verse 14.

1. Afflictions are mysterious though just.
2. Just though mysterious.—*G.R.*

Verse 14. Solemn enquiries, to be followed by searching examinations, by sorrowful confessions,

stern self denials, and sweet restorations.

Verse 15.

1. The afflictions of the righteous may be long continued though severe. "I am afflicted, etc., from my youth up."
2. Severe though long continued.
 - (a) Painful,—"afflicted."
 - (b) Threatening,—"ready to die."
 - (c) Terrific,—"suffer thy terrors."
 - (d) Distracting,—"I am", etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 15. The personal sufferings of Christ for the salvation of his people.—*Sermon by Robert Hawker. Works, Vol. 4. pg 91.*

Verse 16.

1. Good men are often tried men.
2. Tried men frequently misjudge the Lord's dealings.
3. The Lord does not take them at their word, he is better than their fears.—*G.R.*

Verse 18. The loss of friends intended to remind us of our own mortality, to wean us from earth, to lead us to more complete trust in the Lord, to chasten us for sin, and to draw us away to the great meeting place.

Verse 18. The words of our text will lead us to remark that,

1. The happiness of life greatly depends on intimate friendships.
2. The trial of parting with intimate friends is exceedingly painful.
3. In this, as indeed in every affliction, the best consolation is drawn from a belief in, and meditation upon, God's governing providence.—*Joseph Lathrop, 1845.*

Psalm 89

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

We have now reached the majestic *Covenant Psalm*, which, according to the Jewish arrangement closes the third book of the Psalms. It is the utterance of a believer, in presence of great national disaster, pleading with his God, urging the grand argument of covenant engagements, and expecting deliverance and help, because of the faithfulness of Jehovah.

TITLE. *Maschil*. This is most fitly called a Maschil, for it is most instructive. No subject is more

important or is so fully the key to all theology as that of the covenant. He who is taught by the Holy Spirit to be clear upon the covenant of grace will be a scribe well instructed in the things of the kingdom; he whose doctrinal theory is a mangle of works and grace is scarcely fit to be teacher of babes. *Of Ethan the Ezrahite*: perhaps the same person as Jeduthun, who was a musician in David's reign; was noted for his wisdom in Solomon's days, and probably survived till the troubles of Rehoboam's period. If this be the man, he must have written this Psalm in his old age, when troubles were coming thick and heavy upon the dynasty of David and the land of Judah; this is not at all improbable, and there is much in the Psalm which looks that way.

DIVISION. The sacred poet commences by affirming his belief in the faithfulness of the Lord to his covenant with the house of David, and makes his first pause at Ps 89:4. He then praises and magnifies the name of the Lord for his power, justice, and mercy, Ps 89:5-14. This leads him to sing of the happiness of the people who have such a God to be their glory and defence, Ps 89:15-18. He rehearses the terms of the covenant at full length with evident delight, Ps 89:19-37, and then mournfully pours out his complaint and petition, Ps 89:38-51, closing the whole with a hearty benediction and a double Amen. May the Holy Spirit greatly bless to us the reading of this most precious Psalm of instruction.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.* A devout resolve, and very commendable when a man is exercised with great trouble on account of an apparent departure of the Lord from his covenant and promise. Whatever we may observe abroad or experience in our own persons, we ought still to praise God for his mercies, since they most certainly remain the same, whether we can perceive them or not. Sense sings but now and then, but faith is an eternal songster. Whether others sing or not, believers must never give over; in them should be constancy of praise, since God's love to them cannot by any possibility have changed, however providence may seem to frown. We are not only to believe the Lord's goodness, but to rejoice in it evermore; it is the source of all our joy, and as it cannot be dried up, so the stream ought never to fail to flow, or cease to flash in sparkling crystal of song. We have not one, but many *mercies* to rejoice in, and should therefore multiply the expressions of our thankfulness. It is *Jehovah* who deigns to deal out to us our daily benefits, and he is the all sufficient and immutable God; therefore our rejoicing in him must never suffer diminution. By no means let his exchequer of glory be deprived of the continual revenue which we owe to it. Even time itself must not bound our praises—they must leap into eternity; he blesses us with eternal mercies—let us sing unto him *forever*.

With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all *generations*. The utterances of the present will instruct future generations. What Ethan sung is now a text book for Christians, and will be so as

long as this dispensation shall last. We ought to have an eye to posterity in all that we write, for we are the schoolmasters of succeeding ages. Ethan first spoke with his mouth that which he recorded with his pen—a worthy example of using both means of communication; the mouth has a warmer manner than the pen, but the pen's speech lives longest, and is heard farther and wider. While reading this Psalm, such in the freshness of the style, that one seems to hear it gushing from the poet's mouth; he makes the letters live and talk, or, rather, sing to us. Note, that in this second sentence he speaks of *faithfulness*, which is the mercy of God's mercies—the brightest jewel in the crown of goodness. The grace of an unfaithful God would be a poor subject for music, but unchangeable love and immutable promises demand everlasting songs. In times of trouble it is the divine faithfulness which the soul hangs upon; this is the bower anchor of the soul, its hold fast, and its stay. Because God is, and ever will be, faithful, we have a theme for song which will not be out of date for future generations; it will never be worn out, never be disproved, never be unnecessary, never be an idle subject, valueless to mankind. It will also be always desirable to make it known, for men are too apt to forget it, or to doubt it, when hard times press upon them. We cannot too much multiply testimonies to the Lord's faithful mercy—if our own generation should not need them others will: sceptics are so ready to repeat old doubts and invent new ones that believers should be equally prompt to bring forth evidences both old and new. Whoever may neglect this duty, those who are highly favoured, as Ethan was, should not be backward.

Verse 2. *For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever.* His heart was persuaded of it, and he had affirmed it as an indisputable truth. He was certain that upon a sure foundation the Lord intended to pile up a glorious palace of goodness—a house of refuge for all people, wherein the Son of David should for ever be glorified as the dispenser of heavenly grace. Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. This divine edifice, he felt assured, would tower into the skies, and would be turreted with divine faithfulness even as its foundations were laid in eternal love. God's faithfulness is no thing of earth, for here nothing is firm, and all things savour of the changes of the moon and the fickleness of the sea: heaven is the birthplace of truth, and there it dwells in eternal vigour. As the blue arch above us remains unimpaired by age, so does the Lord's truth; as in the firmament he hangs his covenant bow, so in the upper heavens the faithfulness of God is enthroned in immutable glory. This Ethan said, and this we may say; come what will, mercy and faithfulness are built up by "the Eternal Builder", and his own nature is the guarantee for their perpetuity. This is to be called to mind whenever the church is in trouble, or our own spirits bowed down with grief.

Verse 3. *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant.* This was the ground of the Psalmist's confidence in God's mercy and truth, for he knew that the Lord had made a covenant of grace with David and his seed, and confirmed it by an oath. Here he quotes the very words of God, which were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, and are a condensation of the original

covenant in 2Sa 7:1-29. Well might he write in the former verse, "I have said", when he knew that Jehovah had said, "I have sworn." David was the Lord's elect, and with him a covenant was made, which ran along in the line of his seed until it received a final and never ending fulfilment in "the Son of David." David's house must be royal: as long as there was a sceptre in Judah, David's seed must be the only rightful dynasty; the great "King of the Jews" died with that title above his head in the three current languages of the then known world, and at this day he is owned as king by men of every tongue. The oath sworn to David has not been broken, though the temporal crown is no longer worn, for in the covenant itself his kingdom was spoken of as enduring for ever. In Christ Jesus there is a covenant established with all the Lord's *chosen*, and they are by grace led to be the Lord's *servants*, and then are ordained kings and priests by Christ Jesus. How sweet it is to see the Lord, not only making a covenant, but owning to it in after days, and bearing witness to his own oath; this ought to be solid ground for faith, and Ethan, the Ezrahite, evidently thought it so. Let the reader and writer both pause over such glorious lines, and sing of the mercies of the Lord, who thus avows the bonds of the covenant, and, in so doing, gives a renewed pledge of his faithfulness to it. "*I have*", says the Lord, and yet again "*I have*", as though he himself was nothing loath to dwell upon the theme. We also would lovingly linger over the *ipsissima verba* of the covenant made with David, reading them carefully and with joy. There are thus recorded in 2Sa 7:12-16: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shall sleep with thy fathers, 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 stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." After reading this, let us remember that the Lord has said to us by his servant Isaiah, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Verse 4. *Thy seed will I establish for ever.* David must always have a seed, and truly in Jesus this is fulfilled beyond his hopes. What a seed David has in the multitude which have sprung from him who was both his Son and his Lord. The Son of David is the Great Progenitor, the second Adam, the Everlasting Father, he sees his seed, and in them beholds of the travail of his soul. And build up thy throne to all generations. David's dynasty never decays, but on the contrary, is evermore consolidated by the great Architect of heaven and earth. Jesus is a king as well as a progenitor and his throne is ever being built up—his kingdom comes—his power extends. Thus runs the covenant; and when the church declines, it is ours to plead it before the ever faithful God, as the Psalmist does in the latter verses of this sacred song. Christ must reign, but why is his name blasphemed and his gospel so despised? The more gracious Christians are, the more will they be moved to jealousy by

the sad estate of the Redeemer's cause, and the more will they argue the case with the great Covenant maker, crying day and night before him, "Thy kingdom come." Selah. It would not be meet to hurry on. Rest, O reader, at the bidding of this Selah, and let each syllable of the covenant ring in thine ears; and then lift up the heart and proceed with the sacred poet to tell forth the praises of the Lord.

Verse 5. *And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord.* Looking down upon what God had done, and was about to do, in connection with his covenant of grace, all heaven would be filled with adoring wonder. The sun and moon, which had been made tokens of the covenant, would praise God for such an extraordinary display of mercy, and the angels and redeemed spirits would sing, "as it were, a new song." Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. By which is probably intended the holy ones on earth. So that the "whole family in heaven and earth" would join in the praise. Earth and heaven are one in admiring and adoring the covenant God. Saints above see most clearly into the heights and depths of divine love, therefore they praise its wonders; and saints below, being conscious of their many sins and multiplied provocations of the Lord, admire his faithfulness. The heavens broke forth with music at the wonders of mercy contained in the glad tidings concerning Bethlehem, and the saints who came together in the temple magnified the faithfulness of God at the birth of the Son of David. Since that auspicious day, the general assembly on high and the sacred congregation below have not ceased to sing unto Jehovah, the Lord that keepeth covenant with his elect.

Verse 6. *For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord—*therefore all heaven worships him, seeing none can equal him. Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?—therefore the assemblies of the saints on earth adore him, seeing none can rival him. Until we can find one equally worthy to be praised, we will give unto the Lord alone all the homage of our praise. Neither among the sons of the morning nor the sons of the mighty can any peer be found for Jehovah, yea none that can be mentioned in the same day; therefore he is rightly praised. Since the Lord Jesus, both as God and as man, is far above all creatures, he also is to be devoutly worshipped. How full of poetic fire is this verse! How bold is the challenge! How triumphant the holy boasting! The sweet singer dwells upon the name of Jehovah with evident exultation; to him the God of Israel is God indeed and God alone. He closely follows the language long before rehearsed by Miriam, when she sang, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee?" His thoughts are evidently flying back to the days of Moses and the marvels of the Red Sea, when God was gloriously known by his incommunicable name; there is a ring of timbrels in the double question, and a sound as of the twinkling feet of rejoicing maidens. Have we no poets now? Is there not a man among us who can compose hymns flaming with this spirit? O, Spirit of the living God, be thou the inspirer of some master minds among us!

Verse 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.* The holiest tremble in the presence of the thrice Holy One: their familiarity is seasoned with the profoundest awe. Perfect love casts out the fear which hath torment, and works in lieu thereof that other fear which is akin to joy unutterable. How reverent should our worship be! Where angels veil their faces, men should surely bow in lowliest fashion. Sin is akin to presumptuous boldness, but holiness is sister to holy fear. "And to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." The nearer they are the more they adore. If mere creatures are struck with awe, the courtiers and favourites of heaven must be yet more reverent in the presence of the Great King. God's children are those who most earnestly pray "hallowed be thy name." Irreverence is rebellion. Thoughts of the covenant of grace tend to create a deeper awe of God, they draw us closer to him, and the more his glories are seen by us in that nearer access, the more humbly we prostrate ourselves before his Majesty.

Verse 8. *O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? Or Jehovah, God of Hosts, who is like thee, Mighty Jah.* Alexander remarks, that the infinite superiority of God to men and angels is here expressed, or rather indicated, by an accumulation of descriptive titles. Here we have the name which displays his self existence, the title which denotes his dominion over all his creatures, and an adjective which sets forth the power with which he exercises his sovereignty. Yet this great and terrible God has entered into covenant with men! Who would not reverence him with deepest love? Or to thy faithfulness round about thee. He dwells in faithfulness; it is said to be the girdle of the loins of his only begotten Son, who is the express image of his person. None in all creation is faithful as he is; even his angels might prove faithless if he left them to themselves, but he cannot "lie unto David", or forget to keep his oath. Men often fail in truth because their power is limited, and then they find it easier to break their word than to keep it; but the strong Jehovah is equal to all his engagements, and will assuredly keep them. Unrivalled might and unparalleled truth are wedded in the character of Jehovah. Blessed be his name that it is so.

Verse 9. *Thou rulest the raging of the sea.* Always, even in the hour of ocean's maddest fury, the Lord controls it. At the Red Sea the foaming billows saw their God and stood upright in awe. When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. None else can do this; to attempt it would be madness, but the Lord's "hush" silences the boisterous storm. So did the Lord's Anointed calm the storms of Galilee, for he is Lord of all; so also does the great Ruler of Providence evermore govern the fickle wills of men, and quiet the tumults of the people. As a mother stills her babe to sleep, so the Lord calms the fury of the sea, the anger of men, the tempest of adversity, the despair of the soul, and the rage of hell. "The Lord sitteth upon the floods; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever", and in all his ruling and over ruling he has respect unto his covenant; therefore, although our house be not so with God as our hearts would wish, yet we will rejoice in his covenant ordered in all things and sure, and delight in him as all our salvation and all our desire.

Verse 10. *Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain.* Egypt was crushed like a corpse beneath the chariot wheels of the destroyer: its pomp and glory were broken like the limbs of the dead in battle. Egypt was Israel's ancient foe, and its overthrow wits a theme to which devout minds constantly reverted, as to a subject fit for their most exulting songs. We, too, have seen our Rahab broken, our sins overthrown, and we cannot but unite in the ascription of praise unto the Lord. Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. Thy strength has strewn thy foes dead upon the plain, or compelled them to flee hither and thither in dismay. Jehovah has overthrown his enemies with his own right arm, unaided and alone. Proud Rahab, swelling in her fury like the sea, was utterly broken and scattered before the Lord of Hosts.

Verse 11. *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.* All things are alike God's—rebellious earth as well as adoring heaven. Let us not despair of the kingdom of truth; the Lord has not abdicated the throne of earth or handed it over to the sway of Satan. As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. The habitable and cultivated earth, with all its produce, owns the Lord to be both its Creator and Sustainer, builder and upholder.

Verse 12. *The north and the south thou hast created them.* North and south, opposite poles, agree in this—that Jehovah fashioned them. Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name, that is to say, east and west are equally formed by thee, and therefore give thee praise. Turn to all points of the compass, and behold the Lord is there. The regions of snow and the gardens of the sun are his dominions: both the land of the dawning and the home of the setting sun rejoice to own his sway. Tabor was on the west of Jordan and Hermon on the east, and it seems natural to consider these two mountains as representatives of the east and west. Keble paraphrases the passage thus:

"Both Heman moist, and Tabor lone,
They wait on thee with glad acclaim."

Verse 13. *Thou hast a mighty arm,* omnipotence is thine in smiting or uplifting; strong is thy hand, thy power to create and grasp is beyond conception great; and high is thy right hand—thy skill is incomparable, thy favour ennobling, thy working glorious. The power of God so impressed the Psalmist that in many ways he repeated the same thought: and indeed the truth of God's omnipotence is so full of refreshment to gracious hearts that it cannot be too much dwelt upon, especially when viewed in connection with his mercy and truth, as in the following verse.

Verse 14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* They are the basis of the divine government, the sphere within which his sovereignty moves. God as a sovereign is never unjust or unwise. He is too holy to be unrighteous, too wise to be mistaken; this is constant matter for joy to the upright in heart. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face. They are the harbingers and heralds of the Lord; he calls these to the front to deal with guilty and changeful man; he makes them, in the person of the Lord Jesus, to be his ambassadors, and so poor, guilty man is enabled to endure the presence

of his righteous Lord. If mercy had not paved the way, the coming of God to any man must have been swift destruction. Thus has the poet sung the glories of the covenant God. It was meet that before he poured forth his lament he should record his praise, lest his sorrow should seem to have withered his faith. Before we argue our case before the Lord it is most becoming to acknowledge that we know him to be supremely great and good, whatever may be the appearance of his providence; this is such a course as every wise man will take who desires to have an answer of peace in the day of trouble.

Verse 15. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* It is a blessed God of whom the Psalmist has been singing, and therefore they are a blessed people who partake of his bounty, and know how to exult in his favour. Praise is a peculiarly joyful sound, and blessed are those who are familiar with its strains. The covenant promises have also a sound beyond measure precious, and they are highly favoured who understand their meaning and recognise their own personal interest in them. There may also be a reference here to the blowing of trumpets and other glad noises which attended the worship of Jehovah, who, unlike the gods of the heathen was not adored by the shrieks of wretched victims, or the yells and outcries of terror stricken crowds, but by the joyful shouts of his happy people. They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. For them it is joy enough that Jehovah is favourable to them; all day long this contents them and enables them with rigour to pursue their pilgrimage. Only a covenant God could look with favour upon men, and those who have known him in that relationship learn to rejoice in him, yea, to walk with him in fellowship, and to continue in communion with him. If we give God our ear and hear the joyful sound, he will shew us his face and make us glad. While the sun shines, men walk without stumbling as to their feet, and when the Lord smiles on us we live without grief as to our souls.

Verse 16. *In thy name shall they rejoice all the day.* And good cause they have for so doing, for to the soul which, in Christ Jesus, has entered into covenant with God, every attribute is a fountain of delight. There is no hour in the day, and no day in our life, in which we may not rejoice in the name, person, and character of the Lord. We need no other reason for rejoicing. As philosophers could make merry without music, so can we rejoice without carnal comforts; the Lord All sufficient is an all sufficient source of joy. And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. By the Lord's righteous dealings the saints are uplifted in due time, however great may have been the oppression and the depression from which they may have suffered. In the righteousness which the covenant supplies, which is entirely of the Lord, believers are set on high in a secure and blessed position, so that they are full of sacred happiness. If God were unjust, or if he regarded us as being without righteousness, we must be filled with misery, but as neither of these things are so, we are exalted indeed, and would extol the name of the Lord.

Verse 17. *For thou art the glory of their strength.* Surely in the Lord Jehovah have we both righteousness and strength. He is our beauty and glory when we are strong in him, as well as our

comfort and sustenance when we tremble because of conscious weakness in ourselves. No man whom the Lord makes strong may dare to glory in himself, he must ascribe all honour to the Lord alone; we have neither strength nor beauty apart from him. And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. By the use of the word our the Psalmist identifies himself with the blessed people, and this indicates how much sweeter it is to sing in the first person than concerning others. May we have grace to claim a place among those in covenant with God, in Christ Jesus, for then a sense of divine favour will make us also bold and joyous. A creature full of strength and courage lifts up its horn, and so also does a believer become potent, valiant, and daring. The horn was an eastern ornament, worn by men and women, or at least is so at this day, and by the uplifting of this the wearer showed himself to be in good spirits, and in a confident frame of mind: we wear no such outward vanities, but our inward soul is adorned and made bravely triumphant when the favour of God is felt by us. Worldly men need outward prosperity to make them lift up their heads, but the saints find more than enough encouragement in the secret love of God.

Verse 18. *For the Lord is our defence.* Whoever else may defend us, he is our ultimate Defender and Shield. And the Holy one of Israel is our king. He who protects should govern, our defender should be acknowledged as our king. Kings are called the shields of nations, and the God of Israel is both our Ruler and our Defence. Another sense may be that Israel's defender and king was of the Lord, belonging to him and sent by him; even the protectors of the land being themselves protected by the Lord. The title "the Holy One of Israel" is peculiarly delightful to the renewed heart. God is one, we worship none beside. He is holiness itself, the only being who can be called "the Holy One", and in his perfection of character we see the most excellent reason for our faith. He who is holy cannot break his promises, or act unjustly concerning his oath and covenant. Moreover, he is the Holy One of Israel, being specially the God of his own elect, ours by peculiar ties, ours for ever and ever. Who among the saints will not rejoice in the God of election? Are they not indeed a people greatly blessed who can call this God their God for ever and ever?

Verse 19. *Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one.* The Psalmist returns to a consideration of the covenant made with David. The holy one here meant may be either David or Nathan the prophet, but most probably the latter, for it was to him that the word of the Lord came by night. 2Sa 7:4-5. God condescends to employ his gracious ministers to be the means of communication between himself and his favoured ones,—even to King David the covenant was revealed by Nathan the prophet; thus the Lord puts honour upon his ministers. I have laid help upon one that is mighty. The Lord had made David a mighty man of valour, and now he covenants to make him the helper and defender of the Jewish state. In a far fuller sense the Lord Jesus is essentially and immeasurably mighty, and on him the salvation of his people rests by divine appointment, while his success is secured by divine strength being engaged to be with him. Let us lay our faith where God has laid our help. I have

exalted one chosen out of the people. David was God's elect, elect out of the people, as one of themselves, and elect to the highest position in the state. In his extraction, election, and exaltation, he was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus, who is the man of the people, the chosen of God, and the king of his church. Whom God exalts let us exalt. Woe unto those who despise him, they are guilty of contempt of court before the Lord of Hosts, as well as of rejecting the Son of God.

Verse 20. *I have found David my servant.* David was discovered by the Lord among the sheepfolds and recognised as a man of gracious spirit, full of faith and courage, and therefore fit to be leader in Israel. With my holy oil have I anointed him. By the hand of Samuel, David was anointed to be king long before he ascended the throne. The verse must also be expounded of the Prince Emmanuel; he became the servant of the Lord for our sakes, the Father having found for us in his person a mighty deliverer, therefore upon him rested the Spirit without measure, to qualify him for all the offices of love to which he was set apart. We have not a Saviour self appointed and unqualified, but one sent of God and divinely endowed for his work. Our Saviour Jesus is also the Lord's Christ, or anointed. The oil with which he is anointed is God's own oil, and holy oil; he is divinely endowed with the Spirit of holiness.

Verse 21. *With whom my hand shall be established,* or, "with whom my hand shall ever be present." The almightiness of God abides permanently with Jesus in his work as Redeemer and Ruler of his people. Mine arm also shall strengthen him. The fulness of divine power shall attend him. This covenant promise ought to be urged in prayer before the Lord, for the great lack of the church at this time is power. We have everything except the divine energy, and we must never rest content until we see it in full operation among us. Jesus must be among us, and then there will be no lack of force in any of our church agencies.

Verse 22. *The enemy shall not exact upon him;* he shall not be vexed and persecuted as a helpless debtor by an extortionate creditor. Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. Graceless men shall no longer make his life a burden. David had in his earlier history been hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains, and though he had striven in all things to act justly towards Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed, yet Saul was never content with his displays of loyalty, but persecuted him relentlessly. The covenant, therefore, engaged that his life of hardship and oppression should come to an end for ever; it did so in David's own person, and more remarkably still in the life of Solomon his son. Who does not in all this see a type of the Lord Jesus, who though he was once seized for our debts, and also evil entreated by the ungodly, is now so exalted that he can never be exacted upon any more, neither can the fiercest of his enemies vex him again. No Judas can now betray him to death, no Pilate can deliver him to be crucified. Satan cannot tempt him, and our sins cannot burden him.

Verse 23. *And I will beat down his foes before his face*—crushing them and their plans. God himself

thus fights the battles of his Son, and effectually overturns his foes. And plague them that hate him, or *smite his haters*. May none of us learn the terror of this threatening, which is surely being fulfilled upon all those unbelievers who have rejected the Son of God, and died in the hardness of their hearts. The prophecy is also having another fulfilment in the overthrow of systems of error, and the vexation caused to their promoters. There is no such plague to bad men as the prosperity of the cause of Jesus.

Verse 24. *But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him.* These were the two attributes of which the Psalmist began to sing in Ps 89:1, doubtless because he saw them to be most prominent in the covenant which he was about to plead with God. To David and his seed, God was gracious and faithful, and though through their sin the literal kingdom lost all its glory and the dynasty became obscure, yet the line remained unbroken and more than all its former glory was restored by the enthronisation of Him who is Prince of the kings of the earth, with whom the Lord's mercy and faithfulness remain for ever. All who are in Jesus should rejoice, for they shall prove in their own experience the faithful mercy of the Lord. And in my name shall his horn be exalted. Gloriously does the Lord Jesus lift up his head, raised to the highest place of honour by the mandate of the Father. David and Solomon in their dignity were but faint types of the Lord Jesus, who is far above all principalities and powers. The fullest exaltation of the horn of Jesus is yet to come in that millennial period which is hastening on.

Verse 25. *I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.* He shall reach far beyond the little rivers which stand for boundaries in Palestine; he shall by his power embrace all lands from sea to sea. He shall have his hand in the ocean and his right hand in earth's mightiest streams. As monarchs hold in their hands a globe to set forth their dominion over the earth, he shall grasp the far more unconquerable sea, and be Lord of all. This power is to be given him of the Lord, and is to be abiding; so we understand the words "*I will set.*" The verse has in it a voice of good cheer concerning sailors, and all dwellers on the waters; the hand of Jesus is over them, and as he found his first apostles by the sea, so we trust he still finds earnest disciples there.

Verse 27. *Also I will make him my firstborn.* Among the kings the seed of David were to be most favoured and indulged with most love and paternal regard from God: but in Jesus we see this in the highest degree verified, for he has preeminence in all things, inasmuch as by inheritance he has a more glorious name than any other, and is higher than the kings of the earth. Who can rival heaven's Firstborn? The double portion and the government belong to him. Kings are honoured when they honour him, and those who honour him are kings! In the millennial glory it shall be seen what the covenant stores up for the once despised Son of David, but even now faith sees him exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords. Lo, we bow before thee, thou Heir of all things! Our sheaves do obeisance to thy sheaf. All thy mother's children call thee blessed. Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.

Jesus is no servant of princes, nor would he have his bride, the church, degrade herself by bowing before kings and eating the bread of a pensioner at their hands. He and his kingdom are higher than the kings of the earth. Let the great ones of the earth be wise and submit to him, for he is Lord, and he is the governor among the nations.

Verse 28. *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.* The kings of David's line needed mercy, and mercy prevented their house from utterly perishing until the Son of Mary came. He needs no mercy for himself, but he is a representative man, and the mercy of God is required for those who are in him: for such mercy is kept for ever. And my covenant shall stand fast with him. With Jesus the covenant is ratified both by blood of sacrifice and by oath of God, it cannot be cancelled or altered, but is an eternal verity, resting upon the veracity of one who cannot lie. What exultation fills our hearts as we see that the covenant of grace is *sure* to all the seed, because it stands fast with him with whom we are indissolubly united.

Verse 29. *His seed also will I make to endure for ever.* David's seed lives on in the person of the Lord Jesus, and the seed of Jesus in the persons of believers. Saints are a race that neither death nor life can kill. Rome and its priests, with their inquisition and other infernal cruelties, have laboured to exterminate the covenant seed, but "vain is their rage, their efforts vain." As long as God lives, his people must live. And his throne, as the days of heaven. Jesus reigns on, and will reign till the skies shall fall, yea, and when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, his throne shall stand. What a blessed covenant is this! Some commentators talk of conditions, but we fail to see any; the promises are as absolute as they can possibly be, and if any conditions as to the conduct of the favoured individuals can be conceived, they are disposed of in the succeeding verses.

Verse 30. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments.* It was possible, terribly possible, that David's posterity might wander from the Lord; indeed they did so, but what then? Was the mercy of God to pass away from David's seed?—far from it. So, too, the seed of the Son of David are apt to start aside, but are they therefore cast away? Not a single word gives liberty for such an idea, but the very reverse. Expositors in their fear of Calvinistic doctrine shake off the fear of adding to the word of God, or else they would not have spent their time in talking about "the conditions" of this absolutely unconditional covenant.

Verse 31. *If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments.* The dreadful "if" is suggested again, and the sad case is stated in other forms. But if it should be so, what then? Death and rejection? Ah, no; Blessed be God, No! If their sin be negative or positive, if it be forsaking or profanation; if either judgments or commandments or both be violated, yet there is not a word as to final destruction, but the very reverse. Legalism will import its ifs, but the Lord slays the ifs as fast as they rise. Eternal shalls and wills make glorious havoc among the ifs and buts.

Verse 32. *Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod.* Not with the sword, not with death and destruction; but still with a smarting, tingling, painful rod. Saints must smart if they sin: God will see to that. He hates sin too much not to visit it, and he loves his saints too well not to chasten them. God never plays with his rod, he lays it well home to his children, he *visits* them with it in their houses, bodies, and hearts, and makes them know that he is grieved with their ways. He smites home and chastens their iniquity with stripes, which are either many or few in proportion as the heart is properly affected by them. The rod is a covenant blessing, and is meant to be used. As sin is so frequent, the rod never rests long together; in God's family the rod is not spared, or the children would be spoiled.

Verse 33. *Nevertheless.* And a glorious nevertheless too! *Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him.* O glorious fear killing sentence! This crowns the covenant with exceeding glory. Mercy may seem to depart from the Lord's chosen, but it shall never altogether do so. Jesus still enjoys the divine favour, and we are in him, and therefore under the most trying circumstances the Lord's lovingkindness to each one of his chosen will endure the strain. If the covenant could be made void by our sins it would have been void long ere this; and if renewed its tenure would not be worth an hour's purchase if it had remained dependent upon us. God may leave his people, and they may thereby suffer much and fall very low, but utterly and altogether he never can remove his love from them; for that would be to cast a reflection upon his own truth, and this he will never allow, for he adds, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Man fails in all points, but God in none. To be faithful is one of the eternal characteristics of God, in which he always places a great part of his glory: his truth is one of his peculiar treasures and crown jewels, and he will never endure that it should be tarnished in any degree. This passage sweetly assures us that the heirs of glory shall not be utterly cast off. Let those deny the safety of the saints who choose to do so, we have not so learned Christ. We believe in the gospel rod, but not in the penal sword for the adopted sons.

Verse 34. *My covenant will I not break.* It is his own covenant. He devised it, drew up the draft of it, and voluntarily entered into it: he therefore thinks much of it. It is not a man's covenant, but the Lord claims it as his own. It is an evil thing among men for one to be a "covenant breaker", and such an opprobrious epithet shall never be applicable to the Most High. Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Alterations and afterthoughts belong to short sighted beings who meet with unexpected events which operate upon them to change their minds, but the Lord who sees everything from the beginning has no such reason for shifting his ground. He is besides immutable in his nature and designs, and cannot change in heart, and therefore not in promise. A word once given is sacred; once let a promise pass our lips and honesty forbids that we should recall it,—unless indeed the thing promised be impossible, or wicked, neither of which can happen with the promises of God. How consoling it is to see the Lord thus resolute. He, in the words before us, virtually reasserts his covenant and rehearses his engagements. This he does at such length, and with such reiteration,

that it is evident he takes pleasure in that most ancient and solemn contract. If it were conceivable that he had repented of it, he would not be found dwelling upon it, and repeating it with renewed emphasis.

Verse 35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.* Because he could swear by no greater he swore by himself, and by that peculiar attribute which is his highest glory, being the subject of threefold adoration by all the hosts of heaven. God here pledges the crown of his kingdom, the excellent beauty of his person, the essence of his nature. He does as good as say that if he ceases to be true to his covenant he will have forfeited his holy character. What more can he say? In what stronger language can he express his unalterable adherence to the truth of his promise? An oath is the end of all strife; it ought to be the end of all doubt on our part. We cannot imagine that God could lie, yet he puts it so—that if the covenant were not kept by him, he would regard it as a lie. Here is ground for strong confidence; may our faith be of such a nature as these assurances will warrant.

Verse 36. *His seed shall endure for ever.* David's line in the person of Jesus is an endless one, and the race of Jesus, as represented in successive generations of believers, shows no sign of failure. No power, human or Satanic, can break the Christian succession; as saints die others shall rise up to fill their places, so that till the last day, the day of doom, Jesus shall have a seed to serve him. And his throne as the sun before me. In our Lord Jesus the dynasty of David remains upon the throne. Jesus has never abdicated, nor gone into banishment. He reigns, and must reign so long as the sun continues to shine upon the earth. A seed and a throne are the two great promises of the covenant, and they are as important to us as to our Lord Jesus himself; for we are the seed who must endure for ever, and we are protected and ennobled by that King whose royalties are to last for ever.

Verse 37. *It shall be established for ever as the moon.* The kingdom may wax and wane to mortal eyes, but it shall still abide as long as the moon walks in her silver beauty. And as a faithful witness in heavens. The most stable part of the universe is selected as a type of Messiah's kingdom, and both sun and moon are made to be symbols of its long endurance. Whatever else there is in the sky which faithfully witnesses to the unbending course of nature is also called upon to be a sign of the Lord's truth. When heaven and earth witness, and the Lord himself swears, there remains no excuse for doubting, and faith joyfully reposes in confident expectation.

Verse 38. *But thou hast cast off and abhorred.* The Lord had promised not to cast off the seed of David, and yet it looked as if he had done so, and that too in the most angry manner, as if he loathed the person of the king. God's actions may appear to us to be the reverse of his promises, and then our best course is to come before him in prayer and put the matter before him just as it strikes our apprehension. We are allowed to do this, for this holy and inspired man did so unrebuked, but we must do it humbly and in faith. Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. He deserved the wrath, doubtless, but the Psalmist's point is, that this appeared to him to conflict with the gracious covenant.

He puts the matter plainly, and makes bold with the Lord, and the Lord loves to have his servants so do; it shows that they believe his engagements to be matters of fact.

Verse 39. *Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant.* The dispensations of providence looked as if there had been a disannulling of the sacred compact, though indeed it was not so. Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. The king had been subject to such sorrow and shame that his diadem had been as it were taken from his head, dashed on the earth, and rolled in the mire. He was a theocratic monarch, and the Lord, who gave him his crown, took it from him and treated it with contempt,—at least so it seemed. In these sad days also we may utter the same complaint, for Jesus is not acknowledged in many of the churches, and usurpers have profaned his crown. When we hear of kings and queens set up as "heads of the church", and a priest styled "The Vicar of Christ", while parliaments and courts take upon themselves to legislate for the church of God, we may bitterly lament that things should come to so wretched a pass. Few are there who will acknowledge the crown rights of King Jesus, the very subject is considered to be out of date. O Lord how long!

Verse 40. *Thou hast broken down all his hedges.* He was no longer sheltered from the slanderous assaults of contemptuous tongues; the awe which should guard the royal name had ceased to separate him from his fellows. The "divinity which doth hedge a king" had departed. Hitherto, the royal family had been like a vine within an enclosure, but the wall was now laid low, and the vine was unprotected. It is sorrowfully true that in many places the enclosures of the church have been destroyed, the line of demarcation between the church and the world has almost vanished, and godless men fill the sacred offices. Alas, O Lord God, shall it be always so? Shall thy true vine be deserted by thee, thou great Husbandman? Set up the boundaries again, and keep thy church as a vineyard reserved for thyself. Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. The forts of the land were in the possession of the enemy and were dismantled, the defences of the kingdom were overthrown. Thus has it happened that precious truths, which were the bulwarks of the church, have been assailed by heresy, and the citadels of sound doctrine have been abandoned to the foe. O God, how canst thou suffer this? As the God of truth, wilt thou not arise and tread down falsehood?

Verse 41. *All that pass by the way spoil him.* Idle passers by, who have nothing else to do, must needs have a pluck at this vine, and they do it without difficulty, since the hedges are gone. Woe is the day when every petty reasoner has an argument against religion, and men in their cups are fluent with objections against the gospel of Jesus. Although Jesus on the cross is nothing to them, and they pass him by without inquiring into what he has done for them, yet they can loiter as long as you will, if there be but the hope of driving another nail into his hands and helping to crucify the Lord afresh. They will not touch him with the finger of faith, but they pluck at him with the hand of malice. He is a reproach to his neighbours. David's successors had unneighbourly neighbours, who were a reproach

to good fellowship, because they were so ready to reproach their neighbour. The Jews were much taunted by the surrounding Gentiles when at any time they fell into trouble. At this time the people of God, who follow the Lord fully, are subject to a thousand reproaches, and some of them of the most bitter kind. These reproaches are really the reproach of Christ, and, at bottom, are meant for him. Shall it always be so? Shall he, who deserves to be universally adored, be subject to general scorn? Where, then, O God, is thy faithfulness to thy covenant?

Verse 42. *Thou hast set up the right hand of thy adversaries.* Thou hast done it, *thou*, who hast sworn to give him help and victory, thou hast, instead thereof, sided with his enemies, and lent them thy strength, so that they have gained the supremacy. Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. They are boasting over him, and are glorying in his defeat, and this is done by thyself. O God,—how is this? Where is the covenant? Hast thou forgotten thine own pledges and promises?

Verse 43. *Also turned the edge of his sword.* When he goes to war he is as unsuccessful as though his sword refused to cut, and gave way like a sword of lead. His weapons fail him. And hast not made him to stand in the battle. His heart fails him as well as his sword—he wavers, he falls. This has happened even to naturally brave men—a terrible dread has unmanned them. At this present the church has few swords of true Jerusalem metal; her sons are pliable, her ministers yield to pressure. We need men whose edge cannot be turned, firm for truth, keen against error, sharp towards sin, cutting their way into men's hearts. Courage and decision are more needed now than ever, for charity towards heresy is the fashionable vice, and indifference to all truth, under the name of liberal mindedness, is the crowning virtue of the age. The Lord send us men of the school of Elias, or, at least, of Luther and Knox.

Verse 44. *Thou hast made his glory to cease.* The brightness of his reign and the prosperity of his house are gone, his fame is tarnished, his honour disgraced. And cast his throne down to the ground. He has lost his power to govern at home or to conquer abroad. This happened to kings of David's line, and, more grievous to tell, it is happening in these days to the visible kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Where are the glories of Pentecost? Where is the majesty of the Reformation? Where does his kingdom come among the sons of men? Woe is unto us, for the glory has departed, and the gospel throne of Jesus is hidden from our eyes!

Verse 45. *The days of his youth hast thou shortened.* The time of the king's energy was brief, he grew feeble before his time. Thou hast covered him with shame. Shame was heaped upon him because of his premature decay and his failure in arms. This was very grievous to the writer of this Psalm, who was evidently a most loyal adherent of the house of David. In this our day we have to bemoan the lack of vigour in religion—the heroic days of Christianity are over, her raven locks are sprinkled with untimely grey. Is this according to the covenant? Can this be as the Lord has promised? Let us plead with the righteous Judge of all the earth, and beseech him to fulfil his word

wherein he has promised that those who wait upon him shall renew their strength. Selah. The interceding poet takes breath amid his lament, and then turns from describing the sorrows of the kingdom to pleading with the Lord.

Verse 46. *How long, Lord?* The appeal is to Jehovah, and the argument is the length of the affliction endured. Chastisement with a rod is not a lengthened matter, therefore he appeals to God to cut short the time of tribulation. Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Hast thou not promised to appear for thine servant—wilt thou then for ever forsake him? Shall thy wrath burn like fire? Shall it go on and on evermore till it utterly consume its object? Be pleased to set a bound! How far wilt thou go? Wilt thou burn up the throne which thou hast sworn to perpetuate? Even thus we would entreat the Lord to remember the cause of Christ in these days. Can he be so angry with his church as to leave her much longer? How far will he suffer things to go? Shall truth die out, and saints exist no more? How long will he leave matters to take their course? Surely he must interpose soon, for, if he do not, true religion will be utterly consumed, as it were, with fire.

Verse 47. *Remember how short my time is.* If so brief, do not make it altogether bitter. If thine anger burn on it will outlast this mortal life, and then there will be no time for thy mercy to restore me. Some expositors ascribe these words, and all the preceding verses, to the state of the Lord Jesus in the days of his humiliation, and this gives an instructive meaning; but we prefer to continue our reference all through to the church, which is the seed of the Lord Jesus, even as the succeeding kings were the seed of David. We, having transgressed, are made to feel the rod, but we pray the Lord not to continue his stripes lest our whole life be passed in misery. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? If the Lord do not shine upon his work we live for nothing—we count it no longer life if his cause does not prosper. We live if the King lives, but not else. Everything is vanity if religion be vanity. If the kingdom of heaven should fail, everything is a failure. Creation is a blot, providence an error, and our own existence a bell, if the faithfulness of God can fail and his covenant of grace can be dissolved. If the gospel system can be disproved, nothing remains for us or any other of the sons of men, which can render existence worth the having.

Verse 48. *What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?* All must die. None of our race can answer to the question here propounded except in the negative; there is none that can claim to elude the arrows of death. Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Neither by strength, wisdom, nor virtue can any man escape the common doom, for to the dust return we must. Since then we must all die, do not make this life all wretchedness, by smiting us so long, O Lord. Thy Son our covenant Head died, and so also shall we; let us not be so deserted of thee in this brief span that we shall be quite unable to testify to thy faithfulness: make us not feel that we have lived in vain. Thus the brevity of life and the certainty of death are turned into pleas with the Most High. Selah. Here we rest again, and proceed to further pleadings.

Verse 49. *Lord, where are thy former loving kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?*

Here he comes to grand pleading, hand to hand work with the covenant angel. We may remind the Lord of his first deeds of love, his former love to his church, his former favour to ourselves. Then may we plead his oath, and beg him to remember that he has sworn to bless his chosen: and we may wrestle hard also, by urging upon him his own character, and laying hold upon his inviolable truth. When things look black we may bring forth our strong reasons, and debate the case with our condescending God, who has himself said, "Come now, and let us reason together."

Verse 50. *Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants.* By reason of their great troubles they were made a mock of by ungodly men, and hence the Lord's pity is entreated. Will a father stand by and see his children insulted? The Psalmist entreats the Lord to compassionate the wretchedness brought upon his servants by the taunts of their adversaries, who jested at them on account of their sufferings. How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people. The Psalmist himself laid the scorn of the great and the proud to heart. He felt as if all the reproaches which vexed his nation were centred in himself, and therefore in sacred sympathy with the people he poured out his heart. We ought to weep with those that weep; reproach brought upon the saints and their cause ought to burden us: if we can hear Christ blasphemed, and see his servants insulted, and remain unmoved, we have not the true Israelite's spirit. Our grief at the griefs of the Lord's people may be pleaded in prayer, and it will be acceptable argument. There is one interpretation of this verse which must not be passed over; the original is, Remember my bearing in my bosom all the many nations; and this may be understood as a pleading of the church that the Lord would remember her because she was yet to be the mother of many nations, according to the prophecy of Ps 77:1-20. She was as it were ready to give birth to nations, but how could they be born if she herself died in the meanwhile? The church is the hope of the world; should she expire, the nations would never come to the birth of regeneration, but must abide in death.

Verse 51. *Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord.* Here is another forcible point; the scoffers are the Lord's enemies as well as ours, and their reproach falls upon him as well as upon us; therefore we cry for the Lord's interposition. When Jehovah's own name is in the quarrel, surely he will arise. Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. Tracking him and finding occasion to blaspheme at every turn; not only watching his words and actions, but even his harmless steps. Neither Christ nor his church can please the world, whichever way we turn scoffers will rail. Does this verse refer to the oft repeated sarcasm—"Where is the promise of his coming?" Is the reproach aimed at the delays of the Messiah, those long expected footfalls which as yet are unheard? O Lord, how long shall this threadbare taunt continue? How long? How long?

"Come, for creation groans
Impatient of thy stay,

Worn out with these long years of ill,
These ages of delay."
"Come, in thy glorious might,
Come with the iron rod,
Scattering thy foes before thy face,
Most Mighty Son of God."

Verse 52. *Blessed be the Lord for evermore.* He ends where he began; he has sailed round the world and reached port again. Let us bless God before we pray, and while we pray, and when we have done praying, for he always deserves it of us. If we cannot understand him, we will not distrust him. When his ways are beyond our judgment we will not be so foolish as to judge; yet we shall do so if we consider his dealings to be unkind or unfaithful. He is, he must be, he shall be, for ever, our blessed God. Amen, and Amen. All our hearts say so. So be it, Lord, we wish it over and over again. Be thou blessed evermore.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The present Psalm makes a pair with the preceding one. It is a spiritual Allegro to that Penseroso...That Psalm was a dirge of Passion Tide, this Psalm is a carol of Christmas.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm. There are many passages in this Psalm which do clearly evidence that it is to be interpreted of Christ; yea, there are many things in this Psalm that can never be clearly, pertinently, and appositely applied to any but Jesus Christ. For a taste, see Ps 89:19 *"I have laid help upon one that is mighty"*, mighty to pardon, reconcile, to justify, to save, to bring to glory; suitable to that of the Apostle, Heb 7:25, "He is able to save to the uttermost"—that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly, completely, fully, continually, perpetually. Christ is a thorough Saviour, a mighty Saviour: Isa 63:1, "Mighty to save." There needs none to come after him to finish the work which he hath begun: Ps 89:19, *I have exalted one chosen out of the people*, which is the very title given to our Lord Jesus: Isa 62:1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect", or chosen one, "in whom my soul delighteth": Ps 89:20, *I have fouled David my servant.* Christ is very frequently called by that name, as being most dearly beloved of God, and most highly esteemed and valued by God, and as being typified by him both as king and prophet of his church: Ps 89:20, *With my holy oil have I anointed him*; suitable to that of Christ; Lu 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor"; and therefore we need not doubt of the excellency, authority, certainty, and sufficiency of the gospel: Ps 89:27, *I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.* Christ is the firstborn of every creature, and in all things hath the preeminence: Ps 89:29, *His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.* This is chiefly spoken of

Christ and his kingdom. The aspectable heaven is corruptible, but the kingdom of heaven is eternal; and such shall be Christ's seed, throne and kingdom: Ps 89:36, *His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me*. "Christ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand", Isa 53:10. *And his throne as the sun before me*; that is, perpetual and glorious, as the Chaldee explains it, *shall shine as the sun*. Other kingdoms and thrones have their times and their turns, their rise and their ruins, but so hath not the kingdom and throne of Jesus Christ. Christ's dominion is "an everlasting dominion", which shall not pass away; "and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed", Da 7:13-14. I might give further instances out of this Psalm, but enough is as good as a feast. New saith God, "I have made a covenant with him; "so then there is a covenant that God the Father hath made with Christ the Mediator; which covenant, the Father engages to the Son, shall stand fast, there shall be no cancelling or disannulling of it. God the Father hath not only made a covenant of grace with the saints in Christ, but he has also made a covenant of redemption, as we call it for distinction sake, with Jesus Christ himself: "My covenant shall stand fast with him; " that is, with Christ, as we have fully demonstrated.—*Thomas Brooks*.

Verse 1. This one short verse contains the summary, pith, and argument of the whole long Psalm; wherein observe *The Song's Ditty, the lovingkindness and truth of the Lord*, manifested unto the whole world generally, to David's house (that is, the church) especially. *The Singer's Duty, magnifying the mercies of God always, even from one generation to another*. And by all means; with his *mouth*, for that is expressed in this verse; with his *mind*, for that is implied in the next—*I have said*, etc., that is, believed in my heart, and therefore spake it with my tongue, Ps 116:10. "For out of the heart's abundance the mouth speaketh", Mt 12:34.—*John Boys*.

Verse 1. *I will sing*. It is to be observed that he does not say, I will *speak* of the goodness of the Lord; but, I will sing. The celebration of the divine goodness has joined with itself the joy and exultation of a pious mind, which cannot be poured forth better than in song. That pleasantness and exuberance of a happy spirit, which by singing is instilled into the ears of the listeners, has a certain wonderful power of moving the affections; so that not in vain were pious minds taught by the Holy Spirit to inculcate the wonderful work of God in songs composed for this purpose, to commit them to memory and to appoint them to be sung.—*Musculus*.

Verse 1. *I will sing*. The Psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the Psalm with songs of praise; for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks. We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining: but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving; and in these verses we find that which will be in matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or public account.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 1. *Sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*. S. Gregory the Great raises the question here as to

how a perpetual singing of the mercies of God is compatible with unalloyed bliss in heaven, inasmuch as the thought of mercy connotes the memory of sin and sorrow, which needed mercy, whereas Isaiah saith that "the former troubles are forgotten", and "the former things shall not be remembered, nor come upon the heart" (Isa 65:16-17). And he replies that it will be like the memory of past sickness in time of health, without stain, without grief, and serving only to heighten the felicity of the redeemed, by the contrast with the past, and to increase their love and gratitude towards God. And so sings the Cluniac: (Bernard of Clairvaux.)

"Their breasts are filled with gladness,
Their mouths are tuned to praise,
What time, now safe for ever,
On former sins they gaze:
The fouler was the error,
The sadder was the fall,
The ampler are the praises
Of him who pardoned all."

Note, too, that he says, "with *my* mouth", not with that of any deputy; *I will make known*, not secretly or timidly, not in a whisper, but boldly preach, *Thy faithfulness*, or *truth*, not my own opinion, far less my own falsehood, but Thy Truth, which is, Thine Only begotten Son.—*Gregory, Bernard, Hugo, and Augustine: quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1. Mercies. The word may be rendered *graces, kindnesses, goodnesses*, and designs the abundance of grace.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1. The mercies. His manifold and sundry mercies: as if he should say, we have tasted of more than one, yea, we have felt all his mercies; I will therefore praise the same for ever. I will sing his mercy for creating this universe, which is *macrocosmos*, a great world; and for making man, which is *microcosmos*, a little world.

1. My song shall set forth his kindness, for that he gave me being.
2. For adding to my being, life, which he denieth unto stones.
3. To life, sense, which he denieth unto plants.
4. To sense, speech and understanding, which he denieth unto brute beasts...

I am exceeding much bound unto God for creating me when I was not; and for preserving me under his wings ever since I was: yet I am more bound to his mercy for redeeming me, for blessing me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ his Son (Eph 1:1-23 3:1-21), for his electing of me, for his calling of me, for his justifying of me, for his sanctifying of me. These graces are the riches of his goodness and glory, *miseriordioe in oeternum*, everlasting mercies, as reaching from everlasting predestination to everlasting glorification. O Lord, I will always sing thy *mercies* in promising, and

ever shew thy *truth* in performing thy promise made to David, thy chosen servant, concerning thy Son, my Saviour, saying, "Thy seed will I establish for ever." So the fathers expound our text: I will ever sing thy mercies, in vouchsafing to send thy Son to visit thy servants, sick to death in sin. First, I will ever sing of thy mercifulness, and then will ever be shewing thy faithfulness. *Neque enim exhiberetur veritas in impletione promissorum nisi proecederet misericordia in remissione peccatorum.* (For truth, in the fulfilment of the promises, would not be shown forth; unless mercy, in the forgiveness of sins, should precede it.) And what is God's mercy set up for ever, and his truth established in the heavens, but that which Isaiah terms, "the sure mercies of David": that is, as Paul construes Isaiah, the holy promise made to David and the promise made to David, is briefly this, "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and set up thy throne from generation to generation."—*John Boys.*

Verse 1. *For ever.* I know some join *in oeternum* to the noun *misercondias*, and not to the verb *cantabo*, making the sense to be this: I will always sing thy mercies which endure for ever. But *always* is referred as well, if not better, unto the verb, *I will sing*: as who would say, Lord, thy mercies are so manifest, and so manifold, so great in their number, and so good in their nature, that I will alway, so long as I have any being, sing praises unto thee. Haply some will object, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth", (Isa 40:6-7). David being persecuted by Saul, said, "There is but a step between me and death", (1Sa 20:3). Nay, David, thy life is shorter than a stride, but "a span long", as thyself witnesseth, Ps 39:5. How can he then that begs his bread but for a day promise to spend his breath in magnifying the Lord for ever? Answer is made, that the prophet will not only commend the mercies of the Lord in word, but also commit them unto writing. *Ut sciat hoec oetas, posteritasque legat* (Eobanus Hessus.) (*that this age may know, and that posterity may read.*) As the tongue of the prophet is termed elsewhere "the pen of a writer"; so the writing of the Prophet is here termed *his mouth*, as Euthymeus upon the place (Ac 4:25), *Liber Psalmorum os David* (*The Book of Psalms is the mouth of David*). He doth intend to note the mercies of God, and to set forth his truth in a book, the which he will leave behind him (as an instrument) to convey the same *from generation to generations*, from the generation of Jews to the generation of Christians. Or from the Old Testament to the New: for the blessed Apostles in their sermons usually cite sentences out of the Psalms. S. Peter telleth us that the gospel was preached unto the dead (1Pe 4:6); so may we say, that the gospel is preached by the dead. For the most ancient fathers, and other judicious authors, who have spent their days in writing learned expositions and godly meditations upon the Holy Scriptures, although they be dead, yet they "sing all the mercies of the Lord, and shew the truth of his word from one generation to another." It is reported in our chronicles of Athelstan, *parum oetati vixit, multum glorioe* (*he lived but little of time, but much of glory*). So many zealous and industrious doctors have lived (in respect of their age) but a little, yet in respect of their acts, a great while, shining still in their works and writings, as lights of the world. Or

the prophet may be said to *sing ever* intentionally, though not actually. For as the wicked, if he could live alway, would sin alway, so the good man (if God should suffer him alway to breathe on earth) would sing alway the mercies of the Lord.—*John Boys*.

Verse 1. *With my mouth.* The author has heard continual praises from a tongue half eaten away with cancer. What use, beloved reader, are you making of your tongue?—*Philip Bennett Power*.

Verse 2. *I have said.* The word *ytrma*, "*I have said*", is used, in the Book of Psalms, to express two things; either a fixed purpose, or a settled opinion of the person speaking. The Psalmist, therefore, delivers the whole of this second verse in his own person, and introduces not God speaking till the next verse.—*Samuel Horsley*.

Verse 2. *I have said*, etc. The perpetuity of mercy is one eminent piece of this Psalm, for with that he begins: *Mercy shall be built up for ever*, etc. And they are the sure mercies of our spiritual David (Christ), he means. Now, to set forth the perpetuity hereof, he first useth words that express firmitude, as *established, built up for ever*, Ps 89:2,4. Then he uses such similitudes as are taken from things which are held most firm and inviolable amongst men, as Ps 89:4, *foedus incidi*, I have cut or engraven my covenant (so in the Hebrew), alluding to what was then in use, when covenants were mutually to be made, such as they intended to be inviolate, and never to be broken; to signify so much, they did engrave and cut them into the most durable lasting matter, as marble, or brass, or the like. You may see this to have been the way of writing in use, as what was to last for ever: as Job 19:23-24. "Oh, that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" And what is that rock or marble here? No other than the heart itself of our gracious and most merciful Jehovah, and his most unalterable and immovable purposes, truth and faithfulness. This is that foundation *in the heavens*, whereon mercy is built up for ever, as Ps 89:2, which (as the Apostle says) "remains for ever"; and so they become "the sure mercies of David", Isa 60:3. Again, solemn oaths amongst men serve to ratify and make things sworn to perpetual. This also is there specified as having been taken by God: "Once have I sworn by my holiness", etc., and sworn by him that cannot lie, and sworn to that end, "to show the immutability of his counsel", Heb 6:17. And not only is the immutability of his mercy illustrated by these things taken from what is firm on earth, but he ascends up to the heavens, and first into the very highest heavens: Ps 89:2, *For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens*: comparing them to an house built not on earth, or upon a foundation of earth, which thieves break through, and violence destroys, but in heaven, whither they cannot reach.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 2. *Mercy shall be built up for ever.* What is this "*mercy*" that is "*built up for ever*"? but the glorious and the gracious scheme, the glorious and the gracious fabric, of our salvation, founded in the eternal purpose of God—carried into execution by the labours and the death of Jesus

Christ—and then applied and brought home to the heart by the illuminating and converting power of the Holy Ghost? This is that "mercy" which is "built up for ever." It was planned from everlasting, and will know no ruin or decay, through the illimitable line of eternity itself. Who is the builder of this fabric? Not man's free will. Not man's own righteousness or wisdom. Not human power nor human skill. Every true believer will here join issue with David, that it is God, and God alone, who builds up the temple of his Church; and who, as the builder of it, is alone entitled to all the glory. The elect constitute and form one grand house of mercy: an house, erected to display and to perpetuate the riches of the Father's free grace, of the Son's atoning merit, and of the Holy Ghost's efficacious agency. This house, contrary to the fate of all sublunary buildings, will never fall down, nor ever be taken down. As nothing can be added to it, so nothing can be diminished from it. Fire cannot injure it; storms cannot overthrow it; age cannot impair it. It stands on a rock, and is immovable as the rock on which it stands—the threefold rock of God's inviolable decree, of Christ's finished redemption, and of the Spirit's never failing faithfulness.—*Augustus Montague Toplady, 1740-1778.*

Verse 2. *Built up.* Mention of a building of mercy, presupposes miserable ruins, and denotes that this building is intended for the benefit of an elect world ruined by Adam's fall. Free grace and love set on foot this building for them, every stone in which, from the lowest to the highest, is mercy to them; from top to bottom, from the foundation stone to the top stone, all is free and rich mercy to them. And the ground of this glorious building is God's covenant with his chosen: *I have made a covenant with my chosen.*—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 2. *Built up.* Former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The mercies that we enjoy this day are founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High.—*John Howe.*

Verse 2. (*last clause*). The meaning of this passage appears to be, that the constancy of the celestial motions, the regular vicissitudes of day and night, and alternations of the seasons, were emblems of God's own immutability.—*R. Warner, 1828.*

Verse 2.

For I have said, Thy mercies rise,
A deathless structure, to the skies:
The heavens were planted by thy hand,
And, as the heavens, Thy truth shall stand.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 3. *I have made a covenant with my chosen.* We must ponder here with pious wonder how God has deigned to enter into a covenant with man, the immortal with the mortal, the most powerful with the weakest, the most just with the most unjust, the richest with the poorest, the most blessed with the most wretched. The prophet wonders that God is mindful of man, and visits the son of man. Of how much greater admiration, I say is it worthy, that they are also joined together, and that not after a

simple fashion, but by the ties of a covenant? If man had affirmed this of himself, that God was united and bound to him by a covenant, who is there that would not have condemned him of temerity? Now God himself is introduced affirming this very thing of himself, that he had made a covenant with man. What saint does not see in this thing, how great the filanyrwpia of God is!—*Musculus*.

Verse 3. *I have made a covenant with my chosen.* On heaven's side is God himself, the party proposer. Though he was the party offended, yet the motion for a covenant comes from him...The Father of mercies saith, "The lost creatures cannot contract for themselves; and if another undertake not for them, they must perish; they cannot choose an undertaker for themselves. I will choose one for them, and I will make a covenant with my chosen." On man's side is God's chosen, or chosen One, for the word of God is singular; the Son, *the last Adam*. Who else as fit to be undertaker on man's side? Who else could have been the Father's choice for this vast undertaking? No angel nor man was capable of it, but *the Mighty One* (Ps 89:19) whom the Father points out to us as his chosen, Isa 13:1.—*Thomas Boston*.

Verses 3-4. I made a covenant with my chosen, etc. Do you suppose that this was spoken to David, in his own person only? No, indeed; but to David as the antitype, figure, and forerunner of Jesus Christ. Hence, the Septuagint version renders it, *I have covenanted* tois eklektis mou *with my elect people*, or with my chosen ones: *i.e.* with them in Christ, and with Christ in their name. *I have sworn unto David my servant*, unto the Messiah, who was typified by David; unto my coeternal Son, who stipulated to take on himself "the form of a servant"; thy seed, *i.e.* all those whom I have given to thee in the decree of election, all those whom thou shalt live and die to redeem, these *will I establish for ever*, so as to render their salvation irreversible and inadmissible: *and build up thy throne*, thy mediatorial throne, as King of saints and covenant Head of the elect, *to all generations*: there shall always be a succession of favoured sinners to be called and sanctified, in consequence of thy federal obedience unto death; and every period of time shall recompense thy covenant sufferings with an increasing revenue of converted souls, until as many as are ordained to eternal life are gathered in. Observe, here, that when Christ received the promise from the Father concerning the establishment of his (*i.e.* of Christ's) throne to all generations, the plain meaning is, that his people shall be thus established; for, consider Christ in his divine capacity as the Son of God, and his throne was already established, and had been from everlasting, and would have continued to be established without end, even if he had never been incarnate at all. Therefore, the promise imports that Christ shall reign, not simply as a person in the Godhead (which he ever did, ever will, and ever must); but relatively, mediatorially, and in his office character, as the deliverer and king of Zion. Hence it follows, that his people cannot be lost: for he would be a poor sort of a king who had or might have no subjects to reign over. Consequently, that "throne" of glory on which Christ sits is already encircled in part, and will at last be completely surrounded and made still more glorious, by that innumerable company, that

general assembly and church of the firstborn who are written in heaven.—*Augustus Montague Toplady.*

Verse 5. *The Heavens*, etc. Now, for this kingdom of his, the heavens are said to praise his wonders, which is spoken of the *angels*, who are often called the heavens, from their place; as in Job it is said, "The heavens are not clean in his sight." And these knowing the wonders of that covenant of grace, they, even they are said to praise; "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord" In the Hebrew it is "thy wonder", or "thy miracle", in the singular number, which, in Eph 3:10, the angels are said to adore: and in Lu 2:14, to "sing glory to the Highest"; for his grace to man is that miracle. Now the material heavens do not praise the mercy of God, or the grace of God, or the covenant of grace, or the throne of grace that is established in the heavens. They understand nothing of Christ; no, they do not so much as materially give occasion to man to praise God for these: and therefore this is meant of the angels; and most interpreters understand the next words of them: *Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints*, angels, and the holy ones made perfect, for there the great congregation is. For even in the heavens, who can be compared to the Lord, where all his angels thus do praise him? *Who among the sons of the mighty*, of all the powers of the earth, *can be likened unto the Lord?* for he is the "King of kings, and he is the Lord of lords; "a God above all gods, even angels themselves, as elsewhere the Psalmist hath it. And he says not only, *There is none like thee*; but, *Who is like unto thee?* his excellency so exceeds. And in Ps 89:7, he is there presented with all his saints and angels round about him, as one that is greatly to be feared, or that is terrible in himself, by reason of his greatness, in this his council and assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him. For saints and angels, they are of his council in heaven (as might be shewn), and encompass the manifestation of his glory there round about.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 5. *Thy wonders*, etc. As the heavens are a proof of God's power, in respect of his first framing them out of nothing; so are they a pattern of God's faithfulness, in their constant and orderly motion according to his word since their framing: *The heavens shall praise thy faithfulness also*. However the power and faithfulness of God may be seen and heard in the work and speech of the heavens by all men, yet are they not observed and hearkened unto except in the Church by God's children: therefore saith he, *They shall praise thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5. *Thy wonders*. Thy wondrousness (*literally*, wonder), not "Thy wondrous works", but "Thy wonderful mysterious nature and being", as separate and distinct from all created beings.—*J.J.S. Perowne.*

Verse 5. *Thy wonders*, etc. It is a wonderful salvation, it is such a salvation as the angels desire to pry into it; and it is such a salvation, that all the prophets desire to pry into it; it is almost six thousand years since all the angels in heaven fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; it is almost six

thousand years since Abel fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; and what think ye is his exercise this day? He is even wondering at this great salvation.—*Andrew Gray*, 1616.

Verse 6. *Who in the heaven?* Who in the sky? Ainsworth reads it. In the clouds, *in nubibus, oequabitur*, is to be equalled, saith Calvin, to Jehovah, *Quis enim in superiore nube par aestimetur Jehova*. Who in the higher clouds is equal to Jehovah, so Tremellius reads it. *Who in the heavens?* i.e., say some, in the starry heavens, among the celestial bodies, sun, moon, or stars; which were adored as gods, not only by the Persians, but also by some idolatrous Jews, because of their brightness and beauty, their lustre and glory. Which of all those famous lamps, and heavenly luminaries, is to be compared to the Father of lights, and Sun of righteousness? They may glisten like glowworms in the night of Paganism, among them who are covered with the mantle of darkness, but when this Sun ariseth, and day appeareth, they all vanish and disappear. "Who in the heavens?" i.e., say others, in the heaven of heavens, the highest, the third heavens, among the celestial spirits, cherubims and seraphims, angels and archangels, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions? Who among the innumerable company of angels? Who among those pure, those perfect spirits, who are the most ancient, the most honourable house of the creation, is to be compared to the Father of Spirits.—*George Swinnock*.

Verse 6. *Who can be compared?* The Dutch have translated these words, *Who can be shadowed with him?* that is, they are not worthy to be accounted shadows unto such a comparison with him.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 6. *Who among the sons of the mighty.* Literally, "Who is he among the sons of" *Alim* (or of Gods, as in Ps 29:1,) i.e., according to Suicer, the powerful, the princes of the earth.—*Daniel Cresswell*.

Verse 7. *God is greatly to be feared.* Ainsworth reads, "God is daunting terrible." The original word is *Uren*, from *Ure arats*, *he was broken, bruised, terrified*. "An epithet of God", says Bythner, "as though breaking all things."—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc*.

Verse 7. *God is greatly to be feared.* The worship of God is to be performed with great fear and reverence: "God is greatly to be feared." Piscator translates it, *Vehementer formidandus*, to be vehemently feared; and opposes it to that formal, careless, trifling, vain spirit, which too often is found in those that approach the Lord in the duties of his worship.—*John Flavel*.

Verse 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.* Those saints of his who walk close with him, have a daunting power in their appearance. I appeal to guilty consciences, to apostates, to professors who have secret haunts of wickedness: sometime when you come but into the presence of one who is a truly gracious godly man or woman whom your conscience tells you walks close with God, doth not even the very sight of such an one terrify you? The very lustre of that holiness you see in such an one strikes upon your conscience. Then you think, such an one walks close with God

indeed, but I have basely forsaken the Lord, and have had such a haunt of wickedness, I have brought dreadful guilt upon my soul since I saw him last. Ecclesiastical stories tell us of Basil, when the officers came to apprehend him, he being then exercised in holy duties, that there was such a majesty and lustre came from his countenance, that the officers fell down backward (as they did who came to apprehend Christ), they were not able to lay hold of him. Surely, when the saints shall be raised in their holiness, when every one of them shall have their hearts filled with holiness, it will cause abundance of fear even in all hearts of those that converse with them.—*Jeremiah Burrows*.

Verse 8. *Thy faithfulness round about thee.* For just as the tyrants of this world move abroad surrounded by impiety, avarice, contempt of God, and, pride, as with a bodyguard, so God sits on his exalted throne, surrounded with majesty, faithfulness, mercy and equal love to all his people, as with a vesture of gold.—*J. Baptista Folengius*.

Verse 8. *Thy faithfulness round about thee.* Whatever he doth, he is mindful of his faithfulness and covenant, before and behind, and on each side; he can look no way, but that is in his eye. And though he employ angels, and send them down into the world, and they stand round about him; yet he hath better harbingers than these—mercy, and truth, and faithfulness, that wait round about him.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 9. *Thou rulest the raging of the sea.* Surely the Spirit of God would have us to take notice, that though the sea be indeed such a giant, such a monster, as will make a heart of oak shake, or a heart of brass melt, yet what is it to God, but an infant? He can bind it and lay it to sleep, even as a little child. And if the great sea be in the hand of God as a little child, what is great to God! and how great is God! What is strong to God! and how strong is God! What or who is too great, or too strong for God to deal with?—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 9. *Thou rulest.* Here under a figure taken from God's providential government, we have an exhibition of the power of God in defeating the efforts of the enemies of his Church. An instance of this, in the literal sense, we have in the appeasing of the storm by our Lord. "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Here we see that God reigns over the sea immediately, and alters or modifies the arrangements of nature according to his sovereign pleasure. That which Jesus did on one occasion is constantly done by the God of providence. He has not left the ocean to be disturbed at random by the winds, nor to be kept in peace by the laws of nature. He rules the raging of the sea. He raises the waves, and he stilleth them. This exhibits a continually working providence. And what he does in providence he does also in his kingdom of grace. He suffers the fury of the enemy to swell against his cause, but he stills it at his pleasure.—*Alexander Carson*.

Verse 10. *Broken; scattered.* God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 10. *Rahab.* The reason why *Egypt* is expressed in Scripture under this word, ariseth from the two significations of it; first, it signifies *strength*, for Egypt was a very strong nation, and therefore the Israelites were reprov'd for going to them for help, and relying upon their strength, which though great in itself, yet should be to them but a broken reed; secondly, it signifieth pride, or the proud; men are usually proud of strength, and *Egypt* being a strong nation, was also a very proud nation.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11. *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.* Therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12. *The north and the south thou hast created them.* etc. The heights of Huttin, commonly fixed on by tradition as the Mount of Beatitudes, appear a little to the west of Tiberias. Over these the graceful top of Mount Tabor is seen, and beyond it the little Hermon, famous for its dews; and still farther, and apparently higher, the bleak mountains of Gilboa, on which David prayed that there might fall no dew nor rain. A view of the position of Tabor and Hermon from such a situation as that which we now occupied, shewed us how accurately they might be reckoned the "*umbilicus terroe*"—the central point of the land, and led us to infer that this is the true explanation of the manner in which they are referred to in the Ps 89:12. It is as if the Psalmist had said North, South, and *all that is between*—or in other words, the whole land from North to South, to its very centre and throughout its very marrow—shall rejoice in thy name.—*R.M. Macheyne.*

Verse 12. *Tabor and Hermon.* These hills, the one to the east and the other to the west, in Canaan, were much frequented by the saints of God. David speaks of the sacred hill of *Hermon*, and compares brotherly love to the dew of it. Ps 42:6 133:3. And *Tabor*, yet more eminent for the memorable spot of Christ's transfiguration, and from whence God the Father proclaimed his perfect love and approbation of Jesus as his dear Son. Well might this hymn, therefore, in allusion to those glorious events, call even the holy hills to rejoice in Jehovah's name, Mt 17:1-5.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 13. *Strong is thy hand; even thy left hand; as much as to say, tu polles utraque manu,* thou hast both hands alike powerful.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* As if the Psalmist had said, "The ornaments with which God is invested, instead of being a robe of purple, a diadem, or a sceptre, are, that he is the righteous and impartial judge of the world, a merciful father, and a faithful protector of his people." Earthly kings, from their having nothing in themselves to procure for them authority, and to give them dignity, are under the necessity of borrowing elsewhere what will invest them therewith; but God, having in himself all sufficiency, and standing in no need of any other helps, exhibits to us the splendour of his own image in his righteousness, mercy, and truth.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* The Holy Ghost alludes to the thrones of earthly princes, which were underpropped with pillars, as Solomon's throne with lions, 1Ki

19:20, that were both a support and an ornament to it. Now, saith the Psalmist, justice and judgment are the pillars upon which God's throne standeth, as Calvin expounds it, the robe and diadem, the purple and sceptre, the regalia with which God's throne is adorned.—*George Swinnock*.

Verse 14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* Jehovah is here exhibited, by the sacred poet, under the character of a Sovereign, and of a Judge, he being presented to our adoring regard as on his *throne*; the throne of universal empire, and absolute dominion; as exercising his authority, and executing his laws, with an omnipotent but impartial hand. For "Justice and judgment are the *habitation*", the *preparation*, the *establishment*, or the *basis*, of this throne. Our textual translation is, *habitation*; the marginal, *establishment*; the Septuagint, *preparation*; and, if I mistake not, our best modern interpreters render the original term, *basis* or *foundation*; which, on the whole, seems most agreeable. The *basis*, then, of Jehovah's government, or that on which it rests, is "*justice and judgment*." By "*justice*", I conceive we are to understand the attribute so called; and, by "*judgment*", the impartial exercise of that attribute in the Divine administration. So that were not the Most High to administer impartial justice in his moral government, he might be considered, if it be lawful to use the expression, as abdicating his throne.—*Abraham Booth*, 1734-1806.

Verse 14. *Justice*, which defends his subjects, and does every one right. *Judgment*, which restrains rebels, and keeps off injuries. *Mercy*, which shows compassion, pardons, supports the weak. *Truth*, that performs whatsoever he promises.—*William Nicholson*.

Verse 14. *Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.* Note—

1. Mercy is said to go before the face of God, because God sends mercy before judgment, that he might find less to punish: so Bellarmine.
2. That God permits not his face to be seen before He has forgiven our sins through mercy: so Rickelius.
3. That no one comes to the knowledge of God, but he who has obtained mercy beforehand.
4. That God comes to no one unless His grace go before Him. ...Truth goes before the face of God, because God keeps it ever before his eyes, to mould his actions thereby. Pindar calls truth yugatera Dios the daughter of God. Epaminoudas the Theban general, cultivated truth so studiously, that he is reported never to have spoken a falsehood even in jest. In the courts of kings this is a rare virtue.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 14. *Mercy and truth.* *Mercy* in promising; *truth* in performing. *Truth*, in being as good as thy word; *mercy*, in being better.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 14. *Shall go.* In his *active going forth*, tender mercy and goodness announce him, and faithful truth will tell his people he is there when he comes forth. His activities are mercy and faithfulness, because his will is at work and his nature is love. Yet his throne still maintains justice and judgment.—*J.N. Darby*.

Verse 15. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* Not that *hear*, for then the blessing were cheap indeed. Thousands hear the Gospel sound, but sometimes not ten of a thousand know it.—*Thomas James Judkin, 1841.*

Verse 15. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound—viz.,* of the trumpets sounded in token of joy at the great festivals, and chiefly on the first day of the seventh month, the feast of trumpets (Le 23:24), and on extraordinary occasions, especially after the yearly atonement, on the day of jubilee, the tenth day of the seventh month of the fiftieth year, proclaiming liberty to bondmen, and restoration of their inheritance to them that had forfeited it (Le 25:8-10). As the jubilee joy did not come till after the atonement, so no Gospel joy and liberty are ours till first we know Christ as our atonement. "In the day of the people's gladness" they blew the trumpets over their sacrifices, "that they might be to them for a memorial before God" (Nu 10:10). David and Israel brought up the ark of the Lord to Zion "with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet" (2Sa 6:15). In Nu 23:21, Balaam makes it the distinguishing glory of Israel, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them", (Compare Ps 98:6 27:6 *margin*)—*A.R. Fausset.*

Verse 15. *People that know the joyful sound.* Here it is supposed that we have intelligence in respect of "*the joyful sound.*" For there is knowledge not merely of the utterances and intonations, but of the sense and substance, of the thought and feeling, which they convey. And I suppose this to be the meaning of Christ when he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." And I have often been surprised, to note the accuracy with which persons otherwise not very intelligent, not largely informed, not of critical acumen, will yet, when they hear a discourse, judge, discriminate, determine; will be able to say at once—"Truth, clear, unmixed, without a cloud upon it; "or—"Doctrine clouded, statements confused, not the lucid Gospel:" or be able to say, if it be so—"No Gospel at all; contradiction to the truth of Christ." They "*Know the joyful sound*", as it rolls from the plenitude of God's own voice and bosom in his august and blessed revelations; as it is confirmed, authenticated and sealed by the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; as it is witnessed to by the eternal Spirit: "the joyful sound", that there is salvation for lost and ruined men by faith in the blood and in the obedience of him who died upon the tree, and is now enthroned in the highest place in heaven.—*James Stratten, 1845.*

Verse 15. *They shall walk in the light of thy countenance.* Surely, next to the love of God's heart, believers value the smiles of his face; from which, as from the agency of the sun, arise the budding of conscious joy, the leaves of unsullied profession, the variegated blossom of holy tempers, and the beneficent fruits of moral righteousness. They are totally mistaken who suppose that *the light of God's countenance*, and the privileges of the gospel, and the comforts of the Spirit, conduce to make us indolent and inactive in the way of duty. The text cuts up this surmise by the roots. For, it does not

say, they shall *sit down* in the light of thy countenance; or, they shall *lie down* in the light of thy countenance; but "*they shall WALK* in the light of thy countenance." What is walking? It is a progressive motion from one point of space to another. And what is that holy walking which God's Spirit enables all his people to observe? It is a continued, progressive motion from sin to holiness; from all that is evil, to every good word and work. And the self same "light of God's countenance" in which you, O believer, are enabled to walk, and which at first gave you spiritual feet wherewith to walk, will keep you in a walking and in a working state, to the end of your warfare.—*Augustus Montague Toplady*.

Verse 15.—There is the dreadful and there is the joyful sound. The dreadful sound was at Mount Sinai. The joyful sound is from Mount Sion. When the people heard the former they were far from beholding the glory of God's face. Moses only was admitted to see His "back parts"; the people were kept at a distance, and the light of God's glory that they saw was so terrible to them, that they could not abide it. But they that know the "joyful sound." they shall be admitted near, nearer than Moses, so as to see the glory of God's face or brightness of his countenance, and that not only transiently, as Moses saw God's back parts, but continually. The light of God's glory shall not be terrible to them, but easy and sweet, so that they may dwell in it and walk in it; and it shall be to them instead of the light of the sun; for the sun shall no more be their light by day, nor the moon by night, but God shall be their everlasting light, Compare this with Isa 2:5 Re 21:23-24 Re 22:4-5—*Jonathan Edwards*

Verse 16. *And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.* In these words briefly we may notice,
1. The believer's promotion; he is *exalted*. In the first Adam we were debased unto the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads; but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we "sit together with him in heavenly places", says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious Head and representative, Eph 2:6.

2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation; it is *in thy righteousness*. It is not in any righteousness of his own; no, this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but "dung and loss", "filthy rags", dogs' meat: but it is in *thy* righteousness; that is, the righteousness of God, as the apostle calls it: Ro 1:17 Php 3:9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in Scripture. Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature: Ps 11:7, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." Sometimes for his rectorial equity, or distributive justice which he exerciseth in the government of the world, rewarding the good and punishing evil doers: Ps 97:2, "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening: Ps 36:5-6, "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Sometimes it is put for the perfect

righteousness which Christ the Son of God, as our Surety and Mediator, brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners: and this as I said, is frequently called the righteousness of God; and in this sense I understand it here in the text: "*In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*"—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 17. *In thy favour our horn shall be exalted.* A man of lofty bearing is said to carry his horn very high. To him who is proudly interfering with the affairs of another it will be said, "Why show your *kombu*", "horn", "here?" "See that fellow, what a fine horn he has; he will make the people run." "Truly, my lord, you have a great horn." "Chinnan has lost his money; aye, and his hornship too." "Alas, alas! I am like the deer, whose horns have fallen off."—*Joseph Roberts "Oriental Illustrations."*

Verse 19 (*second clause*).—(New Translation) *A mighty chief have I supplied with help.* Literally, "I have equalized help", that is, I have laid or given sufficient help, "upon a mighty one". The verb denotes "to equalize", or "make one thing equal or equiponderant to another", as a means to the end, or vice versa.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 19. *Chosen* has here its strict sense, but not without allusion to its specific use as signifying a young warrior.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 20. *With my holy oil have I appointed him.* As the literal David was thrice anointed king, once by Samuel in Jesse's house at Bethlehem: once at Hebron after the death of Saul, as king over Judah; and again at seven years' end, as ruler over all Israel: so also "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" in his nativity at Bethlehem; a second time over his Church at his resurrection, when the tyrant who sought his life was overcome, and then only over the small "confederation" (which *Hebron* means) of his Jewish disciples; but a third time in his ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Vision of Peace, where he, now crowned as King of Glory, was anointed over all heaven and earth, supreme over all the princes of God. He was thrice anointed in another sense also, once as Prophet, once as Priest, and once as King.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 20-24. I have FOUND David, God exclaims. When sin brought death into the world, and annihilated the hopes of mankind from the first covenant, I—the Almighty—in my care for them, *sought out* a Redeemer. I sought for him in the Divine Nature; and I "*found*" him in My Only Son. I endowed him with ample powers, and I covenanted that, in the weakness of his Incarnation, *my hand and arm should strengthen* him. I declared that Satan *the enemy* should *not exact upon him*; nor should Judas—the son of wickedness—be enabled to *afflict him*. The Jews, *his foes*, shall fall before him; they shall be *smitten down* in their rejection of him; they shall perish from off their land, and be dispersed abroad among the nations. My *truth* shall be ever with him; and acting in my *name* and power, he shall be exalted and glorified amongst men.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 22. *The enemy shall not exact upon him.* The allusion appears to us to be made to a cruel and unjust creditor, who exacts not only his just debts, but some exaggerated demand, with usurious

interest, which was not permitted.—*Williams, quoted by Ed. of Calvin.*

Verse 25. *I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.* That is, he should reign from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates; figuratively expressed by his left hand being extended to the sea, and his right hand to the rivers. A similar expression is used, according to Curtius, by the Scythian ambassadors to Alexander. "If", said they, "the gods had given thee a body as great as thy mind, the whole world would not be able to contain thee. Thou wouldst reach with one hand to the east, and with the other to the west."—*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 25. *I will set his hand also in the sea and his right hand in the rivers.* A certain artist was in the habit of saying that he should represent Alexander in such a manner, that in one hand he should hold a city and from the other pour a river. Christ is represented here as of immense stature, higher than all mountains, with one hand holding the earth, and the other the sea, while from Eastern sea to Western he extends his arms.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 26. *He shall cry unto me, thou art my father.* When did David call God his Father? It is striking that we do not find anywhere in the Old Testament that the patriarchs or prophets called God their Father. You do not find them addressing Him as Father: they did not know him as such. This verse is unintelligible in reference to David; but in regard to the True David it is exactly what he did say,—*"My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God."* Never until Christ uttered these words, never until he appeared on earth in humanity as the Son of God, did any man or any child of humanity address God in this endearing character. It was after Christ said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father", that believers were enabled to look up to God and to say, "Abba, Father". Here you see distinctly that this applies to Christ. He was the first to say this: David did not say it. If there were no other proof in the whole Psalm, that one clause would be a demonstration to me that no other man than the Lord Jesus Christ can be here spoken of.—*Capel Molyneux, 1855.*

Verse 26. *My Father.* Christ commenced his labours by referring to his Father, for in Lu 2:49 he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and his last words were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"; and through his whole life he most constantly addressed God as his Father. *He shall cry unto me: Thou art my Father,* as far as my divinity is concerned. *My God,* as far as my humanity is concerned; *the support of my salvation,* as regards my mortality.—*Bellarmino.*

Verse 26-28. Christ had a command to be a sufferer, and a body prepared him for that purpose; so he had likewise a command to be an advocate, and a life given him, and a throne prepared for him at the right hand of God to that end. This commission is contained in the words before us; and this after his exaltation, Ps 89:24-25. Yet for the full completing of it, Ps 89:27 the matter of the plea is here mentioned, *Thou art the rock of my salvation,* the foundation, the first cause, of all thy salvation I have wrought in the world, being the first mover of it, and promising the acceptance of me in the performance of what was necessary for it. As he hath authority to cry to God, so he hath an

assurance of the prevalence of his cry, in regard of the stability of the covenant of mediation, which shall stand fast with him, or be faithful to him: *my mercy will I keep for him for evermore*, Ps 89:28. The treasures of my mercy are reserved only to be opened and dispensed by him: and the enjoying of his spiritual seed for ever, and the establishing of his own throne thereby, is the promised fruit of this cry, Ps 89:28.—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 27. *I will make him my firstborn.* First, because he is first in the order of predestination; for it is through him, as through the head, that we are predestinated, as we read in Eph 1:1-23. Secondly, because he is first in the second generation to life everlasting, whence he is called (Col 1:18.) *the firstborn from the dead*, and in Re 1:5, *the first begotten of the dead*; and, thirdly, because he had the rights of the firstborn; for *he was appointed heir of all things*; and he was made not only firstborn, but also, *high above the kings of the earth*; that is, Prince of the kings of the earth, and King of kings.—*Bellarmino*.

Verse 27. *Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the, earth.* This promise plainly implies superiority of a nature similar to what was enjoyed of old by the eldest son of a family—the birthright privileges and blessings, which consisted principally in three important particulars: First, A double portion of the parent's earthly possessions, De 21:17. Secondly. Rule or authority over the younger branches of the family, 2Ch 21:3; and Thirdly, The exercise of the priesthood, because God claimed all the firstborn as his, and in their stead he appointed the Levites to do the priest's office, Nu 8:14-17. But, whilst it is literally true that Jesus was the firstborn son of his virgin mother, and on that account entitled to the customary privileges, the promise in the 89th Psalm (Ps 89:1-52) gives intimation of something specific and unusual. David was the youngest son of Jesse, the lowest on the list of a numerous family,—the very last individual among them who could have expected exaltation over all others. But, notwithstanding these natural disadvantages, he was God's choice; and by referring to the Scripture history it would be easy to show in a variety of particulars, how the promise made to David, *I will make him my firstborn*, was literally and remarkably fulfilled in the son of Jesse. In like manner Jesse, to all human appearance, entering the world as heir apparent only to the poverty of Mary and her espoused husband, was far removed from every prospect of realizing that combination of royal and sacerdotal prerogative, which nevertheless was made stare to him by the promise of his heavenly Father: "I will make him *my* firstborn." The pronoun "*my*" gives great emphasis to the promise, but this word is interpolated; and however truly it conveys an idea of the unspeakable superiority which belongs to Jesus Christ as the result of his relationship with God, still we shall find that, even without this important pronoun, the promise simply of being "firstborn" has a sublimity and grandeur about it which needs neither ornament nor addition. The great Jehovah, the Maker and the Owner and the Ruler of the universe, hath said respecting his Christ, "I will make him my firstborn"; that is, I will constitute him the chief of all creatures, and the depository of all power,

and the possessor of all privileges, and the heir of all creation. By way of excellence, he is the firstborn, "higher than all the kings of the earth",—enjoying priority in point of time, and precedence in point of place.—*David Pitcairn, in "The Anointed Saviour", 1846.*

Verse 27. *My firstborn.* In the Hebrew idiom all kings were *the sons of God*: but David is the chief of these, God's *firstborn*. The Greeks had a similar mode of expressing themselves. Kings were the nurslings of Jupiter.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 28. *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.* How will he keep his mercy for Christ for evermore? Very simply, I think. Is not Christ the Fountain of all mercy to us? Is it not the mercy of God the Father flowing to us through Christ that we enjoy? Is he not the Depository of it all? God says, then, I will keep it for him; for ever and ever shall it be lodged in Christ, and his people shall enjoy it throughout eternity.—*Capel Molyneux, 1855.*

Verse 28-30. Here is comfort to those who are true branches, and continue to bring forth fruit in the midst of all the trials that befall them, that God will not suffer them to be cut off by their corruption. If anything in them should provoke God to do it, it must be sin. Now for that, you see how Christ promises that God will take order therewith, and will purge it out of them. This is the covenant made with David, (as he was a type of Christ, with whom the same covenant is made sure and firm,) that *if his seed forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments,*—What! presently turn them out of doors, and cut them off, as those he meant to have no more to do with? What! nothing but utter rejection? Is there no means of reclaiming them? Never a rod in the house? Yes—*then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes, whip out their stubbornness and sinfulness; but my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him* as I did from Saul, as it is in 1Ch 17:13. Let the saints consider this, that they may return when they are fallen, and submit to him and his nature, and suffer him to do what he will with them, and endure cutting, and lancing, and burning, so long as he cuts them not off; endure chastening, and all his dealings else, knowing that all the fruit is but to take away the sin, to make them "partakers of his holiness"; and "if by any means", as Paul speaks of himself, (Php 3:11), be the means what it will, it is no matter. And God, if at any time he seems to cut thee off, yet it is but as the incestuous Corinthian was cut off, 'that the flesh might be destroyed, and the spirit saved.'—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 29. "His seed" and "throne" are coupled together, as if his throne could not stand if his seed did fail. If his subjects should perish, what would he be king of? If his members should consume, what would he be head of?—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 30. *If his children forsake my law.* An objection is supposed: 'Suppose this seed who are included in the covenant fall into transgression, how shall the covenant stand fast then?' The covenant, with the seed, shall stand for ever, but the seed must be a holy seed. Then the objector supposes—'Suppose the seed become unholy?' Well, God explains—"If his children forsake my law,

and walk not in my judgments"—that is, if the seed practically fall away—"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Mark the case. What is it that God will do? The case supposed is that the seed of Christ forsakes the law and breaks his statutes. I need not say to you that that is realized every day. These are not the ungodly or the unconverted that are spoken of, but God's own children. Do you say, 'Can they be guilty of breaking God's statutes, and forsaking God's law?' We do it every day. There is no single day of our lives that we do not do it. . . .

How astonished many would be, if they knew what the real case was of those perhaps whom they admire, and think highly advanced and exalted in the Divine life, if they were to know the falls, the wretched falls, falls in heart, in word and in practice; if they were to know the deep distress that the children of God, who are far advanced as they suppose in the Divine life, are continually suffering from the effect of such transgression! That is exactly what God says; he comes and contemplates such a case, and he says, "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then"—what? What will God do? Some people say, "Then God will leave them." Those who object to the doctrine of final perseverance say this: "It is true he will preserve the believer from the toils of the Devil and the temptations of the world, but not from the breaking forth of his own natural evil." He may be betrayed by that, and finally lost. God exactly meets that case; he contemplates the worst case—actual transgression. He says, "If a child of mine breaks my law". He does not say anything about the Devil, or the outward temptations of the world; but he says, "If they forsake my law and break my statutes." Let us be instructed by God. He does not say he will leave them and forsake them. Mark what he will do! He say—"I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." That is the provision which God has made in his covenant: and it is delightful to see how God has contemplated our case to the uttermost. There is nothing in our history that God has not met in the covenant with Christ. If you are in union with Christ, and a partaker of the covenant, your case is met in every conceivable emergency. Nothing can befall you which is not contemplated—nothing which God has not provided for. Even if you fall, God has provided for it; but take heed; the provision involves much that will be terrible and desperately painful to your mind. There is nothing to encourage sin about it; there is nothing to give us license, nothing to lead a man to boast, "I am safe at last." Be it so: but safe how? How will God secure their safety? "I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."—*Capel Molyneux*.

Verse 30. *If his children forsake my law.* If they fall into sins of commission; if they shoot beyond the mark. *And walk not in my judgements.* If they fall into sins of omission, and shoot short. Where note that *every transgression and disobedience* (that is, every commission and omission) *receiveth a just recompense of reward*, Heb 2:2.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 30. *His children.* wynb, his sons, i.e. Christians, born through the griefs of Christ on the cross, like the pangs of one in travail.—*Geier.*

Verse 30. A man may forsake the doctrines of the Gospel. He may fall into great errors, great aberrations from Truth; he may forsake the ordinances of the Lord's house, though he sees God's word is clear upon the point. He esteems those things as nothing worth, which the Lord esteems so well, that he has given them to his church as a sacred deposit, which she is to convey down to the last posterity till time shall be no more. And what is still more—a man may forsake for a time the principles of the precious Gospel of the living God. But I can imagine a state still more solemnly affecting than even this. It is a part of God's wisdom, (and it is for our good that it is so—all God's wisdom is for his people's good)—it is a part of the wisdom of God, that sin should lead to sin; that one neglect shall pave the way to another; that that which is bad shall lead to that which is worse, and that which is worse shall prepare the way for that which is worst...The longer I live, the more I am brought to this—to know that there is not a sin that ever was committed, but I need the grace of God to keep me from it.—*James Harrington Evans.*

Verses 30-34. God here says two things: first, that he will chastise them, next, that he will not, on that account, cast them out of his covenant. O wonderful tempering of the kindness and severity of God! In which he finds his own glory, and believers their safety! The heavenly Father loves the blood and marks of his Christ which he sees upon them, and the remains of faith and godliness which are preserved hidden in the depth of their heart, this is why he will not cast them off. On the other hand, he considers that it accords neither with his wisdom nor his holiness to bestow his grace and salvation upon those who do not relent for having cast off his law and given themselves up to iniquity. In order to harmonize these opposite desires, he takes the rod, and chastises them, to arouse their conscience, and to excite their faith; to restore them, by the repentance which his discipline produces, to such a state, as that he may be able to bestow upon them, without shame, the blessings he has promised to the children of his Son; just as a wise parent, by moderate and judicious correction gradually draws back his son from those irregularities of life into which he has plunged; and thereby preserves his honour, and himself the pleasure of being able to love and please him without misgiving. Or, as a skilful surgeon, by the pain which his knife, or cautery, or bitter potions, cause his patient, saves his life, and wards off death.—*Jean Daille.*

Verses 30-34. When our heavenly Father is, as it were, forced to put forth his anger, he then makes use of a father's rod, not an executioner's axe. He will neither break his children's bones, nor his own covenant. He lashes in love, in measure, in pity, and compassion.—*Thomas Lye, 1621-1684.*

Verse 32. *Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,* etc. He does not simply say, I will smite them; but, I will visit with the rod. It is one thing merely to smite, it is another thing to smite by visiting. For visitation implies oversight and paternal care. The metaphor is taken from those who undertake

to watch over the sick, or train up children, or tend sheep. He does not say, I will visit them with the rod; but, I will visit their transgression with the rod. We ought to think perpetually, what it is the rod of God visits in us, that we may confess our transgressions, and amend our lives.—*Musculus*.

Verse 33. *Nevertheless my lovingkindness*, etc. Except the covenant of grace had this article in it for remission of sin and for fatherly correction, to drive unto repentance, that the penitent person coming to God by faith might have sin forgiven him and lovingkindness shown to him; this covenant should fail us no less than the covenant of works.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 33. *I will not utterly take from him*. Why "from *him*?" Because all God's lovingkindness to his people is centred in Christ. Does God love you? it is because he loves Christ; you are one with Christ. Your transgressions are your own; they are separate from Christ; but God's love is not your own; it is Christ's: you receive it because you are one with him. How beautifully that is distinguished here—"If they transgress, I will punish *them*; but my lovingkindness will I not take from *him*"—in whom alone they find it; and in union with whom alone they enjoy it.—*Capel Molyneux*.

Verse 33. *From him*. The words, "*Nevertheless my lovingkindness will not utterly take from him*", are worthy of consideration; for the question being about those who are chastised, it would appear that he should have written, from them, and not from him. But the prophet has thus worded it, because, being the children and members of his Christ, the favours which God bestows upon us belong to him in some manner; and it seems that the Psalmist wishes to show us hereby, that it is in Jesus Christ, and for love of him alone, that God bestows favours on us. And that which follows, in Ps 89:34 verse, agrees herewith,—*My covenant will I not break*—for it is properly to Jesus Christ, on account of his admirable obedience, that God the Father has promised to be merciful to our iniquities, and never to leave one of those to perish who are in covenant with him.—*Jean Daille*.

Verse 33. *Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail*. Man's faith may fail him sometimes, but God's faithfulness never fails him: God will not suffer his faithfulness to fail. God's operations may have an aspect that way; the devil's temptations, and our unbelieving hearts, may not only make us think so, but persuade us it is so, whereas it cannot be so, for the Lord will not suffer it, he will not make a lie in his truth or faithfulness; so the Hebrew is: he is a God that cannot lie, he is Truth, speaks truth, and not one of his promises can or shall fail; which may afford strong consolation unto all that are under any promise of God.—*William Greenhill*.

Verse 34. *My covenant will I not break*. He had said above, *If the children of David break my statutes*; and now, alluding to that breach, he declares that he will not requite them as they requite him, *My covenant will I not break*, implying, that although his people may not altogether act in a manner corresponding to their vocation, as they ought to do, he will not suffer his covenant to be broken and disannulled on account of their fault, because he will promptly and effectually prevent this in the way of blotting out their sins by a gratuitous pardon.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness.* He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it, in this concern of an everlasting redemption, which is there spoken of. He that swears, swears by a greater than himself. God having no greater than himself, swears by himself; and swearing here by his holiness seems to equal that single to all his other attributes, as if he were more concerned in the honour of it than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 36. *His seed shall endure for ever.* They shall continue for ever in three senses. *First.* In the succession of their race to the end of the world. It will never be cut off.—"The Church is in danger!" *What Church?* "Upon this rock", says he, "I will build *my* Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Yea, his people shall continue to increase in number and excellency. We shall leave the world better than we entered it: and so will our *children*; till Jerusalem shall be established, and be made a praise in the whole earth. *Secondly.* In their religious character to the end of their own life. If left to themselves, we could not be sure of their persevering to the end of a day or an hour. But they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. He upholdeth them with his hand. They shall hold on their way. In all their dangers they shall be more than conquerors. *Thirdly.* In their glorified state, through eternal ages. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. All other greatness is only for life: it is frequently less durable—at death it *ends*. But *then*, the Christian's greatness—I will not say, begins; for it began the moment he prayed—but then it continues, increases, and is perfected.—*William Jay.*

Verse 37. *It shall be established for ever as the moon.* This clause Kimchi expounds not only of the perpetuity, but of the quality and condition of David's Kingdom, after this fashion: If his children be good, they shall be like the moon, when full and shining; if bad, like the moon waning and obscure. Nevertheless the kingdom itself shall not cease, just as the moon does not go out of existence, whilst it is obscure, but lasts perpetually.—*Musculus.*

Verse 37. *And as a faithful witness in heaven.* (New Translation) *And as the rainbow's faithful sign.* The rainbow is not expressly mentioned in the original, which speaks only of "the faithful witness in heaven." Some commentators understand the "witness" thus mentioned to be no other than the moon itself. I prefer, however, the interpretation that fixes it on the rainbow, which God after the deluge appointed as a "sign" or "witness" of his mercy in Christ. Ge 9:12-17. Conformably to this appointment, the Jews, when they behold the rainbow, are said to bless God, who remembers his

covenant and is faithful to his promise. And the tradition of this its designation to proclaim comfort to mankind was strong among the heathens: for, according to the mythology of the Greeks, the "rainbow" was the daughter of "wonder", "a sign to mortal men", and regarded, upon its appearance, as a messenger of the celestial deities. Thus Homer with remarkable conformity to the Scripture account speaks of the "rainbow", which "Jove hath set in the cloud, a sign to men."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 38. *But thou hast cast off*, etc. The complaining of the saints meanwhile is so exaggerated, that carnal feeling makes itself more apparent in them, than faith... Yet such is the goodness of God, He is not offended with these complaints, provided faith is not altogether extinguished, or succumbs.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 39. *Thou hast profaned his crown*, etc. The crown of a king, (like that of the high priest, on which was inscribed "holiness to the Lord") (Ex 28:36) was a sacred thing, and therefore to cast it in the dust was to profane it.—*A.R. Fausset.*

Verse 40. *Hedges and strong holds.* Both of these may refer to the appointments of a vineyard in which the king was the vine. It was usually fenced around with a stone wall, and in it was a small house or tower, wherein a keeper was set to keep away intruders. When the wall, or hedge, was thrown down, every passer by plucked at the fruit, and when the tower was gone the vineyard was left open to the neighbours who could do as they would with the vines. When the church is no longer separated from the world, and her divine Keeper has no more a dwelling place within her, her plight is wretched indeed.—*C.H.S.*

Verse 43. *Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword*, etc. The arms and military prowess of thy people are no longer of any use to them; Thou art *against* them, and therefore they are fallen. In what a perilous and hopeless situation must that soldier be who, defending his life against his mortal foe, has his sword *broken*, or its *edge turned*; or, in modern warfare, whose *gun* misses *fire!* The *Gauls*, when invaded by the Romans, had no method of *hardening iron*; at every blow their swords *bent*, so that they were obliged, before they could strike again, to put them under their foot or over their knee, to straighten them; and in most cases, before this could be done, their better armed foe had taken away their life! The edge of their sword was turned, so that they could not stand in battle; and hence the *Gauls* were conquered by the Romans.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 43. *Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword*, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and what is worse, thou hast "turned the edge" of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him *to stand*, as he used to do, *in the day of battle.* The spirit of men is what the Father and Former of spirits makes them; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, farther than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them; but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand that should stand up for it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 45. *The days of his youth hast thou shortened.* Our kings have not reigned half their days, nor

lived out half their lives. The *four* last kings of Judea reigned but a short time, and either died by the sword or in captivity. *Jehoahaz* reigned only *three months*, and was led captive to Egypt, where he *died*. *Jehoiakim* reigned only *eleven years*, and was tributary to the Chaldeans, who *put him to death*, and cast his body into the common sewer. *Jehoiachim*, reigned *three months and ten days*, and was led *captive* to Babylon, where he continued in prison to the time of Evil merodach, who, though he loosed him from prison, never invested him with any power. *Zedekiah*, the last of all, had reigned only *eleven years* when he was taken, *his eyes put out*, was *loaded with chains*, and thus carried to Babylon. Most of these kings died a violent and *premature* death. Thus the "*days of their youth*"—of their power, dignity, and life, "*were shortened*", and they themselves *covered with shame*. *Selah*; so it most incontestably is.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 45. *Thou hast covered them with shame. Selah.* Thou hast wrapped him up in the winding sheet of shame. Lord, this is true.—*John Trapp*.

Verses 46-47. This undoubtedly sounds like the voice of one who knows no hereafter. The Psalmist speaks as if all his hopes were bound by the grave; as if the overthrow of the united kingdom of Judah and Ephraim had bereft him of all his joy; and as if he knew no future kingdom to compensate him with its hopes. But it would be doing cruel injustice to take him thus at his word. What we hear is the language of passion, not of sedate conviction. This is well expressed by John Howe in a famous sermon. "The expostulation (he observes) was somewhat passionate, and did proceed upon the sudden view of this disconsolate case, very abstractly considered, and by itself only; and the Psalmist did not, at that instant, look beyond it to a better and more comfortable scene of things. An eye bleared with present sorrow sees not far, nor comprehends so much at one view, as it would at another time, or as it doth presently when the tear is wiped out and its own beams have cleared it up." It would be unwarrantable, therefore, to infer from Ethan's expostulation, that the saints who lived under the early kings were strangers to the hope of everlasting life. I am inclined to go further, and to point to this very complaint as affording a presumption that there was in their hearts an irrepressible sentiment of immortality. The bird that frets and wounds itself on the bars of its cage shows thereby that its proper home is the free air. When inveterate sensuality has succeeded in quenching in a man's heart the hope of a life beyond the grave, the dreary void which succeeds utters itself, not in solemn complaints like Ethan's, but in songs of forced mirth—dismal Anacreontic songs: "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die."

"It is time to live if I grow old,
It is time short pleasures now to take,
Of little life the best to make,
And manage wisely the last stake."

(Anacreon's *Age*, as translated by Cowley.)—*William Binnie*.

Verse 46. *Shall thy wrath burn like fire? An element that hath no mercy.—William Nicholson.*

Verse 47. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* If I should demand of any, for what cause especially man came into the world; he would answer with the Psalmist, God did not create man in vain. Did He create man to heap up wealth together? no, for the apostle saith. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And, having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." 1Ti 6:6-8. Did he create him to hawk after power and principality? no, for Nebuchadnezzar lusting after these, lost no less than a kingdom. Did He create him to eat, drink and play? no, for Seneca, though an heathen saith, *major sum*, etc., I am greater, and born to greater things, than that I should be a vile slave of my senses. What then is the proper end of man? That we should live to the praise of the glory of his grace wherewith he hath made us freely accepted in his Beloved. Eph 1:6.—*William Pulley.*

Verse 47. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* If we think that God hath made man "*in vain*", because so many have short lives, and long afflictions in this world, it is true that God "hath made" them so; but it is not true, that therefore they are "made in vain". For those whose days are few and full of trouble, yet may glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and go to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. If we think that God has made men in vain, because the most of men neither serve him nor enjoy him, it is true, that as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them they had not been born, than not be "born again"; but it was not owing to God, that they were made in vain, it was owing to themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him; for he has "made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil", and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 47. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* When I add to the consideration of my short time, that of dying mankind, and behold a dark and deadly shade universally overspreading the world, the whole species of human creatures vanishing, quitting the stage round about me, and disappearing almost as soon as they show themselves; have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge? Why is there so unaccountable a phenomenon? Such a creature made to no purpose; the noblest part of this inferior creation brought forth into being without any imaginable design? I know not how to untie the knot, upon this only view of the case, or avoid the absurdity. It is hard sure to design the supposal, (or what it may yet seem hard to suppose), "*that all men were made in vain.*"—*John Howe.*

Verse 47. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* Two thoughts crush us—*Man was made to mourn, and man was made in vain.* Yes, this thought is painfully pressed upon us,—man is "*made in vain!*" In how many particulars, especially when we survey that large range of characters to which we may give the denomination of wasted lives; there to behold peerless *genius* frittering itself away upon unworthy attainments, upon worthless performances; *imagination* that might adorn truth, if that were

possible; *wit*, that might select and discriminate the true from the false; and *eloquence* that might enforce the true;—where do we find these? Unsatisfactory and miserable world, may we well exclaim, where nothing is real, and nothing is realised: when I consider how our lives are passed in the struggle for existence; when I consider the worry of life, where it is not a woe—the woe, where it is not a worry; when I consider how the millions pass their time in a mere toil for sensual objects, and that those to whom the sad contradiction of life never comes, are the most wretched of all, did they but know it; when I consider the millions of distorted existences; and the many millions!—the greater number of the world by far—who wander Christless, loveless, hopeless, over the broad highway of it; when I consider life in many of the awakened as a restless dream, as children beating the curtain and crying in the night; when I consider how many questions recur for ever to us; and will not be silenced, and cannot be answered; when I consider the vanity of the philosopher's inquisitiveness, and the end of Royalty in the tomb; when I look round on the region of my own joys, and know how short their lease is, and that their very ineffableness is a blight upon them; when I consider how little the best can do, and that none can do anything well; and, finally, when I consider the immeasurable immensity of thought within, unfulfilled, and the goading restlessness, I can almost exclaim with our unhappy poet *Byron*—

"Count all the joys thine hours have seen,
Count all thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou last been,
It were something better not to be."

—*E. Paxton Hood*, in "Dark Sayings on a Harp", 1865.

Verses 47-48. In these verses, the fundamental condition of Israel's blessedness is found to be an acknowledgment of the total unprofitableness of the flesh. Resurrection is the basis upon which the sure mercies of David rest available for faith (Ac 13:34). This is rather implied than directly stated in the present Psalm.—*Arthur Pridham*.

Verse 48. *What man. Mi gheber*, says the original; it is not *Is he*, which is the first name of man, in the Scriptures, and signifies nothing but a *sound*, a voice, a word, a musical air which dies, and evaporates; what wonder if man, that is but *Ishe*, a *sound*, should die too? It is not Adam, which is another name of man, and signifies nothing but *red earth*; let it be earth red with blood, (with that murder which we have done upon ourselves,) let it be earth red with blushing, (so the word is used in the original), with a conscience of our own infirmity, what wonder if man, that is but Adam, guilty of this self murder in himself, guilty of this inborn frailty in himself, die too? It is not *Enos*, which is also a third name of man, and signifies nothing but a *wretched and miserable creature*; what wonder that man, that is but earth, that is a burden to his neighbours, to his friends, to his kindred, to himself, to whom all others, and to whom myself desires death, what wonder if he die? But this question is

framed upon more of these names; not *Ishe*, not Adam, not Enos; but it is *Mi gheber*, *Quis vir*; which is the word always signifying a man accomplished in all excellencies, a man accompanied with all advantages; fame, and a good opinion justly conceived, keeps him from being *Ishe*, a mere sound, standing only upon popular acclamation; innocency and integrity keeps him from being Adam, red earth, from bleeding, or blushing at anything he hath done; that holy and religious art of arts, which St. Paul professed. *That he knew how to want, and how to abound*, keeps him from being Enos, miserable or wretched in any fortune; he is *gheber*, a great man, and a good man, a happy man, and a holy man, and yet *Mi gheber*, *Quis homo*, this man must see death.—*John Donne*.

Verse 48. This Psalm is one of those twelve that are marked in the forehead with *Maschil*; that is, a *Psalm giving instruction*. It consisteth of as many verses as the year doth of weeks, and hath like the year, its summer and winter. The summer part is the former; wherein, the church having reaped a most rich crop (the best blessings of Heaven and earth) the Psalmist breaketh forth into the praises of their gracious Benefactor, *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*: so it begins, and so he goeth on a great way. Who now would expect anything but mercies, and singing, and summer all the way? But summer ceaseth, and winter commences, at Ps 89:38: *But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth, with thine anointed*. Mercies and singing are now turned into troubles and mourning. But nothing shall you hear but bitter querimonies and expostulations till you come to the last verse. There the good man's come to himself again. Though God were angry with his people, he cannot part with God in discontent. Though God had laden them with crosses, he lifts up his head, and presents God with blessing; *Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen, and Amen*. He blesseth him as well for winter as for summer, for troubles as for mercies. And thus the last verse of Psalm having as much affinity with the first in matter, as the last day of the year hath with the first in season; if we circle the Psalm, and bring both ends together, we find a fit resemblance between the year and it. The text is one of the Psalmist's winter drops; a black line from that pen, which erstwhile was so filled with joy, and wrote nothing but rubrics. He complains in the next precedent verse, of the brevity of his own life (it was like a winter's day, very short); in this, of the instability of man's life; as though he had said, I am not the only mortal. Other men's lives, though haply clothed with more comforts than mine, are altogether as mortal as mine; for his interrogations are equivalent to strong negations. As to see *sleep* is to sleep; so to see or *taste death*, is to die. There is no surviving such a sight Death says, as God once to Moses, "There shall no man see me *and live*." Ex 33:20.—*Thomas Du-gard, in a Funeral Sermon, 1648*.

Verse 48. Death spares no *rank*, no *condition* of men. Kings as well as subjects, princes as well as the meanest rustics are liable to this fatal stroke. The lofty cedars and low shrubs; palaces and cottages are alike here. Indeed, we read that Julius Caesar bid the master of the ship wherein he was sailing, take courage notwithstanding the boisterous tempest, because he had Caesar and his

fortunes embarked in his vessel, as much as to say, the element on which they then were could not prove fatal to an emperor, to so great a one as he was. Our William surnamed Rufus said, he never heard of a king that was drowned. And Charles the Fifth, at the Battle of Tunis, being advised to retire when the great ordnance began to play, told them that it was never known that an emperor was slain with great shot, and so rushed into the battle. But this we are sure of, it was never known or heard that any king or crowned head escaped the blow of death at last. The sceptre cannot keep off the arrows that fly by day, and the sickness which wastes at noonday; 'it is no screen, no guard against the shafts of death. We have heard of great tyrants and usurpers who vaunted that they had the power of life and death, and as absolutely disposed of men as Domitian did of flies; but we have heard likewise that in a short time (and generally the shorter the more furious they have been) their sceptres are fallen out of their hands; their crowns are toppled off their heads, and they are themselves snatched away by the King of Terrors. Or, if we speak of those royal personages that are mild and gentle, and like Vespasian are the darlings and delight of the people, yet these no less than others have their fatal hour, and their regal honour and majesty are laid in the dust. *The King doth not die*, may be a Common law maxim, but it is a falsehood according to the laws of God and Nature, and the established constitution of heaven. For God himself who hath said, *Ye are gods*, hath also added, *Ye shall die like men*. In the *Escorial* the palace of the Kings of Spain, is their *cemetery* too; there their royal ashes lie. So in the place where the kings and queens of England are crowned, their predecessors are entombed: to tell them, as it were, that their crowns exempt them not from the grave, and that there is no greatness and splendour that can guard them from the arrest of death. He regards the rich and wealthy no more than the poor and necessitous: he snatches persons out of their mansion houses and hereditary seats, as well as out of almshouses and hospitals. His dominion is over masters as well as servants, parents as well as children, superiors as well as inferiors.—*John Edwards*.

Verse 48.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth ever gave, Await alike the inevitable hour—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansions call the fleeting breath? Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?—*Thomas Gray, 1716-1771.*

Verse 50. *How I do bear in my bosom the reproach*, etc. I take the reproaches of thy servants and thine anointed, (1) as if they reproached me in mine own particular; or, (2) in that they lie so heavy upon my heart; or, (3) in that I am resolved quietly to endure them, and to swallow them down in silence, as not being indeed able to shake them off; because in the eye of reason our condition is at

present so contrary to what we waited for; or, (4) in that their reproaches came not to his ears by hear say only, but were openly to his face cast as it were into his bosom.—*Arthur Jackson*.

Verse 50. I do bear in, my bosom the reproach, etc. The reproach of religion and of the godly doth lie near, and should lie near, the heart of every lively member of the church.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 51. *They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.* This phrase is obscure in diction, and therefore variously interpreted

1. Some by the *footsteps of Christ*, judge that his advent in the flesh is meant: others refer the words to David, and take the meaning to be, imitation of him. The first exposition yields this sense: Be mindful, O Lord, of the reproach of thy enemies wherewith they insult our expectation of thy Anointed, and scoff at his advent as if it would never come.

2. The second interpretation is this: Recollect, O Lord, what contempt thy enemies heap upon us on account of thy servant David, because we fondly cherish his memory and his example, and nourish the hope of thy covenant with him, clinging tenaciously thereto...Thirdly, this clause may be so interpreted that by *twbqe*, that is, the heel, we may understand the extremities of the Kingdom of Christ, of David. Thus we may imagine the enemies of God threw this in the teeth of the people of Israel, that they had already come to the end and extremity of the Kingdom of David.—*Musculus*.

Verse 51 (*second clause*). The *Chaldee* has: "They have scoffed at the tardiness of Thy Messiah's footsteps." So *Kimchi*: "He delays so long, they say He will never come." Compare 2Pe 3:4,9. The Arabic *aqaba* is used in the sense of "delaying."—*William Kay*.

Verse 51. *The footsteps*, or foot soles, that is, the ways, life, actions, and sufferings, Ps 56:6 Ps 49:5. This referred to Christ, respecteth the oracle, Ge 3:15, that the Serpent should bruise the foot sole of the woman's seed; referred to Christians which follow his footsteps, in suffering and dying with him, that we may be glorified with him (1Pe 2:21 Ro 8:17); it notes the scandal of the Cross of Christ, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." (1Co 1:23 1Pe 4:13-14.) The Chaldee understands it of the slackness of the footsteps.—*Henry Ainsworth*.

Verse 52. *Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.* Victory begins to shine in the phrase, *Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen.* Some think that these words are not the words of the Psalmist, because they are of opinion that they do not agree with the preceding, but were written by another, or added by the Collector of the Psalms as a concluding doxology; or if the Psalmist wrote them, he did so merely in finishing his prayer. But it is a matter of the greatest moment; for it indicates the victory of faith, since he observes that after that grief, the reproach of the heel is gloriously removed that the Messiah may remain a victor for ever, having bruised the serpent's head, and taken away from him in perpetuity all his power of hurting. That this should certainly take place, he adds the seal of faith again and again: "*Amen, and Amen.*"—*James Alting*, 1618-1679.

Verse 52. This doxology belongs alike to all the Psalms of the Third Book, and ought not to be treated as if it were merely the last verse of the Psalm to which it adjoins. It ought to be set forth in such a shape as would enable and invite God's people to sing it as a separate formula of praise, or in connection with any other Psalm.—*William Binnie.*

Verse 52. As to the words *Amen and Amen*, I readily grant that they are here employed to mark the end of the third book of the Psalms.—*John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. Mercies celebrated. When?—"for ever."
2. By whom?—by those who are the subjects of them.
3. Therefore they must live for ever to celebrate them.
4. Faithfulness declared. (a) To our own generation. (b) To succeeding generations by its influence upon others.

Verse 2.—

1. The Testimony.
 - (a) To the constancy of Mercy: (1.) builds up its trophies every moment. (2.) It preserves them for ever.
 - (b) To the constancy of Faithfulness. It remains as the ordinances of heaven.
2. Its Confirmation. "I have said", etc., said it,
 - (a) Upon the ground of Scripture.
 - (b) of experience.
 - (c) of reason.
 - (d) of observation of others.

Verses 3-4.

1. The Covenant made. With whom?—with David and in him with David's Lord and Son. The true David—the chosen one—the servant of the Father in redemption.
2. For what?—
 - (a) for his seed. He should have a seed and that seed should be established.
 - (b) for himself, "his throne", etc.
3. The Covenant confirmed.
 - (a) By decree. "I have made", etc.
 - (b) By promise. "I will establish."
 - (c) By oath. "I have sworn."

Verse 6.—We have a comparison between God and the most excellent in heaven and

earth—challenge both worlds.

1. The true God, sovereign of heaven and earth is incomparably great in his BEING and EXISTENCE;

(a) because his being is of himself *eternal*;

(b) because he is a *perfect* being;

(c) because he is *independent*;

(d) because he is unchangeable.

2. God is incomparably great in his ATTRIBUTES and PERFECTIONS.

(a) In his *holiness*;

(b) in his *wisdom* and *knowledge*;

(c) in his *power*;

(d) in his *justice*;

(e) in his *patience*;

(f) in his *love* and *goodness*.

3. God is incomparably great in his WORKS—creation; providence; redemption, and human salvation.—*Theophilus Jones*, 1830.

Verse 6.—The incomparableness of God, in his Being, Attributes, Works, and Word.—*Swinnock*. (Nichol's Edition of Swinnock's Works, Vol. 4, pp. 373-508.)

Verses 6-7.

1. In creation God is far above other beings. Ps 89:6.

2. In Redemption he is far above himself in creation. Ps 89:7.

Verses 9-10. God's present rule in the midst of confusion, and rebellion; and his ultimate overthrow of all adverse forces.

Verse 11.

1. God's possession of heaven, the model of his possession of earth.

2. God's possession of earth most certain, and its manifestation in the future most sure.

3. The course of action suggested to his people by the two facts.

Verse 12. The joy of creation in its Creator.

Verse 14.

1. The Equity of the divine government—"justice", etc. No creature can eventually be unjustly dealt with under his dominion, and his kingdom ruleth over all.

2. The Sovereignty of the divine government. Truth before mercy. Mercy founded upon truth. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham." The covenant made in mercy to Abraham is fulfilled in truth to Jacob.

Verse 15.

1. The gospel is a joyful sound. Good tidings, etc.
2. It is a joyful sound to those who know it, hear it, believe it, love it, obey it.
3. They to whom it is a joyful sound are blessed. "They shall walk", etc.

Verse 15.

1. There is a theoretical knowledge of the gospel.
2. An experimental knowledge, and,
3. A practical knowledge

—*W. Drasfield*, 1859.

Verse 16.—

1. Exultation.

(a) "In thy name", etc., as rich in mercy as the God of salvation—of all grace—of all consolation.

(b) At what season—"all the day", morning, noon, and night.

2. Exaltation. "In thy righteousness", etc.

(a) How not exalted. Not in their own righteousness.

(b) How exalted. "In *thy*", etc. Procured for them—by a divine person (*thy*)—imputed to them. Ours, though thine. The righteousness of God as God could not exalt us, but his righteousness as God man can. Exalted above hell, above earth, above Paradise, above angels. Exalted to friends of God—children of God—one with God, to heaven.

Verse 16. (second clause).—Consider,

1. What the believer is exalted *above* or *from*, by God's righteousness.

(a) It exalts him above the law.

(b) Above the world.

(c) Above the power and malice of Satan.

(d) Above death.

(e) Above all accusations (Ro 8:33-34.)

2. To what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted by virtue of that righteousness.

a) To a state of peace and reconciliation with God.

(b) To sonship.

(c) To fellowship and familiarity with God, and access to him.

(d) And finally, to a state of endless glory.

—*E. Erskine*.

Verse 17.

1. The blessedness of the righteous.

(a) Their internal glory. Reliance upon divine strength.

(b) Their internal honour. "In thy favour", etc.

2. The participation in that blessedness. The *their* of the people of God becomes *our*. Their strength our horn. Happy they, who, with respect to all the privileges of the saints, can thus turn *their* into *our*.

Verse 17.

1. Consider our natural weakness.
2. Consider our strength in God.
3. Give God the glory of it.

Verse 18.

1. Jehovah—his power, self existence, and majesty—our defence.
2. The Holy One of Israel—his character, covenant character, and unity—our government.

Verse 19.

1. The work required. "Help."
 - (a) By whom? By God himself.
 - (b) For what? To reconcile God to man, and man to God.
2. The persons selected for this work.
 - (a) Human. "Chosen out of the people."
 - (b) Divine. "Thy Holy One."
3. His qualifications for the work.
 - (a) His own ability for the office. "One that is mighty."
 - (b) His appointment to it by God. "I have laid." etc. "I have chosen", etc.

Verse 19. (*last clause*). Election, extraction, exaltation.

Verses 20-21.

1. The Messiah would be of the seed of David. The true David.
2. He would be a servant of the Father. "My servant."
3. He would be consecrated to his office by God. "With my holy oil", etc.
4. He would perfectly fulfil it. "With whom my hand", etc.
5. He would be sustained in it by the Father. "Mine arm", etc.

Verse 22-23.

1. A prophecy of the conflict of the Messiah with Satan. Satan could not exact any debt or homage for him.
2. Of his refutation of his enemies. "I will beat down", etc. The Scribes and Pharisees were beaten down before his face.
3. Of the destruction of their city and nation. "And plague them", etc.

Verse 26. Our Lord's filial spirit, and how it was displayed.

Verse 29.

1. The subjects of Messiah's reign. "His seed."

- (a) For union—his seed.
 - (b) For resemblance.
 - (c) For multitude.
2. The duration of his reign.
- (a) They for ever one with him.
 - (b) He for ever on the throne.

Verses 30-34.

1. The persons referred to. "His children." "Ye are all the children", etc.
2. The supposition concerning them. "If his children forsake", etc.
- (a) They may possibly—may fall, though not fall away.
 - (b) They will probably, because they are far from being perfect.
 - (c) They have actually: as David himself and others.
3. The threatening founded upon that supposition.
- (a) Specified—"the rod—stripes." They shall smart for it sooner or later.
 - (b) Certified. "Then will I."
4. The qualification of the threatening. "Nevertheless", etc.
- (a) The nevertheless characterized. Lovingkindness not removed, etc.
 - (b) Emphasised. The rod may seem to be in anger, nevertheless, etc.

There is,

- 1. An if.
- 2. A then.
- 3. A nevertheless.

Verse 39.

- 1. Providence may often seem to be at variance with promises.
- 2. Promises are never at variance with providence. It is the covenant of thy servant and his crown still.

Verse 39. How the throne of King Jesus may be profaned.

Verse 40.

- 1. What God had done. "Broken down", etc.
- 2. What he had not done. Not taken away sorrow for his departure and desire for his return.

Verse 43. Cases in which the sword of the gospel appears to have its edge turned.

Verse 44-45.

- 1. A prophecy that the Messiah would be meek and lowly. "Made his glory to cease."
- 2. Would become a servant to the Father. "Cast his throne down", etc.
- 3. Would be cut off in the midst of his days. "The days of his youth", etc.

4. That he would die an ignominious death. "Hast covered him", etc.

Verse 45. The excellence of the first days of Christianity, and in what respect their glory has departed from us.

Verse 46. The hand of God is to be acknowledged.

1. In the nature of affliction. "Wilt thou hide thyself", etc.

2. In the duration of affliction. "How long, Lord?"

3. In the severity of affliction. Wrath burning like fire.

4. In the issue of affliction. How long? for ever? In all these respects the words are applicable both to Christ and to his people.

Verse 46. Remember. The prayer of the dying thief, the troubled believer, the persecuted Christian.

Verse 47.

1. An appeal to divine goodness. "Remember", etc. Let not my life be all trouble and sorrow.

2. To divine wisdom. "Wherefore", etc. Was man made only to be miserable? Will not man have been made in vain if his life be but short, and that short life be nothing but sorrow?

Verse 52.

1. The voice. "Blessed", etc. In himself in all his works and ways—in his judgments as well as in his mercies—as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—"for evermore."

2. The echo, "Amen and amen." Amen, says the church on earth—says the church in heaven—say the angels of God—says the whole holy and happy universe—says eternity past and eternity to come.

WORK UPON THE EIGHTY-NINTH PSALM

In the Works of John Boys, folio, pp. 805-9, there is an Exposition of a portion of this Psalm.

HERE ENDETH THE THIRD BOOK OF THE PSALMS.

Psalm 90

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. A Prayer of Moses the man of God. Many attempts have been made to prove that Moses did not write this Psalm, but we remain unmoved in the conviction that he did so. The condition of Israel in the wilderness is so preeminently illustrative of each verse, and the turns, expressions, and words are so similar to many in the Pentateuch, that the difficulties suggested are, to our mind, light as air in

comparison with the internal evidence in favour of its Mosaic origin. Moses was mighty in word as well as deed, and this Psalm we believe to be one of his weighty utterances, worthy to stand side by side with his glorious oration recorded in Deuteronomy. Moses was peculiarly a man of God and God's man; chosen of God, inspired of God, honoured of God, and faithful to God in all his house, he well deserved the name which is here given him. The Psalm is called a prayer, for the closing petitions enter into its essence, and the preceding verses are a meditation preparatory to the supplication. Men of God are sure to be men of prayer. This was not the only prayer of Moses, indeed it is but a specimen of the manner in which the seer of Horeb was leant to commune with heaven, and intercede for the good of Israel. This is the oldest of the Psalms, and stands between two books of Psalms as a composition unique in its grandeur, and alone in its sublime antiquity. Many generations of mourners have listened to this Psalm when standing around the open grave, and have been consoled thereby, even when they have not perceived its special application to Israel in the wilderness and have failed to remember the far higher ground upon which believers now stand.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—Moses sings of the frailty of man, and the shortness of life, contrasting therewith the eternity of God, and founding thereon earnest appeals for compassion. The only division which will be useful separates the contemplation Ps 90:1-11 from the Ps 90:12-17 there is indeed no need to make even this break, for the unity is well preserved throughout.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.* We must consider the whole Psalm as written for the tribes in the desert, and then we shall see the primary meaning of each verse. Moses, in effect, says—wanderers though we be in the howling wilderness, yet we find a home in thee, even as our forefathers did when they came out of Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in tents among the Canaanites. To the saints the Lord Jehovah, the self-existent God, stands instead of mansion and roof-tree; he shelters, comforts, protects, preserves, and cherishes all his own. Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the saints dwell in their God, and have always done so in all ages. Not in the tabernacle or the temple do we dwell, but in God himself; and this we have always done since there was a church in the world. We have not shifted our abode. Kings' palaces have vanished beneath the crumbling hand of time—they have been burned with fire and buried beneath mountains of ruins, but the imperial race of heaven has never lost its regal habitation. Go to the Palatine and see how the Caesars are forgotten of the halls which echoed to their despotic mandates, and resounded with the plaudits of the nations over which they ruled, and then look upward and see in the ever-living Jehovah the divine home of the faithful, untouched by so much as the finger of decay. Where dwelt our fathers a hundred generations since, there dwell we still. It is of New Testament saints that the Holy Ghost has said, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in

God and God in him!" It was a divine mouth which said, "Abide in me", and then added, "he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit." It is most sweet to speak with the Lord as Moses did, saying, "Lord, thou art our dwelling place", and it is wise to draw from the Lord's eternal condescension reasons for expecting present and future mercies, as the Psalmist did in the next Psalm wherein he describes the safety of those who dwell in God.

Verse 2. *Before the mountains were brought forth.* Before those elder giants had struggled forth from nature's womb, as her dread firstborn, the Lord was glorious and self sufficient. Mountains to him, though hoar with the snows of ages, are but new born babes, young things whose birth was but yesterday, mere novelties of an hour. Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world. Here too the allusion is to a birth. Earth was born but the other day, and her solid land was delivered from the flood but a short while ago. Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God, or, "thou art, O God." God was, when nothing else was. He was God when the earth was not a world but a chaos, when mountains were not upheaved, and the generation of the heavens and the earth had not commenced. In this Eternal One there is a safe abode for the successive generations of men. If God himself were of yesterday, he would not be a suitable refuge for mortal men; if he could change and cease to be God he would be but an uncertain dwelling place for his people. The eternal existence of God is here mentioned to set forth, by contrast, the brevity of human life.

Verse 3. *Thou turnest man to destruction, or "to dust."* Man's body is resolved into its elements, and is as though it had been crushed and ground to powder. And sayest, Return, ye children of men, *i.e.*, return even to the dust out of which ye were taken. The frailty of man is thus forcibly set forth; God creates him out of the dust, and back to dust he goes at the word of his Creator. God resolves and man dissolves. A word created and a word destroys. Observe how the action of God is recognised; man is not said to die because of the decree of faith, or the action of inevitable law, but the Lord is made the agent of all, his hand turns and his voice speaks; without these we should not die, no power on earth or hell could kill us.

"An angel's arm cannot save me from the grave,
Myriads of angels cannot confine me there."

Verse 4. *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.* A thousand years! This is a long stretch of time. How much may be crowded into it,—the rise and fall of empires, the glory and obliteration of dynasties, the beginning and the end of elaborate systems of human philosophy, and countless events, all important to household and individual, which elude the pens of historians. Yet this period, which might even be called the limit of modern history, and is in human language almost identical with an indefinite length of time, is to the Lord as nothing, even as time already gone. A moment yet to come is longer than "yesterday when it is past", for that no longer exists at all, yet such is a chiliad to the eternal. In comparison with eternity, the most lengthened

reaches of time are mere points, there is in fact, no possible comparison between them. And as a watch in the night, a time which is no sooner come than gone. There is scarce time enough in a thousand years for the angels to change watches; when their millennium of service is almost over it seems as though the watch were newly set. We are dreaming through the long night of time, but God is ever keeping watch, and a thousand years are as nothing to him. A host of days and nights must be combined to make up a thousand years to us, but to God, that space of time does not make up a whole night, but only a brief portion of it. If a thousand years be to God as a single night watch, what must be the life time of the Eternal!

Verse 5. *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* As when a torrent rushes down the river bed and bears all before it, so does the Lord bear away by death the succeeding generations of men. As the hurricane sweeps the clouds from the sky, so time removes the children of men. They are as a sleep. Before God men must appear as unreal as the dreams of the night, the phantoms of sleep. Not only are our plans and devices like a sleep, but we ourselves are such. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. As grass is green in the morning and hay at night, so men are changed from health to corruption in a few hours. We are not cedars, or oaks, but only poor grass, which is vigorous in the spring, but lasts not a summer through. What is there upon earth more frail than we!

Verse 6. *In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.* Blooming with abounding beauty till the meadows are all besprent with gems, the grass has a golden hour, even as man in his youth has a heyday of flowery glory. In the evening it is cut down, and withereth. The scythe ends the blossoming of the field flowers, and the dews at flight weep their fall. Here is the history of the grass—sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more. Natural decay would put an end both to us and the grass in due time; few, however, are left to experience the full result of age, for death comes with his scythe, and removes our life in the midst of its verdure. How great a change in how short a time! The morning saw the blooming, and the evening sees the withering.

Verse 7. This mortality is not accidental, neither was it inevitable in the original of our nature, but sin has provoked the Lord to anger, and therefore thus we die. For we are consumed by thine anger. This is the scythe which mows and the scorching heat which withers. This was specially the case in reference to the people in the wilderness, whose lives were cut short by justice on account of their waywardness; they failed, not by a natural decline, but through the blast of the well deserved judgments of God. It must have been a very mournful sight to Moses to see the whole nation melt away during the forty years of their pilgrimage, till none remained of all that came out of Egypt. As God's favour is life, so his anger is death; as well might grass grow in an oven as men flourish when the Lord is wroth with them. "And by thy wrath are we troubled", or terror stricken. A sense of divine anger confounded them, so that they lived as men who knew that they were doomed. This is true of

us in a measure, but not altogether, for now that immortality and life are brought to light by the gospel, death has changed its aspect, and, to believers in Jesus, it is no more a judicial execution. Anger and wrath are the sting of death, and in these believers have no share; love and mercy now conduct us to glory by the way of the tomb. It is not seemly to read these words at a Christian's funeral without words of explanation, and a distinct endeavour to shew how little they belong to believers in Jesus, and how far we are privileged beyond those with whom he was not well pleased, "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." To apply an ode, written by the leader of the legal dispensation under circumstances of peculiar judgment, in reference to a people under penal censure, to those who fall asleep in Jesus, seems to be the height of blundering. We may learn much from it, but we ought not to misapply it by taking to ourselves, as the beloved of the Lord, that which was chiefly true of those to whom God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. When, however, a soul is under conviction of sin, the language of this Psalm is highly appropriate to his case, and will naturally suggest itself to the distracted mind. No fire consumes like God's anger, and no anguish so troubles the heart as his wrath. Blessed be that dear substitute, "Who bore that we might never His Father's righteous ire."

Verse 8. *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.* Hence these tears! Sin seen by God must work death; it is only by the covering blood of atonement that life comes to any of us. When God was overthrowing the tribes in the wilderness he had their iniquities before him, and therefore dealt with them in severity. He could not have their iniquities before him and not smite them. Our secret sins in the sight of thy countenance. There are no secrets before God; he unearths man's hidden things, and exposes them to the light. There can be no more powerful luminary than the face of God, yet, in that strong light, the Lord set the hidden sins of Israel. Sunlight can never be compared with the light of him who made the sun, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If by his countenance is here meant his love and favour, it is not possible for the heinousness of sin to be more clearly manifested than when it is seen to involve ingratitude to one so infinitely good and kind. Rebellion in the light of justice is black, but in the light of love it is devilish. How can we grieve so good a God? The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt with a high hand, fed in the wilderness with a liberal hand, and guided with a tender hand, and their sins were peculiarly atrocious. We, too, having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and saved by abounding grace, will be verily guilty if we forsake the Lord. What manner of persons ought we to be? How ought we to pray for cleansing from secret faults? It is to us a wellspring of delights to remember that our sins, as believers are now cast behind the Lord's back, and shall never be brought to light again: therefore we live, because, the guilt being removed, the death penalty is removed also.

Verse 9. *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath.* Justice shortened the days of rebellious

Israel; each halting place became a graveyard; they marked their march by the tombs they left behind them. Because of the penal sentence their days were dried up, and their lives wasted away. We spend our years as a tale that is told. Yea, not their days only, but their years flew by them like a thought, swift as a meditation, rapid and idle as a gossip's story. Sin had cast a shadow over all things, and made the lives of the dying wanderers to be both vain and brief. The first sentence is not intended for believers to quote, as though it applied to themselves, for our days are all passed amid the lovingkindness of the Lord, even as David says in the Ps 23:6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Neither is the life of the gracious man unsubstantial as a story teller's tale; he lives in Jesus, he has the divine Spirit within him, and to him "life is real, life is earnest"—the simile only holds good if we consider that a holy life is rich in interest, full of wonders, chequered with many changes, yet as easily ordered by providence as the improvisatore arranges the details of the story with which he beguiles the hour. Our lives are illustrations of heavenly goodness, parables of divine wisdom, poems of sacred thought, and records of infinite love; happy are we whose lives are such tales.

Verse 10. *The days of our years are threescore years and ten.* Moses himself lived longer than this, but his was the exception not the rule: in his day life had come to be very much the same in duration as it is with us. This is brevity itself compared with the men of the elder time; it is nothing when contrasted with eternity. Yet is life long enough for virtue and piety, and all too long for vice and blasphemy. Moses here in the original writes in a disconnected manner, as if he would set forth the utter insignificance of man's hurried existence. His words may be rendered, "The days of our years! In them seventy years": as much as to say, "The days of our years? What about them? Are they worth mentioning? The account is utterly insignificant, their full tale is but seventy." And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their *strength labour and sorrow*. The unusual strength which overleaps the bound of threescore and ten only lands the aged man in a region where life is a weariness and a woe. The strength of old age, its very prime and pride, are but labour and sorrow; what must its weakness be? What panting for breath! What toiling to move! What a failing of the senses! What a crushing sense of weakness! The evil days are come and the years wherein a man cries, "I have no pleasure in them." The grasshopper has become a burden and desire faileth. Such is old age. Yet mellowed by hallowed experience, and solaced by immortal hopes, the latter days of aged Christians are not so much to be pitied as envied. The sun is setting and the heat of the day is over, but sweet is the calm and cool of the eventide: and the fair day melts away, not into a dark and dreary night, but into a glorious, unclouded, eternal day. The mortal fades to make room for the immortal; the old man falls asleep to wake up in the region of perennial youth. For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. The cable is broken and the vessel sails upon the sea of eternity; the chain is snapped and the eagle mounts to its native air above the clouds. Moses mourned for men as he thus

sung: and well he might, as all his comrades fell at his side. His words are more nearly rendered, "He drives us fast and we fly away; "as the quails were blown along by the strong west wind, so are men hurried before the tempests of death. To us, however, as believers, the winds are favourable; they bear us as the gales bear the swallows away from the wintry realms, to lands

"Where everlasting spring abides
And never withering flowers."

Who wishes it to be otherwise? Wherefore should we linger here? What has this poor world to offer us that we should tarry on its shores? Away, away! This is not our rest. Heavenward, Ho! Let the Lord's winds drive fast if so he ordains, for they waft us the more swiftly to himself, and our own dear country.

Verse 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* Moses saw men dying all around him: he lived among funerals, and was overwhelmed at the terrible results of the divine displeasure. He felt that none could measure the might of the Lord's wrath. Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. Good men dread that wrath beyond conception, but they never ascribe too much terror to it: bad men are dreadfully convulsed when they awake to a sense of it, but their horror is not greater than it had need be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. Holy Scripture when it depicts God's wrath against sin never uses an hyperbole; it would be impossible to exaggerate it. Whatever feelings of pious awe and holy trembling may move the tender heart, it is never too much moved; apart from other considerations the great truth of the divine anger, when most powerfully felt, never impresses the mind with a solemnity in excess of the legitimate result of such a contemplation. What the power of God's anger is in hell, and what it would be on earth, were it not in mercy restrained, no man living can rightly conceive. Modern thinkers rail at Milton and Dante, Bunyan and Baxter, for their terrible imagery; but the truth is that no vision of poet, or denunciation of holy seer, can ever reach to the dread height of this great argument, much less go beyond it. The wrath to come has its horrors rather diminished than enhanced in description by the dark lines of human fancy; it baffles words, it leaves imagination far behind. Beware ye that forget God lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. God is terrible out of his holy places. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah! Remember Korah and his company! Mark well the graves of lust in the wilderness! Nay, rather bethink ye of the place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Who is able to stand against this justly angry God? Who will dare to rush upon the bosses of his buckler, or tempt the edge of his sword? Be it ours to submit ourselves as dying sinners to this eternal God, who can, even at this moment, command us to the dust, and thence to hell.

Verse 12. *So teach us to number our days.* Instruct us to set store by time, mourning for that time past wherein we have wrought the will of the flesh, using diligently the time present, which is the accepted hour and the day of salvation, and reckoning the time which lieth in the future to be too

uncertain to allow us safely to delay any gracious work or prayer. Numeration is a child's exercise in arithmetic, but in order to number their days aright the best of men need the Lord's teaching. We are more anxious to count the stars than our days, and yet the latter is by far more practical. That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Men are led by reflections upon the brevity of time to give their earnest attention to eternal things; they become humble as they look into the grave which is so soon to be their bed, their passions cool in the presence of mortality, and they yield themselves up to the dictates of unerring wisdom; but this is only the case when the Lord himself is the teacher; he alone can teach to real and lasting profit. Thus Moses prayed that the dispensations of justice might be sanctified in mercy. "The law is our school master to bring us to Christ", when the Lord himself speaks by the law. It is most meet that the heart which will so soon cease to beat should while it moves be regulated by wisdom's hand. A short life should be wisely spent. We have not enough time at our disposal to justify us in mispending a single quarter of an hour. Neither are we sure of enough life to justify us in procrastinating for a moment. If we were wise in heart we should see this, but mere head wisdom will not guide us aright.

Verse 13. *Return, O LORD, how long? Come in mercy, to us again. Do not leave us to perish. Suffer not our lives to be both brief and bitter. Thou hast said to us, "Return, ye children of men", and now we humbly cry to thee, "Return, thou preserver of men."* Thy presence alone can reconcile us to this transient existence; turn thou unto us. As sin drives God from us, so repentance cries to the Lord to return to us. When men are under chastisement they are allowed to expostulate, and ask "how long?" Our faith in these times is not too great boldness with God, but too much backwardness in pleading with him. And let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Thus Moses acknowledges the Israelites to be God's servants still. They had rebelled, but they had not utterly forsaken the Lord; they owned their obligations to obey his will, and pleaded them as a reason for pity. Will not a man spare his own servants? Though God smote Israel, yet they were his people, and he had never disowned them, therefore is he entreated to deal favourably with them. If they might not see the promised land, yet he is begged to cheer them on the road with his mercy, and to turn his frown into a smile. The prayer is like others which came from the meek lawgiver when he boldly pleaded with God for the nation; it is Moses like. He here speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

Verse 14. *O satisfy us early with thy mercy.* Since they must die, and die so soon, the psalmist pleads for speedy mercy upon himself and his brethren. Good men know how to turn the darkest trials into arguments at the throne of grace. He who has but the heart to pray need never be without pleas in prayer. The only satisfying food for the Lord's people is the favour of God; this Moses earnestly seeks for, and as the manna fell in the morning he beseeches the Lord to send at once his satisfying favour, that all through the little day of life they might be filled therewith. Are we so soon to die? Then, Lord, do not starve us while we live. Satisfy us at once, we pray thee. Our day is short and

the night hastens on, O give us in the early morning of our days to be satisfied with thy favour, that all through our little day we may be happy. That we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Being filled with divine love, their brief life on earth would become a joyful festival, and would continue so as long as it lasted. When the Lord refreshes us with his presence, our joy is such that no man can take it from us. Apprehensions of speedy death are not able to distress those who enjoy the present favour of God; though they know that the night cometh they see nothing to fear in it, but continue to live while they live, triumphing in the present favour of God and leaving the future in his loving hands. Since the whole generation which came out of Egypt had been doomed to die in the wilderness, they would naturally feel despondent, and therefore their great leader seeks for them that blessing which, beyond all others, consoles the heart, namely, the presence and favour of the Lord.

Verse 15. *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* None can gladden the heart as thou canst, O Lord, therefore as thou hast made us sad be pleased to make us glad. Fill the other scale. Proportion thy dispensations. Give us the lamb, since thou has sent us the bitter herbs. Make our days as long as our nights. The prayer is original, childlike, and full of meaning; it is moreover based upon a great principle in providential goodness, by which the Lord puts the good over against the evil in due measure. Great trial enables us to bear great joy, and may be regarded as the herald of extraordinary grace. God's dealings are according to scale; small lives are small throughout; and great histories are great both in sorrow and happiness. Where there are high hills there are also deep valleys. As God provides the sea for leviathan, so does he find a pool for the minnow; in the sea all things are in fit proportion for the mighty monster, while in the little brook all things befit the tiny fish. If we have fierce afflictions we may look for overflowing delights, and our faith may boldly ask for them. God who is great in justice when he chastens will not be little in mercy when he blesses, he will be great all through: let us appeal to him with unstaggering faith.

Verse 16. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants.* See how he dwells upon that word servants. It is as far as the law can go, and Moses goes to the full length permitted him henceforth Jesus calls us not servants but friends, and if we are wise we shall make full use of our wider liberty. Moses asks for displays of divine power and providence conspicuously wrought, that all the people might be cheered thereby. They could find no solace in their own faulty works, but in the work of God they would find comfort. And thy glory unto their children. While their sons were growing up around them, they desired to see some outshinings of the promised glory gleaming upon them. Their Sons were to inherit the land which had been given them by covenant, and therefore they sought on their behalf some tokens of the coming good, some morning dawns of the approaching noonday. How eagerly do good men plead for their children. They can bear very much personal affliction if they may but be sure that their children will know the glory of God, and thereby be led to serve him. We are content

with the work if our children may but see the glory which will result from it: we sow joyfully if they may reap.

Verse 17. *And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.* Even upon us who must not see thy glory in the land of Canaan; it shall suffice us if in our characters the holiness of God is reflected, and if over all our camp the lovely excellences of our God shall cast a sacred beauty. Sanctification should be the daily object of our petitions. And establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of *our hands establish thou it.* Let what we do be done in truth, and last when we are in the grave; may the work of the present generation minister permanently to the building tip of the nation. Good men are anxious not to work in vain. They know that without the Lord they can do nothing, and therefore they cry to him for help in the work, for acceptance of their efforts, and for the establishment of their designs. The church as a whole earnestly desires that the hand of the Lord may so work with the hand of his people, that a substantial, yea, an eternal edifice to the praise and glory of God may be the result. We come and go, but the Lord's work abides. We are content to die so long as Jesus lives and his kingdom grows. Since the Lord abides for ever the same, we trust our work in his hands, and feel that since it is far more his work than ours he will secure it immortality. When we have withered like grass our holy service, like gold, silver, and precious stones, will survive the fire.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. 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 connection 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.—*J.A. Alexander.*

Title. A prayer of Moses. Moses may be considered as the first composer of sacred hymns.—*Samuel Burder.*

Title. The Psalm is described in the title as a *prayer*. This description shows, as Amyraldus saw, that the kernel of the Psalm in the *second* part, and that the design of the first is to prepare the way for the second, and lay down a basis on which it may rest.—*E.W. Hengstenberg.*

Title. A prayer of Moses. Moses was an old and much tried man, but age and experience had taught him that, amidst the perpetual changes which are taking place in the universe, one thing at least remains immutable, even the faithfulness of him who is "from everlasting to everlasting God." How far back into the past may the patriarch have been looking when he spake these words? The burning bush, the fiery furnace of Egypt, the Red Sea, Pharaoh with his chariots of war, and the weary march of Israel through the wilderness, were all before him; and in all of them he had experienced that "God

is the Rock, his work perfect, all his ways judgment" (De 32:4). But Moses was looking beyond these scenes of his personal history when he said, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations." (De 32:7), and we may be sure that he was also looking beyond them when he indited the song, *Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations*. Yes; he was casting in his mind how God had been the refuge of Jacob and Isaac, of Abraham, Noah, and all the patriarchs. Moses could take a retrospect of above a thousand years, which had all confirmed the truth. I can do no more. At this point of time I can look back to the days of Moses and Joshua and David, and descending thence to the days of the Son of God upon earth, and of Paul and Peter, and all the saints of the Church down to the present hour; and what a thousand years avouched to Moses, three thousand now avouch to me: the Lord is the dwelling place of those that trust in him from generation to generation. Yes; and to him who was the refuge of a Moses and an Abraham, I too in the day of trouble can lift my hands. Delightful thought! That great Being who, during the lapse of three thousand years, amidst the countless changes of the universe, has to this day remained unchanged, is MY God.—*Augustus F. Theluck, in "Hours of Christian Devotion", 1870.*

Whole Psalm. Although some difficulties have been started, there seems no reason to doubt that this Psalm is the composition of Moses. From the remotest period his name has been attached to it, and almost every Biblical scholar, from Jerome down to Hengstenberg, has agreed to accept it as a prayer of that "man of God" whose name it has always carried. If so, it is one of the oldest poems in the world. Compared with it Homer and Pindar are (so to speak) modern, and even King David is of recent date. That is to say, compared with this ancient hymn the other Psalms are as much more modern as Tennyson and Longfellow are more modern than Chaucer. In either case there are nearly five centuries between.—*James Hamilton.*

Whole Psalm. The 90th Psalm might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions—the deepest in feeling—the loftiest in theologic conception—the most magnificent in its imagery. True is it in its report of human life—as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal—the Sovereign and the Judge; and yet the refuge and hope of men, who, notwithstanding, the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in him; but who, in the firmness of faith, pray for, as if they were predicting, a near at hand season of refreshment. Wrapped, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of Immortality; for in the very complaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these, his few years of trouble, and their brevity, and their gloom, there is brought into contrast the Divine immutability; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety: the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo. No taint is there in this Psalm of the pride and petulance—the half uttered blasphemy—the malign disputing or arraignment of the justice or goodness of God, which have so often shed a venomous colour upon the language of those who have writhed in anguish, personal or relative.

There are few probably among those who have passed through times of bitter and distracting woe, or who have stood—the helpless spectators of the miseries of others, that have not fallen into moods of mind violently in contrast with the devout and hopeful melancholy which breathes throughout this ode. Rightly attributed to the Hebrew Lawgiver or not, it bespeaks its remote antiquity, not merely by the majestic simplicity of its style, but negatively, by the entire avoidance of those sophisticated turns of thought which belong to a late—a lost age in a people's intellectual and moral history. This Psalm, undoubtedly, is centuries older than the moralizing of that time when the Jewish mind had listened to what it could never bring into a true assimilation with its own mind—the abstractions of the Greek Philosophy.

With this one Psalm only in view—if it were required of us to say, in brief, what we mean by the phrase—"The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry"—we find our answer well condensed in this sample. This magnificent composition gives evidence, not merely as to the mental qualities of the writer, but as to the tastes and habits of the writer's contemporaries, his hearers, and his readers; on these several points—*first*, the free and customary command of a poetic diction, and its facile imagery, so that whatever the poetic soul would utter, the poet's material is near at hand for his use. There is then that depth of feeling—mournful, reflective, and yet hopeful and trustful, apart from which poetry can win for itself no higher esteem than what we bestow upon other decorative arts, which minister to the demands of luxurious *sloth*. There is, moreover, as we might say, underlying this poem, from the first line to the last, the substance of philosophic thought, apart from which, expressed or understood, poetry is frivolous, and is not in harmony with the seriousness of human life: this Psalm is of a sort which Plato would have written, or Sophocles—if only the one or the other of these minds had possessed a heaven descended Theology.—*Isaac Taylor*.

Verse 1. *Lord.* Observe the change of the divine names in this Psalm. Moses begins with the declaration of the Majesty of the Lord (*Adonai*) but when he arrives at Ps 90:13, he opens his prayer with the Name of grace and covenanted mercy to Israel—JEHOVAH; and he sums up all in Ps 90:17, with a supplication for the manifestation of the *beauty* Men of "the Lord our God" (JEHOVAH, ELOHIM).—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 1. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place.* Many seem to beg God's help in prayer, but are not protected by him: they seek it only in a storm, and when all other means and refuges fail them. But a Christian must maintain constant communication with God; must dwell in God, not run to him now and then.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 1. This exordium breathes life, and pertains to a certain hope of the resurrection and of eternal life. Since he calls God, who is eternal, our habitation, or to speak more clearly, our place of refuge, to whom fleeing we may be in safety. For if God is our dwelling place, and God is life, and we dwellers in him, it necessarily follows, that we are in life, and shall live for ever... For who will call God

the dwelling place of the dead? Who shall regard him as a sepulchre? He is life; and therefore they also live to whom he is a dwelling place. After this fashion Moses, in the very introduction, before he lets loose his horrible thunderings and lightnings, fortifies the trembling, that they may firmly hold God to be the living dwelling place of the living, of those that pray to him, and put their trust in him. It is a remarkable expression, the like of which is nowhere in Sacred Scripture, that God is a *dwelling place*. Scripture in other places says the very opposite, it calls men temples of God, in whom God dwells; "the temple of God is holy", says Paul, "which temple ye are." Moses inverts this, and affirms, we are inhabitants and masters in this house. For the Hebrew word *Nwem* properly signifies a dwelling place, as when the Scripture says, "In Zion is his dwelling place", where this word (*Maon*) is used. But because a house is for the purpose of safety, it results, that this word has the meaning of a refuge or place of refuge. But Moses wishes to speak with such great care that he may shew that all our hopes have been placed most securely in God, and that they who are about to pray to this God may be assured that they are not afflicted in this work in vain, nor die, since they have God as a place of refuge, and the divine Majesty as a dwelling place, in which they may rest secure for ever. Almost in the same strain Paul speaks, when he says to the Colossians, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." For it is a much clearer and more luminous expression to say, Believers dwell in God, than that God dwells in them. He dwelt also visibly in Zion, but the place is changed. But because he (the believer), is in God, it is manifest, that he cannot be moved nor transferred, for God is a habitation of a kind that cannot perish. Moses therefore wished to exhibit the most certain life, when he said, God is our dwelling place, not the earth, not heaven, not paradise, but simply God himself. If after this manner you take this Psalm it will become sweet, and seem in all respects most useful. When a monk, it often happened to me when I read this Psalm, that I was compelled to lay the book out of my hand. But I knew not that these terrors were not addressed to an awakened mind. I knew not that Moses was speaking to a most obdurate and proud multitude, which neither understood nor cared for the anger of God, nor were humbled by their calamities, or even in prospect of death.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 1. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place*, etc. In this first part the prophet acknowledgeth that God in all times, and in all ages hath had a special care of his saints and servants, to provide for them all things necessary for this life; for under the name of "*dwelling place*", or *mansion house*, the prophet understandeth all helps and comforts necessary for this life, both for maintenance and protection. For the use of such houses was wont to be not only to defend men from the injury of the weather, and to keep safely, within the walls and under the roof all other things necessary for this life, and to be a place of abode, wherein men might the more commodiously provide for all other things necessary, and walk in some calling profitable to their neighbour and to the glory of God; but also to protect them from the violence of brute beasts and rage of enemies. Now the prophet herein seems to note a special and more immediate providence of God: (for of all kind of people they seemed to be

most forsaken and forlorn); that whereas the rest of the world seemed to have their habitations and mansions rooted in the earth, and so to dwell upon the earth; to live in cities and walled towns in all wealth and state; God's people were as it were without house and home. Abraham was called out of his own country, from his father's house, where no doubt he had goodly buildings, and large revenues, and was commanded by God to live as a foreigner in a strange country, amongst savage people, that he knew not; and to abide in tents, booths, and cabins, having little hope to live a settled and comfortable life in any place. In like manner lived his posterity, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, wandering from place to place in the land of Canaan; from thence translated into the land of Egypt, there living at courtesy, and as it were tenants at will, and in such slavery and bondage, that it had been better for them to have been without house and home. After this for forty years together (at which time this Psalm was penned) they wandered up and down in a desolate wilderness, removing from place to place, and wandering, as it were in a maze. So that of all the people of the earth, God's own people had hitherto lived as pilgrims and banished persons, without house or home; and therefore the prophet here professes that God himself more immediately by his extraordinary providence, for many ages together had protected them, and been as it were a mansion house unto them; that is, the more they were deprived of these ordinary comforts of this life, the more was God present with them, supplying by his extraordinary and immediate providence what they wanted in regard of ordinary means. The due consideration of this point may minister matter of great joy and comfort to such children of God as are thoroughly humbled with the consideration of man's mortality in general, or of theirs whom they rely and depend upon in special.—*William Bradshaw*, 1621.

Verse 1. *Our dwelling place.* God created the earth for beasts to inhabit, the sea for fishes, the air for fowls, and heaven for angels and stars, so that man hath no place to dwell and abide in but God alone.—*Giovanni della Mirandola Pico*, 1463-1494.

Verses 1-2. The comfort of the believer against the miseries of this short life is taken from the decree of their election, and the eternal covenant of redemption settled in the purpose and counsel of the blessed Trinity for their behoof, wherein it was agreed before the world was, that the Word to be incarnate, should be the Saviour of the elect: for here the asserting of the eternity of God is with relation to his own chosen people; for *Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations*, and *thou art God from everlasting to everlasting*, is in substance thus much:—Thou art from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God in purpose and affection toward us thy people, and so thou art *our God* from everlasting, in regard of thy eternal purpose of love, electing us, and in regard of thy appointing redemption for us by the Redeemer.—*David Dickson*.

Verses 1-2. If man be ephemeral, God is eternal.—*James Hamilton*.

Verses 1-6.

O Lord, thou art our home, to whom we fly,

and so hast always been, from age to age;
Before the hills did intercept the eye,
Or that the frame was up of earthly stage,
One God thou wert, and art, and still shall be;
The line of time, it doth not measure thee.
Both death and life obey thy holy lore,
And visit in their turns as they are sent;
A thousand years with thee they are no more
Than yesterday, which, ere it is, is spent:
Or as a watch by night, that course doth keep,
And goes and comes, unawares to them that sleep.
Thou carriest man away as with a tide:
Then down swim all his thoughts that mounted high;
Much like a mocking dream, that will not bide,
But flies before the sight of waking eye;
Or as the grass, that cannot term obtain,
To see the summer come about again.
At morning, fair it musters on the ground;
At even it is cut down and laid along:
And though it shared were and favour found,
The weather would perform the mower's wrong:
Thus hast thou hanged our life on brittle pins,
To let us know it will not bear our sins.—*Francis Bacon*.

Verse 2. *The earth and the world.* The word *earth* here is used to denote the world as distinguished either from heaven (Ge 1:1), or from the sea (Ge 1:10). 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.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 2. *From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.* The everlastingness of which Moses speaks is to be referred not only to the essence of God, but also to his providence, by which he governs the world. He intends not merely that he is, but that he is God.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 2. Such a God (he says) have we, such a God do we worship, to such a God do we pray, at whose command all created things sprang into being. Why then should we fear if this God favours us? Why should we tremble at the anger of the whole world? If He is our dwelling place, shall we not be safe though the heavens should go to wrack? For we have a Lord greater than all the world. We have a Lord so mighty that at his word all things sprang into being. And yet we are so fainthearted

that if the anger of a single prince or king, nay, even of a single neighbour, is to be borne, we tremble and droop in spirit. Yet in comparison with this King, all things beside in the whole world are but as the lightest dust which a slight breath moves from its place, and suffers not to be still. In this way this description of God is consolatory, and trembling spirits ought to look to this consolation in their temptations and dangers.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 3. *Thou turnest man to destruction*, etc. The prophet conceives of God as of a potter, that having of dust tempered a mass, and framed it into a vessel, and dried it, doth presently, within a minute or an hour after, dash it again in pieces, and beat it to dust, in passion as it were speaking unto it, "Get thee to dust again." The word here translated "*destruction*", signifies a beating, or grinding, or pounding of a thing to powder. And the prophet seems to allude to the third of Genesis, where God speaks of Adam, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return", as if he should say, O Lord, thou that hast made and framed man of the dust of the earth, thou beatest him to dust again; and as thou madest him by thy word alone, so with thy word thou suddenly turnest, and beatest him against to dust; as a man that makes a thing, and presently mars it again...He doth it with a word, against which is no resistance, when that word is once come out of his mouth; it is not all the diet, physic, and help, and prayers in the world that can save the life. And this he can do suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye. And therefore we should, as we love our lives, fear him, and take heed how we offend and displease him that can with a word turn the strongest man into dust.—*William Bradshaw*.

Verse 3. *Thou turnest man to destruction*, etc. The first word for "*man*", signifies a man full of misery, full of sickness and infirmities, a miserable man, vwna. And the other word here used in the end of the verse, signifies a man made of *clay*, or of the very slime of the earth. From hence we learn what is the nature of all men, of all the sons of *Adam*, viz., a piece of living *clay*, a little piece of red earth. And besides that man is subject to *breaking* and *crushing*, every way a miserable man; so is he of a brittle mould, a piece of red clay, that hath in it for a time a living soul, which must return to God that gave it; and the body, this piece of earth, return to the earth from whence it came: and if we had no Scripture at all to prove this, daily experience before our eyes makes it clear how all men, even the wisest, the strongest, the greatest and the mightiest monarchs and princes in the world, be but miserable men, made of red earth, and quickly turn again to dust.—*Samuel Smith, in "Moses his Prayer"*, 1656.

Verse 3. *Thou turnest man to destruction*. Augustine says, We walk amid perils. If we were glass vases we might fear less dangers. What is there more fragile than a vase of glass? And yet it is preserved, and lasts for centuries: we therefore are more frail and infirm.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 3. *Return ye*. One being asked what life was? made an answer answerless, for he presently turned his back and went his way.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 4. *A thousand years*, etc. As to a very rich man a thousand sovereigns are as one penny; so, to the eternal God, a thousand years are as one day.—*John Albert Bengel, 1687-1752*.

Verse 4. The Holy Ghost expresses himself according to the manner of men, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to our capacity. If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God, then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God; and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions five hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God. Yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all these, for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 4. *As yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* He corrects the previous clause with an extraordinary abbreviation. For he says that the whole space of human life, although it may be very long, and reach a thousand years, yet with God it is esteemed not only as one day, which has already gone, but is scarcely equal to the fourth part of a night. For the nights were divided into four watches, which lasted three hours each. And indeed by the word *night*, it is meant that human affairs in this life are involved in much darkness, many errors, dangers, terrors, and sorrows.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 4. *As a watch in the night.* The night is wont to appear shorter than the day, and to pass more swiftly, because those who sleep, says Euthymius, notice not the lapse of time. On account of the darkness also, it is less observed; and to those at work the time seems longer, than to those who have their work done.—*Lorinus*.

Verse 4. *A watch in the night.* Sir John Chardin observes in a note on this verse, that as the people of the East have no clocks, the several parts of the day and of the night, which are eight in all, are given notice of. In the Indies, the parts of the night are made known as well by instruments of music in great cities, as by the rounds of the watchmen, who with cries, and small drums, give them notice that a fourth part of the night is passed. Now as these cries awaked those who had slept, all that quarter part of the night, it appeared to them but as a moment.—*Harmer's Observations*.

Verse 4.—The ages and the dispensations, the promise to Adam, the engagement with Noah, the oath to Abraham, the covenant with Moses—these were but watches, through which the children of men had to wait amid the darkness of things created, until the morning should dawn of things uncreated. Now is "the right far spent, and the day at hand."—*Plain Commentary*.

Verse 5. *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* Mtmrz (*zeram-tam*) *thou hast inundated them*, namely, the years of man, i.e., thou hast hurried them away with a flood, thou hast made them to glide away as water, *they will be sleep*.—*Bythner's "Lyre of David."*

Verse 5. *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* Let us meditate seriously upon the swift passage of our days, how our life runs away like a stream of waters, and carrieth us with it. Our condition in the eyes of God in regard of our life in this world is as if a man that knows not how to swim, should be cast into a great stream of water, and be carried down with it, so that he may sometimes lift up his

head or his hands, and cry for help, or catch hold of this thing and that, for a time, but his end will be drowning, and it is but a small time that he can hold out, for the flood which carries him away will soon swallow him up. And surely our life here if it be rightly considered, is but like the life of a person thus violently carried down a stream. All the actions and motions of our life are but like unto the strivings and struggles of a man in that case: our eating, our drinking, our physic, our sports, and all other actions are but like the motions of the sinking man. When we have done all that we can, die we must, and be drowned in this deluge.—*William Bradshaw*.

Verse 5. *Away as with a flood.* "A man is a bubble", said the Greek proverb, which Lucian represents to this purpose, saying, "All the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations like bubbles. Some of these instantly sink into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having no other business in the world but to be born, that they might be able to die; others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others: and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy, and being crushed in by a great drop from a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth; the change not being great; it being hardly possible that a bubble should be more a nothing than it was before."—*Jeremy Taylor*.

Verse 5. (*first clause*). The most ancient mode of measuring small portions of time was by water flowing out of a vessel the clepsydra of the Greeks and Romans; and Ovid has compared the lapse of time to the flowing of a river (Metam. 15, 180.)—*Stephen Street*.

Verse 5. *They are as a sleep.* For as in the visions of sleep, we seeing, see not, hearing we hear not, tasting or touching we neither taste nor touch, speaking we speak not, walking we walk not; but when we seem to employ movements and gestures, in no respect do we employ them, since the mind vainly forms without any real objects images of things that exist not, as if they existed. In this very way, the imaginations of those who are awake closely resemble dreams; they come, they go, they confront us and flee from us; before they are seized, they fly away.—*Philo, in Le Blanc*.

Verse 5. *They are as a sleep.* Our life may be compared to sleep in four respects.

1. In regard of the shortness of it.
2. In regard of the easiness of being put out of it.
3. In regard of the many means to disquiet and break it off.
4. With regard to the many errors in it.

For the first three. Sleep is but short, and the sweeter it is, the shorter it seems to be. And as it is but short of itself, though it should last the full swing of nature; so the soundest sleep is easily broken; the least knock, the lowest call puts men out of it; and a number of means and occasions there be to interrupt and break it off. And is it not so with the life of man? Is not the longest life short? Is it not the shorter, the sweeter and fuller of contents it is? And is it not easily taken away? Are there not many means to bring us unto our end? even as many as there are to waken us out of sleep. For the fourth.

How many errors are we subject to in sleep? In sleep the prisoner many times dreams that he is at liberty; he that is at liberty, that he is in prison; he that is hungry, that he is feeding daintily; he that is in want, that he is in great abundance; he that abounds, that he is in great want. How many in their sleep have thought they have gotten that which they shall be better for for ever, and when they are even in the hope of present possessing some such goodly matter, or beginning to enjoy it, or in the midst of their joy, they are suddenly awaked, and then all is gone with them, and their golden fancies vanish away in an instant. So for evil and sorrow as well. And is it not just so in the life of man?—*William Bradshaw*.

Verse 5. *They are like grass.* In this last similitude, the prophet compares men to grass, that as grass hath a time of growing and a time of withering, even so has man. *In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.* In which words Moses compares the former part of man's life, which is the space of thirty-three years, to the time of growing of grass, and that is accounted the time of the perfection of man's strength and age; at which age, according to the course of nature, man flourisheth as grass doth; that is the time of a man's prime and flourishing estate. But *in the evening;* that is, when the grass is ripe, and ready to be cut down, *it withereth.* Even so man, being once at his strength, and ripest age, doth not stand at a stay, nor continueth long so; but presently begins to decay, and to wither away, till old age comes, and he is cut down by the scythe of death. Now, in that Moses useth so many similitudes, and all to show how frail this life of man is, we are taught, that the frailty, vanity, and shortness of man's life is such, that examples will scarcely shew it. Death comes as a *flood,* violently and suddenly; we are as a *sleep;* we are as *grass;* our life is like a *dream;* we spend our days as a *tale that is told,* Ps 90:9. All these similitudes Moses hath in this Psalm, as if he wanted words and examples, how to express the vanity, frailty, and shortness thereof.—*Samuel Smith*.

Verse 6. *In the morning.* This can hardly mean "in early youth", as some of the Rabbis explain. The words, strictly speaking, are a part of the comparison ("they are as grass which springeth afresh in the morning"), and are only thus placed first to give emphasis to the figure. In the East, one night's rain works a change as if by magic. The field at evening was brown, parched, arid as a desert; in the morning it is green with the blades of grass. The scorching hot wind (Jas 1:11) blows upon it, and again before evening it is withered.—*J.J.S. Perowne*.

Verse 6. *Cut down.*

Stout and strong today,
Tomorrow turned to clay.
This day in his bloom,
The next, in the tomb.

It is true that to some Death sends his grey harbingers before, and gives them timely warning of his approach. But in how many cases does he arrive unannounced, and, lifting up his scythe, mows

down the lofty! On shipboard there is but a plank between us and death; on horseback, but a fall. As we walk along the streets, death stretches a threatening finger from every tile upon the roofs! "He comes up into our windows, and enters into our palaces; he cuts off the children from without, and the young men from the streets." Jer 9:21. Our life is less than an handbreadth. How soon and how insensibly we slip into the grave!—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 7. *For we are consumed by thine anger.* This is a point disputed by philosophers. They seek for the cause of death, since indeed proofs of immortality that cannot be despised exist in nature. The prophet replies, that the chief cause must not be sought in the material, either in a defect of the fluids, or in a failure of the natural heat; but that God being offended at the sins of men, hath subjected this nature to death and other infinite calamities. Therefore, our sins are the causes which have brought down this destruction. Hence he says, *In thine anger we vanish away.*—*Mollerus.*

Verse 7. *For we are consumed by thine anger,* etc. Whence we may first of all observe, how they compare their present estate in the wilderness, with the estate of other nations and people, and shew that their estate was far worse than theirs: for others died now one, and then one, and so they were diminished; but for them, they were hastily consumed and suddenly swept away by the plague and pestilence which raged amongst them. Hence we may observe, first of all—That it is a ground of humiliation to God's people when their estate is worse than God's enemies'. Moses gathers this as an argument to humble them, and to move them to repentance and to seek unto God; viz., that because of their sins they were in a far worse case and condition than the very enemies of God were. For though their lives were short, yet they confess that theirs was far worse than the very heathen themselves, for they were *suddenly consumed by his anger.* When God is worse to his own church and people than he is to his enemies; when the Lord sends wars in a nation called by his name, and peace in other kingdoms that are anti Christian; sends famine in his church, and plenty to the wicked; sends the plague and pestilence in his church, and health and prosperity to the wicked; oh, here is matter of mourning and humiliation; and it is that which hath touched God's people to the quick, and wounded them to the heart, to see the enemies of the church in better condition than the church itself.—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 7. *By thy wrath are we troubled.* The word used by Moses is much stronger than merely "troubled." It implies being cut off, destroyed—in forms moreover of overwhelming terror.—*Henry Cowles, in "The Psalms; with Notes." New York, 1872.*

Verse 8. God needs no other light to discern our sins by but the light of his own face. It pierceth through the darkest places; the brightness thereof enlightens all things, discovers all things. So that the sins that are committed in deepest darkness are all one to him as if they were done in the face of the sun. For they are done in his face, that shines more, and from which proceeds more light than from the face of the sun. So that this ought to make us the more fearful to offend; he sees us when

we see not him, and the light of his countenance shines about us when we think ourselves hidden in darkness. Our sins are not only then in his sight when they are a committing and whilst the deed is doing; but ever after, when the act is past and gone and forgotten, yet then is it before the face of God, even as if it were in committing: and how should this make us afraid to sin! When our sins are not only in his sight while they are a committing, but so continue still for ever after they are past and done. God *sets our sins before him*; this shows he is so affected with them, he takes them so to heart, that he doth in a special manner continue the remembrance of them. As those that having had great wrong will store it up, or register it, or keep some remembrance of it or other, lest they should forget, when time shall serve, to be quit with those that have wronged them: so doth God, and his so doing is a sign that he takes our sins deeply to heart; which should teach us to fear the more how we offend him. When God in any judgment of death, or sickness, or loss of friends, shows his wrath, we should think and meditate of this; especially when he comes nearest us: Now the Lord looks upon my sins, they are now before him; and we should never rest till we have by repentance moved him to blot them out. Yea, to this end we should ourselves call them to remembrance. For the more we remember them, the more God forgets them; the more we forget them, the more God remembers them; the more we look upon them ourselves, the more he turneth his eyes from them.—*William Bradshaw*.

Verse 8. It is a well known fact that the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are very much affected by the situation in which they are placed in respect to us, and by the light in which they are seen. Objects seen at a distance, for example, appear much smaller than they really are. The same object, viewed through different mediums, will often exhibit different appearances. A lighted candle, or a star, appears bright during the absence of the sun; but when that luminary returns, their brightness is eclipsed. Since the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are thus affected by extraneous circumstances, it follows, that no two persons will form precisely the same ideas of any object, unless they view it in the same light, or are placed with respect to it in the same situation.

Apply these remarks to the case before us. The psalmist addressing God, says, *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance*. That is, our iniquities or open transgressions, and our secret sins, the sins of our hearts, are placed, as it were, full before God's face, immediately under his eye; and he sees them in the pure, clear, all disclosing light of his own holiness and glory. Now if we would see our sins as they appear to him, that is, as they really are, if we would see their number, blackness and criminality, and the malignity and desert of every sin, we must place ourselves, as nearly as is possible, in his situation, and look at sin, as it were, through his eyes. We must place ourselves and our sins in the centre of that circle which is irradiated by the light of his countenance where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is

seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn and dazzle, with insufferable brightness. And in order to this, we must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen and almost forgotten, and where consequently, the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived—and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory, where he does not, as here, conceal himself behind the veil of his works, and of second causes, but shines forth the unveiled God, and is seen as he is.

My hearers, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colours; if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude and criminality, bring them into the hallowed place, where nothing is seen but the brightness of unsullied purity, and the splendours of uncreated glory; where the sun itself would appear only as a dark spot; and there, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of his countenance round you, review your lives, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God, in whose presence you are, is the Being who forbids sin, the Being of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 9. For all our days go back again (wnp) in thy wrath. Hitherto he has spoken of the cause of that wrath of God which moveth him to smite the world with such mortality. Now here he further sets forth the same by the effects thereof in reference to that present argument he hath in hand. 1. That our days do as it were go backward in his wrath: that whereas God gave us being to live, our life and our being are nothing else but a going backward, as it were, to death and to nothing. Even as if a stranger being suddenly rapt and carried midway to his home, where are all his comforts, he should spend all the time that is behind, not in going forward to his home, but in going backward to the place from which he was suddenly brought. All the sons of Adam as soon as they have being and live are brought suddenly a great part of their way: and whereas they should go forward and live longer and longer, they from their first beginning to live go backward again to death and to nothing. This is the sum in effect of that which the Lord saith in the beginning of the Psalm, (Ps 90:3:) *Thou bringest men to destruction; saying, Return again, ye sons of Adam:* as if he should say, Thou makest a man, and when he is made, he in thy wrath doth haste to nothing else but destruction and to be marred again. Thus do our days as it were go backward, and we in them return from whence we came.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 9. When I was in Egypt, three or four years ago, I saw what Moses himself might have seen, and what the Israelites, no doubt, very often witnessed:—a crowd of people surrounding a professed story teller, who was going through some tale, riveting the attention and exciting the feelings of those who listened to him. This is one of the customs of the East. It naturally springs up among any people who have few books, or none; where the masses are unable to read, and where, therefore, they are dependent for excitement or information on those who can address the ear, and who recite, in prose

or verse, traditionary tales and popular legends. I dare say this sort of thing would be much in repute among the Israelites themselves during their detention in the wilderness, and that it served to beguile for them many a tedious hour. It is by this custom, then, that we venture to illustrate the statement of the text. The hearing of a story is attended by a rapid and passing interest—it leaves behind it a vague impression, beyond which comparatively but few incidents may stand out distinctly in the after thought. In our own day even, when tales are put into printed books, and run through three or four volumes, we feel when we have finished one, how short it appears after all, or how short the time it seemed to take for its perusal. If full of incident, it may seem sometimes long to remember, but we generally come to the close with a sort of feeling that says, "And so that's all." But this must have been much more the case with the tales "that were told." These had to be compressed into what could be repeated at one time, or of which three or four might be given in an evening or an hour. The story ended; and then came the sense of shortness, brevity, the rapid flight of the period employed by it, with something like a feeling of wonder and dissatisfaction at the discovery of this. "For what is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."—*Thomas Binney*.

Verse 9. *As a tale.* The grace whereof is *brevity*.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 9. *As a tale that is told.* The Chaldee has it, *like the breath of our mouth in winter*.—*Daniel Cresswell*.

Verse 9. The thirty-eight years, which after this they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of *a tale that is told*; for it was only to pass away time like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the rising...The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixed, but all short and transient; that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 9. *We spend our year as a tale that is told*, or, *as a meditation* (so some translate) suddenly or swiftly: a discourse is quickly over, whether it be a discourse from the mouth, or in the mind; and of the two the latter is far the more swift and nimble of foot. A discourse in our thoughts outruns the sun, as much as the sun outruns a snail; the thoughts of a man will travel the world over in a moment; he that now sits in this place, may be at the world's end in his thoughts, before I can speak another word.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 9. *We spend our years as a tale that is told.* This seems to express both a necessary fact and a censure. The rapid consumption of our years—their speedy passing away, is inevitable. But they

may be spent also in a trifling manner to little valuable purpose, which would complete the disconsolate reflection on them, by the addition of guilt and censure.—*John Foster, 1768-1843.*

Verse 9. *As a tale that is told.* In the Hebrew it is *hgx-wmk, sicut meditatio, (as a meditation)* and so we read it in the margin, as if all our years were little else than a continual meditation upon the things of this world. Indeed, much of man's time is spent in this kind of vain meditation, as how to deceive and play fast and loose for advantage; such a meditation had they, Isa 59:13, or meditating with the heart lying words; the same word in the Hebrew as in my text; or how to heap up riches, such a meditation had that covetous man in the gospel, Lu 12:17; or how to violate the sacred bonds of religion and laws of God, such a meditation had they, Ps 2:1-3; and in such vain meditations as these do men spend their years "as a tale that is told." . . . To close this point with Gregory Nazianzen. What are we but a vain dream that hath no existence or being, a mere phantasm or apparition that cannot be held, a ship sailing in the sea which leaves no impression or trace behind it, a dust, a vapour, a morning dew, a flower flourishing one day and fading another, yea, the same day behold it springing and withered, but my text adds another metaphor from the flying of a bird, *and we fly away*, not go and run but fly, the quickest motion that any corporeal creature hath. Our life is like the flight of a bird, it is here now and it is gone out of sight suddenly. The Prophet therefore speaking of the speedy departure of Ephraim's glory expresses it thus, "It shall flee away like a bird", Ho 9:11; and Solomon saith the like of riches, "they make themselves wings and flee away like an eagle toward heaven": Pr 23:5. David wished for the wings of a dove that he might flee away and be at rest and good cause he had for it, for this life is not more short than miserable. . . . Be it our care then not to come creeping and coughing to God with a load of diseases and infirmities about us, when we are at death's door and not before, but to consecrate the first fruits of our life to his service. It is in the spending our time (as one compares it) as in the distilling of waters, the thinnest and purest part runs out first and only the lees at last: what an unworthy thing will it be to offer the prime of our time to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the dregs of it to God. He that forbade the lame and the blind in beasts to be sacrificed, will not surely allow it in men; if they come not to present their bodies a living sacrifice, while they are living and lively too, ere they be lame or blind or deformed with extremity of age, it is even a miracle if it prove then a holy, acceptable, or reasonable service.—*Thomas Washbourne, 1655.*

Verse 9. (*second clause*). The Hebrew is different from all the Versions. *We consume our years (hgx-wmk kemo hegeh) like a groan.* We live a dying, whining, complaining life, and at last a *groan* is its termination!—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9. The Vulgate translation has, *Our years pass away like those of a spider.* It implies that our life is as frail as the thread of a spider's web. Constituted most curiously the spider's web is; but what more fragile? In what is there more wisdom than in the complicated frame of the human body; and

what more easily destroyed? Glass is granite compared with flesh; and vapours are rocks compared with life.—*C.H.S.*

Verse 10. *It is soon cut off, and we fly away.* At the Witan or council assembled at Edwin of Northumbria at Godmundingham (modern name Godmanham), to debate on the mission of Paulinus, the King was thus addressed by a heathen Thane, one of his chief men:—"The present life of man, O King, may be likened to what often happens when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes and nobles in winter time. A fire blazes on the hearth, and warms the chamber; outside rages a storm of wind and snow; a sparrow flies in at one door of thy hall, and quickly passes out at the other. For a moment and while it is within, it is unharmed by the wintry blast, but this brief season of happiness over, it returns to that wintry blast whence it came, and vanishes from thy sight. Such is the brief life of man; we know not what went before it, and we are utterly ignorant as to what shall follow it. If, therefore, this new doctrine contain anything more certain, it justly deserves to be followed."—*Bede's Chronicle.*

Verse 10. *The time of our life is threescore years and ten* (saith Moses), or set it upon the tenters, and rack it to *fourscore*, though not one in every fourscore arrives to that account, yet can we not be said to live so long; for take out, first, ten years for infancy and childhood, which Solomon calls the time of wantonness and vanity (Ec 11:1-10.), wherein we scarce remember what we did, or whether we lived or no; and how short it is then? Take out of the remainder a third part for sleep, wherein like blocks we lie senseless, and how short is it then? Take out yet besides the time of our carking and worldly care, wherein we seem both dead and buried in the affairs of the world, and how short is it then? And take out yet besides, our times of wilful sinning and rebellion, for while we sin, we live not, but we are "dead in sin", and what remaineth of life? Yea, how short is it then? So short is that life which nature allows, and yet we sleep away part, and play away part, and the cares of the world have a great part, so that the true spiritual and Christian life hath little or nothing in the end.—*From a Sermon by Robert Wilkinson, entitled "A Meditation of Mortalitie, preached to the late Prince Henry, some few daies before his death", 1612.*

Verse 10. *Threescore years and ten.* It may at first seem surprising that Moses should describe the days of man as "*Threescore years and ten.*" But when it is remembered, that, in the second year of the pilgrimage in the wilderness, as related in Nu 14:28-39, God declared that all those who had been recently numbered at Sinai should die in the wilderness, before the expiration of forty years, the lamentation of Moses on the brevity of human life becomes very intelligible and appropriate; and the Psalm itself acquires a solemn and affecting interest, as a penitential confession of the sins which had entailed such melancholy consequences on the Hebrew nation; and as a humble deprecation of God's wrath; and as a funeral dirge upon those whose death had been preannounced by the awful voice of God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 10. There have been several *gradual abbreviations* of man's life. Death hath been coming nearer and nearer to us, as you may see in the several ages and periods of the world. Adam, the first of human kind, lived nine hundred and thirty years. And seven or eight hundred years was a usual period of man's life before the Flood. But the Sacred History (which hath the advantage and preeminence of all other histories whatsoever, by reason of its antiquity) acquaints us that immediately after the Flood the years of man's life were shortened by no less than half...*After the Flood* man's life was apparently shorter than it was before, for they fell from nine hundred, eight hundred, and seven hundred years to four hundred and three hundred, as we see in the age of Arphaxad, Salah, Heber: yea, they fell to two hundred and odd years, as we read of Peleg, Reu, Serug, and Tharah; yea, they came down to less than two hundred years. In the space of a few years man's life was again cut shorter by almost half, if not a full half. We read that Abraham lived but one hundred and seventy-five years, so that man's age ran very low then. See the account given in Scripture of Nahor, Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (who died at a hundred) which confirms the same. And again the *third time*, man's life was shortened by almost *another half*, viz., about the year of the World 2,500, in Moses' time. For he sets the bounds of man's life thus: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Ps 90:10. Eighty years is the utmost limit he sets man's life at, *i.e.*, in the most ordinary and common account of man's life. Though some are of the opinion that these words do not give an account of the duration of man's life in general, but refer to the short lives of the Israelites in the wilderness, yet I do not see but it may take in both; and Moses who composed the Psalm, lived a hundred and twenty years himself, yet he might speak of the common term of man's life, and what usually happened to the generality of men.—*John Edwards*.

Verse 10. *Their strength is labour and sorrow.* Most commonly old age is a feeble estate; the very grasshopper is a burden to it. Ec 12:5. Even the old man himself is a burden, to his wife, to his children, to himself. As Barzillai said to David, "I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" 2Sa 19:35. Old age, we say, is a good guest, and should be made welcome, but that he brings such a troop with him; blindness, aches, coughs, & c.; these are troublesome, how should they be welcome? *Their strength is labour and sorrow.* If their very strength, which is their best, be labour and grief, what is their worst?—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 10. *Their strength is labour and sorrow.*

Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,
Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade.

—*Samuel Johnson*, 1709-1784.

Verse 10. *Their strength.* Properly, *the pride* of the days of our life is labour and sorrow—*i.e.*, our days at their best.—*Barth's "Bible Manual"*.

Verse 10. *We fly away.*

Bird of my breast, away!

The long wished hour is come.

On to the realms of cloudless day,

On to thy glorious home!

Long has been thine to mourn

In banishment and pain.

Return, thou wandering dove, return,

And find thy ark again!

Away, on joyous wing,

Immensity to range;

Around the throne to soar and sing,

And faith for sight exchange.

Flee, then, from sin and woe,

To joys immortal flee;

Quit thy dark prison house below,

And be for ever free!

I come, ye blessed throng,

Your tasks and joys to share;

O, fill my lips with holy song,

My drooping wing upbear.

—*Henry Francis Lyte, 1793-1847.*

Verse 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* We may take some scantling, some measure of the wrath of man, and know how far it can go, and what it can do, but we can take no measure of the wrath of God, for it is unmeasurable.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* None at all; and unless the power of that can be known, it must abide as unspeakable as the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 11. Moses, I think, here means, that it is a holy awe of God, and that alone, which makes us truly and deeply feel his anger. We see that the reprobate, although they are severely punished, only chafe upon the bit, or kick against God, or become exasperated, or are stupefied, as if they were hardened against all calamities; so far are they from being subdued. And though they are full of trouble, and cry aloud, yet the Divine anger does not so penetrate their hearts as to abate their pride and fierceness. The minds of the godly alone are wounded with the wrath of God; nor do they wait for

his thunder bolts, to which the reprobate hold out their hard and iron necks, but they tremble the very moment when God moves only his little finger. This I consider to be the true meaning of the prophet.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* etc. The meaning is, What man doth truly know and acknowledge the power of thine anger, according to that measure of fear wherewith thou oughtest to be feared? Note hence, how Moses and the people of God, though they feared God, yet notwithstanding confess that they failed in respect of that measure of the feat of God which they ought to have had; for we must not think, but Moses and some of his people did truly fear God. But yet in regard of the power of God's anger, which was now very great and grievous, their fear of God was not answerable and proportionable; then it is apparent that Moses and his people failed in respect of the measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had, in regard of the greatness and grievousness of the judgments of God upon them. See, that the best of God's servants in this life fall short in their fear of God, and so in all graces of the Spirit; in that love of God, in faith in repentance, and in obedience, we come short all of us of that which the Lord requires at our hands. For though we do know God, and that he is a just God, and righteous, and cannot wink at sin; yet what man is there that so fears before him as he ought to be feared? what man so quakes at his anger as he should; and is so afraid of sin as he ought to be? We have no grace here in perfection, but the best faith is mixed with infidelity; our hope with fear; our joy with sorrow. It is well we can discern our wants and imperfections, and cry out with the man in the gospel, "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!"—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* No man knows the power of God's anger, because that power has never yet put itself forth to its full stretch. Is there, then, no measure of God's wrath—no standard by which we may estimate its intenseness? There is no fixed measure or standard, but there is a variable one. The wicked man's fear of God is a measure of the wrath of God. If we take the man as he may be sometime taken, when the angel of death is upon him, when the sins of his youth and of his maturer years throng him like an armed troop, and affright and afflict him—when with all his senses keenly alive to the rapid strides of bodily decay, he feels that he must die, and yet that he is not prepared—why, it may come to pass, it does occasionally, though not always come to pass, that his anticipations of the future are literally tremendous. There is such a fear and such a dread of that God into whose immediate presence he feels himself about to be ushered, that even they who love him best, and charm him most, shrink from the wildness of his gaze and the fearfulness of his speech. And we cannot tell the man, though he may be just delirious with apprehension, that his fear of God invests the wrath of God with a darker than its actual colouring. On the contrary, we know that according to the fear, so is the wrath. We know that if man's fear of God be wrought up to the highest pitch, and the mind throb so vehemently that its framework threaten to

give way and crumble, we know that the wrath of the Almighty keeps pace with this gigantic fear. . . . If it has happened to you—and there is not perhaps a man on the face of the earth to whom it does not sometimes happen—if it has ever happened to you to be crushed with the thought, that a life of ungodliness must issue in an eternity of woe, and if amid the solitude of midnight and amid the dejections of sickness there pass across the spirit the fitful figures of all avenging ministry, then we have to tell you, it is not the roar of battle which is powerful enough, nor the wail of orphans which is thrilling enough, to serve as the vehicle of such a communication; we have to tell you, that you fly to a refuge of lies, if you dare flatter yourselves that either the stillness of the hour or the feebleness of disease has caused you to invest vengeance with too much of the terrible. We have to tell you, that the picture was not overdrawn which you drew in your agony. *"According to thy fear, so is thy wrath."* Fear is but a mirror, which you may lengthen indefinitely, and widen indefinitely, and wrath lengthens with the lengthening and widens with the widening, still crowding the mirror with new and fierce forms of wasting and woe. We caution you, then, against ever cherishing the flattering notion, that fear can exaggerate God's wrath. We tell you, that when fear has done its worst, it can in no degree come up to the wrath which it images...

Now, it is easy to pass from this view of the text to another, which is in a certain sense similar. You will always find, that men's apprehensions of God's wrath are nicely proportioned to the fear and reverence which are excited in them by the name and the attributes of God. He will have but light thoughts of future vengeance, who has but low thoughts of the character and properties of his Creator: and from this it comes to pass, that the great body of men betray a kind of stupid insensibility to the wrath of Jehovah...Look at the crowd of the worldly and the indifferent. There is no fear of God in that crowd; they are "of the earth earthy." The soul is sepulchred in the body, and has never wakened to a sense of its position with reference to a holy and avenging Creator. Now, then, you may understand the absence of all knowledge of the power of God's wrath. *"Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath."*—Henry Melvill.

Verse 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* etc. This he utters, 1. By way of lamentation. He sighing forth a most doleful complaint against the security and stupor he observed in that generation of men in his time, both in those that had already died in their sins, as well as of that new generation that had come up in their room, who still lived in their sins; oh, says he, 'Who of them knoweth the power of thine anger?' namely, of that wrath which followeth after death, and seizes upon men's souls for ever; that is, who considers it, or regards it, till it take hold upon them? He utters it, 2. In a way of astonishment, out of the apprehension he had of the greatness of that wrath. *"Who knoweth the power of thine anger?"* that is, who hath or can take it in according to the greatness of it? which he endeavours to set forth, as applying himself to our own apprehension, in this wise, *Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.* Where those words, *"thy fear"* are taken *objective*, and so

signify the *fear of thee*; and so the meaning is, that according to whatever proportion our souls can take in, in fears of thee and of thine anger, so great is thy wrath itself. You have souls that are able to comprehend vast fears and terrors; they are as extensive in their fears as in their desires, which are stretched beyond what this World or the creatures can afford them, to an infinity. The soul of man is a dark cell, which when it begets fears once, strange and fearful apparitions rise up in it, which far exceed the ordinary proportion of worldly evils (which yet also our fears usually make greater than they prove to be); but here, as to that punishment which is the effect of God's own immediate wrath, let the soul enlarge itself, says he, and widen its apprehension to the utmost; fear what you can imagine, yet still God's wrath, and the punishment it inflicts, are not only proportionable, but infinitely exceedingly all you can fear or imagine. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" It passeth knowledge.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Moses who was learned in all the sciences of the Egyptians (among which arithmetic was one) desireth to learn this point of arithmetic only of thee, O Lord; and why? Is it because, as Job speaketh, thou hast determined the number of his days? Would Moses have thee reveal to every man the moment of his end? Such speculations may well beseem an Egyptian, an Israelite they do not beseem. Thy children, O Lord, know that it is not for them so to know times and seasons which thou keepest in thine own power, and are a secret sealed up with thee: we should not pry into that counting house, nor curiously inquire into that sum. It is not then a mathematical numbering of days that Moses would be schooled in, but a moral; he would have God not simply to teach him to number, but to number "so"; and "so" points out a special manner, a manner that may be useful for the children of God. And indeed our petitions must bear this mark of profitable desires, and we should not ask aught of thee but that by which (if we speed) we may become the better; he that so studies his mortality learns it as he should, and it is only thou, O Lord, that takest him out such a lesson. But what is the use, O Moses, that thou wouldst have man make of such a knowledge? "*Even to apply his heart unto wisdom.*" O happy knowledge, by which a man becomes wise; for wisdom is the beauty of a reasonable soul. God created him therewith, but sin hath divorced the soul and wisdom; so that a sinful man is indeed no better than a fool, so the Scripture calleth him; and well it may call him so, seeing all his carriage is vain, and the upshot of his endeavours but vexation of spirit. But though sin have divorced wisdom and the soul, yet are they not so severed but they may be reunited; and nothing is more powerful in furthering this union than this feeling meditation—that we are mortal.—*Arthur Lake.*

Verse 12. *So teach us,* etc. Moses sends you to God for teaching. "Teach Thou us; not as the world teacheth—teach Thou us." No meaner Master; no inferior school; not Moses himself except as he speaks God's word and becomes the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; not the prophets, not

apostles themselves, neither "holy men of old", except as they "spake and were moved by the Holy Ghost." This knowledge comes not from flesh and blood, but from God. "So teach Thou us." And so David says, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in Thy truth." And hence our Lord's promise to his disciples, "The Holy Ghost, He shall teach you all things."—*Charles Richard Sumner, 1850.*

Verse 12. *Teach us to number our days.* Mark what it is which Moses here prays for, only to be taught to number his days. But did he not do this already? Was it not his daily work this, his constant and continual employment? Yes, doubtless it was; yea, and he did it carefully and conscientiously too. But yet he thought he did it not well enough, and therefore prays here in the text to be taught to do better. See a good man, how little he pleaseth himself in any action of his life, in any performance of duty that he does. He can never think that he does well enough whatever he does, but still desires to do otherwise, and would fain do better. There is an affection of modesty and humility which still accompanies real piety, and every pious man is an humble, modest man, and never reckons himself a perfect proficient, or to be advanced above a teaching, but is content and covetous to be a continual learner; to know more than he knows and to do better than he does; yea, and thinks it no disparagement to his graces at all to take advice, and to seek instruction where it is to be had.—*Edm. Barker's Funeral Sermon for Lady Capell, 1661.*

Verse 12. *Teach us to number our days.*

"Improve Time in time, while the Time doth last.

For all Time is no time, when the Time is past."

—*From Richard Pigot's "Life of Man, symbolised by the Months of the Year", 1866.*

Verse 12. *Teach us to number our days.* The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together. Of the same kind is prodigality of life: he that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavour to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground. An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto that time was his estate; an estate, indeed, that will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly repay the labours of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun by noxious plants, or laid out for show rather than for use.—*Samuel Johnson.*

Verse 12. *To number our days,* is not simply to take the reckoning and admeasurement of human life. This has been done already in Holy Scripture, where it is said, "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" Nor yet is it, in the world's phrase, to calculate the chances of survivorship, which any man may do in the instance of the aggregate, but which no man can do in the case of the individual. But it is to take the measure of our days as

compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct, and in which it shall at last be absorbed. Under this aspect it is, that David contemplates man when he says, "*Thou hast made our days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee*", Ps 39:5; and then proceeds to include in this comprehensive estimate even those whose days have been the longest upon earth: "Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity."—*Thomas Dale*, 1847.

Verse 12. *To number our days.* Number we our days by our daily prayers—number we them by our daily obedience and daily acts of love—number we them by the memories that they bring of holy men who have entered into their Saviour's peace, and by the hopes which are woven with them of glory and of grace won for us!—*Plain Commentary*.

Verse 12. *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Sir Thomas Smith, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, some months before his death said, That it was a great pity men know not to what end they were born into this world, until they were ready to go out of it.—*Charles Bradbury*.

Verse 12. *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.* St. Austin says, "We can never do that, except we number every day as our last day." Many put far the evil day. They refuse to leave the earth, when the earth is about to take its leave of them.—*William Secker*.

Verse 12. *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Moses speaketh of *wisdom* as if it were physic, which doth no good before it be applied; and the part to apply it to is the *heart*, where all man's affections are to love it and to cherish it, like a kind of hostess. When the heart seeketh it findeth, as though it were brought unto her, like Abraham's ram. Therefore God saith, "They shall seek me and find me, because they shall seek me with their hearts", Jer 29:13; as though they should not find him with all their seeking unless they did seek him with their heart. Therefore the way to get wisdom is to apply your hearts unto it, as if it were your calling and living, to which you were bound apprentices. A man may apply his ears and his eyes as many truants do to their books, and yet never prove scholars; but from that day when a man begins to apply his heart unto wisdom, he learns more in a month after than he did in a year before, nay, than ever he did in his life. Even as you see the wicked, because they apply their hearts to wickedness, how fast they proceed, how easily and how quickly they become perfect swearers, expert drunkards, cunning deceivers, so if ye could apply your hearts as thoroughly to knowledge and goodness, you might become like the apostle which teacheth you. Therefore, when Solomon sheweth men the way how to come by wisdom, he speaks often of the heart, as, "Give thine heart to wisdom", "let wisdom enter into thine heart", "get wisdom", "keep wisdom", "embrace wisdom", Pr 2:10 4:5 8:8, as though a man went a wooing for wisdom. Wisdom is like God's daughter, that he gives to the man that loves her, and sueth for her, and means to set her

at his heart. Thus we have learned how to apply knowledge that it may do us good; not to our ears, like them which hear sermons only, nor to our tongues, like them which make table talk of religion, but to our hearts, that we may say with the virgin, "My heart doth magnify the Lord", Lu 1:46, and the heart will apply it to the ear and to the tongue, as Christ saith, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Mt 12:34.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 12. Of all arithmetical rules this is the hardest—to *number our days*. Men can number their herds and droves of oxen and of sheep, they can estimate the revenues of their manors and farms, they can with a little pains number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable and therefore do never begin to number them. Who saith not upon the view of another, surely yonder man looketh by his countenance as if he would not live long, or yonder woman is old, her days cannot be many: thus we can number other men's days and years, and utterly forget our own, therefore this is the true wisdom of mortal men, to number their own days.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 12. Observe here, after that Moses had given us a description of the wrath of God, presently his thoughts are taken up with the meditation of death. The wrath of God thought on makes us think of death...Let us often think of the wrath of God, and let the thought of it so far work upon us, as to keep us in a constant awe and fear of God; and let this fear drive us to God by prayer, that fearing as we ought, we may pray as we are commanded, and praying, we may prevent the wrath of God. If our present sorrows do not move us, God will send greater; and when our sorrows are grown too great for us, we shall have little heart or comfort to pray. Let our fears then quicken our prayers; and let our prayers be such as are able to overcome our fears; so both ways shall we be happy, in that our fears have taught us to pray, and our prayers have made us to fear no more.—*Christopher Shute, in "Ars pie moriendi: or, The true Accomptant. A Sermon", etc., 1658.*

Verse 12. It is evident, that the great thing wanted to make men provide for eternity, is the practical persuasion that they have but a short time to live. They will not apply their hearts unto wisdom until they are brought to the numbering of their days. And how are you to be brought, my brethren? The most surprising thing in the text is, that it should be in the form of a prayer. It is necessary that God should interfere to make men number their days. We call this surprising. What! is there not enough to make us feel our frailty, without an actual, supernatural impression? What! are there not lessons enough of that frailty without any new teaching from above? Go into our churchyards—all ages speak to all ranks. Can we need more to prove to us the uncertainty of life? Go into mourning families, and where are they not to be found?—in this it is the old, in that it is the young, whom death has removed—and is there not eloquence in tears to persuade us that we are mortal? Can it be that in treading every day on the dust of our fathers, and meeting every day with funerals of our brethren, we shall not yet be practically taught to number our days, unless God print the truth on our hearts,

through some special operation of his Spirit? It is not thus in other things. In other things the frequency of the occurrence makes us expect it. The husbandman does not pray to be made believe that the seed must be buried and die before it will germinate. This has been the course of the grain of every one else, and where there is so much experience what room is there for prayer. The mariner does not pray to be taught that the needle of his compass points towards the north. The needle of every compass has so pointed since the secret was discovered, and he has not to ask when he is already so sure. The benighted man does not pray to be made to feel that the sun will rise in a few hours. Morning has succeeded to night since the world was made, and why should he ask what he knows too well to doubt? But in none of these things is there greater room for assurance than we have each one for himself, in regard to its being appointed to him once to die. Nevertheless, we must pray to be! made to know—to be made to feel—that we are to die, in the face of an experience which is certainly not less than that of the parties to whom we have referred. This is a petition that we may believe, believe as they do: for they act on their belief in the fact which this experience incontestably attests. And we may say of this, that it is amongst the strangest of the strange things that may be affirmed of human nature, that whilst, in regard to inferior concerns, we can carefully avail ourselves of experience, taking care to register its decisions and to deduce from them rules for our guidance—in the mightiest concern of all we can act as though experience had furnished no evidence, and we were left without matter from which to draw inferences. And, nevertheless, in regard to nothing else is the experience so uniform. The grain does not always germinate—but every man dies. The needle does not always point due north—but every man dies. The sun does not cross the horizon in every place in every twenty-four hours—but every man dies. Yet we must pray—pray as for the revelation of a mystery hidden from our gaze—we must pray to be made to know—to be made to believe—that every man dies! For I call it not belief, and our text calls it not belief, in the shortness of life and the certainty of death, which allows men to live without thought of eternity, without anxiety as to the soul, or without an effort to secure to themselves salvation. I call it not belief—no, no, anything rather than belief. Men are rational beings, beings of forethought, disposed to make provision for what they feel to be inevitable; and if there were not a practical infidelity as to their own mortality, they could not be practically reckless as to their own safety.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 12. *So teach us to number our days*, etc. Five things I note in these words: first, that death is the haven of every man; whether he sit on the throne, or keep in a cottage, at last he must knock at death's door, as all his fathers have done before him. Secondly, that man's time is set, and his bounds appointed, which he cannot pass, no more than the Egyptians could pass the sea; and therefore Moses saith, "*Teach us to number our days*", as though there were a number of our days. Thirdly, that our days are few, as though we were sent into this world but to see it; and therefore Moses, speaking of our life, speaks of days, not of years, nor of months, nor of weeks; but "*Teach us*

to number our days", shewing that it is an easy thing even for a man to number his days, they be so few. Fourthly, the aptness of man to forget death rather than anything else; and therefore Moses prayeth the Lord to teach him to number his days, as though they were still slipping out of his mind. Lastly, that to remember how short a time we have to live, will make us apply our hearts to that which is good.—*Henry Smith*.

Verse 12. *Our hearts.* In both the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the term "*heart*" is applied alike to the mind that thinks, to the spirit that feels, and the will that acts. And it here stands for the whole mental and moral nature of man, and implies that the whole soul and spirit, with all their might, are to be applied in the service of wisdom.—*William Brown Keer*, 1863.

Verse 12. *Wisdom.* I consider this "*wisdom*" identical with the hypostatic *wisdom* described by Solomon, Pr 8:15-31, and Pr 9:1,5, even Immanuel, the *wisdom*, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people. The chief pursuit of life should be the attainment of an experimental knowledge of Christ, by whom "kings reign and princes decree justice; whose delights are with the sons of men, and who crieth, Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." David in the Psalms, and Solomon, his son, in the Proverbs, have predictively manifested Messiah as the hypostatic *wisdom*, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—*J.N. Coleman*.

Verse 13. *Let it repent thee.* According to the not infrequent and well known phraseology of Scripture, God is said to repent, when putting away men's sorrow, and affording new ground of gladness, he appears as it were to be changed.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 14. *O satisfy us with thy mercy.* A poor hungry soul lying under sense of wrath, will promise to itself happiness for ever, if it can but once again find what it hath sometime felt; that is, one sweet fill of God's sensible mercy towards it.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 14. *O satisfy us.* That is everywhere and evermore the cry of humanity. And what a strange cry it is, when you think of it, brethren! Man is the offspring of God; the bearer of his image; he stands at the head of the terrestrial creation; on earth he is peerless; he possesses wondrous capacities of thought, and feeling, and action. The world, and all that is in it, has been formed in a complete and beautiful adaptation to his being. Nature seems to be ever calling to him with a thousand voices, to be glad and rejoice; and yet he is unsatisfied, discontented, miserable! This is a most strange thing—strange, that is, on any theory respecting man's character and condition, but that which is supplied by the Bible; and it is not only a testimony to the ruin of his nature, but also to the insufficiency of everything earthly to meet his cravings.—*Charles M. Merry*, 1864.

Verse 14. *O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* We pass now to this particular prayer, and those limbs that make up the body of it. They are many; as many as words in it: satisfy, and satisfy us, and do that early, and do that with that which is thine, and let that

be mercy. So that first it is a prayer for fulness and satisfaction,—*satisfy*: and then it is a prayer not only of appropriation to ourselves, satisfy me, but of a charitable dilation and extension to others, satisfy *us*, all us, all thy servants, all thy church; and then thirdly it is a prayer of despatch and expedition, "Satisfy us *early*;" and after that, it is a prayer of evidence and manifestation, satisfy us with that which is, and which we may discern to be *thine*; and then lastly it is a prayer of limitation even upon God himself, that God will take no other way herein but the way of "*mercy*." "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy*."...There is a spiritual fulness in this life of which St. Hierome speaks, *Ebrietas felix, satietas salutaris*, A happy excess and a wholesome surfeit; *quoque quanto copiosius sumitur, majorem donat sobrietatem*, In which the more we eat, the more temperate we are, and the more we drink, the more sober. In which (as St. Bernard also expresses it in his mellifluence) *Mutua interminabili inexplicabili generatione, desiderium generat satietatem, et satietas parit desiderium*, By a mutual and reciprocal, by an undeterminable and inexpressible generation of one another, the desire of spiritual graces begets a satiety, and then this satiety begets a farther desire. This is a holy ambition, a sacred covetousness. Naphtali's blessing, "*O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord*", De 33:23; St. Stephen's blessing, "*Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*", Ac 6:5; the blessed Virgin's blessing, "*Full of grace*"; Dorcas' blessing, "*Full of good works and of alms deeds*", Ac 9:36; the blessing of him who is blessed above all, and who blesseth all, even Christ Jesus, "*Full of wisdom, full of the Holy Ghost, full of grace and truth*". Lu 2:40 4:1 Joh 1:14. ..."*Satisfy us early with*" that which is *thine*, "*thy mercy*"; "for there are mercies (in a fair extent and accommodation of the word, that is refreshing, eases, deliverances), that are not *his* mercies, nor his satisfactions...It is not his mercy, except we go by good ways to good ends; except our safety be established by alliance with his friends, except our peace may be had with the perfect continuance of our religion, there is no safety, there is no peace. But let me feel the effect of this prayer, as it is a prayer of manifestation, let me discern that that which is done upon me is done by the hand of God, and I care not what it be, I had rather have God's vinegar, than man's oil, God's wormwood, than man's manna, God's justice, than any man's mercy; for therefore did Gregory Nyssen call St. Basil in a holy sense, *Ambidextrum*, because he took everything that came by the right handle, and with the right hand, because he saw it come from God. Even afflictions are welcome when we see them to be his: though the way that he would choose, and the way that this prayer entreats, be only mercy, "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy*."—*John Donne*.

Verse 16. *And thy glory unto their children.* That is to say, that our children may see the glorious fruit of this affliction in us, that so they may not be discouraged thereby to serve thee, but rather the more heartened, when they shall see what a glorious work thou hast wrought in and upon us by afflicting us.—*William Bradshaw*.

Verse 16-17. "Thy work." "The work of our hands." You will observe a beautiful parallelism between

two things which are sometimes confounded and sometimes too jealously sundered: I mean *God's agency* and *man's instrumentality*, between man's personal activity and that power of God which actuates and animates, and gives it a vital efficacy. For forty years it had been the business of Moses to bring Israel into a right state politically, morally, religiously: *that* had been *his* work, And yet, in so far as it was to have any success or enduringness, it must be God's work. "The work of our hands" do thou establish; and this God does when, in answer to prayer, he adopts the work of his servants, and makes it his own "work", his own "glory", his own "beauty."—*James Hamilton*.

Verse 16-17. There is a twofold Rabbinical tradition respecting this verse and the preceding one; that they were the original prayer recited by Moses as a blessing on the work of making the Tabernacle and its ornaments, and that subsequently he employed them as the usual formula of benediction for any newly undertaken task, whenever *God's glorious Majesty* was to be consulted for an answer by Urim and Thummim.—*Lyranus, R. Shelomo, and Genebrardus, quoted by Neale*.

Verses 16-17. They were content to live and to die as pilgrims, provided only they could feel that in his sterner dealings with them, God was, however slowly, preparing the way for that display of glorious blessedness which should be the lot of their descendants. In a similar spirit they ask God to establish the work of their hands, though they reckoned not that they should behold its results. Their comfort in sowing was the belief that their children would reap.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*.

Verses 16-17. It is worthy of notice that this prayer was answered. Though the first generation fell in the wilderness, yet the labours of Moses and his companions were blessed to the second. These were the most devoted to God of any generation that Israel ever saw. It was of them that the Lord said, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." It was then that Balaam could not curse, but, though desirous of the wages of unrighteousness, was compelled to forego them, and his curse was turned into a blessing. We are taught by this case, amidst temporal calamities and judgments, in which our earthly hopes may be in a manner extinguished, to seek to have the loss repaired by spiritual blessings. If God's work does but appear to us, and our posterity after us, we need not be dismayed at the evils which afflict the earth.—*Andrew Fuller*.

Verse 17. *Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us*, etc. Let us try to look at our life's work in relation to the Lord's beauty. Our work and Divine Beauty, at first sight, how different; yet, on deeper insight, how truly one, how inseparably united. There is light so beauty giving, that nothing it touches is positively ugly. In our sea girt island, with our fickle climate and grey atmosphere, we can only rarely imagine what magic power the serene skies, the balmy air, the sunny atmosphere of the South have over even the least interesting object in nature; but from certain hours, in certain places, I think we may form an idea of the transforming faculty of light. There is also spiritual light, so beauty

inspiring, that the plainest face within which it is born is illumined with singular loveliness, which wins its way into many a heart. Who of us has not marvelled at an unexpected light, in what we had always thought an uninteresting face? Who has not beheld a light divine irradiate the human countenance, giving joy, and prophesying perfection, where we had least thought to find beauty? May we not take these facts as emblems, albeit faint and imperfect, of what the "*Beauty of the Lord*" does for us, and our work? You know what the natural light can do for material objects; you know what mental and moral light can work for human faces; rise from these, and know what spiritual light, Divine Light, can do for immortal beings and immortal works.—*Jessie Coombs, in "Thoughts for the Inner Life", 1867.*

Verse 17. *The beauty of the Lord.* In the word Men (beauty) there is something like a deluge of grace. Thus far, he says, we have sought thy work, O Lord. There we do nothing, but are only spectators and recipients of thy gifts, we are merely passive. There thou showest thyself to us, and makest us safe, by thy work alone, which thou doest, when thou dost liberate us from that disease which Satan inflicted on the whole human race in Adam, to wit, Sin and Eternal death.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 17. God is glorified and his work advances when his church is beautiful. *The beauty of the Lord* is the beauty of holiness,—that beauty which in the Lord Jesus himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is towards this that all amongst us who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of his Kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavours. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 17. *The work of our hands.* Jarchi interprets this of the work of the Tabernacle, in which the hands of the Israelites were employed in the wilderness; so Arama of the Tabernacle of Bezaleel.—*John Gill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The near and dear relation between God and his people, so that they mutually dwell in each other.

Verse 1. The abode of the church the same in all ages; her relation to God never changes.

Verse 1.

1. The soul is at home in God. (a) Originally. Its birth place—its native air—home of its thoughts, will, conscience, affections, desires. (b) Experimentally. When it returns here it feels itself at home: "Return unto thy rest", etc. (c) Eternally. The soul, once returned to this home, never leaves it: "it shall go no more out for ever."

2. The soul is not at home elsewhere. "Our dwelling place", etc. (a) For all men. (b) At all times. He is ever the same, and the wants of the soul substantially are over the same.—*G.R.*

Verse 2. A Discourse upon the Eternity of God. S. Charnock. Works pg 344-373, Nichol's Edition.

Verse 2. (*last clause*).—The consideration of God's eternity may serve,

1. For the support of our faith; in reference to our own condition for the future; in reference to our posterity; and to the condition of God's church to the end of the world.

2. For the encouragement of our obedience. We serve the God who can give us an everlasting reward.

3. For the terror of wicked men.

—*Tillotson's Sermon on the Eternity of God.*

Verse 3.

1. The cause of death—"thou turnest."

2. The nature of death—"return."

3. The necessities of death—reconciliation with God, and preparation to return.

Verse 4.

1. Contemplate the lengthened period with all its events.

2. Consider what He must be to whom all this is as nothing.

3. Consider how we stand towards Him.

Verse 5. Comparison of mortal life to sleep. See William Bradshaw's remarks in our Notes on this verse.

Verses 5-6. The lesson of the Meadows.

1. Grass growing the emblem of youth.

2. Grass flowering—or man in his prime.

3. The scythe.

4. Grass mown—or man at death.

Verse 7.

1. Man's chief troubles are the effect of death. (a) His own death. (b) The death of others.

2. Death is the effect of Divine anger: "We are consumed by", etc.

3. Divine anger is the effect of sin. Death by sin.—*G.R.*

Verse 8.

1. The notice which God takes of sin. (a) Individual. "*Our* iniquities." (b) Universal notice—"iniquities"—not one only, but all. (c) Minute, even the most secret sins. (d) Constant: "Set them before" him—"in the light", etc.

2. The notice which we should take of them on that account. (a) In our thoughts. Set them before us.

(b) In our consciences. Condemn ourselves on account of them. (c) In our wills. Turn from them by

repentance—turn to a pardoning God by faith.—*G.R.*

Verse 9.

1. Every man has a history. His life is as a tale—a separate tale—to be told.
2. Every man's history has some display of God in it. All our days, some may say, are passed away in thy wrath—all, others may say, in thy love—and others, some of our days in anger and some in love.
3. Every man's history will be told. In death, at judgment, through eternity.—*G.R.*

Verse 10.

1. What life is *to* most. It seldom reaches its natural limits. One half die in childhood; more than half of the other half die in manhood; few attain to old age.
2. What life is *at* most. "Threescore years", etc.
3. What it is *to* most beyond that limit. "If by reason", etc.
4. What it is *to* all. "It is soon cut off", etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 11.

1. The anger of God against sin is not fully known by its effects in this life. "Who knoweth the power", etc. Here we see the hiding of its power.
2. The anger of God against sin hereafter is equal to our greatest fears. "According to thy fear", etc.; or, "the fear of thee", etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 12.

1. The Reckoning. (a) What their usual number. (b) How many of them are already spent. (c) How uncertain the number that remains. (d) How much of them must be occupied with the necessary duties of this life. (e) What afflictions and helplessness may attend them.
2. The use to be made of it. (a) To "seek wisdom"—not riches, worldly honours, or pleasures—but wisdom; not the wisdom of the world, but of God. (b) To "apply the heart" to it. Not mental merely, but moral wisdom; not speculative merely, but experimental; not theoretical merely, but practical. (c) To seek it at once—immediately. (d) To seek it constantly—"apply our hearts", etc.
3. The help to be sought in it. "So teach us", etc. (a) Our own ability is insufficient through the perversion both of the mind and heart by sin. (b) Divine help may be obtained. "If any man lack wisdom." etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 12.—The Sense of Mortality. Show the variety of blessings dispensed to different classes by the right use of the sense of mortality.

1. It may be an antidote for the sorrowful. Reflect, "there is an end."
2. It should be a restorative to the labouring.
3. It should be a remedy for the impatient.
4. As a balm to the wounded in heart.
5. As a corrective for the worldly.

6. As a sedative to the frivolous.

—*R. Andrew Griffin, in "Stems and Twigs", 1872.*

Verse 13. In what manner the Lord may be said to repent.

Verse 14. (*first clause*). See "*Spurgeon's Sermons*", No. 513: "*The Young Man's Prayer*."

Verse 14.

1. The deepest yearning of man is for satisfaction.
2. Satisfaction can only be found in the realization of Divine Mercy.

—*C.M. Merry, 1864.*

Verse 14. *O satisfy us early with thy mercy*, etc. Learn,

1. That our souls can have no solid satisfaction in earthly things.
2. That the mercy of God alone can satisfy our souls.
3. That nothing but satisfaction in God can fill our days with joy and gladness.

—*John Cawood, 1842.*

Verse 14.

1. The most cheerful days of earth are made more cheerful by thoughts of Divine mercy.
2. The most sorrowful days of earth are made glad by the consciousness of Divine love.

—*G.R.*

Verse 15.

1. The joy of faith is in proportion to the sorrow of repentance.
2. The joy of consolation is in proportion to suffering in affliction.
3. The joy of the returning smiles of God is in proportion to the terror of his frowns.—*G.R.*

Verse 15. The Balance of life, or the manner in which our joys are set over against our sorrows.

Verse 16.

1. Our duty—"work", and our desire about it.
2. Our children's portion—"glory", and our prayer in reference to it.

Verse 17. The Right Establishment, or the work which will endure—why it will endure and should endure. Why we wish our work to be of such a nature, and whether there are enduring elements in it.

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