CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY ON PSALMS

VOLUME 3

Psalms 93–150



JOHN CALVIN

SOLI DEO GLORIA

CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

Commentary on Psalms

Volume 3

Psalms 93-150

John Calvin

Translated from the original Latin and collated with the author's French version by the Rev. James Anderson

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Commentary on Psalms, Volume 3: Psalms 93-150

John Calvin

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

VOLUME FIFTH

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

In bringing to a close his labors on Calvin's Commentary On The Psalms, the Editor begs leave to state, that in addition to the General Index, and the Indices Of Texts Of Scripture, and of Hebrew Words, originally contemplated, it has been deemed highly desirable to give at the end of the Commentary a Translation; or Calvin's Version Of The Psalms arranged in parallelisms, together with a Table Of Those Passages In The Psalms Which Are Quoted In The New Testament, and a Table Of The Particular Subjects Of Each Psalm, according to Calvin's interpretation. These additions, it is hoped, will be considered as improvements. From the extent to which they have increased the size of this Volume, it has been found necessary to omit the Appendix of Additional Criticisms to which reference is made in some of the footnotes throughout the work.

To exhibit the Psalms arranged in the metrical order, was an idea which appears never to have suggested itself to the mind of Calvin. In his time, indeed, and long after it, the peculiar character of Hebrew Poetry was not understood. It was not till a recent period that any steady light was thrown on the laws of its composition. A vast amount of learning had indeed been expended on the subject, and a variety of hypotheses had been suggested by successive writers to unravel a question so intricate and mysterious; but no satisfactory result was attained until it was investigated by the learned Bishop Lowth, to whose genius and erudition we are indebted for the discovery of this long lost secret. He has proved, with a clearness and force of evidence which has now commanded universal assent, that Hebrew Poetry bears no resemblance in its structure to the Poetry of Greece and Rome, that it has no rhyming termination of lines as in the Poetry of our own language, and that its peculiar, and perhaps its sole characteristic, lies

in a felicitous arrangement of words into what he denominates Parallelism. In other words, its leading peculiarity is that each sentence consists generally of two parts, closely corresponding to each other, not indeed in the number of syllables, but in the ideas which they express, or in their grammatical constructive form, the second being synonymous (or, as Bishop Jebb would denominate it, cognate) with the first, — or antipathetic to it in its terms and sentiments, — or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction, such as noun answering to noun, verb to verb, member to member, negative to negative, interrogative to interrogative. [442] The division of these sacred poems into hemistichs or lines is, therefore, the form in which they ought naturally to be arranged; and such an arrangement is attended with great advantages. It exhibits to the eye the peculiar structure of Hebrew poetical composition, and is, besides, an important aid in Scriptural Interpretation, as it often contributes to the elucidation of obscure and difficult passages, and enables even the mere English reader to discover a thousand beauties, which, without such a help, would escape his notice.

In translating this parallel version, two of Calvin's translations of the Hebrew text were at the service of the Editor, — the Latin and the French. The former is strictly literal, rarely changing the Hebrew idiom, or even inserting a supplementary term, and uniformly giving the arrangement of the words as they stand in the inspired original. The latter is also upon the whole literal, though in some instances it changes the Hebrew idiom into the French, as well as frequently inserts such supplementary terms as the sense seems to require; and disregarding the arrangement of the words in the original, it gives them in the order most suitable to the genius of the French tongue. The Editor has followed Calvin's Latin Version, and has rendered it literally, retaining the Hebrew modes of expression, and the arrangement of the words in the sequence of the Hebrew text, except in a very few instances where a deviation seemed necessary to render the reading intelligible. Occasionally he has found it necessary to insert some supplementary words. These, when taken from Calvin's French Version, as is generally the case, are printed simply in *italics,* and when supplied by the Editor are printed in *italics* and enclosed within brackets. By adhering to the Hebrew order of the words, the arrangements may sometimes appear harsh and uncouth; but very often they give much beauty and force to the expression. And in retaining the Hebrew idioms, the Editor has felt little scruple, considering that as our English Bible is a literal verbal translation

442

This sentence expresses the three specific heads into which Lowth discovered Hebrew parallelism, — which involves in it much variety and many gradations, — may be generally And more loosely *distributed, Parallels Synonymous,* (or, according to JEBB, *Parallels Cognate,) Parallels Antithetic, and Parallels Synthetic* or *Constructive.* For an example of the first, see Psalm 1:1-5; of the second, see Psalm 20:7, 8; and of the third, see Psalm 148:7-13.

of the Original Hebrew, many of these are quite familiar to us, and from their peculiar grace have even become naturalized in our language.

"The Hebrew idioms," says Addison, "run into the English with a peculiar grace and beauty. Our language has received innumerable elegencies's and improvements from that infusion of Hebraisms which are derived to it out of the poetical passages in Holy Writ. They give a force and energy to our expressions, warm and animate our language, and convey our thoughts in more ardent and intense phrases than any that are to be met with in our own tongue. There is something so pathetic in this kind of diction, that it often sets the mind in a flame, and makes our heart burn within us."

The utility of the two Tables adverted to is too obvious to require to be dwelt upon. From the former the reader will perceive how completely the inspiration of the Psalms is established by New Testament authority, and how highly they were appreciated by Christ and His Apostles, there being no portion of Old Testament Scripture from which they so frequently quoted. The other Table will readily serve as a guide to the selection of such Psalms as may be adapted to the doctrines of the Christian system, the duties of the Christian life, or the varied circumstances, whether prosperous or adverse, in which the Christian or the Church of God may be placed.

J.A.
EDINBURGH, April 1849.

Psalm 93

PSALM 93

The psalm commences with the celebration of the infinite glory of God. It is then declared that such is his faithfulness that he never deceives his own people, who, embracing his promises, wait with tranquil minds for their salvation amidst all the tempests and agitations of the world.

Psalm 93:1-2

1. Jehovah hath reigned, he hath clothed himself with majesty: [1]
Jehovah hath clothed himself with strength, he hath girded himself:

[1] Horsley translates, —
"Jehovah is King,
Jehovah is gorgeously arrayed."
And, on the second line, he has the following note: — "The construction of the original is doubtful, though the sense be obvious. The text may be expounded in either of these two ways; יהוה (*Jehovah*) לבש (hath put on) לבש גאות (majesty of dress;) or, לבש גאות (majesty of dress) [is] לבש (the dress) יהוה (of Jehovah.)"

[2] he hath also established the world, it shall not be moved. **2**. Thy throne is stable; [3] from then, from everlasting art thou.

1 *Jehovah hath reigned* We here see what I have lately adverted to, that in the power of God there is exhibited to us matter of confidence; for our not investing God with the power which belongs to him, as we ought to do, and thus wickedly despoiling him of his authority, is the source of that fear and trembling which we very often experience. This, it is true, we dare not do openly, but were we well persuaded of his invincible power, that would be to us an invincible support against all the assaults of temptation. All admit in word what the prophet here teaches, That God reigns; but how few are there who oppose this shield to the hostile powers of the world, as it becomes them to do, that they may fear nothing however terrible? In this then consists the glory of God, that he governs mankind according to his will. It is said that *he clothes himself with majesty and strength;* not that we ought to imagine that there is any thing in him which is derived from another, but it is intended by the effect and indubitable experience to show his wisdom and righteousness in the government of mankind. The Psalmist proves that God will not neglect or abandon the world, from the fact that he created it. A simple survey of the world should of itself suffice to attest a Divine Providence. The heavens revolve daily, and, immense as is their fabric, and inconceivable the rapidity of their revolutions, we experience no concussion — no disturbance in the harmony of their motion. The sun,

2

See volume 2, page 455, note 2. Bishop Lowth supposes that here, as well as in that passage, there is an allusion to the precious and magnificent ornaments of the priests' attire. "Such," says he, "was the gracefulness, such the magnificence of the sacerdotal vestments, especially those of the High Priest; so adapted were they, as Moses says, (Exodus 28:2,) to the expression of glory and beauty, that to those who were impressed with an equal opinion of the sanctity of the wearer, nothing could possibly appear more venerable and sublime. To these, therefore, we find frequent allusions in the Hebrew poets, when they have occasion to describe extraordinary beauty or comeliness, or to delineate the perfect form of supreme Majesty. The elegant Isaiah (Isaiah 61:10) has a most beautiful idea of this kind when he describes, in his own peculiar manner, (that is, most magnificently,) the exultation and glory of the Church, after its triumphal restoration. Pursuing the allusion, he decorates her with the vestments of salvation, and clothes her in a robe of righteousness. He afterwards compares the Church to a bridegroom dressed for the marriage, to which comparison incredible dignity is added by the word *Ikohen*, a metaphor plainly taken from the apparel of the priests, the force of which, therefore, no modern language can express. No imagery, indeed, which the Hebrew writers could employ, was equally adapted with this to the display (as far as the human powers can conceive or depict the subject) of the infinite majesty of God, 'Jehovah' is therefore introduced by the Psalmist as 'clothed with glory and with strength,' (Psalm 93:1,) he is 'girded with power,' (Psalm 65:7;) which are the very terms appropriated to the describing of the dress and ornaments of the priests." — *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, volume 1, pages 174, 175.

3

"Ou, prepare." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, prepared."

though varying its course every diurnal revolution, returns annually to the same point. The planets, in all their wanderings, maintain their respective positions. How could the earth hang suspended in the air were it not upheld by God's hand? By what means could it maintain itself unmoved, while the heavens above are in constant rapid motion, did not its Divine Maker fix and establish it? Accordingly the particle אף, *aph,* denoting *emphasis,* is introduced — Yea, *he hath established it.*

2 *Thy throne is stable* Some read, *is prepared,* and this agrees well with the context. provided we take the two clauses as one sentence, meaning — *O Lord, as thou art from eternity, even so thy throne is erected or prepared from that time* For the sense which some have attached to the words, as if they contained a simple assertion of God's eternity, is poor; and the Psalmist evidently intends to say that as God is eternal in essence, so he has always been invested with power and majesty. The term *throne* signifies, by the figure synecdoche, righteousness, and office or power of government; it being customary to transfer such images taken from men to God, in accommodation to our infirmity. [4] By this ascription of praise the Psalmist effectually disposes of all the absurd ideas which have been broached, tending to deny or disparage the power of God, and declares, upon the matter, that God may sooner cease to be, than to sit upon his throne in the government of this world.

Psalm 93:3-5

3. The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah! the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods shall lift up their waves. **4**. The waves [5] of the sea are terrible, by reason of the noise of great waters, Jehovah is

4

"Selon que ces similitudes-ci prinses des hommes ont de coustume d'estre appropriees a Dieu, pour le regard et la portee de nostre infirmite." — *Fr.*

5

The Hebrew word משברי, *mishberey*, here used for *waves*, means "waves" that "beat" against the shore or each other, and so are "broken," — "breakers." Accordingly, Mant translates, "Strong the breakers tossing high." Horsley gives a similar version. He reads the third and fourth verses thus, —

3. "The floods, O Jehovah! Raised
The floods raised their voice;
The floods lifted up their waves,
With the sound of many waters.
4. Mighty are the breakers of the seal;
Mighty on High is Jehovah!"

As to the fourth line, "With the sound of many waters," he observes, "This is the first line of the fourth, but should be joined to the third verse. And are not the floods here mentioned, the fluids of the indigested chaos, in wild irregular agitation, before the Creator had reduced it to form and order? Or rather, may they not be mystical, — the tumults of the rebellious people?"

terrible above. **5**. Thy testimonies are singularly true: holiness is the glory of thy house, O Jehovah! for length of days. [6]

3 *The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah!* Various meanings have been attached to this verse. Some think there is an allusion to the violent assaults made upon the Church by her enemies, and the goodness of God seen in restraining them.

[7] Others are of opinion that the words should be taken literally, and not figuratively, in this sense — Though the noise of many waters be terrible, and the waves of the sea more fearful still, God is more terrible than all. I would not be inclined to insist too nicely upon any comparison that may have been intended. I have no doubt the Psalmist sets forth the power of God by adducing one brief illustration out of many which might have been given, [8] Intimating that we need not go farther for a striking instance of Divine power — one that may impress us with an idea of his tremendous majesty — than to the floods of waters, and agitations of the ocean; as in Psalm 29:4, the mighty voice of God is said to be in the thunder. God manifests his power in the sound of the floods, and in the tempestuous waves of the sea, in a way calculated to excite our reverential awe. Should it be thought that there is a comparison intended, then the latter clause of the verse must be understood as added, with this meaning, That all the terror of the objects mentioned is as nothing when we come to consider the majesty of God himself, such as he is in heaven. There is still another sense which may be extracted from the words, That though the world may to appearance be

6

"Domui tuae decus, sanctitas Jehovah in longitudinum dierum." — *Lat.* The translation in the French version is different, — "A ta maison *est donc* magnificence: la sainctete du Seigneur *est pour* un long temps." "To thy house *then there is* glory: the holiness of the Lord *is for* a length of time." In the former version, holiness is represented to be the true glory and ornament of God's house; in the latter, it is described as the attribute of God.

7

Dr Morison, after stating the opinion of Mudge, who thinks that this psalm was composed on occasion of some violent inundation, which threatened a general confusion to the world, adds, "It is more probable, perhaps, that the floods spoken of are entirely figurative; and that they represent in Eastern phrase, those powerful enemies by whom the peace of David and the ancient Church was so often disturbed. But though the floods were lifted high, and threatened destruction to those who were within their reach, yet Jehovah was seen, as it were, riding on their most tempestuous billows, and amidst their mightiest tumult, his throne was unshaken and his kingdom unmoved." In support of this view he refers to other passages of Scripture, as Isaiah 8:7, 8; 17:12, 13; and Job 46:7, 8, [*sic*] where the confederated enemies of God's Church are compared to the tempestuous waves of the mighty ocean, which roll one after another with resistless fury upon the storm-tossed bark.

8

"Non dubito quin Propheta quasi *per hypotyposin* Dei potentiam hic nobis exprimat." — *Lat.* "Comme par une demonstration." — *Fr.* *Hypotyposis* means strictly the first rough sketch of a picture.

shaken with violent commotions, this argues no defect in the government of God, since he can control them at once by his dreadful power.

5 *Thy testimonies* [9] *are singularly true* As yet the Psalmist has insisted upon the excellency of God in the work of creation, and the providential government of the world. Now he speaks of his distinguishing goodness to his chosen people, in making known to them the doctrine which bringeth salvation. He begins by commending the absolute trust-worthiness and truthfulness of the law of God. This being a treasure which was not extended to all nations promiscuously, he adds immediately that the house of God would be adorned with a glory which should last for ever. The Divine goodness is displayed in every part of the world, but the Psalmist justly considers it as of all others the most inestimable blessing, that God should have deposited in his Church the covenant of eternal life, and made his glory principally to shine out of it. Some translate the Hebrew word נאוה, *naävah, desirable,* [10] as if the Psalmist had said that *the adorning of the temple was precious;* but the grammatical construction will not admit of this. By *length of days* is meant *perpetual succession,* [11] and to this we find Isaiah referring in striking terms, that the Divine truth might be preserved in faithful custody through successive ages.

"Behold, I have put my word in thy mouth, in the mouth of thy seed, and of thy seed's seed," (Isaiah 59:21.)

9

"The testimonies of God, when taken generally, are the truths which he has testified or declared, inclusive not only of moral precepts, but of gracious and unchangeable promises. The combined result of which is, to impress on the minds of men the weighty consideration, that those who trust in the mercy of God must not, in a lower degree, venerate and adore his sanctity in all their converse with him." — *Walford.*

10

"Quidam, נאוה, pro desiderabili accipiunt: acsi dixisset propheta, Templi decus esse pretiosum," etc. — *Lat.* The French version follows this exactly. But the sentence is unsatisfactory; and there would seem to be some mistake, or omission, in the original text. If the Hebrew word referred to be rendered *desirable*, then when joined to קדש, the clause would read, *holiness is desirable*, or *becoming, to thy house, etc.* — and not *the adorning of thy house is desirable*, or *precious*

11

"'Holiness becometh thine house — for ever,' ימים לארך, *le-orec yamim*, 'for length of days:' during the whole lapse of time; till the sun and moon shall be no more." — *Dr Adam Clarke*

Psalm 94

PSALM 94

The Psalmist implores Divine assistance against wicked and violent men, who persecuted the upright in a cruel and tyrannical manner. It is evident that he refers to domestic foes, whose unrighteous domination was as vexatious and oppressive to the Lord's people, as all the injuries received from the Gentile nations without.

Psalm 94:1-6

1. O Jehovah! God of vengeances; God of vengeances, [12] shine forth. [13] **2**. Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth! render a reward to the

12

This is a literal translation of the original Hebrew, and Archbishop Secker thinks it is much more spirited than that of our English version. The word *vengeance*, when applied to God, means nothing more than his retributive justice. It may not be one of the happiest words for representing the Hebrew term when used to express this attribute of Deity, being liable to be misunderstood, as if it implied a revengeful spirit, the sense which it commonly bears when applied to men. "This retributive justice," says Dr Adam Clarke, "is what we often term *vengeance*, but perhaps improperly; for vengeance with us signifies an excitement of angry passions, in order to gratify a vindictive spirit, which supposes itself to have received some real injury; whereas, what is here referred to is the simple act of justice that gives to all their due."

13

Mant renders,
"Beam forth with all thy radiance bright."
"The Hebrew verb," he observes, "signifies *to irradiate*, *shine forth*, as God in glory; Psalm 80:1; 50:2; and that either in vengeance, as in this place, or kindness, as in Job 10:3." — *See Parkhurst's Lexicon* on יפע

> proud. **3**. O Jehovah! how long shall the wicked — how long shall the wicked triumph? **4**. They pour forth, they speak hard things, all the workers of iniquity lift up themselves. **5**. They break in pieces thy people, O Jehovah! and afflict thy inheritance. **6**. They slay the widow, and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

1 *O Jehovah! God of vengeances* We know that the Jews were surrounded by many neighbors who were not well affected towards them, and were thus incessantly subject to the assaults and oppression of bitter enemies. As this intestine persecution was even more afflictive than the rampant and unrestrained violence of the wicked, we need not wonder that the Psalmist should earnestly beseech God for deliverance from it. The expressions which he uses, calling upon God to *shine forth* conspicuously, and *lift himself up on high,* amount in common language to this, that God would give some actual manifestation of his character as judge or avenger; for in that case he is seen ascending his tribunal to exact the punishment due to sin, and demonstrate his power in preserving order and government in the world. The phraseology is used only in reference to ourselves, disposed as we are to feel as if he overlooked us, unless he stretched out his hand to help us in some visible and open manner. In calling him twice successively *the God of vengeances,* and then, *judge of the earth,* the Psalmist uses these titles as applicable to the present situation in which he stood, reminding Him in a manner of the office which belonged to him, and saying — O Lord! it is thine to take vengeance upon sinners, and judge the earth — see how they take advantage of the impunity which is extended to their guilt, and triumph audaciously in their wickedness! Not that God needs to be admonished of his duty, for he never resigns himself to indifference, and even when he seems to delay his judgments, is only adjusting them according to what he knows to be the best season; but his people conceive of him in this way to themselves, and take occasion from this to embolden and stimulate themselves to greater vehemency in prayer. [14] The same may be said of the repetition which the Psalmist uses. When the wicked then indulge in unrestrained excesses, we are to remember that God can never cease to assert his character as the judge of the earth who takes vengeance upon iniquity. Does he seem in our carnal apprehension to have at any time withdrawn and hidden himself? let us put up without hesitation the prayer which is here taught us by the Holy Spirit, that he would *shine forth*

3 *O Jehovah! how long shall the wicked?* The Psalmist justifies himself in this verse for the fervent importunity which he showed in prayer. There was need of immediate help, when the wicked had proceeded to such an extent of

14

"Mais les fideles s'arrestent a mediter ainsi en eux-mesmes la nature d'iceluy, afin de s'accourager, meilleure esperance, et soliciter a prier avec plus grande ardeur et vehemence." — *Fr.*

audacity. The necessity of our case may justly embolden us in our requests, which must be all the more readily heard as they are reasonable; and here the Psalmist insists that his complaints were not without cause, nor originated in trifling reasons, but were extorted by injuries of the most flagrant description. Notice is taken of the length of time during which their persecutions had lasted, as an aggravating circumstance. They had become hardened under the long-continued forbearance of God, and had in consequence contracted a shamelessness, as well as obstinacy of spirit, imagining that he looked upon their wickedness with an eye of favor. The term *how long* twice repeated, implies the extent of impunity which had been granted, that it was not as if they had newly started upon their career, but that they had been tolerated for a length of time, and had become outrageously flagitious. It was thus that in former times wicked men tyrannized to such a degree over the Church, while yet God did not interfere to apply a remedy; and we need not be surprised that he should subject her now to protracted persecutions, nor should we conclude that, because he does not immediately proceed to cure existing evils, he has utterly forsaken her. The term *triumph* denotes that fullness of audacious and boasting exultation which the wicked feel when they are intoxicated with continued prosperity, and conceive that they may indulge in every excess without restraint.

4 *They pour forth, they speak hard things* [15] He shows in still clearer terms, how their fierceness in persecution was such that they did not scruple to glory in their guilt. The Hebrew verb נבע, *nabang,* means more than *to speak.* Literally it signifies *to rush* or *boil forth,* and comes to denote figuratively the uttering of reckless or rash words. We see how wicked men are instigated by pride and vain-glory, to demean and disgrace themselves so far as to boast vain-gloriously of their power, breathing forth threatenings of bloodshed, violence, and monstrous cruelty. It is to such ebullitions that the Psalmist refers, when men who are lost to all sense of shame and modesty boast of the wickedness which they can perpetrate at will. This is what he means by their *speaking hard things,* uttering discourse which is under no restraint of fear, or prudential consideration, but which launches into the most unbridled license. As the Lord's people had formerly to endure the heavy trial of seeing the Church subjected to this wild tyranny and misrule, we should account it no strange thing to see the Church suffering still under miserable misgovernment, or positive oppression, but should pray for help from God, who, though he connives at wickedness for a time, eventually comes to the deliverance of his children.

15

In our English Bible this verse is put into the interrogative form, and the words "how long" are supplied: "*How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things?" Calvin translates it as a simple statement, and without any supplemental words; which Archbishop Secker considers to be more correct.

5 *They break in pieces thy people, O Jehovah!* Having spoken of their discourse or language as vain-glorious and shameless, he proceeds to speak of their deeds, in cruelly persecuting the Church. It is hard that even the subjects of heathen princes should be subjected to unjust persecution, but a more intolerable thing still, that those who are God's own people, his peculiar inheritance, should be trampled under the foot of tyranny. The prayer before us is one which, as I have already remarked, is given with the intention that we should prefer it ourselves, when we or others may be persecuted by wicked men, and especially intestine enemies. Our safety is dear to the Lord, not only as we are men, the workmanship of his hand, but as we are his peculiar heritage; and this should lead us, when wronged at any time, to betake ourselves to God with the more confidence. It is farther added — that they spare not *the widow,* and *the orphan, and murder the stranger* God, while he has commanded us in general to cultivate equity and justice in our common intercourse, has commended the orphan, widow, and stranger, to our peculiar care, as being more exposed to injury, and therefore more entitled to humanity and compassion. To treat such objects with cruelty argues a singular degree of impiety, and contempt of divine authority, and is not only an outrage of common justice, but the infraction of a privilege of special protection which God has condescended to cast around them.

[16] They who are chargeable with such conduct, particularly provoke the divine anger. As to little children especially, their helplessness and tender age will even protect them from being attacked by dogs and wild beasts. And what shall we think of the monstrous inhumanity of men, who would make them the objects of their assault? We have here a specimen of the dreadful state of matters which must then have prevailed in the Church of God. The law was there, and the ordinances of divine appointment, yet we see to what an awful extent every species of wickedness abounded. Let us beware lest we fall into a similar state of corruption, and should it so happen under our own observation that men persecute the stranger, seize the widow, and rob the fatherless, let us, in imitation of the Psalmist, who would have us alleviate their misfortunes, pray God to undertake their defense.

Psalm 94:7-10

7. And they have said, God shall not see, the God of Jacob shall not know. **8**. Understand, ye stupid [17] among the people: and ye fools,

16

"Non seulement le droict commun est viole, mais aussi le privilege que Dieu a voulu ordonner pour les maintenir en sauvete et seurete." — *Fr.*

17

"בערים, *boharum*, *ye brutish* From בער, *a brute.*" — *Bythner*

when will ye be wise? **9**. He that planted [18] the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? **10**. He that chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge. [19]

7. *And they have said, God shall not see* When the Psalmist speaks of the wicked as taunting God with blindness and ignorance, we are not to conceive of them as just exactly entertaining this imagination of him in their hearts, but they despise his judgments as much as if he took no cognisance of human affairs. Were the truth graven upon men's hearts that they cannot elude the eye of God, this would serve as a check and restraint upon their conduct. When they proceed to such audacity in wickedness as to lay the hand of violence upon their fellow-creatures, to rob, and to destroy, it shows that they have fallen into a state of brutish security in which they virtually consider themselves as concealed from the view of the Almighty. This security sufficiently proves at least, that they act as if they never expected to be called to an account for their conduct. [20] Though they may not then be guilty of the gross blasphemy of asserting in so many words that God is ignorant of what goes forward in the world, a mere nothing in the universe — the Psalmist very properly charges them with denying God's providential government, and, indeed, avowedly stripping him of the power and function of judge and governor, since, if they really were persuaded as they ought of his superintending providence, they would honor him by feeling a reverential fear — as I have elsewhere observed at greater length. He intends to express the lowest and most abandoned stage of depravity, in which the sinner casts off the fear of God, and rushes into every excess. Such infatuated conduct would have been inexcusable even in heathens, who had never heard of a divine revelation; but it was monstrous in men who had been brought up from infancy in the knowledge of the word, to show such mockery and contempt of God.

18

"The Hebrew verb denotes *planting* in various senses: and is with great propriety applied to the wonderful structure of the ear, and its insertion into and connection with the head." — *Mant.*

19

Upon this and the preceding verse, Grotius says, "This is a very excellent way of arguing; for whatever perfection there is in created beings, it is derived from God; and therefore it must be in him in the most eminent manner." It is well observed by Dr Adam Clarke, that "the Psalmist does not say, He that planted the ear *hath he not an ear*? He that formed the eye *hath he not eyes*? No, but shall he not *hear* — shall he not *see*? And why does he say so? To prevent the error of humanising God; of attributing members or corporeal parts to the infinite Spirit."

20

"Et certes une asseurance tant lourde monstre qu'ils pechent tout ainsi comme s'ils ne devoyent jamais estre appelez, rendre raison de leur vie." — *Fr.*

8 *Understand, ye stupid among the people* As it was execrable impiety to deny God to be Judge of the earth, the Psalmist severely reprimands their folly in thinking to elude his government, and even succeed by artifices in escaping his view. The expression, *stupid among the people,* is stronger than had he simply condemned them as foolish. It rendered their folly more inexcusable, that they belonged to the posterity of Abraham, of whom Moses said,

"What people is there so great, who have their gods so near unto them, as the Lord thy God hath this day come down unto thee? For this is your understanding and wisdom before all nations, to have God for your legislator." (Deuteronomy 4:7)

[21] Perhaps, however, he may be considered as addressing the rulers and those who were of higher rank in the community, and styling them *degraded among the people,* that is, no better than the common herd of the vulgar. Proud men, who are apt to be blinded by a sense of their importance, require to be brought down, and made to see that in God's estimation they are no better than others. He puts them on a level with the common people, to humble their self-complacency; or we may suppose that he hints with an ironical and sarcastic allusion to their boasted greatness, that they were distinguished above others chiefly for pre-eminent folly — adding, at the same time, as an additional aggravation, that they were obstinate in their adherence to it; for as much is implied in the question, *When will ye be wise?* We might consider it an unnecessary assertion of Divine Providence to put the question to the wicked, *Shall not he who made the ear hear?* because there are none so abandoned as openly to deny God's cognisance of events; but, as I have observed above, the flagrant audacity and self-security which most men display in contradicting his will, is a sufficient proof that they have supplanted God from their imaginations, and substituted a mere dead idol in his place, since, did they really believe him to be cognisant of their actions, they would at least show as much regard to him as to their fellow-creatures, in whose presence they feel some measure of restraint, and are prevented from sinning by fear and respect. To arouse them from this stupidity, the Psalmist draws an argument from the very order of nature, inferring that if men both see and hear, by virtue of faculties which they have received from God the Creator, it is impossible that God himself, who formed the eye and the ear, should not possess the most perfect observation.

10. *He that chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct?* He would have them argue from the greater to the less, that if God did not spare even whole nations, but visits their iniquity with punishment, they could not

21

The Latin reads here as follows: "Quis populus tam nobilis, qui deos sibi appropinquantes hubeat, sicuti hodie Deus tuus ad te descendit? Haec enim vestra est intelligentia coram cunctis Gentibus, et sapientia, Deum habere legislatorem."

imagine that he would suffer a mere handful of individuals to escape with impunity. The comparison intended, however, may possibly be between the Gentiles and the Jews. If God punished the heathen nations, who had not heard his word, with much severity, the Jews might expect that they, who had been familiarised to instruction in his house, would receive still sharper correction, and that he would vindicate his justice most in that nation over which he had chosen to preside. Still the former sense of the passage appears to me preferable, That it is folly in any number of individuals to flatter themselves with impunity, when they see God inflicting public punishment upon collective people. Some think there is an exclusive allusion to the signal and memorable instances of Divine judgment recorded in Scripture, as in the destruction of Sodom with fire from heaven, (Genesis 19.) and of the whole human family by the flood, (Genesis 7.) But the simpler meaning is best, That it were the height of madness in individuals to think that they could escape when nations perish. In adding that God *teacheth men knowledge,* [22] the Psalmist glances at the overweening confidence of such as despise God, and pride themselves in their acuteness and shrewdness, as we find Isaiah denouncing a woe against those crafty enemies of God who dig deep, that they may hide themselves from his sight, (Isaiah 29:15.) It is a disease prevalent enough in the world still. We know the refuges under covert of which both courtiers and lawyers take occasion to indulge in shameless mockery of God. [23] It is as if the Psalmist had said — You think to elude God through the confidence which you have in your acute understandings, and would pretend to dispute the knowledge of the Almighty, when, in truth, all the knowledge which is in the world is but as a drop from his own inexhaustible fullness.

Psalm 94:11-13

22

In our English Bible, the words *shall not he know*? are added. "But this is not acknowledged by the original nor by any of the versions. Indeed it is not necessary; for, either the words contain a simple proposition, 'It is he who teacheth man knowledge;' or this clause should be read in connection with verse 11, 'Jehovah, who teacheth man knowledge, he knoweth the devices of man, that they are vanity.' As he teaches knowledge to man, must He not know all the reasonings and devices of the human heart?" — *Dr Adam Clarke.*

23

"Mais nous voyons avec quelles couvertures tant les courtisans que les gens de justice obscurcissent leurs entendemens afin que sans aucune vergongne ils osent bien se moquer de Dieu." — *Fr.*

11. Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of men, [24] that they are vain. [25]
12. Blessed is the man whom thou hast instructed, O God! And taught out of thy law; **13**. To give him rest from days of evil whilst the pit is digged for the wicked.

11. *Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of men, etc.* He again insists upon the folly of men in seeking to wrap themselves up in darkness, and hide themselves from the view of God. To prevent them from flattering themselves with vain pretexts, he reminds them that the mists of delusion will be scattered at once when they come to stand in God's presence. Nothing can avail them, so long as God from heaven stamps vanity upon their deepest counsels. The Psalmist's design in citing them before the Judge of all, is to make them thoroughly search and try their own hearts; for the great cause of their self-security lay in failing to realize God, burying all distinction between right and wrong, and, so far as that was possible, hardening themselves against all feeling. They might contrive to soothe their minds by means like these, but he tells them that God ridiculed all such trifling. The truth may be a plain one, and well known; but the Psalmist states a fact which many overlook, and which we would do well to remember, That the wicked, when they attempt to hide themselves under subtile refuges, cannot deceive God, and necessarily deceive themselves. Some read — *They* (that is, men themselves) *are vanity;* but this is a forced rendering, and the form of expression is one which both in the Greek and Hebrew may be translated, *God knows that the thoughts of men are vain.*

12 *Blessed is the man whom thou hast instructed, O God!* The Psalmist now passes from the language of censure to that of consolation, comforting

24

Horsley reads, "the devices of man:" and asking, Did not St Paul for אדם read ערם, or rather ערום? refers to 1 Corinthians 3:20

25

The original word הבל is "from הבל, which first signifies *to vanish*, or *come to nought*, as in Jeremiah 2:5, 'They walked after ההבל, vanity, ויהבלו, and vanished, *or* came to nought;' and if understood here in this sense, it must signify *vanishing*, *transient*, that soon comes to nothing; and accordingly the Syriac renders it a *vapour* But there is another notion of הבל; it is put metaphorically for 'stultescere,' 'to grow foolish.'

Thus in Psalms 62:11, it is best rendered from the Hebrew, 'Trust not in oppression and rapine, תהבלו-אל, become not vain,' *i e.*, *fools*, to signify that those that so trust, that depend on unlawful means for enriching themselves, will certainly be deceived, find this the most perfect *folly* in the event. And the term *folly* being that by which the Atheist is most frequently expressed in Scripture, will be most agreeable to this place, where the Atheist's cogitations are described, verse 7, confident of *God's not seeing nor regarding*; which thoughts of his, as they are Atheistical, and so false, and so *foolish* in one sense, as *folly* is *ignorance*, so are they most impudent, (which is practical and the greatest *folly*,) will never secure his wicked actions of impunity, but, on the contrary, will betray him to all the ruin in the world. And to this sense it is, that in verse 8 we find it said in the like style, 'Understand, O ye brutish; and ye fools, when will ye be wise?' and so this is the adequate notion of the word here." — *Hammond*

himself and others of the Lord's people with the truth, that though God might afflict them for a time, he consulted their true interests and safety. At no period of life is this a truth which it is unnecessary to remember, called as we are to a continued warfare. God may allow us intervals of ease, in consideration of our weakness, but would always have us exposed to calamities of various kinds. The audacious excesses to which the wicked proceed we have already noticed. Were it not for the comfortable consideration that they are a blessed people whom God exercises with the cross, our condition would be truly miserable. We are to consider, that in calling us to be his people, he has separated us from the rest of the world, to participate a blessed peace in the mutual cultivation of truth and righteousness. The Church is often cruelly oppressed by tyrants under color of law — the very case of which the Psalmist complains in this psalm; for it is evident that he speaks of domestic enemies, pretending to be judges in the nation. Under such circumstances, a carnal judgment would infer, that if God really concerned himself in our welfare he would never suffer these persons to perpetrate such enormities. To prevent this, the Psalmist would have us distrust our own ideas of things, and feel the necessity of that wisdom which comes from above. I consider the passage to mean that it is only in the Lord's school we can ever learn to maintain composure of mind, and a posture of patient expectation and trust under the pressure of distress. The Psalmist declares that the wisdom which would bear us onward to the end, with an inward peace and courage under long-continued trouble, is not natural to any of us, but must come from God. [26] Accordingly, he exclaims, that those are the truly blessed whom God has habituated through his word to the endurance of the cross, and prevented from sinking under adversity by the secret supports and consolations of his own Spirit.

The words with which the verse begins, *Blessed is the man whom thou hast instructed,* have no doubt a reference to chastisements and experience of the cross, but they also comprehend the gift of inward illumination; and afterwards the Psalmist adds, that this wisdom, which is imparted by God inwardly, is, at the same time, set forth and made known in the Scriptures. [27] In this way he puts honor upon the use of the written word, as we find Paul saying, that all things

"were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope" (Romans 15:4)

26

"Les hommes ne sont point si sages, qu'au milieu des afflictions continuelles ils taschent d'un courage paisible de parvenir jusques au but; mais qui ceste sagesse-la leur est donnee de Dieu." — *Fr.*

27

"Mais le Prophete adjouste incontinent, que ceste sagesse laquelle Dieu nous inspire au dedans, nous est quant-et-quant proposee et manifestee en la Loy." — *Fr.*

This shows from what quarter we are to derive our patience — the oracles of God, which supply us with matter of hope for the mitigation of our griefs. In short, what the Psalmist means is summarily this: Believers must, in the first place, be exhorted to exercise patience, not to despond under the cross, but wait submissively upon God for deliverance; and next, they must be taught how this grace is to be obtained, for we are naturally disposed to abandon ourselves to despair, and any hope of ours would speedily fail, were we not taught from above that all our troubles must eventually issue in salvation. We have here the Psalmist's testimony to the truth, That the word of God provides us with abundant ground of comfort, and that none who rightly avails himself of it need ever count himself unhappy, or yield himself to hopelessness and despondency. One mark by which God distinguishes the true from the false disciple is, that of his being ready and prepared to bear the cross, and waiting quietly for the Divine deliverance, without giving way to fretfulness and impatience. A true patience does not consist in presenting an obstinate resistance to evils, or in that unyielding stubbornness which passed as a virtue with the Stoics, but in a cheerful submission to God, based upon confidence in his grace. On this account it is with good reason that the Psalmist begins by laying it down as a fundamental truth, necessary to be learned by all the Lord's people, That the end of those temporary persecutions, to which they are subjected, is their being brought at last to a blessed rest after their enemies have done their worst. He might have contented himself with saying, that the truly blessed were those who had learned from God's word to bear the cross patiently, but that he might the more readily incline them to a cheerful acquiescence in the Divine disposals, he subjoined a statement of the consolation which tends to mitigate the grief of their spirits. Even supposing that a man should bear his trials without a tear or a sigh, yet if he champ the bit in sullen hopelessness — if he only hold by such principles as these, "We are mortal creatures," "It is vain to resist necessity, and strive against fate," "Fortune is blind" — this is obstinacy rather than patience, and there is concealed opposition to God in this contempt of calamities under color of fortitude. The only consideration which will subdue our minds to a tractable submission is, that God, in subjecting us to persecutions, has in view our being ultimately brought into the enjoyment of a rest. Wherever there reigns this persuasion of a rest prepared for the people of God, and a refreshment provided under the heat and turmoil of their troubles, that they may not perish with the world around them, — this will prove enough, and more than enough, to alleviate any present bitterness of affliction.

By *evil days,* or *days of evil,* the Psalmist might thus mean the everlasting destruction which awaits the ungodly, whom God has spared for a certain interval. Or his words may be expounded as signifying, that the man is blessed who has learned to be composed and tranquil under trials. The rest intended would then be that of an inward kind, enjoyed by the believer even

during the storms of adversity; and the scope of the passage would be, that the truly happy man is he who has so far profited, by the word of God, as to sustain the assault of evils from without, with peace and composure. But as it is added, *whilst* [28] *the pit is digged for the wicked,* it would seem necessary, in order to bring out the opposition contained in the two members of the sentence, to suppose that the Psalmist rather commends the wisdom of those who reckon that God afflicts them with a view to saving them from destruction, and bringing them eventually to a happy issue. It was necessary to state this second ground of comfort, because our hearts cannot fail to be affected with the most intense grief when we see the wicked triumph, and no Divine restraint put upon them. The Psalmist meets the temptation by appropriately reminding us that the wicked are left upon earth, just as a dead body which is stretched out upon a bed, till its grave be dug. Here believers are warned that, if they would preserve their constancy, they must mount their watchtower, as Habakkuk says, (Habakkuk 2:1) and take a view in the distance of God's judgments. They shall see worldly men rioting in worldly delights, and, if they extend their view no farther, they will give way to impatience. But it would moderate their grief, would they only remember that those houses which are nominally appropriated to the living, are, in fact, only granted to the dead, until their grave be digged; and that, though they remain upon earth, they are already devoted to destruction. [29]

Psalm 94:14-15

14. Surely Jehovah will not cast off his people, and he will not forsake his inheritance. **15**. But judgment will return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart after him.

28

In our English Bible it is "*until* the pit be digged:" on which Hammond, who gives the same translation as Calvin, comments as follows: — "The rendering of עד, *until*, in this place, may much disturb the sense, and make it believed that the *rest* רע מימי, *from the evil days*, *i e.*, from persecution, (see Ephesians 5:16,) which God gives to good men, is to continue *till* the pit be digged for the ungodly, *i e.*, till the measure of their sins be filled up, and so destruction be ready for them: whereas, the contrary of this is evident, that either the destruction of the wicked is first, and the quiet and rest of the good (oppressed by them) a natural effect of that, and so subsequent to it; or that both of them are of the same date, at once 'tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest,' 2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7. And this is evidently the meaning of it here, and so will be discerned, if only the אד be rendered *dum*, *whilst*, (as it is elsewhere used, Jonah 4:2, אד היותי, 'whilst I was,' Job 1:16, מדבר זה אד, 'whilst he was speaking,') for then thus it will run very fitly, 'That thou mayest give him rest — whilst the pit is digged —'" Horsley reads the verse —

"To produce ease for him out of the days of adversity, Whilst the pit is digging for the impious."

29

"Que les maisons qui sont destinees aux vivans, pour un peu de temps sont bien concedees aux morts cependant qu'on leur fait leur fosse; et qu'en ceste facon ceux qui neantmoins sont destinez a perdition, demeurent en vie," etc. — *Fr.*

14 *Surely Jehovah will not cast off his people* He enforces the same truth which he had stated above in still clearer terms, denying it to be possible that God should cast off his people, whom he had chosen in a manner to be his inheritance. When assailed by afflictions, we should fly to this consideration, as a sanctuary of refuge, that we are God's people, gratuitously adopted into his family, and that he must necessarily have a most intimate and tender regard for our safety, having promised to watch as carefully over his Church as if it were his own heritage. We are thus again taught that our patience will soon give way and fail, unless the tumult of carnal suggestions be allayed by a knowledge of the Divine favor shining in upon our souls.

15. *But judgment will return unto righteousness* In the dark season of affliction, it is not easy to recognize the secret love which God even then bears to his own children, and the Psalmist adduces another ground of comfort, in the consideration that God will eventually put an end to the confusions which perplex them, and reduce matters to order. The form of expression used by the Psalmist is a little obscure, and this has led some to read the first part of the verse, as if it contained two distinct clauses — *justice will return at the end,* and then, *judgment will return* This is a violent wresting of the context. I have no doubt the Psalmist meant to say that judgment would be fitted or conformed to justice. And by judgment here is meant, as in many other places, the government or public state of matters. The confusion which prevails in the world, seems to argue some defect or unrighteousness of administration; and he holds out to us that it shall be well in the issue. More is said than merely that men who indulged in reckless oppression would be brought back to equitable dealing. A deeper meaning is intended, That God, when he interposed to restore the condition of his people, would bring forth openly to the light his justice which had lain concealed; by which we are not to understand that he ever deviates the least in his providence from the strictest rectitude, only there is not always that harmony and arrangement which might make his righteousness apparent to man's view, and the correction of this inequality is here called justice of government. [30] As the sun's light is hid from view at night, or at a cloudy season, so when the wicked persecute the righteous, and are allowed to indulge in iniquity without restraint, the Divine justice is obscured by the clouds which are thus interposed between us and the providence of God, and judgment is in a manner separated from justice. But when things are brought back again to their proper state, justice and government are seen to harmonize perfectly together in the equality which prevails. [31] Faith no doubt, should enable us to discern the justice of God even when things are

30

"Mais pource qu'au regard des hommes ou ne voit pas tousjours une telle moderation ou temperature que sa justice soit apparente; laquelle est nommee Gouvernement juste, apres que l'inequalite est corrigee." — *Fr.*

31

most dark and disordered; but the passage speaks of what would be obvious to sense and actual observation, and asserts that the justice of God would shine as the sky when all is calm and serene.

And all that are upright in heart after him Some read, *after it,* that is, *after righteousness;* but as by righteousness here we are to understand the equal and harmonious government which prevails when God takes vengeance upon the wicked and delivers his own people, this rendering will scarcely suit. It would rather seem that God himself is to be understood, so that the relative is here without an antecedent. In the Hebrew, when mention is made of God, the relative is not unfrequently put instead of the name. The words then mean, that upon God's restoring order in the world, his people would be encouraged to follow him with greater alacrity. Even when called to bear the cross, they sigh after him under their troubles and distresses, but it binds them more closely to his service when they see his hand stretched forth in this visible manner, and sensibly experience his deliverance.

Psalm 94:16-19

16. Who will rise up for me against my adversaries? who will stand up for me [32] against the workers of iniquity? **17**. Unless Jehovah had been my help, my soul had well nigh dwelt in silence. [33] **18**. If I said, My foot has fallen, thy kindness, O Jehovah! has held me up. [34] **19**. In the multitude of my thoughts, [35] thy comforts within me delight my soul. [36]

"On voit un tresbon accord entre la domination et justice en une equalite bien moderee." — *Fr.*

32

Horsley reads, "Who will set himself on my side?" The original words are לי יתיצב-מי. "The verb יתיצב," says this critic, "I take to be a military term; literally, 'to take one's place in battalion'"

33

"The Hebrew is דומה *Sepulchrum*, Pagn. *Silentium*, Mont. The Septuagint has τῷ ᾅδῃ; and Jerome *in inferno*." — *Reeves*' *Collation of the Hebrew and Greek text of the Psalms*

34

"יסעדני, *yisadeni*, *propped me* It is a metaphor taken from any thing *falling*, that is *propped*, *shored up*, or *buttressed* How often does the *mercy* of God thus prevent the ruin of weak believers, and of those who have been unfaithful?" — *Dr Adam Clarke*

35

In the Septuagint and Vulgate, it is "in the multitude of my sorrows."

36

Horsley reads the whole verse thus: —

"In the multitude of my anxieties within me,
Thy comforts cheered my soul."

16. *Who will rise up for me against my adversaries?* Here the Psalmist points out, in a lively and graphic manner, how destitute he was of all human aid. As if at the moment in danger, he cries out — *Who will stand up for me?* Who will oppose himself to my enemies? And immediately afterwards he replies, that had not God helped him, he must have despaired of safety. In declaring that he had been thus miraculously rescued from death, when deserted by all the world, he commends the more God's kindness and grace. When men aid us, they are only instruments by which the grace of God works; but we are apt not to recognize God's hand when we see any subordinate agency in the deliverance. He speaks of *his life dwelling in silence,* (verse 17) for the dead lie in the grave without feeling or strength. Thus the Psalmist owns that there was no means by which his life could have been preserved, had not God interposed without delay.

18. *If I said, My foot has fallen* What is said in this verse confirms the preceding statement. The more to commend God's kindness and power, he declares that it was no common danger from which he had been rescued, but in a manner from present death. The import of the language is, that death stared him so full in view, that he despaired of himself; as Paul speaks of having had the message of death in himself, when his condition was desperate, and he had given up hope of life, (2 Corinthians 1:9.) The fact of the Psalmist having been delivered after he had considered death certain, made the Divine interposition the more conspicuous. If we understand him as speaking of temporal death only in the expression, *My foot has fallen* — there is nothing unaccountable in the circumstance of his having despaired, [37] as God often prolongs the life of his people in the world, when they had lost hope, and were preparing for their departure. Possibly, however, the Psalmist only means that this was the language of sense; and this is the more probable, because we have already seen that he never ceased praying to God — a proof that he had still some hope. The next verse affords still further proof, for there he tells us that his afflictions were always mixed with some comfort. By *thoughts,* he means anxious and perplexing cares, which would have overwhelmed him had not consolation been communicated to him from above. We learn this truth from the passage, That God interposes in behalf of his people, with a due regard to the magnitude of their trials and distresses, and at the very moment which is necessary, enlarging them in their straits, as we find stated in other places. The heavier our calamities grow, we should hope that Divine grace will only be the more powerfully

And he observes, "The original word ישעשעו signifies 'to cause to leap or dance for joy;' but the English language will not bear an application of this image to the soul; though we say, 'to make the *heart* leap for joy.'"

37

"Si nous entendons le *glissement du pied*, seulement de la mort corporelle, il ne sera point absurde de dire que le Prophere ait este en ce desespoir." — *Fr.*

manifested in comforting us under them, (Psalm 4:1; 118:5,) But should we through weakness of the flesh be vexed and tormented by anxious cares, we must be satisfied with the remedy which the Psalmist here speaks of in such high terms. Believers are conscious of two very different states of mind. On the one hand, they are afflicted and distressed with various fears and anxieties; on the other, there is a secret joy communicated to them from above, and this in accommodation to their necessity, so as to preserve them from being swallowed up by any complication or force of calamity which may assail them.

Psalm 94:20-23

> **20**. Shall the throne of iniquities have fellowship with thee, framing molestation for law? [38] **21**. They will gather together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. **22**. But Jehovah has been my fortress; and my God for the rock of my confidence. **23**. And he shall repay their own iniquity upon them, and shall cut them off in their wickedness; Jehovah our God shall cut them off.

20 *Shall the throne of iniquities have fellowship with thee?* He again derives an argument for confidence from the nature of God, it being impossible that he should show favor to the wicked, or sanction their evil devices. With God for their enemy, how could they escape being destroyed? The words have greater force from being thrown into the form of a question, to show how completely opposed all sin is to the divine nature. The term *throne* is used, because those against whom the present charge is brought were not common robbers or assassins, who are universally recognized as infamous, but tyrants who persecuted the Lord's people under color of law. These, although occupying the throne which has been consecrated to *God,* have stained and polluted it with their crimes, and therefore have nothing in common with it. The meaning is brought out more clearly in the subsequent clause of the verse, where they are declared to be persons utterly estranged from God, who *frame molestation for law,* or, as the Hebrew word חֹק, *chok,* signifies, *decree of law,* or *statute order.* The Psalmist aims at those profligate judges who, under pretense of pursuing the strict course of office, perpetrate the worst species of enormities. Judges of this abandoned character, as we know, with no other view than to retain possession of a specious name for integrity, invent various excuses to defend their infamous

38

Dr Kennicott reads, "sub specie legis;" in which he is followed by Horsley: "Framing oppression under the pretense of law." Fry's version of the whole verse stands thus: —

"Is the tribunal of iniquity in accord with thee?
Decreeing wrong against me by law?"

"Legal forms," he remarks, "have often been given to the proceedings of the persecutors of God's people; and the sacred institutions, both of the civil and religious authorities, have been perverted to be the tools of oppression."

oppressions. The meaning of the Psalmist is apparent then; and it is this, that honorable as a throne may be, so far as the name goes, it ceases to have any worth or estimation with God when abused by wicked men; for iniquity can never meet with his approbation.

21. *They will gather together against the soul of the righteous* As the Hebrew word גדד*, gadad,* or גוד*, gud,* [39] signifies to collect forces or a band of men, the Psalmist evidently intimates that he had to do with leading persons of influence, and not with those merely in private station. The term implies too, that it was not merely one or two private individuals who persecuted him, and others of the Lord's people, but a public convention. Melancholy and disgraceful must the state of matters have been, when the wicked thus ruled in lawful assembly, and those who formed the college of judges were no better than a band of robbers. The case becomes doubly vexatious, when the innocent victims of oppression are not only injured, but have a stigma fixed upon their character. And what more unseemly spectacle, than when the whole course of judicial administration is just a foul conspiracy against good and innocent men? [40] The instance here recorded should prepare us for a like emergency, if it chance to occur in our own day, when the wicked may be permitted, in the providence of God, to mount the seat of judgment, and launch destruction upon the upright and the righteous, under color of law. Intolerable as it might seem at first sight, that persons innocent of any crime should meet with cruel persecution, even from the hands of judges, so as to be loaded with ignominy, we see that God tried his children in other times by this double species of oppression, and that we must learn to bear submissively not only with unrighteous violence, but with charges most injurious to our character, and most undeserved. [41]

22 *But Jehovah has been my fortress* The Psalmist declares, that great as were the extremities to which he had been reduced, he had found sufficient help in the single protection of God; thus passing a new commendation upon his power, which had been such as alone, and unaided, to put down the mightiest endeavors — all the force and the fury of his numerous enemies. He does more than say that God was a fortress, where he might hide with safety, and from the top of which he could bid defiance to every assault.

39

"יגודו, (*ja-ghod-du,*) *will collect in a troop* Targ. 'will heap together evils;' LXX. 'will hunt after.' From גדד, *ran by troops*, *invaded with an army.*" — *Bythner*

40

"Deinde quid minus consentaneum, quam ut tota forensis ratio nihil aliud sit quam scelesta conspiratio ad insontes damnandos?" — *Lat.*

41

"Toutesfois pour autant que Dieu a jadis exerce ses serviteurs en l'une et l'autre sorte de tentation, apprenons non seulement de porter patiemment une violence injuste, mais aussi les calomnies indignes," etc. — *Fr.*

Having congratulated himself upon the divine protection, he proceeds to denounce destruction upon his enemies; for it is to be considered as God's special prerogative to make the evil which his enemies devise against his people recoil upon their own heads. The mere defeating, and frustrating their attempts, would afford no inconsiderable display of divine justice; but the judgment of God is far more marvellously manifested when they fall into the pit which they themselves had prepared, when all the subtle plans which they have adopted for ruining the innocent end in their being destroyed by their own craftiness, and when having done their utmost, they fall by their own sword. We are slow to believe that this shall be the issue, and accordingly it is said twice — *he shall cut them off — the Lord our God shall cut them off* It may be noticed also, that the Psalmist in using the expression *our God,* holds out a ground of encouragement to the faithful, reminding us of what he had said above, that God will not forget his own inheritance, even his people whom he has brought unto the faith of himself.

Psalm 95

PSALM 95

The inspired penman of this psalm, whoever he was, [42] in exhorting the Jews to praise God in solemn assembly, states two grounds why God should be praised; the one, that he sustains by his power the world which he created, the other, that he had of his free grace adopted the Church into a gracious relationship with himself. As many take God's praises into their lips in a hypocritical manner, he exhorts the people at the same time to be sincere, serious, and devoted in the service, and to show by the tenor of their life that they had not been chosen in vain. The more effectually to guard them against hypocrisy, he mentions that their fathers from the beginning had been of a stubborn spirit, and chargeable with ingratitude to God; and he takes notice of the dreadful punishment which fell upon them, and which might well deter their children from following in the footsteps of their rebelliousness.

Psalm 95:1-5

1. Come, let us rejoice before Jehovah; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. [43] **2**. Let us come before his face with praise, In psalms let us shout for joy unto him. **3**. For Jehovah is a great God, And a great King, above all gods. **4**. For in his hand are

42

This psalm has no inscription, but the Septuagint, Vulgate, Æthiopic, Arabic, and Syriac versions, and the apostle Paul in Hebrews 4:7, ascribe it to David; so that there can be no doubt that it is one of the compositions of the sweet singer of Israel.

43

the deep places of the earth, [44] And the heights of the mountains are his. **5**. For his is the sea, and he made it; And the dry land his hands formed.

1. *Come, let us rejoice before Jehovah.* This psalm is suited for the Sabbath, when we know that the religious assemblies were more particularly convened for the worship of God. It is not individuals among the godly whom he exhorts to celebrate the divine praises in private; he enjoins these to be offered up in the public meeting. By this he showed that the outward worship of God principally consisted in the sacrifice of praise, and not in dead ceremonies. He enjoins haste upon them; by which they might testify their alacrity in this service. For the Hebrew word קדם, *kadam*, in the second verse, which I have rendered, *let us come before*, etc., means to *make haste.* He calls upon them to speed into the presence of God; and such an admonition was needed, considering how naturally backward we are when called by God to the exercise of thanksgiving. This indirect charge of indolence in the exercise, the Psalmist saw it necessary to prefer against God's ancient people; and we should be made aware that there is just as much need of a stimulus in our own case, filled as our hearts are with similar ingratitude. In calling them *to come before God's face*, he uses language which was also well fitted to increase the ardor of the worshippers; nothing being more agreeable than to offer in God's own presence such a sacrifice as

Horsley reads the second clause, "Let us raise the loud peal of melody to the Rock of our salvation;" on which he has the following note: "The verb הריע signifies to make a loud sound of any sort, either with the voice or with instruments. In the Psalms it generally refers to the mingled din of voices and various instruments, in the temple-service. This wide sense of the word cannot be expressed otherwise in the English language than by a peripharasis." Bishop Mant, acting on this notion, has ventured, conformably to it, to specify in his version some of the instruments commonly used in the temple-worship: —

"Come, let us sing Jehovah's praise!
To him the pealing chorus raise,
With trump, and harp, and cymbals ring;
The rock on which our hopes are placed!"

44

"The deep places of the earth," which are opposed to the "heights of the mountains," plainly mean the deepest and most retired parts of the terraqueous globe, which are explored by the eye of God, and by his only. Horsely reads the verse thus, —

"The God in whose hand are the nethermost recesses of the earth,
Whose also are the inaccessible summits of the mountains."

"This, and the following verse," says he, "are expositive of the greatness of the Godship of Jehovah, generally mentioned in the lst verse. 'The God, in whose hand.' Thus, I have endeavoured to preserve the full force of the Hebrew phrase בידו אשר." Bythner's version of the last member is, "And the strength of the mountains is his." He derives the noun ותועפות, *vethoaphoth*, which he renders *strength*, from the verb יעף, *yaaph*, *was wearied*; and observes, that this is "a noun plural feminine, *weariness*, — by antiphrasis, *strength*: is read four times in Scripture, and is said of mountains, silver, and the unicorn, the weariness and difficulty in overcoming which, denote their great strength." Pagninus gives a similar rendering. Montanus has *cacumina*, *the tops*, which the Septuagint seems to agree, reading τὰ ὕ ψη τῶν ὀρέων.

he declares that he will accept. He virtually thus says, in order to prevent their supposing the service vain, that God was present to witness it. I have shown elsewhere in what sense God was present in the sanctuary.

3. *For Jehovah is a great God.* By these words the Psalmist reminds us what abundant grounds we have for praising God, and how far we are from needing to employ the lying panegyric with which rhetoricians flatter earthly princes. First, he extols the greatness of God, drawing a tacit contrast between him and such false gods as men have invented for themselves. We know that there has always been a host of gods in the world, as Paul says,

"There are many on the earth who are called gods,"
(1 Corinthians 8:5.)

We are to notice the opposition stated between the God of Israel and all others which man has formed in the exercise of an unlicensed imagination. Should any object, that "an idol is nothing in the world," (1 Corinthians 8:4,) it is enough to reply, that the Psalmist aims at denouncing the vain delusions of men who have framed gods after their own foolish device. I admit, however, that under this term he may have comprehended the angels, asserting God to be possessed of such excellence as exalted him far above all heavenly glory, and whatever might be considered Divine, as well as above the feigned deities of earth. [45] Angels are not indeed gods, but the name admits of an improper application to them on account of their being next to God, and still more, on account of their being accounted no less than gods by men who inordinately and superstitiously extol them. If the heavenly angels themselves must yield before the majesty of the one God, it were the height of indignity to compare him with gods who are the mere fictions of the brain. In proof of his greatness, he bids us look to his formation of the world, which he declares to be *the work of God's hands,* and subject to his power. This is one general ground why God is to be praised, that he has clearly shown forth his glory in the creation of the world, and will have us daily recognize him in the government of it. When it is said, that *the depths of the earth are in his hand,* the meaning is, that it is ruled by his providence, and subject to his power. Some read, *the bounds of the earth,* but the word means *abysses* or *depths*, as opposed to *the heights of the mountains.* The Hebrew word properly signifies *searching.*

Psalm 95:6-7

45

"Deum ita excellere, ut longe emineat supra omnem coelestem gloriam et quicquid divinum est, non minus quam supra omne terrenum figmentum." — *Lat.*

> **6**. Come ye, let us worship, and bow down; [46] let us kneel before the face of Jehovah our Maker. **7**. Because he is our God, and we the people of his pastures, and the flock of his hand; to-day, if ye will hear his voice.

6. *Come ye, let us worship* Now that the Psalmist exhorts God's chosen people to gratitude, for that pre-eminency among the nations which he had conferred upon them in the exercise of his free favor, his language grows more vehement. God supplies us with ample grounds of praise when he invests us with spiritual distinction, and advances us to a pre-eminency above the rest of mankind which rests upon no merits of our own. In three successive terms he expresses the one duty incumbent upon the children of Abraham, that of an entire devotement of themselves to God. The worship of God, which the Psalmist here speaks of, is assuredly a matter of such importance as to demand our whole strength; but we are to notice, that he particularly condescends upon one point, the paternal favor of God, evidenced in his exclusive adoption of the posterity of Abraham unto the hope of eternal life. We are also to observe, that mention is made not only of inward gratitude, but the necessity of an outward profession of godliness. The three words which are used imply that, to discharge their duty properly, the Lord's people must present themselves a sacrifice to him publicly, with kneeling, and other marks of devotion. *The face of the Lord* is an expression to be understood in the sense I referred to above, — that the people should prostrate themselves before the Ark of the Covenant, for the reference is to the mode of worship under the Law. This remark, however, must be taken with one reservation, that the worshippers were to lift their eyes to heaven, and serve God in a spiritual manner. [47]

7 *Because he is our God* While it is true that all men were created to praise God, there are reasons why the Church is specially said to have been formed for that end, (Isaiah 61:3.) The Psalmist was entitled to require this service more particularly from the hands of his chosen people. This is the reason why he impresses upon the children of Abraham the invaluable privilege which God had conferred upon them in taking them under his protection. God may indeed be said in a sense to have done so much for all mankind. But when asserted to be the Shepherd of the Church, more is meant than that he favors her with the common nourishment, support, and government which he extends promiscuously to the whole human family; he is so called because he separates her from the rest of the world, and cherishes her with

46

"That is, so as to touch the floor with the forehead, while the worshipper is prostrate on his hands and knees. — See 2 Chronicles 7:3." — *Fry.*

47

"Il faut neantmoins tousjours adjoustor ceste exception, que les fideles eslevans les yeux au ciel, adorent Dieu spirituellement." — *Fr.*

a peculiar and fatherly regard. His people are here spoken of accordingly as the *people of his pastures,* whom he watches over with peculiar care, and loads with blessings of every kind. The passage might have run more clearly had the Psalmist called them *the flock of his pastures,* and *the people of his hand;* [48] or, had he added merely — *and his flock* [49] — the figure might have been brought out more consistently and plainly. But his object was less elegancy of expression than pressing upon the people a sense of the inestimable favor conferred upon them in their adoption, by virtue of which they were called to live under the faithful guardianship of God, and to the enjoyment of every species of blessings. They are called *the flock of his hand,* not so much because formed by his hand as because governed by it, or, to use a French expression, *le Troupeau de sa conduite.* [50] The point which some have given to the expression, as if it intimated how intent God was upon feeding his people, doing it himself, and not employing hired shepherds, may scarcely perhaps be borne out by the words in their genuine meaning; but it cannot be doubted that the Psalmist would express the very gracious and familiar kind of guidance which was enjoyed by this one nation at that time. Not that God dispensed with human agency, intrusting the care of the people as he did to priests, prophets, and judges, and latterly to kings. No more is meant than that in discharging the office of shepherd to this people, he exercised a superintendence over them different from that common providence which extends to the rest of the world.

To-day, if you will hear his voice [51] According to the Hebrew expositors, this is a conditional clause standing connected with the preceding sentence; by which interpretation the Psalmist must be considered as warning the

48

Hammond, after making a similar remark, adds — "But it is more reasonable to take the explanation from the different significations of רעה, [the word which Calvin renders *pasture*,] as for *feeding*, so for *governing*, equally applicable to men and cattle; from whence it is but analogy, that מרעה, which signifies *a pasture*, where cattle are fed, should also signify *dominion* or *kingdom*, or any kind of πολιτεία, wherein a *people* are *governed* And then the other part, *the sheep of his hand*, will be a fit, though figurative, expression; the shepherd that feeds, and rules, and leads the *sheep*, doing it by his *hand*, which manageth the rod and staff, Psalm 23:4. The Jewish Arab reads, 'the people of his feeding, or flock, and the sheep of his guidance.'"

49

The text reads, "Si tantum nomen Legis posuisset." This is evidently a mistake of the printer for *Gregis.* The French version reads — "Le Troupeau."

50

The flock under his conduct or guidance.

51

The ancient Jewish writers frequently apply these words to the Messiah: and they have argued from them, that if all Israel would repent but one day the Messiah would come; because it is said, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice."

people that they would only retain possession of their privilege and distinction so long as they continued to obey God. [52] The Greek version joins it with the verse that follows — *to-day,* if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts*,* and it reads well in this connection. Should we adopt the distribution of the Hebrew expositors, the Psalmist seems to say that the posterity of Abraham were the flock of God's hand, inasmuch as he had placed his Law in the midst of them, which was, as it were, his crook, and had thus showed himself to be their shepherd. The Hebrew particle אם, *im,* which has been rendered *if*, would in that case be rather expositive than conditional, and might be rendered *when,* [53] the words denoting it to be the great distinction between the Jews and the surrounding nations, that God had directed his voice to the former, as it is frequently noticed he had not done to the latter, (Psalm 147:20; Deuteronomy 4:6, 7.) Moses had declared this to constitute the ground of their superiority to other people, saying, "What nation is there under heaven which hath its gods so nigh unto it?" The inspired writers borrow frequently from Moses, as is well known, and the Psalmist, by the expression *to-day,* intimates how emphatically the Jews, in hearing God's voice, were his people, for the proof was not far off, it consisted in something which was present and before their eyes. He bids them recognize God as their shepherd, inasmuch as they heard his voice; and it was an instance of his singular grace that he had addressed them in such a condescending and familiar manner. Some take the adverb to be one of exhortation, and read, *I would that they would hear my voice,* but this does violence to the words. The passage runs well taken in the other meaning we have assigned to it. Since they had a constant opportunity of

52

Hammond observes, that the particle אם, *im*, here rendered *if*, is in other places often used in an optative signification, as in Exodus 32:32, "If thou wilt" for "O that thou wouldst forgive them;" and that therefore the rendering here may be, "O that to-day ye would hear his voice;" — a reading, he adds, which "may be thought needful to the making the sense complete in this verse, which otherwise is thought to hang (though not so fitly) on the 8th verse, and not to be finished without it." He then goes on to say, "But it may be considered also, whether this verse be not more complete in itself by rendering אם, *if*, thus: 'Let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and sheep of his hand, if ye will hear his voice to-day,' *i e.*, speedily, — if ye will speedily perform obedience to him, — setting the words in form of a conditional promise, thereby to enforce the performance of the condition on our part. The condition to the performance of which they are exhorted, (verse 6,) is paying God the worship and lowly obedience due to him; and the promise secured to them in this performance, that *he* will be their *God*, and they *the people of his pasture*, *etc.*, *i e.*, that God will take the same care of them that a shepherd does of his sheep; preserve them from all enemies, Midianites, Philistines, Canaanites, etc."

53

"Non erit proprie conditionalis, sed expositiva; vel pro temporis adverbio sumetur." — *Lat.* — "Ne sera pas proprement conditionnelle, mais expositive; ou bien elle sera prinse pour *Quand*." — *Fr.*

hearing the voice of God — since he gave them not only one proof of the care he had over them as shepherd, or yearly proof of it, but a continual exemplification of it, there could be no doubt that the Jews were chosen to be his flock.

Psalm 95:8-11

8. Harden not your heart, as in Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness. [54] **9**. When your fathers tempted me, they proved me, though yet they had seen my work. **10**. Forty years, I strove with this generation, [55] and said, They are a people that err in heart,

54

That is, in the wilderness of Midian, into which the people entered after passing through the Red Sea. In their way towards Horeb, their fourth station was at Rephidim, where they were chargeable with the sinful conduct here referred to.

55

Paul, in quoting this passage in Hebrews 3:9, joins the words *forty years* to the concluding part of the preceding verse: "When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years;" whereas, in the Hebrew text, and as Calvin connects them, they form the commencement of the 10th verse. But this depends on the punctuation system of the Masorites, which the Apostle has not followed. It is of little consequence whether the words *forty years* are connected with the close of the 9th verse or the beginning of the 10th; the sense in either case being substantially the same. If the Israelites tempted God forty years, he strove with them during that period; and if he strove with them for so long a time, it was because they tempted him. The Apostle shows that either of these readings may be indifferently adopted, when, in the 17th verse of that chapter, instead of speaking of the forty years as the space of time during which the Israelites tempted God, he speaks of them as the period during which God was grieved by that rebellious people. "But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?"

[56] and they have not known my ways. **11**. Wherefore I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: [57]

8. *Harden not your heart, as in Meribah* The Psalmist, having extolled and commended the kindness of God their Shepherd, takes occasion, as they were stiffnecked and disobedient, to remind them of their duty, as his flock, which was to yield a pliable and meek submission; and the more to impress their minds, he upbraids them with the obstinacy of their fathers. The term מריבה, *Meribah,* may be used appellatively to mean *strife* or *contention;* but as the Psalmist evidently refers to the history contained in Exodus 17:2-7, [58] I have preferred understanding it of the place — and so of מסה, *Massah.* [59] In the second clause, however, the place where the temptation happened may be thought sufficiently described under the term

56

לבב תעי עם, *am toe lebab*, "a nation wandering of heart." תעי, *toe*, is from תעה, *taah*, *he wandered*, *deviated* The LXX., whom Paul follows in Hebrews 3:10, have ἀεὶ πλανωνται; from which Reeves conjectures, that instead of תעי עם, *populus erratium*, "a people that do err;" they might have read,תעי עלם "always erring." The phrase, *erring in heart*, is emphatic, indicating the great stress which God lays on the state of the heart. Moses Stuart, in his commentary on this passage, as quoted in Hebrews 3:10, understands *the heart* as pleonastic; so that the phrase imports simply, *They always err*, *i e.*, they are continually departing from the right way. But the phrase, we think, is intended to convey another idea, — that God, in judging of the character and conduct of men, has a special regard to the state of the heart. It is the heart which he principally requires in our obedience; and this he chiefly looks to in men's disobedience. When it is upright as to its general frame, design, and principle, he will bear with many failings and shortcomings. When it is insincere, he will set no value whatever on any outward professions or actions, however good in themselves. We ourselves act upon the same principle, and are justified in doing so. If a man discovers that he has just ground to suspect that the hearts of those with whom he has intimate intercourse, are false and deceitful towards him, he ceases to respect and love them, whatever may be their professions of friendship. The lines of the Greek poet, though inconsistent with the subdued feeling and tone of Christian benevolence, which, in this case, instead of hatred to the person, produces regret and grief; yet show that men universally, from their very nature, take into account the state of the heart in estimating the professions and conduct of others towards them: —

"Ecqov gar moi ceinov ojmwv ai'dao pulhsin
Ov c eJteron men ceuqei eni fresin, allo de bazei"
"I hate him like the gates of hell, who, pretending fairly to me,
reserves other things in his mind."

57

The oath to which God here refers is recorded in Numbers 14:20, 23.

58

This remarkable part of Jewish history is alluded to in other places, and for various purposes. Sometimes to reproach the Israelites on account of their sins, as in Deuteronomy 9:22, "And at Massah ye provoked the Lord to wrath;" sometimes to warn them against falling into the like sins, as in Deuteronomy 6:16, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God as ye tempted him in Massah;" and, at other times, as an instance of the faithfulness of the Levites who clave to God in these circumstances of trial, Deuteronomy 33:8, "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah."

59

wilderness, and should any read, *according to the day of temptation* (instead of *Massah*) *in the wilderness,* there can be no objection. Some would have it, that Massah and Meribah were two distinct places, but I see no ground to think so; and, in a matter of so little importance, we should not be too nice or curious. He enlarges in several expressions upon the hardness of heart evinced by the people, and, to produce the greater effect, introduces God himself as speaking. [60] By hardness of heart, he no doubt means, any kind of contempt shown to the word of God, though there are many different kinds of it. We find that when proclaimed, it is heard by some in a cold and slighting manner; that some fastidiously put it away from them after they had received it; that others proudly reject it; while again there are men who openly vent their rage against it with despite and blasphemy. [61] The Psalmist, in the one term which he has employed, comprehends all these defaulters, the careless — the fastidious — such as deride the word, and such as are actuated in their opposition to it by frenzy and passion. Before the heart can be judged soft and pliable to the hearing of God's word, it is necessary that we receive it with reverence, and with a disposition to obey it. If it carry no authority and weight with it, we show that we regard him as no more than a mere man like ourselves; and here lies the hardness of our hearts, whatever may be the cause of it, whether simply carelessness, or pride, or rebellion. He has intentionally singled out the odious term here employed, to let us know what an execrable thing contempt of God's word is; as, in the Law, *adultery* is used to denote all kinds of fornication and uncleanness, and *murder* all kinds of violence, and injury, hatreds, and enmities. Accordingly, the man who simply treats the word of God with

In our English Bible it is, "in the provocation — in the day of temptation." But the most eminent critics agree with Calvin in thinking that it is better to retain the terms *Meribah* and *Massah* than to translate them. The places called by these names were so designated from the Israelites provoking and tempting God at them; and the retaining of the proper names gives more effect and liveliness to the allusion. See Psalm 81:7, volume 3, page 316, n. 2.

60

Mant and Walford suppose that it is at the second part of verse 7, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," where God is introduced as speaking. "By an almost imperceptible transition," remarks the former critic, "the person is here [last clause of verse 7th] changed; Jehovah becomes the speaker; and with a corresponding change of topic, the Ode, which had commenced with a spiritual exhortation to exult in the blessings of the Gospel, concludes with a solemn, affectionate, and impressive admonition of the danger of disobedience to it; leaving the warning upon the mind with an abruptness peculiarly well calculated to excite attention and to produce the desired effect." Dimock conjectures, that, as God is introduced as speaking in the last clause of the 7th verse, we should read with Mudge, בקולי, for בקלו, (or, as 37 MSS. and two others at first, בקולו,) "Oh that you may hear *my voice* this day: that you may not harden your hearts," etc.

61

"Ab aliis frigide audiri, et contemptim; ab aliis fastidiose respui; ab aliis superbe rejici; ab aliis etiam furiose non sine probro et blasphemia proscindi." — *Lat.*

neglect, and fails to obey it, is said here to have a hard and stony heart, although he may not be an open despiser. The attempt is ridiculous which the Papists have made to found upon this passage their favorite doctrine of the liberty of the will. We are to notice, in the first place, that all men's hearts are naturally hard and stony; for Scripture does not speak of this as a disease peculiar to a few, but characteristic in general of all mankind, (Ezekiel 36:26.) It is an inbred pravity; still it is voluntary; we are not insensible in the same manner that stones are, [62] and the man who will not suffer himself to be ruled by God's word, makes that heart, which was hard before, harder still, and is convinced as to his own sense and feeling of obstinacy. The consequence by no means follows from this, that softness of heart — a heart flexible indifferently in either direction, is at our command. [63] The will of man, through natural corruption, is wholly bent to evil; or, to speak more properly, is carried headlong into the commission of it. And yet every man, who disobeys God therein, hardens himself; for the blame of his wrong doing rests with none but himself.

9 *When your fathers tempted me, they proved me* The Psalmist insinuates, as I have already remarked, that the Jews had been from the first of a perverse and almost intractable spirit. And there were two reasons which made it highly useful to remind the children of the guilt chargeable upon their fathers. We know how apt men are to follow the example of their predecessors; custom begets a sanction; what is ancient becomes venerable, and such is the blinding influence of home example, that whatever may have been done by our forefathers passes for a virtue without examination. We have an instance in Popedom, of the audacity with which the authority of the fathers is opposed to God's word. The Jews were of all others most liable to be deceived upon this side, ever accustomed as they were to boast of their fathers. The Psalmist accordingly would detach them from the fathers, by taking notice of the monstrous ingratitude with which they had been chargeable. A second reason, and one to which I have already adverted, is, that he would show them the necessity in which they stood of being warned upon the present subject. Had their fathers not manifested a rebellions spirit, they might have retorted by asking the question, Upon what ground he warned them against hardness of heart, their nation having hitherto maintained a character for docility and tractableness? The fact being otherwise — their fathers having from the first been perverse and

62

"Combien qu'une telle perversite nous soit naturelle, toutesfois pource qu'elle est volontaire, et que nous ne sommes pas insensibles comme les pierres." — *Fr.*

63

"Il ne s'ensuit pas neantmoins qu'il soit en nostre puissance d'amollir nostre coeur, ou de le flechir en l'une et l'autre part." — *Fr.*

stubborn, the Psalmist had a plain reason for insisting upon the correction of this particular vice.

There are two ways of interpreting the words which follow. As *tempting God* is nothing else than yielding to a diseased and unwarrantable craving after proof of his power, [64] we may consider the verse as connected throughout, and read, *They tempted me and proved me, although they had already seen my work* God very justly complains, that they should insist upon new proof, after his power had been already amply testified by undeniable evidences. There is another meaning, however, that may be given to the term *proved,* — according to which, the meaning of the passage would run as follows: — Your fathers tempted me in asking where God was, notwithstanding all the benefits I had done them; and they proved me, that is, they had actual experience of what I am, inasmuch as I did not cease to give them open proofs of my presence, and consequently they saw my work. Whatever sense we adopt, the Psalmist's design is plainly to show how inexcusable the Jews were in desiring a discovery of God's power, just as if it had been hidden, and had not been taught them by the most incontestable proofs. [65] Granting that they had received no foregoing demonstration of it, they would have evinced an unbecoming spirit in demanding of God why he had failed to provide them with meat and drink; but to doubt his presence after he had brought them from Egypt with an outstretched hand, and evidenced his nearness to them by most convincing testimonies, — to doubt his presence in the same manner as if it had never been revealed, was a degree of perverse forgetfulness which aggravated their guilt. Upon the whole, I consider the following to be the sense of the passage — Your fathers tempted me, although they had abundantly proved — perceived by clear and undeniable evidences, that I was their God — nay, although my works had been clearly set before them. The lesson is one which is equally applicable to ourselves; for the more abundant testimonies we may have had of the power and loving-kindness of the Lord, the greater will our sin be, if we insist upon receiving additional proofs of them. How many do we find in our own day demanding miracles, while others murmur against God because he does not indulge their wishes? Some may ask why the Psalmist singles out the particular case of Meribah, when there were many other instances which he might have adduced. They never ceased to provoke God from the moment of their passing the Red Sea; and in bringing this one charge only

64

"When the Scriptures speak of men as *tempting* God, the meaning is, that men do that which puts the divine patience, forbearance, goodness, etc., to a trial; *i.e.*, makes it difficult, as it were, to preserve a strict regard to these." — *Stuart* on Hebrews 3:8.

65

"D'autant qu'ils ont desire que la vertu de Dieu, laquelle leur estoit declaree par tant d'experiences, leur fust manifestee, comme s'ils ne l'eussent jamais cognue." — *Fr.*

against them, he might seem by his silence on other points to justify their conduct. But the figure synecdoche is common in Scripture, and it would be natural enough to suppose that one case is selected for many. At the same time, another reason for the specification may have been, that, as plainly appears from Moses, the ingratitude and rebellion of the people reached its greatest height on this occasion, when they murmured for water. I am aware that interpreters differ upon this. Such, however, was the fact. They then crowned their former impiety; nor was it until this outcry was made, as the consummating act of all their preceding wickedness, that they gave open proof of their obstinacy being incurable. [66]

10. *Forty years I strove with this generation* [67] The Psalmist brings it forward as an aggravation of their perverse obstinacy, that God strove with them for so long a time without effect. Occasionally it will happen that there is a violent manifestation of perversity which soon subsides; but God complains that he had constant grounds of contention with his people, throughout the whole forty years. And this proves to us the incurable waywardness of that people. The word *generation* is used with the same view. The word דור, *dor,* signifies an age, or the allotted term of human life; and it is here applied to the men of an age, as if the Psalmist had said, that the Israelites whom God had delivered were incorrigible, during the whole period of their lives. The verb אקוט, *akut,* which I have rendered *I strove,* is, by some, translated *contemned,* and in the Septuagint it reads, προσωχθισα, [68] *I was incensed,* or *enraged;* but Hebrew interpreters retain the genuine meaning, That God strove with them in a continual course of contention. This was a remarkable proof of their extreme obstinacy; and God is introduced in the verse as formally pronouncing judgment upon them, to intimate, that after having shown their ungodliness in so many different ways, there could be no doubt regarding their infatuation. *Erring in heart,* is an expression intended not to extenuate their conduct, but to stamp it with folly and madness, as if he had said, that he had to do with beasts, rather than men endued with sense and intelligence. The reason is subjoined, that they would not attend to the many works of God brought under their eyes,

66

"Solus ille strepitus, quasi omnium actionum catastrophe, palam ostenderit insanabilem esse eorum pervicaciam." — *Lat.*

67

"*The men of that age*, or, as we say in English, *the generation* then upon the stage." — *Stuart* on Hebrews 3:10.

68

"προσωχθιζα *I was indignant, was offended at* The word is Helenistic. The Greeks use ὀχθέω and ὀχθίζω According to etymology, it consists of πρός, *to, against, upon*, and ὀχθη, *bank, shore* It is applied primarily to a ship infringing upon the shore, or, as we say, running aground. It answers to the Hebrew קו קוט מאס, etc." — *Stuart* on Hebrews 3:10

and more than all, to his word; for the Hebrew term דרך, *derech,* which I have rendered *ways,* comprehends his law and repeated admonitions, as well as his miracles done before them. It argued amazing infatuation that when God had condescended to dwell in such a familiar manner amongst them, and had made such illustrious displays of himself, both in word and works, they should have shut their eyes and overlooked all that had been done. This is the reason why the Psalmist, considering that they wandered in error under so much light as they enjoyed, speaks of their stupidity as amounting to madness.

11. *Wherefore I have sworn in my wrath* I see no objection to the relative אשר, *asher,* being understood in its proper sense and reading — *To whom I have sworn.* The Greek version, taking it for a mark of similitude, reads, As *I have sworn* But I think that it may be properly considered as expressing an inference or conclusion; not as if they were then at last deprived of the promised inheritance when they tempted God, but the Psalmist, having spoken, in the name of God, of that obstinacy which they displayed, takes occasion to draw the inference that there was good reason for their being prohibited, with an oath, from entering the land. Proportionally as they multiplied their provocations, it became the more evident that, being incorrigible, they had been justly cut off from God's rest. [69] The meaning would be more clear by reading in the pluperfect tense — *I had sworn;* for God had already shut them out from the promised inheritance, having foreseen their misconduct; before he thus strove with them. I have elsewhere adverted to the explanation which is to be given of the elliptical form in which the oath runs. [70] The land of Canaan is called God's *rest* in reference to the promise. Abraham and his posterity had been wanderers in it until the full time came for entering upon the possession of it. Egypt had been a temporary asylum, and, as it were, a

69

"Satis superque innotuit, quia corrigi nullo modo poterant, non temere fuisse abdicatos a requie Dei." — *Lat.*

70

See Commentary, Psalm 27:13, and 89:35. "The Hebrews used אם, in the latter clause of an oath, which ran thus: *God do so to me*, if (אם) *I do thus*, etc. See the full form in 1 Samuel 3:17; 2 Samuel 3:35; 2 Kings 6:31. The former part of this oath was sometimes omitted, and אם had then the force of a strong negative; see 2 Samuel 11:11; 1 Samuel 14:45, *alibi*; *vide* Ges. Heb. Lex. under אם, number 6. So in Psalm 95:11, יבאון אם, contains a strong negative, which the LXX., and Paul after them, (Hebrews 3:11,) have rendered εἰ εἰσελεύσονται, *they shall not enter*." — *Stuart* on Hebrews 3:11. "The expression," says Dr Owen, "is imperfect, and relates to the oath of God, wherein he sware by himself. As if he had said, 'Let me not live, or not be God, if they enter,' which is the greatest and highest asseveration that they should not enter. And the concealment of the engagement is not, as some suppose, from a παθος, causing an abruptness of speech, but from the reverence of the person spoken of. The expression is perfectly and absolutely negative. So Mark 8:12, with Matthew 16:4; 1 Samuel 14:44; 1 Kings 20:10." — *Commentary* on Hebrews 3:11.

place of exile. In preparing to plant the Jews, agreeably to his promise, in their rightful patrimony of Canaan, God might very properly call it his rest. The word must be taken, however, in the active sense; this being the great benefit which God bestowed, that the Jews were to dwell there, as in their native soil, and in a quiet habitation. We might stop a moment here to compare what the Apostle states in the third and fourth chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews, with the passage now before us. That the Apostle follows the Greek version, need occasion no surprise. [71] Neither is he to be considered as undertaking professedly to treat this passage. He only insists upon the adverb *To-day,* and upon the word *Rest* And first, he states that the expression *to-day,* is not to be confined to the time when the Law was given, but properly applies to the Gospel, when God began to speak more openly. The fuller and more perfect declaration of doctrine demanded the greater share of attention. God has not ceased to speak: he has revealed his Son, and is daily inviting us to come unto him; and, undoubtedly, it is our incumbent duty, under such an opportunity, to obey his voice. The Apostle next reasons from the *rest,* to an extent which we are not to suppose that the words of the Psalmist themselves warrant. [72] He takes it up as a first position, that since there was an implied promise in the punishment here denounced, there must have been some better rest promised to the people of God than the land of Canaan. For, when the Jews had entered the land, God held out to his people the prospect of another rest, which is defined by the Apostle to consist in that renouncing of ourselves, whereby we rest from our own works while God worketh in us. From this, he takes occasion to compare the old Sabbath, or rest, under the Law, which was figurative, with the newness of spiritual life. [73] When his said that he *swore in his wrath,* this intimates that he was in a manner freed to inflict this punishment, that the provocation was of no common or slight kind, but that their awful obstinacy inflamed his anger, and drew from him this oath.

71

See volume 1, page 103, note.

72

"Subtilius disputat quam ferant Prophetae verba." — *Lat.*

73

"Vetus et legale Sabbathum quod umbratile tantum erat, cum spirituali vitae novitate." — *Lat.*

Psalm 96

PSALM 96

This psalm contains an exhortation to praise God, an exhortation which is directed not only to the Jews, but to all nations. We must infer from this, that it has reference to the kingdom of Christ. God's name could not be called upon in any other part of the world than Judea, until it had been revealed; and the heathen nations were at that time necessarily altogether incapacitated for any such exercise. [74] Yet it is evident that the Holy Spirit stirred up the saints who were under the Law to celebrate the Divine praises, till the period should arrive when Christ, by the spread of the Gospel, should fill the whole earth with his glory.

> Psalm 96:1-3
>
> **1.** Sing to Jehovah a new song, sing unto Jehovah, all the earth. **2.** Sing unto Jehovah, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day. **3.** Declare his glory among the heathen; his wonders among all people.

1 *Sing unto Jehovah a new song* This commencement shows that, as I have already observed, the Psalmist is exhorting the whole world, and not the Israelites merely, to the exercise of devotion. Nor could this be done, unless the gospel were universally diffused as the means of conveying the knowledge of God. The saying of Paul must necessarily hold true,

74 "Mutae erant ac surdae." — *Lat.*

"How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?" (Romans 10:14.)

The same Apostle proves the calling of the Gentiles, by adducing in testimony of it, "Praise the Lord, ye Gentiles, with his people" — from which it follows, that fellowship in the faith stands connected with the joint celebration of praise, (Romans 15:11.) Besides, the Psalmist requires a *new song,* [75] not one which was common, and had formerly been raised. He must therefore refer to some unusual and extraordinary display of the Divine goodness. Thus, when Isaiah speaks of the restoration of the Church, which was wonderful and incredible, he says, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," (Isaiah 42:10.) The Psalmist intimates accordingly, that the time was come when God would erect his kingdom in the world in a manner altogether unlooked for. He intimates still more clearly as he proceeds, that all nations would share in the favor of God. He calls upon them everywhere to show forth his salvation, and, in desiring that they should celebrate it from day to day, would denote that it was not of a fading or evanescent nature, but such as should endure for ever.

3 *Declare his glory among the heathen* Additional terms are adduced to commend the salvation spoken of. It is called *his glory* and *his wonders;* which is equivalent to saying that it was glorious and admirable. By such titles the Psalmist would distinguish it from any deliverances which had formerly been granted, as indeed there can be but one opinion, that when God appeared as Redeemer of all the world, he gave a display of his mercy and of his favor, such as he never vouchsafed before. This salvation it was impossible, as I have said, that the Gentile nations could have celebrated, had they been left without it. The words teach us that we can never be said to have rightly apprehended the redemption wrought out by Christ, unless

75

We meet with a psalm very similar to this, in 1 Chronicles 16, delivered by David to Asaph, to be sung on occasion of the removing of the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Zion. But the ode, as it stands in 1 Chronicles 16, is considerably longer, extending from the 8th verse to the 36th [1Ch 16:8-36]; and this is only the part of it from the 23rd to the 33rd verse [1Ch 16:23-33]. It has been supposed that this part was extracted from the psalm above mentioned, and, with a few inconsiderable alterations, adapted to the solemnity of the dedication of the second temple. This opinion is founded upon the inscription of the psalm in the Septuagint, Vulgate, Æthiopic, and Arabic versions, which is, "A song of David when the house was built after the captivity." Consequently, strictly speaking, this is not a *new song.* But it may be called *new*, from its having been adapted to a new purpose — from its having been intended to celebrate new mercies conferred upon the Jews, and to lead the mind forward to the glorious era of the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom, which probably was the matter of more general expectation among the chosen people, at the period when the temple was rebuilt, than when the ark was brought to Mount Zion from the house of Obed-edom. It may be observed, that the first verse is not in the original poem, as recorded in the book of Chronicles, but appears to have been added for the new occasion to which this shorter psalm was adapted.

our minds have been raised to the discovery of something incomparably wonderful about it.

Psalm 96:4-6

> **4**. For Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised; he is terrible above all gods. [76] **5.** For all the gods of the nations are vanities; [77] but Jehovah made the heavens. **6.** Strength and honor are before him; power and glory are in his sanctuary.

4. *For Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised.* He particularly describes that God, whom he would have men to celebrate, and this because the Gentile nations were prone to merge into error upon this subject. That the whole world might abjure its superstitions, and unite in the true religion, he points out the one only God who is worthy of universal praise. This is a point of the greatest importance. Unless men are restrained by a due respect to it, they can only dishonor him the more that they attempt to worship him. We must observe this order if we would not profane the name of God, and rank ourselves amongst unbelieving men, who set forth gods of their own invention. By *gods* in the verse may be meant, as I observed already, (Psalm 95:3,) either angels or idols. I would still be of opinion that the term comprehends whatever is, or is accounted deity. As God, so to speak, sends rays of himself through all the world by his angels, these reflect some sparks of his Divinity. [78] Men, again, in framing idols, fashion gods to themselves which have no existence. The Psalmist would convince them of its being a gross error to ascribe undue honor either to the angels or to idols, thus detracting from the glory of the one true God. He convicts the heathen nations of manifest infatuation, upon the ground that their gods are vanity and nought, for such is the meaning of the Hebrew word אלילים, *elilim,* [79] which is here applied to idols in contempt. The Psalmist's great point is to show, that as the Godhead is really and truly to be found in none but the one Maker of the world, those religions are vain and contemptible which corrupt the pure worship of him. Some may ask, Are angels then to

76

The original word for *gods* is אלהים, *elohim* Dr Adam Clarke, who doubts whether this word is ever by fair construction applied to false gods or idols, reads —

"Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised.
Elohim is to be feared above all."

77

"Ou, idoles." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, idols."

78

"Quia Deus per angelos irradiat totum mundum, in illis refulgent Deitatis scintillae." — *Lat.* "Pource que Dieu jette comme ses rayons sur tout le monde par les anges, des estincelles de Divinite reluisent en iceux." — *Fr.*

79

be accounted nothing and vanity, merely because many have been deceived in thinking them gods? I would reply, that we do injury to the angels when we give them that honor which is due to God only; and, while we are not on this account to hold that they are nothing in themselves, yet whatever imaginary glory has been attached to them must go for nothing. [80] But the Psalmist has in his eye the gross delusions of the heathen, who impiously fashioned gods to themselves.

Before refuting their absurd notions, he very properly remarks of God that he is *great, and greatly to be praised* — insinuating that his glory as the infinite One far excels any which they dreamt of as attaching to their idols. We cannot but notice the confidence with which the Psalmist asserts the glory of the true God, in opposition to the universal opinion which men might entertain. The people of God were at that time called to maintain a conflict of no inconsiderable or common description with the hosts and prodigious mass of superstitions which then filled the whole world. The true God might be said to be confined within the obscure corner of Judea. Jupiter was the god every where received — and adored throughout the whole of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Every country had its own gods peculiar to itself, but these were not unknown in other parts, and it was the true God only who was robbed of that glory which belonged to him. All the world had conspired to believe a lie. Yet the Psalmist, sensible that the vain delusions of men could derogate nothing from the glory of the one God, [81] looks down with indifference upon the opinion and universal suffrage of mankind. The inference is plain, that we must not conclude that to be necessarily the true religion which meets with the approbation of the multitude; for the judgment formed by the Psalmist must have fallen to the ground at once, if religion were a thing to be determined by the suffrages of men, and his worship depended upon their caprice. Be it then that ever so many agree in error, we shall insist after the Holy Ghost that they cannot take from God's glory; for man is vanity himself, and all that comes of him is to be mistrusted. [82] Having asserted the greatness of God, he proves

אליל, *elil*, signifies *a thing of nought*; as if from אל, *not*, the ל being doubled to denote extreme nothingness. Thus a false vision or prophecy, on which no dependence can be placed, is called אליל, *elil*, "a thing of nought," Jeremiah 14:14, and a shepherd that leaves the flock, and instead of visiting, healing and feeding them, devours and tears them in pieces, is called in Zechariah 11:15, 16, "a pastor, האליל, *haelil*, *of no value*." In this sense the word is used of the false gods of the heathen. Instead of being אלהים, *elohim*, *gods*, they are אלילים, *elilim*, *mere nothings* Accordingly, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 8:4, speaks of an idol as being "nothing in the world."

80

"Sed quicquid imaginarium illis affingitur, nihilum esse." — *Lat.*

81

"Quia eorum vanitas nihil derogat unis Dei gloriae." — *Ib.*

82

it by reference to the formation of the world, which reflects his perfections. [83] God must necessarily exist of himself, and be self-sufficient, which shows the vanity of all gods who made not the world. The *heavens* are mentioned — a part for the whole — as the power of God is principally apparent in them, when we consider their beauty and adornment.

6 *Strength and honor are before him* I translate the Hebrew word הוד, *hod,* by *strength,* and think those interpreters who render it *glory* have not duly considered the context. It is evident that the next member of the verse is a repetition, and there it reads, *Power and Glory are in his sanctuary.* The Psalmist means that we cannot be said to know God if we have not discovered that there is in him an incomparable glory and majesty. He first takes notice of his power and strength, as that in which his glory consists. There, as God is invisible, he directs the thoughts of his people to the sanctuary, which we have already seen to be the symbol of his presence. Such is the weakness of our minds that we rise with difficulty to the contemplation of his glory in the heavens. The Psalmist reminds us that we have no reason to say that his glory is obscure, since there were emblems of his presence in the temple, the sacrifices, and the ark of the covenant. Let us endeavor, when we make mention of God, to conceive of this glory which shines before him — otherwise, if we do not apprehend his power, it is rather a dead than a living God whom we worship. [84]

Psalm 96:7-9

7. Give to Jehovah, O ye assemblies of peoples! give to Jehovah glory and strength. [85] **8.** Give to Jehovah the glory of his name; bring an

"Car tout ainsi qu'ils sont vanite aussi tout ce qui procede d'eux est vain et plein de deception." — *Fr.*

83

"The argument of God's superiority over all other beings, drawn from his creation of the world, is sublimely expressed in the following lines ascribed by Justin Martyr (*de Monarchid.* page 159, ed. Oxon. 1703) to Pythagoras, —

Εἴ τις ἐρεῖ, Θεός εἰμι πάρεξ ἐνὸς, οὗτος ὀφείλει
Κόσμον ἴσον τούτῳ στήσας εἰπεῖν ἐμὸς οὗτος.

"One God our hearts confess: whoe'er beside
Aspires with Him our homage to divide,
A world as beauteous let him first design,
And say, its fabric finished, 'This is mine.'"
— *Merrick's Annotations.*

84

"Car ceux qui separent de luy sa puissance, imaginent plustost une essence morte, qu'une Divinite vive." — *Fr.*

85

offering, [86] and come into his courts. **9.** Worship before Jehovah in the beauty of the sanctuary; [87] let the whole earth tremble before his face.

7 *Give to Jehovah, etc.* Since praise waited for God in Zion, (Psalm 65:1,) and that was the place devoted to the celebration of his worship, and the posterity of Abraham were alone invested with the privilege of priesthood, we cannot doubt that the Psalmist refers here to that great change which was to take place in the Church upon the advent of Christ. An opposition or distinction is intended between God's ancient people and the Gentile tribes, which were to be afterwards adopted into the same fellowship. To declare *his glory and strength,* is the same with declaring the *glory of his strength* And to show that man can boast nothing of his own, and in refusing to celebrate God, impiously despoils him of his just honors, he subjoins, *Give unto the Lord the glory of his name;* an expression which denotes that God borrows nothing from without, but comprehends all that is worthy of praise in himself. He calls upon the Gentile nations in so many words to render unto God the same worship which the Jews did; not that we must worship God now according to the outward ritual which was prescribed under the Law, but he signifies that there would be one rule and form of religion in which all nations should accord. Now, unless the middle wall of partition had been broken down, the Gentiles could not have entered along with God's children into the courts of the sanctuary. So that we have here a clear prediction of the calling of the Gentiles, who needed to have their uncleanness taken away before they could be brought into the holy assembly. The *mincha,* or

The original word for *strength* is עז, *oz*, which is derived from עזז, *azaz*, *he was strong* "The same word," says Hammond, "signifies what the Greeks call ἐξουσία, *power*, *dominion*, *empire* In the notion of *strength* or *valour* it may probably be used in verse 6, where as *beauty* so *strength* is said to be in his sanctuary; *beauty* in respect of the glory of the divine presence, by the guard of angels that attend there, and *strength* in respect of the assistance that is by God provided and furnished there to all that seek it by prayer. But the other notion is fitter for this place, where the word is joined with *glory* and attributed to God; and so in 1 Peter 5:11, which seems to be taken from hence, it is αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, 'to him be glory and dominion;' and hence God's title of παντοκράτωρ is best rendered, not 'almighty,' or 'he that hath all strength' but 'he that hath the עז or, κράτος, dominion or empire over all.'"

86

Horsley reads, "Take an offering." "A *mincha,*" says he, "an offering of bread and flour, not of flesh."

87

The words קדש-בהדרת, which Calvin renders, "in the beauty of the sanctuary," are rendered in our English Bible "in the beauty of holiness." The Septuagint reads, αὐλῇ ἁγια αὐτου, "in the court of his holiness;" from which it has been thought probable that the text originally stood קוו-בחצר. See this word at the end of the preceding verse. In Psalm 29:2, the same sentence occurs. The version of Calvin, and that of Jerome, which is precisely the same, *in decore sanctuarii*, partake both of the Hebrew and Septuagint reading.

oblation, was only one kind of sacrifice, but it is here taken to denote the whole worship of God, because it was a part of divine service more ordinarily practiced. We see from this, and other passages, that the inspired penmen describe the inward worship of God under symbols common in the age when they lived. God would not have meat-offerings presented to him after Christ had come; but the words which the Psalmist employs intimate that the doors of the temple, once shut, were now to be opened for the admission of the Gentiles. The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 13:15) tells us what are those sacrifices with which God will now be worshipped. Hence the absurdity of the Papists, who would adduce such passages in support of the mass and their other fooleries. We may very properly learn from the words, however, that we ought not to come empty-handed into the presence of God, enjoined as we are to present ourselves and all that we have as a reasonable service unto Him, (Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5.)

9 *Worship before Jehovah* The Psalmist prosecutes the same train of sentiment. In requiring oblations of his people, God was not to be considered as standing in need of the services of the creature, but as giving them an opportunity of professing their faith. The true reason, therefore, is here mentioned why the oblation was enjoined, That his people might prostrate themselves before him, and acknowledge that they and all belonging to them were his. Mention is made of *the beauty of the temple,* referring to the fact that the Gentiles should be raised to a new honor, in being associated into one body with God's chosen people. [88] At the time when this psalm was written, it was generally deemed scarcely credible that the heathen nations would be admitted into the temple in company with the holy seed of Abraham. This should make us think all the more highly of our calling as Gentiles, which seemed then so incredible and impracticable a thing. We may be convinced that God only could have opened for us the door of salvation. The *beauty of the temple* is an expression intended to beget a reverential view of the temple, that men may approach it with humble fear, instead of rushing without consideration into God's presence. The clause which follows in the verse is inserted for the same purpose — *tremble before his face,* intimating that we should prostrate ourselves as suppliants before him when we consider his awful majesty. Not that he would deter worshippers from drawing near to God. They should esteem it their greatest pleasure and enjoyment to seek his face. But he would have us humbled to the right and serious worship of God. I may add, that the beauty or glory of the sanctuary did not consist in silver and gold, in the preciousness of the material of which it was made, nor in polished stones, nor in any splendor

88 "Pour monstrer que les Gentils devoyent estre receus a un honneur nouveau, qu'ils feront un mesme corps avec le peuple eleu." — *Fr.*

and decoration of this kind, but in the representation of the heavenly pattern which was shown to Moses on the mount, (Exodus 25:9.)

Psalm 96:10-13

> **10.** Say among the heathen, Jehovah reigneth; also the world shall be established, it shall not be moved: he shall judge the peoples [89] in righteousness, [literally, in righteousnesses.] **11.** Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder, and the fullness thereof. **12.** Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; likewise let all the trees of the wood rejoice. [90] **13.** Before Jehovah; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. [91]

10. *Say among the heathen, Jehovah reigneth* His language again implies that it is only where God rules and presides that he can be worshipped. The Gentiles could not possibly profess the worship of God, so long as his throne was only in the small corner of Judea, and they were not acknowledging his government. Accordingly, the Psalmist speaks of his extending his kingdom to all parts of the world, with the view of gathering unto himself in one, those who had formerly been divided and scattered. The expression, *Say among the heathen,* signifies that God would enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom by his word and doctrine. What is said of the *world being established,* is

89

"*The peoples.* The Hebrew word is plural, and it is rendered plurally by all the ancient versions. It is not *one people* only, but *all the nations upon earth*, that God will judge." — *Street.*

90

The Hebrew verb רננו, *rannenu*, here rendered *rejoice*, "expresses," says Mant, "the vibratory motion either of a dancer's feet, or of a singer's lips. Hence it signifies, to wave to and fro' as trees." In support of this sense of the word he refers to Bishop Horsley's note on Psalm 98:8, and Parkhurst's Lexicon on רנן, 1:2. Accordingly, he translates the verse —

"Be glad, ye fields, and fruits, the fields that spread;
Wave high, ye woods, in worship wave the head;"

which, he observes, will remind the reader of Adam and Eve's morning hymn: —

"— and wave your tops, ye pines,
With every plant, in sign of worship wave."
Paradise Lost, v.

91

This psalm has been admired for its grandeur and magnificence. The three last verses in particular have been frequently quoted as a specimen of sublimity in sentiment and language, which cannot be surpassed. "Nothing can excel in this respect," remarks Bishop Lowth, "that noble exultation of universal nature in the 96th Psalm, which has been so often commended, where the whole animate and inanimate creation unite in the praises of their Maker. Poetry here seems to assume the highest tone of triumph and exultation, and to revel, if I may so express myself, in all the extravagance of joy." — *Lectures on Sacred Poetry*, volume 1, page 378.

particularly worthy of our observation. So far as the order of nature is concerned, we know that it has been Divinely established, and fixed from the beginning; that the same sun, moon, and stars, continue to shine in heaven; that the wicked and the unbelieving are sustained with food, and breathe the vital air, just as do the righteous. Still we are to remember that so long as un-godliness has possession of the minds of men, the world, plunged as it is in darkness, must be considered as thrown into a state of confusion, and of horrible disorder and misrule; for there can be no stability apart from God. The world is very properly here said therefore to be established, that it should not shake, when men are brought back into a state of subjection to God. We learn this truth from the passage, That though all the creatures should be discharging their various offices, no order can be said to prevail in the world, until God erect his throne and reign amongst men. What more monstrous disorder can be conceived of, than exists where the Creator himself is not acknowledged? Wicked and unbelieving men may be satisfied with their own condition, but it is necessarily most insecure, most unstable; and destitute as they are of any foundation in God, their life may be said to hang by a thread. [92] We are to recollect what we have seen taught, (Psalm 46:5) "God is in the midst of the holy city, she shall not be moved." Very possibly there may be an indirect allusion to the imperfect and uncompleted state of things under the Law, and a contrast may have been intended between the perfect condition of things which should obtain under Christ, and the prelude to it under the former period. Next he predicts that the kingdom to be introduced should be distinguished by righteousness, according to what we have seen, (Psalm 45:6) "A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." The term *judging,* in the Hebrew, includes government of any kind. If God's method of governing men be to form and regulate their lives to righteousness, we may infer, that however easily men may be satisfied with themselves, all is necessarily wrong with them, till they have been made subject to Christ. And this righteousness of which the Psalmist speaks has not reference merely to the outward actions. It comprehends a new heart, commencing as it does in the regeneration of the Spirit, by which we are formed again into the likeness of God.

11 *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.* With the view of giving us a more exalted conception of the display of God's goodness in condescending to take all men under his government, the Psalmist calls upon the irrational things themselves, the trees, the earth, the seas, and the heavens, to join in the general joy. Nor are we to understand that by *the*

92

"Semper tamen fluctuari necesse est, et vitam eoram pendere de filo, quia in Deo fundatus non est eorum status." — *Lat.*

heavens he means the angels, and by *the earth* men; [93] for he calls even upon the dumb fishes of the deep to shout for joy. The language must therefore be hyperbolical, designed to express the desirableness and the blessedness of being brought unto the faith of God. At the same time, it denotes to us that God does not reign with terror, or as a tyrant, but that his power is exercised sweetly, and so as to diffuse joy amongst his subjects. The wicked may tremble when his kingdom is introduced, but the erection of it is only the cause of their fear indirectly. [94] We might notice also, that the hyperbole here employed does not want a certain foundation of a more literal kind. As all elements in the creation groan and travail together with us, according to Paul's declaration, (Romans 8:22) they may reasonably rejoice in the restoration of all things according to their earnest desire. The words teach us how infatuated that joy is, which is wantonly indulged in by men who are without God. From the close of the psalm, we learn that it is impossible to experience the slightest measure of true joy, as long as we have not seen the face of God, *Rejoice before the Lord, because he cometh* And if the very sea and land mourn so long as God is absent, may we not ask what shall become of us, who are properly the subjects of God's dreadful curse? The Psalmist, to remove all doubt regarding an event which might seem incredible, repeats his assertion of it, and states, at the same time, in what that rectitude consists, which he had formerly mentioned, when he adds, that *God shall govern the world with righteousness and truth.* This shows us that it is only by the light of God's righteousness and truth that the wickedness and hypocrisy of men can be removed and dispelled.

93

"Neque enim metonymice de angelis vel hominibus loquitur." — *Lat.* "Il ne faut pas penser que ce soit yci la figure nommee Metonymie, et que par les Cieux il entende les Anges, par la Terre les hommes." — *Fr.*

94

"C'est une chose accidentale." — *Fr.*

Psalm 97

PSALM 97

The description which we have of the kingdom of God in this psalm, does not apply to the state of it under the Law. We may infer, accordingly, that it contains a prediction of that kingdom of Christ, which was erected upon the introduction of the Gospel. The Psalmist, while he commends it to us by insisting upon its greatness and glory, so well calculated to compel the reverential fear of men, gives an amiable representation of it, by informing us that it has been erected for the salvation of mankind sinners.

Psalm 97:1-5

1. Jehovah reigns: let the earth rejoice, let the great islands [95] be glad. **2.** Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation [96] of his throne. **3.** A fire shall go before

95

"Ou, que beaucoup d'isles." — *Fr marg* "Or, let the many isles." Horsley and some other critics object to translating the original word, אִיִּם, *iyim*, by *isles* He reads, "Let the various settlements of man rejoice:" on which he observes, "I cannot more exactly render the force of the Hebrew אִיִּם, than by this periphrasis. The English language hath no single word to convey the same idea; and the word 'isles' or 'islands,' hath hardly any relation to it." Fry's note here is as follows: — "The Hebrew terms rendered, 'the multitude of the isles,' 'the various settlements of men,' 'the extended shores,' seem in a special manner to designate these western parts of the world, which were known as distant coasts visited by the ships of Tyre. All Europe might originally fall under this denomination, with some parts of the sea coasts of Africa, and even of Asia; nor can there be any doubt, that all subsequent discoveries by sea, once uninhabited, but now colonized, and settled from the old countries, would be designated by this term. Some nations of this description are called upon, in particular, to rejoice in the Savior's appearing."

96

his face, and shall burn up his enemies round about. **4.** His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth shall see, and tremble. **5.** The hills flow down like wax at the presence of Jehovah, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

1 *Jehovah reigns* His inviting men to rejoice, is a proof that the reign of God is inseparably connected with the salvation and best happiness of mankind. And, the joy he speaks of being common to the whole world and to the regions beyond the seas, it is evident that he predicts the enlargement of God's kingdom, which had been confined within the narrow boundaries of Judea, to a far wider extent. The Psalmist, in setting forth the various particulars of the Divine glory in the four verses which follow, would seek to impress all men with a reverential fear of him. Thus he gives us a representation of the formidable majesty attaching to God, that he may dash and humble vain confidence and carnal pride. A cloudy sky overawes us more than a clear one, as the darkness produces a peculiar effect upon the senses. The Psalmist makes use of this symbol, no doubt, to impress the world with the greater reverence of God. Others refine more upon the words, and think that clouds are said to be round about God, to check human rashness and presumption, and restrain that excessive curiosity which would pry more than is fit into the mysteries of Godhead. This is an interpretation of the words which makes them convey a very useful lesson; but I am against all refined renderings, and think that the Psalmist intended in associating darkness with God, to impress the hearts of men with a fear of him in general. [97] The same meaning is brought out in the remaining context, when *fire is said to go before him, and burn up his enemies, his lightnings to shake the earth, and the mountains to flow down.* Should any object that this does not agree with what was said of the joy which his kingdom diffuses, I might answer, first, that although God is ready on his part to diffuse blessedness wherever he reigns, all are not capable of appreciating it. Besides, as I have already hinted, the truth is one of use to believers, humbling the pride of the flesh, and deepening their adoration of God. God's throne is represented as

The word מכון, *mechon*, here rendered "habitation," is from כון, *kun*, *he prepared*, *fitted*, *confirmed* "It is used," says Hammond, "for *a place*, *seat*, but especially *a basis*, whereon anything is set: from whence the LXX. had their μεχωςὼθ, (the very Hebrew מכונות) for *basis*, 1 Kings 7:27. The Chaldee here retains the original מכון, but the LXX., from the notion of the verb for *fitting*, read κατόρθωσις, 'the setting right of his throne;' the Syriac, by way of paraphrase, 'by equity and judgment thy throne is confirmed:' all which concur to the notion of *basis* or *foundation*, which is the thing that gives the *rectitude* first, and then the *stability*, to the chair or throne that is set on it. And so that is unquestionably the right, intelligible rendering of the phrase, 'Righteousness and judgment are the (not habitation but) basis of his throne,' *i e.*, his sentences, decrees, judicatures, are all built upon righteousness and judgment, as a throne is built and established on a foundation."

97

"Que le Prophete a voulu par ce regard obscur de Dieu, toucher au vif les coeurs des hommes, afin qu'ils tremblent." — *Fr.*

founded in *justice* and *judgment*, to denote the benefit which we derive from it. The greatest misery which can be conceived of, is that of living without righteousness and judgment, and the Psalmist mentions it as matter of praise exclusively due to God, that when he reigns, righteousness revives in the world. He as evidently denies that we can have any righteousness, till God subjects us to the yoke of his word, by the gentle but powerful influences of his Spirit. A great proportion of men obstinately resist and reject the government of God. Hence the Psalmist was forced to exhibit God in his severer aspect, to teach the wicked that their perverse opposition will not pass unpunished. When God draws near to men in mercy, and they fail to welcome him with becoming reverence and respect, this implies impiety of a very aggravated description; on which account it is that the language of denunciation suits with the kingdom of Christ. The Psalmist intimates that those who should despise God in the person of his only-begotten Son, will feel in due time and certainly the awful weight of his majesty. So much is implied in the expression used — *The earth* Shall See. For the wicked, when they find that their attempts are vain in fighting against God, resort to subterfuge and concealment. The Psalmist declares that they would not succeed by any such vain artifice in hiding themselves from God.

Psalm 97:6-8

> **6.** The heavens have declared his righteousness, and all the people have seen his glory. **7.** Confounded be all those who serve graven images, who glory in their inventions; [98] let all the gods worship before him. **8.** Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah [99] rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Jehovah!

6 *The heavens have declared his righteousness* Here he states that there would be such an illustrious display of the righteousness of God, that the heavens themselves would herald it. The meaning is not the same as in the beginning of the nineteenth psalm, "The heavens declare the glory of God," etc. In that psalm David means no more than that the wisdom and power of God are as conspicuous in the fabric of the heavens, as if God should assert

98

"Ou, idoles." *Fr marg* "Or, idols." The original word here is אלילים *elilim* See note 2, page 50.

99

"*Judah's daughters*, the inferior towns and villages of Judea, so called with reference to the metropolis, or mother city. This is a very elegant kind of personification, by which the subject, adjunct, accident, effect, or the like, of any thing or place is called the son, or, as in this instance, the daughter of that thing or place. Hence the Hebrew poets often introduce, as it were, on the stage, nations, countries, or kingdoms, clothed in the dress of women, and performing all the functions suited to such a character. The practice is familiar to our minds; but probably it is so rendered by our habitual acquaintance with the Hebrew idiom, to which it appears to owe its origin." — *Mant on Psalms* 48:11.

them with an audible voice. The meaning of the passage before us is, that the spiritual righteousness of God should be so signally manifested under the reign of Christ as to fill both heaven and earth. There is much force in this personification, in which the heavens, as if even they were penetrated with a sense of the righteousness of God, are represented as speaking of it. It is equally probable, however, that the heavens signify here *the angels, who are contained in heaven,* by the figure of metonomy or synecdoche, while, in the corresponding clause, instead of the earth being mentioned, he speaks of the peoples who dwell upon it. The angels may very properly be said to announce and celebrate the Divine glory.

7 *Confounded be all those who serve graven images.* The Psalmist draws a broad distinction here, as in the psalm next to this, between the true God and the false gods which men form for themselves. This he does that the praise which he had ascribed might not be applied to any but the true God. Men are all ready to admit that they ought to celebrate the praises of God, but, naturally prone as they are to superstition, few indeed will be bound down to worship God in the manner which is right. No sooner have they to do with God than they deviate into the most baseless delusions. Each fashions a god for himself, and all choose what suits them best in the medley of inventions. This is the reason why the sacred writers, under the apprehension that men may turn to false gods, are careful in giving exhortations to the worship of God, to state at the same time who the true God is. The order observed by the Psalmist suggests the remark, that corrupt superstitions will never be removed until the true religion obtains. Prevented from coming to the true God by the slowness of their spiritual apprehension, men cannot fail to wander in vanities of their own; and it is the knowledge of the true God which dispels these, as the sun disperses the darkness. All have naturally a something of religion born with them, [100] but owing to the blindness and stupidity, as well as the weakness of our minds, the apprehension which we conceive of God is immediately depraved. Religion is thus the beginning of all superstitions, not in its own nature, but through the darkness which has settled down upon the minds of men, and which prevents them from distinguishing between idols and the true God. The truth of God is effectual when revealed in dispelling and dissipating superstitions. Does the sun absorb the vapors which intervene in the air, and shall not the presence of God himself be effectual much more? We need not wonder then that the Psalmist, in predicting the Kingdom of God, triumphs over the ungodly nations, which boasted in graven images, as when Isaiah, speaking of the rise of the Gospel, adds,

"Then all the idols of Egypt shall fall," (Isaiah 19:1)

100

"Les hommes ont naturellement quelque religion," etc. — *Fr.*

Since the knowledge of God has been hid from the view of men, we are taught also that there is no reason to be surprised at the host of superstitions which have overspread the world. We have an exemplification of the same truth in our own day. The knowledge of the true doctrine is extinguished amongst the Turks, the Jews, and Papists, and, as a necessary consequence, they lie immersed in error; for they cannot possibly return to a sound mind, or repent of their errors, when they are ignorant of the true God. When the Psalmist speaks of their being *confounded,* he means that the time was come when those who were given to idolatry should repent, and return to the worship of the true God. Not that all without exception would be brought to genuine repentance, — for experience has taught us in these our own times how atheistical men [101] will cast off superstition, and yet assume the most shameless effrontery, but that this is one of those consequences which the knowledge of God should effect, the turning of men from their errors unto God. Some there are who obstinately resist God, of which we have many examples in the Papacy; but we have every reason to believe that they are secretly prostrated by that which they affect to despise, and confounded notwithstanding their opposition. What the Psalmist says a little after, *Let all the gods* [102] *worship before him,* properly applies to the angels, in whom there shines forth some small portion of divinity, yet it may, though less appropriately, be extended to fictitious gods; as if he had said, Whatever is accounted or held as a god must quit its place and renounce its claims, that God alone may be exalted. Hence it may be gathered that the true definition of piety is, when the true God is perfectly served, and when he alone is so exalted, that no creature obscures his divinity; and, accordingly, if we would not have true piety entirely destroyed amongst us, we must hold by this principle, That no creature whatever be exalted by us beyond measure,

8 *Zion heard, and was glad* In the former part of the psalm he had spoken of that joy which should be common to all the world. Now he makes special

101

"Lucianici homines." — *Lat.* "Disciples de Lucian et Atheistes." — *Fr.*

102

With the exception of the Chaldee, which, instead of "gods," has "people," all the ancient versions translate *angels — all his angels*, as if the Hebrew reading had originally been מלאכיו כל, and not as in our present copies אלהים כל. It has indeed been questioned whether אלהים, *elohim*, can be correctly translated *angels* The most of modern lexicographers and critics reject this sense of the word. "But usage, after all," says Moses Stuart, "pleads in favor of it. The Septuagint render אל (God) by ἄγγελος, in Job 20:15; and אלהים by ἄγγελοι, in Psalm 8:6; 96:7; 137:1. Paul follows them by quoting Psalm 8:6 in Hebrews 2:7; and also by quoting Psalm 97:7 in Hebrews 1:6; *i e.*, supposing that he does actually quote it. Is not this sufficient evidence that there was a *usus loquendi* among the Jews, which applied the word אלהים occasionally to designate *angels*? It is admitted that kings and magistrates are called *elohim*, because of their rank or dignity. Is there any thing improbable in the supposition that angels may be also called אלהים, who at present are elevated above men, Hebrews 2:7?"

mention of God's chosen nation; and this partly, because they were to enjoy the first-fruits of this joy, and partly, because he would remove all occasion for rivalry or envy. Accordingly, having said that the Gentile nations should be brought to equal privileges with the posterity of Abraham, he adds, that the Jews would not suffer any diminution of honor by this co-partnership of privilege, but might rather reasonably rejoice in being chosen of God to be the fountain out of which the world was to be watered and refreshed. Those of whom the Psalmist speaks were the true children of Abraham and them only. They had a double reason for rejoicing, when God extended his government and glory from the rising to the setting sun; for, while he exhibited to them in Christ the complete fulfillment of that redemption which was promised, they, at the same time, saw the glory of God diffused from the narrow limits of Judea to all parts of the world. When the nations were blessed in the seed of Abraham, agreeably to the prediction which had gone before, this was no inconsiderable confirmation of their faith, as also, when they saw a religion which had been hated and despised universally embraced. But why, it may be asked, does he speak of those things being *heard,* rather than *seen*? Two reasons may be given for this. First, he

Stuart, in the above remarks, speaks as if it were doubtful whether Paul in Hebrews 1:6, "And again, when he bringeth the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him," quotes from the 7th verse of the 97th Psalm. Commentators are divided in opinion on this point, some maintaining that the quotation is from Psalm 97, and others that it is from Deuteronomy 32:43, in the Septuagint version, where the very words are found which appear in Hebrews 1:6, although *only* in that version; the Hebrew and all the ancient versions being without them. One difficulty attending the supposition of his quoting from Deuteronomy 32:43 is, that the subject connected with this command to the angels (if we admit the clause in the Septuagint to be a part of the sacred text) has no relation to the Messiah. The context celebrates the victory over the enemies of Israel, which God will achieve. After saying that 'his arms should be drunk with blood, and that his sword should devour flesh with the blood of the slain and of captives, from the time when he begins to take vengeance on the enemy,' the Septuagint (not the Hebrew) immediately inserts, εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοὶ ἅμα αὐτῷ καὶ προκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ. This in the place where it stands must mean, "Let the inhabitants of the heavenly world rejoice in the victory of God over the enemies of his people, and let them pay their adoration to him." But the Messiah does not seem to be at all alluded to any where in the context, much less described as being *introduced into the world* It is not therefore very likely that this is the passage quoted, unless we suppose that Paul borrowed the words merely as fitted to express the idea which he intended to convey, without any reference to their original meaning. The probability is in favor of a quotation from the text before us; which in the Septuagint runs thus: προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ. Paul's words are, και προσκυνησάτώσαν αὐτῷ παντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ. Here the variation from the Septuagint is so very inconsiderable, making no change upon the sense of the passage, that the discrepancy, especially when it is considered that very few of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New agree *verbatim* either with the Hebrew or Septuagint, is no argument against the supposition of the Apostle's quoting this text from that version which was in general use among the Jews. And this psalm admits of an easy application to the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, whose advent was to destroy idolatry, and be the source of rejoicing and happiness to all the righteous, which the passage in Deuteronomy referred to does not. — See *Stuart's Commentary* on Hebrews 1:6, and *Excursus* 6.

would have God's believing people anticipate the blessing by hope, ere the consummation of it arrived; and, again, the language intimates, that the glory of the Gospel would be spread to such distant quarters, that the Jews would rather hear of it by report, than witness it with their own eyes.

Psalm 97:9-12

> **9.** For thou, Jehovah, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods. **10.** Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his meek ones; he will deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. **11.** Light has been sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. **12.** Rejoice in Jehovah, ye righteous, and celebrate the memory of his holiness.

9 *For thou, Jehovah, art high above all the earth* Having already, in another place, explained these words, I shall not say more at present upon them. Only it is to be noticed, that there is a comparison drawn between God and the angels, and whatever has any claim to eminence. The Psalmist limits all other excellency in such a manner, as to leave no room for questioning that all majesty is comprehended in God only. This was the case more eminently when God manifested himself in his only-begotten Son, who is the express image of himself. Before that period his greatness was less apparent, because he was less known.

10 *Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil* Those that fear God are here enjoined to practice righteousness, as Paul says,

"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," (2 Timothy 2:19)

He shows from the very nature of God, that we cannot be judged and acknowledged to be his servants unless we depart from sin, and practice holiness. God is in himself the fountain of righteousness, and he must necessarily hate all iniquity, unless we could suppose that he should deny himself; and we have fellowship with him only on the terms of separation from unrighteousness. As the persecution of the wicked is apt to provoke us to seek revenge, and unwarrantable methods of escape, the Psalmist guards us against this temptation, by asserting that God is the keeper and protector of his people. If persuaded of being under the Divine guardianship, we will not strive with the wicked, nor retaliate injury upon those who have wronged us, but commit our safety to him who will faithfully defend it. This gracious act of condescension, by which God takes us under his care, should serve as a check to any impatience we might feel in abstaining from what is evil, [103] and preserving the course of integrity under provocation.

103

"De nous tenir en bride, de peur qu'il ne nous soit fascheux ou grief de nous abstenir de malice," etc. — *Fr.*

11. *Light has been sown for the righteous* He confirms the truth just advanced, and anticipates an objection which might be brought against it. We have seen that the Lord's people are often treated with the utmost cruelty and injustice, and would seem to be abandoned to the fury of their enemies. The Psalmist reminds us for our encouragement that God, even when he does not immediately deliver his children, upholds them by his secret power. [104] In the first clause of the verse there is a double metaphor. By *light* is meant joy, or a prosperous issue, (according to a phraseology which is common in Scripture,) as darkness denotes adversity. The latter metaphor of *sowing* is rather more difficult to understand. [105] Some think that gladness is sown for the just, as seed which, when cast into the ground, dies or lies buried in the earth a considerable time before it germinates. This idea may be a good one; but, perhaps, the simplest meaning of the words is the following, that though the righteous may be almost banished out of the world, and unable to venture themselves forth in public, and hidden from view, God will spread abroad their joy like *seed,* or bring forth to notice the light of their joy which had been shut up. The second clause of the verse is an exegesis of the first — *light* being interpreted to mean *joy,* and *the righteous* such as are *upright in heart* This definition of *righteousness* is worthy of notice, That it does not consist in a mere outward appearance, but comprehends integrity of heart, more being required to constitute us righteous in God's sight than that we simply keep our tongue, hands, or feet, from wickedness. In the concluding verse he exhorts the Lord's people to gratitude, that looking upon God as their Redeemer, they should lead a life corresponding to the mercy they have received, and rest contented under all the evils they encounter, with the consciousness that they enjoy his protection.

104

"Quamvis non statim suos liberet Deus, arcana tamen virtute tucri eorum salutem." — *Lat.*

105

Walford objects to the version *light is sown*, on the ground that it presents an incongruous combination of figures; and he translates, "light is diffused." "Who can say," he remarks, "what is meant by the sowing of light? The diffusion or expansion of light is intelligible, and means that though good men may be in darkness or adversity, light and prosperity will burst through the cloud." The Septuagint, Vulgate, Arabic, and Æthiopic versions translate, "light *is risen* for the righteous," probably reading זרח, *zarach*, which De Rossi found in one manuscript, instead of זרע, *zara* Houbigant and others adopt this reading, conceiving it to be more agreeable to the common idea of light. But Muis vindicates the text from Psalm 126:5; and Archbishop Secker thinks "sown" a very proper expression. In support of the same rendering, Merrick, in his Annotations, quotes several passages from the classic Greek authors, in which both light and gladness are said to be sown.

Psalm 98

PSALM 98

This psalm has a great resemblance to the ninety-sixth, not only in matter, but language. The great scope of it is to show that the glory of God would be illustriously displayed in the spread of the knowledge of his name throughout the world, both from the more ample fulfillment which would be given upon the manifestation of the Savior, to the promises made to the posterity of Abraham, and from the sudden extension of salvation to all parts of the earth. He calls upon men to magnify the name of God on this account.

Psalm 98:1-3

1. Sing unto Jehovah a new song, for he hath done marvelous things: his own right hand, and the arm of his holiness, hath gotten him the victory. [106] **2.** Jehovah hath made known his salvation: his righteousness he hath revealed in the sight of the heathen. **3.** He hath remembered his goodness and truth towards the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. [107]

106

The last clause is "literally, *have wrought deliverance for him*, *i e.*, not deliverance of him, as if God had been himself in danger or distress; but that is done *for* any one, which is done agreeably to his wishes and intentions, and at his instigation. The original, therefore, expresses, that the deliverance wrought was originally designed and decreed by God, and that his immediate power effected the thing intended without any other aid." — *Horsley* Street translates, "hath wrought salvation for us." He thinks that instead of לו, *for him*, we should read לנו, *for us*

107

The last part of this verse is in the same words with Isaiah 52:10.

1 *Sing unto Jehovah a new song* I have already remarked, that the expression here used denotes an extraordinary, not a common, ascription of praise. This appears from the reason assigned for it, That God had manifested his salvation in a singular and incredible manner. For having spoken of *marvelous things,* he represents this as the sum of all, that God had procured salvation *with his own right hand;* [108] that is, not by human means, or in an ordinary way, but delivering his Church in an unprecedented manner. Isaiah enlarges upon this miracle of God's power:

"The Lord looked if there were any to help, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness sustained him,"
(Isaiah 59:16)

In both passages *the arm of God* stands opposed to ordinary means, which although when employed they derogate nothing from the glory of God, yet prevent us from so fully discovering his presence as we might otherwise do. The language of the Psalmist amounts to a declaration that God would not save the world by means of an ordinary kind, but would come forth himself and show that he was the author of a salvation in every respect so singular. He reasonably infers that mercy of such a wonderful, and, to us, incomprehensible kind, should be celebrated by no ordinary measures of praise. This is brought out still more clearly in the verse which follows, where it is said that *his salvation and righteousness are shown to the nations* What could have been less looked for than that light should have arisen upon these dark and benighted places, and that righteousness should have appeared in the habitations of desperate wickedness? Salvation is mentioned first, although it is, properly speaking, the effect of righteousness. Such an inversion of the natural order is often observed in stating divine benefits; nor is it surprising that what is the means, and should be mentioned first, is sometimes set last, and follows by way of explanation. I may add, that the righteousness of God, which is the source of salvation, does not consist in his recompensing men according to their works, but is just the illustration of his mercy, grace, and faithfulness.

3 *He hath remembered his goodness* Having spoken of the general manifestation of his salvation, he now celebrates his goodness more particularly to his own chosen people. God exhibited himself as a Father to Gentiles as well as Jews; but to the Jews first, who were, so to speak, the first-born. [109] The glory of the Gentiles lay in their being adopted and in-grafted into the holy family of Abraham, and the salvation of the whole world sprung from

108

"Car apres avoir parle des miracles, il les restreint specialement a une somme, ascavoir, que Dieu *s'est acquis salut par sa propre vertu.*" — *Fr.*

109

"Afin qu'ils fussent comme les aisnez." — *Fr.*

the promise made to Abraham, as Christ said, "Salvation is of the Jews," (John 4:22) The Psalmist therefore very properly observes, that God in redeeming the world *remembered his truth,* which he had given to Israel his people — language, too, which implies that he was influenced by no other motive than that of faithfully performing what he had himself promised. [110] The more clearly to show that the promise was not grounded at all on the merit or righteousness of man, he mentions the *goodness* of God first, and afterwards his *faithfulness,* which stood connected with it. The cause, in short, was not to be found out of God himself, (to use a common expression,) but in his mere good pleasure, which had been testified long before to Abraham and his posterity. The word *remembered* is used in accommodation to man's apprehension; for what has been long suspended seems to have been forgotten. Upwards of two thousand years elapsed from the time of giving the promise to the appearance of Christ, and as the people of God were subjected to many afflictions and calamities, we need not wonder that they should have sighed, and given way to ominous fears regarding the fulfillment of this redemption. When it is added, *all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God,* this is not merely commendatory of the greatness of the salvation, meaning that it should be so illustrious that the report of it would reach the ends of the earth; but it signifies that the nations formerly immersed in delusions and superstitions would participate in it.

Psalm 98:4-9

4. Exult before Jehovah all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. **5.** Sing to Jehovah upon the harp, upon the harp, and with the voice of a psalm. [111] **6.** With trumpets, and sound of the cornet, sing before Jehovah the King. **7.** Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and those who dwell therein. [112] **8.**

110

"Qu'il n'a point este induit par autre raison, sinon afin que fidelement il accomplist ce qu'il avoit promis." — *Fr.*

111

Horsley reads —

"Chant unto Jehovah to the harp,
To the harp, and the sound of the zimrah."

"זמרה here," he remarks, "as in Psalm 81:2, is certainly the name of some musical instrument. But what the particular instrument might be, which went by that name, is quite uncertain. I therefore retain the Hebrew word."

112

Street is of opinion that the nominative cases of the concluding part of this verse do not belong to the verb of the preceding clause, but to the verb in the subsequent verse. "Roar let the globe," says he, "'and those that inhabit it,' is not so proper an expression as 'Let the globe and those that inhabit it clap the hand.'"

> Let the floods clap their hands: [113] let the hills be joyful together, **9.** Before Jehovah: for he cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with uprightness.

4 *Exult before Jehovah all the earth* Here he repeats the exhortation with which he had begun, and by addressing it to the nations at large, he indicates that when God should break down the middle wall of partition all would be gathered to the common faith, and one Church formed throughout the whole world. When he speaks of musical instruments the allusion is evidently to the practice of the Church at that time, without any intention of binding down the Gentiles to the observance of the ceremonies of the law. The repetition made use of is emphatical, and implies that the most ardent attempts men might make to celebrate the great work of the world's redemption would fall short of the riches of the grace of God. This is brought out still more forcibly in what follows, where feeling is ascribed to things inanimate. The whole passage has been elsewhere expounded, and it is unnecessary to insist further upon it.

113

"Let the floods *clap their hands*," is a most beautiful prosopopoeia, a figure for which the Hebrew poets are remarkable, and which they manage with equal elegance and boldness. Horsley renders, "Let the floods sound applause;" observing, that it is literally "clap their hands." "The verb רנן," he adds, "expresses the vibratory motion, either of a dancer's feet, or of a singer's lip. Therefore, when applied figuratively to an inanimate thing that can neither dance nor sing, it is better to render its general sense than to confine it to either particular image. Our language has no word, which, like the Hebrew, may express dancing or singing indiscriminately." The propriety of deviating from the literal rendering may, however, be questioned. This ode is highly animated; it is a burst of joy in God raised to the highest pitch; and it is the property of this emotion, when felt in a high degree, to express itself in the most daring and unusual figures. It may be added, that the whole of the seventh and eighth verses furnish a beautiful specimen of personification. With a sublimity of sentiment and an energy of language which cannot be surpassed, all nature, animate and inanimate, is summoned to unite in the song of joy, and to contend with eager rivalry in celebrating the praises of its Creator.

Psalm 99

PSALM 99

This psalm differs from those which precede it in one respect, that it speaks of the kingdom of God, and the blessings consequent upon it, as confined within Judea; and rather calls upon the posterity of Abraham, in distinction from the surrounding nations, to praise God for the privilege of their adoption.

Psalm 99:1-4

> **1.** Jehovah reigns; let the people tremble: he dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved. **2.** Jehovah is great in Zion; and he is high above all nations. **3.** They shall acknowledge thy great and terrible name; it is holy. **4.** The king's strength [114] also loves judgment; thou hast established equity, thou hast done judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

1 *Jehovah reigns* The people, who were formerly called upon to rejoice, are now commanded to tremble. For as the Jews were encompassed by enemies,

114

"*The king's strength* seems here put for the king himself." — *Merrick* Street removes the original word for *strength* to the end of the preceding verse, reading *holy and mighty*; and renders the first part of this verse thus: "Thou art a king that lovest judgment;" observing, that, in the Hebrew it is מלך, *melech*, not המלך, *hamelech*, that the word אהב, *aheb*, *that lovest*, is a participle here, and that the pronoun אתה, *atah*, *thou*, belongs to the first clause. "According to the translation of the English Bible," says he, "there is a great want of connection. 'The king's strength also loveth judgment: thou dost establish equity,' etc. There had been no king spoken of before except Jehovah, and the Psalmist is here addressing him in the second person, not speaking of him in the third."

it was of the utmost importance that God's power should be magnified among them, that they might know that, while under his guardianship, they would be constantly and completely safe from the hatred and fury of every foe. The Hebrew word רגז, *ragaz,* as we have elsewhere seen, sometimes signifies *to tremble,* at other times, *to be angry,* and, in short, denotes any strong emotion arising either from anger or fear. [115] Accordingly, the prophet here intends that God, in the emancipation of his chosen people, should give such a palpable display of his power, as would strike all the nations with dismay, and make them feel how madly they had rushed upon their own destruction. For it is with regard to men that God is said to reign, when he exalts himself by the magnificent displays which he gives of his power; because, while the aid which he gives to them remains invisible, unbelievers act a more presumptuous part, just as if there were no God.

2 *Jehovah in Zion* It is proper that we should not forget the antithesis I formerly mentioned, namely, that God is great in Zion to destroy and annihilate all the enemies of his Church; and that, when the Psalmist goes on to say, *he is high above all nations,* his meaning is, not that he presides over them to promote their welfare, but to disconcert their counsels, to baffle their designs, and to subvert all their power. That which immediately follows about the *praising of God's name,* refers not to the nations at large, but in my opinion to the faithful, from whom alone the prophet demands a tribute of gratitude. For although God compels his vanquished enemies to acknowledge him, yet as they do not cease from speaking against his glory, and blaspheming his holy name, it cannot be to them that the exhortation is addressed, *Praise the name of God, for it is holy;* but to the faithful, who, from their knowledge of God's holy name, very cordially engage in the celebration of its praises.

115

רגז, *ragaz*, "denoting commotion either of the body or mind, imports in the latter acceptation particularly two things, *fear* and *anger*, those two principal emotions of the mind. In the sense of anger we have it in Genesis 45:24, where we render it *falling out* or *quarrelling*, and in 2 Kings 19:27, 28, where we render it *rage* So, Proverbs 29:9, and in Genesis 41:10, the Hebrew קצף, (affirmed of Pharaoh, viz., that) *he was wroth*, is by the Chaldee rendered רגז. And this is much the more frequent acceptation of the word in the Old Testament." — *Hammond's note* on Psalm 4:4. On the text before us, after observing that Abu Walid explains this root as signifying in the Arabic *trembling* and *commotion*, arising sometimes from anger, sometimes from fear, and other causes, the same critic says, "Here the context may seem to direct the taking it in the notion of commotion simply, as that signifies ἀκαταστασία, *sedition* or *tumult of rebels* or other adversaries. And then the sense will be thus: 'The Lord reigneth, let the people be moved,' *i e.*, Now God hath set up David in his throne, and peaceably settled the kingdom in him, in spite of all the commotions of the people. The LXX. render it to this sense, as Psalm 4:4, ὀργιζέσθωσαν, 'let the people be angry or regret it as much as they will.'" The verb here, and the concluding verb of the verse, may be read in the future tense: "The people *or* nations shall tremble, and the earth shall be moved," just as at the giving of the Law, "the people trembled," and "the earth shook." Thus the passage may be regarded as a prediction of the subjection of the heathen world to the dominion of Christ.

4 *The king's strength also loves judgment* This may be viewed as a threatening designed to fill his enemies with dismay; as if he should say, such is God's regard for righteousness and equity, that he hath clothed himself with power to avenge the injuries which his enemies have done to him. I think it preferable, however, to apply it to the Church, because she is under the government of God for the express purpose [116] of practicing righteousness and holiness. There is another interpretation which is by no means objectionable, namely, that which does not associate ideas of tyranny with the government of God, because there is constant concord between his power and justice. But when I consider the whole context, I have no doubt, that the prophet, after having introduced God as established upon his royal throne, now speaks of the manner in which he governs his kingdom; for he adds, *thou hast established equity* and righteousness. This clause is susceptible of two interpretations; either that God in his law has commanded his people to practice perfect equity, or that, in supporting and defending them, he has uniformly testified his great regard for his justice and equity. It is most true that the highest equity has always characterized the works and judgments of God, yet it appears more probable that it refers to that system, that form of government which God, who loves justice, appointed among the people of Israel, and which was the best rule for leading a life of honesty and integrity. And hence the word *to do* is improperly taken to signify *to order or command.* Should any one choose to consider this last clause as relating to God's government, I am by no means disposed to disagree with him. For there is nothing that more animates and encourages the faithful to render obedience to God, or inspires them with greater zeal to observe his law, than to find in this course of action that they are the objects of his paternal care, and that the righteousness, which he requires from his own people in words, is on his part reciprocated by kind deeds.

Psalm 99:5-9

> **5.** Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his footstool; he [117] is holy. **6.** Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among those who call upon his name; they called upon Jehovah, and he answered them. **7.** He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: [118]

116

"A ceste condition." — *Fr.* "Upon condition."

117

The marginal translation in our English Bible is, *it is holy*, connecting *holy* with Jehovah's footstool, mentioned in the preceding clause. This construction appears to be very appropriate. The third, the fifth, and in effect the ninth verses, end with this expression, which seems to be a kind of chorus, and thus divides the psalm into three parts. The first part terminates with ascribing *holiness* to the *name* of Jehovah; the second with attributing the same property to his *abode*; and at the conclusion, holiness, essential, infinite, and immutable holiness, is ascribed to *Jehovah himself.*

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they kept his testimonies, and the statute which he gave them. **8.** O Jehovah our God, thou wast a God that wast favorable to them, though thou didst take vengeance upon their inventions. **9.** Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for Jehovah our God is holy.

5 *Exalt Jehovah our God* This exhortation is properly addressed to the Church alone, because having been made a partaker of the grace of God, she ought the more zealously to devote herself to his service, and to the love of godliness. The Psalmist, therefore, calls upon the Jews to exalt that God from whom they had received such manifest help, and enjoins them to render that worship appointed in his Law. The temple indeed is frequently in other places denominated *God's seat, or house,* or rest, or dwelling-place; here it is called his footstool, and for the use of this metaphor, there is the best of all reasons. For God desired to dwell in the midst of his people in such a manner, as not only to direct their thoughts to the outward temple and to the ark of the covenant, but rather to elevate them to things above. Hence the term house or dwelling-place tended to impart courage and confidence to them, that all the faithful might have boldness to draw near unto God freely, whom they beheld coming to meet them of his own accord.

But as the minds of men are prone to superstition, it was necessary to check this propensity, lest they should associate with their notions of God things fleshly and earthly, and their thoughts should be wholly engrossed by the outward forms of worship. The prophet, therefore, in calling the temple God's footstool, desires the godly to elevate their thoughts above it, for he fills heaven and earth with his infinite glory. Nevertheless, by these means

That God spoke to Moses and Aaron out of the cloudy pillar, there is no doubt. In Exodus 16:10, 11, we read,

"And it came to pass as Aaron spoke unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying," etc.

And when God said to Moses, Exodus 17:6, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb," The meaning undoubtedly is, that the cloudy pillar, from which he was to speak, would stand upon Horeb. See also Exodus 19:9, 18, 19. To this intercourse Aaron as well as Moses was admitted, as we learn from the 24th verse of that chapter, and from Exodus 20:21, 22. The only difficulty here is, how God can be said to have spoken to Samuel out of the cloudy pillar, of which we have no particular account in his history. To this it may be answered, that when God called upon Samuel four times successively, at the fourth time he "came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel," (verse 10,) which seems parallel to those words of God to Moses, Exodus 17:6, "I will stand before thee upon the rock," and may, therefore, be presumed to mean that the cloud, the usual emblem of the Divine presence under the former dispensation, came and stood before Samuel, and that God spake from it, though it is evident that at the three preceding calls it did not appear. Again, when Samuel's offerings and prayers were so signally heard at Mizpeh, 1 Samuel 7, it is said, verse 9, "The Lord answered him," and verse 10, "The Lord thundered with a great thunder;" and as where thunder is, a cloud is supposed to exist, this answering of Samuel with thunder may not unreasonably be supposed to denote God's speaking to him at this time also out of the cloud.

he reminds us that true worship can be paid to God no where else than upon mount Zion. For he employs a style of writing such as is calculated to elevate the minds of the godly above the world, and, at the same time, does not in the least degree detract from the holiness of the temple, which alone of all places of the earth God had chosen as the place where he was to be worshipped. From this we may see, since the days of Augustine, how vainly many perplex themselves in endeavoring to ascertain the reason for the prophet ordering God's footstool to be worshipped. The answer of Augustine is ingenious. If, says he, we look to Christ's manhood, we will perceive a reason why we may worship the footstool of God, and yet not be guilty of idolatry; for that body in which he wishes to be worshipped he took from the earth, and on this earth nothing else than God is worshipped, for the earth is both the habitation of Deity, and God himself condescended to become earth. All this is very plausible, but it is foreign to the design of the prophet, who, intending to distinguish between legal worship, (which was the only worship that God sanctioned,) and the superstitious rites of the heathen, summons the children of Abraham to the temple, as if to their standard, there, after a spiritual manner, to worship God, because he dwells in celestial glory.

Now that the shadowy dispensation has passed away, I believe that God cannot otherwise be properly worshipped, than when we come to him directly through Christ, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells. It were improper and absurd for any one to designate him *a footstool.* For the prophet merely spake in this manner to show that God was not confined to the visible temple, but that he is to be sought for above all heavens, [119] inasmuch as he is elevated above the whole world.

The frantic bishops of Greece, in the second Council of Nice, very shamefully perverted this passage, when they endeavored to prove from it that God was to be worshipped by images and pictures. The reason [120] assigned for exalting Jehovah our God, and worshipping at his footstool, contains an antithesis: *he is holy* For the prophet, in hallowing the name of the one God, declares all the idols of the heathen to be unholy; as if he should say, Although the heathen claim for their idols an imaginary sanctity, they are nevertheless very vanity, an offense, and abomination. Some translate this *clauses for it is holy;* but it will appear from the end of the psalm that it was the design of the prophet by this title to distinguish God from all idols.

6. *Moses and Aaron.* The Psalmist magnifies the special grace which God in a very remarkable manner vouchsafed to the seed of Abraham, that thence

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"Comme aussi il est esleve par dessus tout le monde." — *Fr.*

120

"La cause qu'il rend." — *Fr.* "Causae redditio." — *Lat.*

he chose for himself prophets and priests to be, as it were, mediators between him and the people, to ratify the covenant of salvation. And he mentions three persons who were famous in former times. For Moses was, as it were, a mediator to reconcile the people unto God. Aaron was invested with the same office; and, subsequently, Samuel sustained the same character. There is no doubt, however, that under these three persons he included all the people with whom God had made a covenant. But he mentions the names of those who were the depositaries and guardians of this invaluable treasure. It may appear improper that he should speak of Moses as *among the priests,* since his sons were only among the common Levites, and that Moses himself, after the giving of the law, never held the office of high priest. But as the Hebrews call כוהנים, *chohanim,* those who are chief and very eminent personages, [121] such as kings' sons, there is nothing to prevent the prophet from giving this designation to Moses, as if he had said that he was one of the holy rulers of the Church. [122] Moreover, if we go back to the first original — to the period prior to the publication of the law, it is certain that Moses was then invested with the high priest's office. The design of the prophet must also be kept in mind, namely, that God not only adopted the seed of Abraham, but set apart some of them to act as mediators, whom he enjoined to call upon his name, in order that his covenant might be the more confirmed. For the *invocation* of which he speaks must not be understood indiscriminately of every manner of *calling upon,* but only of that which belongs to the priests, who were chosen by God, as intercessors to appear in his presence in the name of all the people, and to speak on their behalf.

They called upon Jehovah The Psalmist explains more fully what I have just now said, that God from the very first, and with a special reference to his gracious covenant, bestowed great benefits upon the descendants of Abraham — the Jews. And, therefore, as often as they experienced the loving-kindness of God, it behooved them to call to mind his former loving-kindness. The prophet, too, makes particular mention of the visible symbol

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"Ceux qui sont les principaux et les plus excellens personnages." — *Fr.*

122

Accordingly, some instead of *priests* read *princes*, or *chief men* כהן, כחן, *to minister*, is a common title of civil as well as ecclesiastical officers. Hence, in Exodus 2:16, for the Hebrew term כהן, the Chaldee has רבא, "*the Prince* of Midian." And in 2 Samuel 8:18, it is said of David's sons, that they were כהנים, which does not there mean *priests*, but *princes* or *chief rulers*; — רברבין, *great men*, as the Chaldee has it, or הראשונים, "*principal* or *chief men* about the king," as they are termed in 1 Chronicles 18:17. Of this sort was Ira the Jairite, who, in 2 Samuel 20:26, is called כהן, which does not there denote *priest*, but a *chief ruler* about David. Thus, as in the more general sense of the word, it comprehends civil as well as ecclesiastical rulers, it is evident that Moses, no less than Aaron, may be reckoned בכהניו, *among God's rulers* or *chief men*; and, as Calvin states, it is to be noticed that Moses was, properly speaking, the Priest of the Israelites before the appointment of Aaron and his family to the sacerdotal office.

of *the cloudy pillar,* by which God designed to testify in all ages that his presence was ever with his people, according as he employed temporal signs, not only for their benefit to whom they were exhibited, but also for the benefit of those who were to succeed them. Not that God always showed a cloudy pillar to his ancient people, but considering that the dullness of men is so great, that they do not perceive the presence of God unless they are put in mind by external signs, the prophet very properly reminds the Jews of this memorable token. And as God had appeared openly in the desert to their fathers, so their posterity might be well assured that he would also be near to them. He adds, that they *had kept God's testimonies,* for the purpose of enforcing the duty of like obedience upon succeeding generations.

8. *O Jehovah our God* The prophet here reminds them that God had heard their prayers because his grace and their piety harmonized. Consequently, encouraged by their exemplary success in prayer, their posterity ought to call upon God, not merely pronouncing his name with their lips, but keeping his covenant with all their heart. He farther reminds us that if God does not display his glory so bountifully, and so profusely in every age, the fault is with men themselves, whose posterity have either utterly forsaken, or greatly declined from the faith of the fathers. It is not to be wondered at that God should withdraw his hand, or at least not stretch it forth in any remarkable way, when he beholds piety waxing cold on the earth.

O God, thou hast been propitious to them. [123] From these words it is quite obvious that what the Psalmist had formerly said concerning Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, refers to the whole people; for surely they did not officiate as priests merely for their own benefit, but for the common benefit of all the Israelites. Hence the transition is more natural which he makes from these three to the remaining body of the people. For I neither restrict the relative, to these three persons, nor do I interpret them exclusively of the same, but I rather think that the state of the whole Church is pointed out; namely, that while God, at the prayers of the priests, was propitious to the Jews, he, at the same time, sharply punished them for their sins. For on the one hand, the prophet magnifies the grace of God in that he had treated the people so kindly, and had so mercifully forgiven their iniquity; on the other hand, he specifies those awful examples of punishment by which he punished them for their ingratitude, that their descendants might learn to submit themselves dutifully to him. For it must not be forgotten, that by how much God deals graciously with us, by so much will he the less easily endure that we should treat his liberality with scorn.

In the close of the psalm he repeats the same sentence which we had in the fifth verse, only substituting *his holy mountain* instead of *his footstool;* and as for the sake of brevity he had formerly said somewhat obscurely הוא קדוש, *kadosh hu, he is holy,* he now says more plainly, *Jehovah our*

123

God is holy His intention is to show that God is not to be worshipped by the Israelites at random, (as the religion of the heathen depended upon fancy alone,) but that his worship is founded upon the assurance of faith.

Hammond translates, "O God, thou was propitiated for their sakes." He observes, that להם, *lahem*, which Calvin renders *to them*, is not to be understood barely in the sense of the dative case, "thou wast propitiated to them," or "forgavest them;" but means *for them*, that is, *for their sakes*: God sparing the people, for or on account of the prayers of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. God did not destroy them when these holy and devoted men pleaded with him in their behalf; he spared them, and drew back the hand of vengeance in answer to prayer. Such was the effect of Moses' intercessions. When the people caused Aaron to make the golden calf and worshipped it, God's anger was kindled against them. And he said to Moses, "Now therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." Had Moses let God alone, the whole of that race would have been utterly consumed. But he pleaded with God in their behalf, and "the Lord repented him of the evil which he thought to do unto the people," Exodus 22:10-15. Nor was Aaron less prevalent in turning away the anger of God from the rebellious Israelites, as is evident from Numbers 16:43-45. When, on the occasion of the rebellion and murmuring of the people at Moses and Aaron on account of what befell Korah and his company, God said to Moses, "Get thee up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment;" Moses and Aaron "fell upon their faces," and prayed. Then it follows, verse 46, "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar; and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." Equally successful were the intercessions of Samuel. When the Israelites were sore pressed by the Philistines, and afraid of them, they "said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." Samuel did as they desired, and God was propitiated by his prayers: "Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him." — 1 Samuel 7:7, 8, 9

Psalm 100

PSALM 100

The title of this psalm may serve for a summary of its contents Moreover, its brevity renders a lengthened discourse unnecessary. The Psalmist, in an especial manner, invites believers to praise God, because he has chosen them to be his people, and has taken them under his care.

> Psalm 100:1-3
>
> A Psalm of Praise
>
> **1.** Let all the earth make a joyful noise to Jehovah. **2.** Serve Jehovah with gladness: come into his presence with joyfulness. **3.** Know ye that Jehovah himself is God: he made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

1 *Make a joyful noise* The Psalmist refers only to that part of the service of God which consists in recounting his benefits and giving thanks. And since he invites the whole of the inhabitants of the earth indiscriminately to praise Jehovah, he seems, in the spirit of prophecy, to refer to the period when the Church would be gathered out of different nations. Hence he commands (verse 2) that God should *be served with gladness,* intimating that his kindness towards his own people is so great as to furnish them with abundant ground for rejoicing. This is better expressed in the third verse, in which he first reprehends the presumption of those men who had wickedly revolted from the true God, both in fashioning for themselves gods many, and in devising various forms of worshipping them. And as a multitude of gods destroys and suppresses the true knowledge of one God only, and

tarnishes his glory, the prophet, with great propriety, calls upon all men to bethink themselves, and to cease from robbing God of the honor due to his name; and, at the same time, inveighs against their folly in that, not content with the one God, they were become vain in their imaginations. For, however much they are constrained to confess with the mouth that there is a God, the maker of heaven and earth, yet they are ever and anon gradually despoiling him of his glory; and in this manner, the Godhead is, to the utmost extent of their power, reduced to a nonentity. As it is then a most difficult thing to retain men in the practice of the pure worship of God, the prophet, not without reason, recalls the world from its accustomed vanity, and commands them to recognize God as God. For we must attend to this short definition of the knowledge of him, namely, that his glory be preserved unimpaired, and that no deity be opposed to him that might obscure the glory of his name. True, indeed, in the Papacy, God still retains his name, but as his glory is not comprehended in the mere letters of his name, it is certain that there he is not recognized as God. Know, therefore, that the true worship of God cannot be preserved in all its integrity until the base profanation of his glory, which is the inseparable attendant of superstition, be completely reformed.

The prophet next makes mention of the great benefits received from God, and, in an especial manner, desires the faithful to meditate upon them. To say *God made us* is a very generally acknowledged truth; but not to advert to the ingratitude so usual among men, that scarcely one among a hundred seriously acknowledges that he holds his existence from God, although, when hardly put to it, they do not deny that they were created out of nothing; yet every man makes a god of himself, and virtually worships himself, when he ascribes to his own power what God declares belongs to him alone. Moreover, it must be remembered that the prophet is not here speaking of creation in general, (as I have formerly said,) but of that spiritual regeneration by which he creates anew his image in his elect. Believers are the persons whom the prophet here declares to be God's workmanship, not that they were made men in their mother's womb, but in that sense in which Paul, in Ephesians 2:10, calls them, Τὸ ποιημα, *the workmanship* of God, because they are created unto good works which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them; and in reality this agrees best with the subsequent context. For when he says, *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture,* he evidently refers to that distinguishing grace which led God to set apart his children for his heritage, in order that he may, as it were, nourish them under his wings, which is a much greater privilege than that of merely being born men. Should any person be disposed to boast that he has of himself become a new man, who is there that would not hold in abhorrence such a base attempt to rob God of that which belongs to him? Nor must we attribute this spiritual birth to our earthly parents, as if by their own power they begat us; for what could a corrupt seed produce? Still the majority of men do not hesitate to

claim for themselves all the praise of the spiritual life. Else what mean the preachers of free-will, unless it be to tell us that by our own endeavors we have, from being sons of Adam, become the sons of God? In opposition to this, the prophet in calling us the *people of God,* informs us that it is of his own good will that we are spiritually regenerated. And by denominating us *the sheep of his pasture,* he gives us to know that through the same grace which has once been imparted to us, we continue safe and unimpaired until the end. It might be otherwise rendered, *he made us his people,* etc. [124] But as the meaning is not altered, I have retained that which was the more generally received reading.

Psalm 100:4-5

4. Enter into his gates with praise, and into his courts with rejoicing: give glory [125] to him, and bless his name. **5.** Because Jehovah is good, his mercy endureth for ever, and his truth from generation to generation.

4 *Enter his gates* The conclusion of the psalm is almost the same as the beginning of it, excepting that he adopts a mode of speech which relates to the worship of God which obtained under the law; [126] in which, however, he merely reminds us that believers, in rendering thanks to God, do not discharge their duty aright, unless they also continue in the practice of a steady profession of piety. Meanwhile, under the name of the temple, he signifies that God cannot be otherwise worshipped than in strict accordance with the manner prescribed in his law. And, besides, he adds, that *God's mercy endureth for ever,* and that *his truth also is everlasting,* to point out to us that we can never be at a loss for constant cause of praising him. If, then, God never ceases to deal with us in this manner, it would argue the basest ingratitude on our part, if we wearied in rendering to Him the tribute of praise to which he is entitled. We have elsewhere taken notice of the reason why truth is connected with mercy. For so foolish are we, that we scarcely feel the mercy of God while he openly manifests it, not even in

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The Hebrew text has a keri, which is ולו אנחנו, "and we are his," instead of ולא אנחנו "and not ourselves." The Septuagint supports the latter reading, the ketib, καὶ οὐχ ἡμεῖς, "and not we ourselves;" in which it is followed by the Syriac and Vulgate versions. Jerome agrees with the keri, *Ipse fecit nos, et ipsius sumus*; and so does the Chaldee. "I am persuaded," says Lowth, in Merrick's Annotations, "that the Masoretical correction, ולו, (and we are *his*,) is right: the construction and parallelism both favour it."

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"Donnez-luy gloire." — *Fr.*

126

"Sinon qu'il mesle des maniers de parler, qui se rapportent au service de Dieu qui estoit sous la Loy." — *Fr.*

the most palpable displays of it, until he open his holy lips to declare his paternal regard for us.

Psalm 101

PSALM 101

David was not as yet put in possession of the kingdom, but having been already created king by the appointment of God, he prepares himself for exercising the government in the best manner. And he not only stirs up himself to perform faithfully the duties of his kingly office by devoutly meditating on this subject, but also engages by a solemn vow to be God's faithful servant, in order to induce Him to put him speedily in possession of the kingdom.

Psalm 101:1-5

A Psalm of David.

1. I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto thee, O Jehovah! will I sing psalms. **2.** I will behave myself prudently in a perfect way, till thou comest to me: [127] I will walk in the integrity of my heart in the midst of thy house. **3.** I will not set a wicked thing before my eyes: I hate the work [128] of those who turn aside; it shall not adhere to me. **4.** The perverse heart shall depart from me: I will not know evil [129]

127

"Ou, quand viendras-tu a moy?" — *Fr. marg.* "Or, when wilt thou come to me?"

128

"*Toute* oeuvre." — *Fr.* "*All* the work."

129

"Ou, le mauvais." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, the evil man."

5. Whoso slandereth his neighbor in secret, him will I destroy: the man whose eyes are lofty, and whose heart is wide, I cannot endure.

1 *I will sing of mercy and of judgment* What David here says concerning singing must be understood by the reader as intimating that this psalm contains the substance of his meditations with himself, as to what kind of king he would be whenever he should be put in possession of the sovereign power which had been promised him. *To sing* therefore of *mercy and of judgment,* is equivalent to declaring in solemn terms, that he would be a just and an upright king. Augustine understands this as meaning that God is to be praised, whether he punish men with severity, or whether he show himself merciful to them; but this interpretation is too refined. David does not speak of God's secret judgments, but of the due administration of the kingdom, that he might both by words and deeds fulfill his vocation. When he asserts, *Unto thee, O Jehovah! will I sing psalms,* he acknowledges that it was by the favor of God that he was appointed to so distinguished and honorable an office; for it would have been an act of presumptuous rashness for him to have thrust himself into it, at the mere impulse of his own mind. He very properly comprehends all princely virtues under these two particulars, *mercy and judgment;* for as it is the principal duty of a king to yield to every man his own right, so he is also required to possess a considerate love and compassion towards his subjects. Solomon therefore justly says, (Proverbs 16:12) "The throne is established by righteousness."

2 *I will behave myself prudently in a perfect way* David here shows that he carefully considered how weighty a charge was laid upon him when he was made king. We know, and it is a truth taught us by experience, that almost all kings are intoxicated with the splendors of royalty; and the proverb was not used without foundation in ancient times, "A king must be born either a king or a fool." It is indeed a mistake to say that kings are born fools. Men were led to speak in this manner, because it commonly happens that those who are invested with the government of kingdoms and empires are fools and blockheads. And surely it is a remarkable instance of the vengeance of God, that beasts, and such as are altogether unworthy to be numbered among men, commonly possess the highest authority. But although kings are not born fools, yet they are so blinded by their dignity, that they think themselves in no respect indebted to their subjects, become arrogant and haughty in their carriage, recklessly plunge into their pleasures, and at length utterly forget themselves. David therefore says, *I will behave myself prudently,* or, which amounts to the same thing, I will look warily to myself; it being a rare virtue for the man who may do as he pleases to exercise such moderation, as not to allow himself liberty in any degree to do evil. He then who is exalted to sovereign power, and yet, instead of attempting to go as far as he can in doing mischief, restrains himself by self-control, is endued with true understanding. In short, David protests that he will not be like

other kings who are infatuated by their own dignity; but that according to the greatness of the charge imposed upon him, he would endeavor wisely to perform his duty. It is to be observed, that he represents wisdom as consisting *in a perfect way,* or in uprightness. From this we learn that tyrants who employ their talents in forming wicked devices, and who are daily contriving new methods for burdening and oppressing their subjects; in short, who are ingenious only in doing mischief, are not wise towards God. Many persons, it is true, dislike such craftiness; but still, it is undeniable that, if kings are intent upon enlarging the boundaries of their kingdom, and are masters in refined policy for accomplishing such a purpose, this is accounted the most perfect wisdom which they can possess, and is extolled to the skies. David, on the contrary, covets no other wisdom but that which is the mistress of integrity. *Till thou comest to me* These words may be read in two ways. Some translate them interrogatively, *When wilt thou come?* as if David besought God not to subject him to any longer delay. And truly he had just ground to groan and lament, when he saw himself so long oppressed with poverty, and driven from place to place a wretched exile. It had been better for him to have lived obscure and unnoticed in his father's cottage, following his former occupation as a shepherd, than to be anointed king, that, being driven out of his country, he might live in utter dishonor and hatred. But I prefer reading the sentence without interrogation, *until* or *when thou comest;* and yet even this I interpret somewhat differently from the majority of commentators, understanding it to mean, that although David still continued in the condition of a private person, and did not enjoy the royal power which had been promised him, he nevertheless did not cease in the meantime to follow after uprightness. Thus he sets *the midst of his house* in opposition to palaces and public buildings; as if he had said, Within my private house or in my family.

3 *I will not set a wicked thing before my eyes* After having protested, that in leading a private life, he would practice virtue and righteousness, even as it becomes good princes to begin with this, he now adds, that in executing the office of prince, he will be the enemy of all injustice and wickedness. *To set a wicked thing before one's eyes,* is equivalent to purposing to do something that is wicked. He therefore declares, that he will turn away from all wickedness; and it is certain, that no man can be a just and an impartial punisher of wrongdoing, but he who abhors it with all his heart. Whence it follows that kings, in order to the performance of their duty, must keep themselves entirely free from all consent to wickedness. Some join to the first sentence the word עשוה, *asoh,* which we translate *work,* and supply the letter ל*, lamed;* as if it had been said, I will not set before my eyes any wickedness to do it, or, nothing wicked will be acceptable to me to execute it. But the other sense is more probable, which is, that David, after having declared that he will not suffer any iniquity before his eyes, immediately adds for the sake of confirmation, that he will be an enemy to all injustice.

If the last clause is referred to the persons who turn aside, there is a change of the number. It may, however, be explained of the work itself, implying that he would never have any share in wicked defections from the path of rectitude.

4 *The perverse heart shall depart from me* Some by *perverse heart* understand perfidious men; but this I reject as a sense too forced, and it is moreover inconsistent with the context. As David has added in the second clause by way of exposition, *I will not know evil,* he doubtless in the first protests that he will be free from all perfidiousness and wickedness. The amount is, that he will do his endeavor to keep himself from all wrong-doing, and that he will not even know what it is to do wrong to his neighbors.

5 *Whoso slandereth his neighbor* [130] *in secret, him will I destroy.* In this verse he speaks more distinctly of the duty of a king who is armed with the sword, for the purpose of restraining evil-doers. Detraction, pride, and vices of every description, are justly offensive to all good men; but all men have not the power or right to cut off the proud or detractors, because they are not invested with public authority, and consequently have their hands bound. It is of importance to attend to this distinction, that the children of God may keep themselves within the bounds of moderation, and that none may pass beyond the province of his own calling. It is certain, that so long as David lived merely in the rank of a private member of society, he never dared to attempt any such thing. But after being placed on the royal throne, he received a sword from the hand of God, which he employed in punishing evil deeds. He particularises certain kinds of wickedness, that under one species, by the figure synecdoche, he might intimate his determination to punish all sorts of wickedness. To detract from the reputation of another privily, and by stealth, is a plague exceedingly destructive. It is as if a man killed a fellow-creature from a place of ambush; or rather a calumniator, like one who administers poison to his unsuspecting victim, destroys men unawares. It is a sign of a perverse and treacherous disposition to wound the good name of another, when he has no opportunity of defending himself. This vice, which is too prevalent every where, while yet it ought not to be tolerated among men, David undertakes to punish.

He next characterises the proud by two forms of expression. He describes them as those whose *eyes are lofty,* not that all who are proud look with a

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The reading of the Chaldee is striking, "He who speaks with a *triple tongue*," "*i e.*," says Bythner, "*an informer*, *calumniator*, *detractor*, who injures three souls, his own, his hearers, and the calumniated; he inflicts a deep wound on his own conscience, puts a lie into the mouth of his hearer, and injures the subject of his slander; according to which, Herodotus has said, Διαβολή ἐστι δεινότατον ἐν τῶ δύο μέν εἰσιν οἱ ἀδικέοντες εἷς δε ὁ ἀδικεόμενος. 'Calumny is most iniquitous, in which there are two injuring and one injured.'" The word מלושני, *meloshni* rendered *slandereth*, is from the noun לשון, *lashon*, *the tongue* In Psalm 140:12, it is said, "Let not לשון איש, *ish lashon*, *a man of tongue*, (*i e.*, a slanderer,) be established in the earth."

lofty countenance, but because they commonly betray the superciliousness of their proud hearts by the loftiness of their countenance. He farther describes them as *wide* [131] *of heart,* because those who aspire after great things must necessarily be puffed up and swollen. They are never satisfied unless they swallow up the whole world. From this we learn that good order cannot exist, unless princes are sedulously on the watch to repress pride, which necessarily draws after it and engenders outrage and cruelty, contemptuous language, rapine, and all kinds of ill treatment. Thus it would come to pass, that the simple and the peaceable would be at the mercy of the more powerful, did not the authority of princes interfere to curb the audacity of the latter. As it is the will of God that good and faithful kings should hold pride in detestation, this vice is unquestionably the object of his own hatred. What he therefore requires from his children is gentleness and meekness, for he is the declared enemy of all who strive to elevate themselves above their condition.

Psalm 101:6-8

> **6.** My eyes are towards the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he who walketh in an upright way shall minister to me. **7.** He who worketh [or practiseth] deceit shall not dwell in the midst of my house: he who speaketh falsehoods shall not abide in my sight. **8.** Early [132] will I destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah.

6 *My eyes are towards the faithful of the land* David here lays down another virtue of a wise prince, when he affirms that it will be his care to make all *the faithful of the land* his intimate friends, — that he will avail himself of their good offices, and have as domestic servants such only as

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The Hebrew noun רחב, *rechab*, for *wide* or *large*, is derived from רחב, *rachab*, *dilatus est* "Applied to the heart or soul, it denotes largeness of desires. — So Proverbs 28:25, 'He that is נפש רחב, large in soul;' where the LXX. fitly render רחב, by ἄπληστος, 'insatiable,' applying it either to wealth or honor, the insatiable desire of either of which (as there follows) 'stirs up strife.' And so here they have rendered it again ἄπλήστῳ καρδίᾳ, 'he that cannot be filled in the heart,' *i e.*, the covetous or ambitious man. The Syriac reads, *wide* or *broad*; so the Jewish Arab, 'Him that is high of eyes, and wide of heart, I can have no patience with those two.'" — *Hammond*

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"Hebrews aux matins." "Hebrews at the mornings." — *Fr marg* Courts of judicature for the execution of public justice were wont to be held in the morning in ancient times, as they are still with us, or at least began then, and continued till the evening. Hugo Grotius and others think there is here an allusion to these courts. "To this," says Hammond, "most probably לבקרים in the plural, *in the mornings*, here refers, the season wherein David, as a judge entering the tribunal, *destroys* and *cuts* off the wicked doers. The former part of the psalm contains his resolution for choice of counsellors and officers of state, preferring the plain, honest, and not the subtlest contrivers; and this last for the execution of justice, discountenancing and judicially *cutting off all wicked men*."

are distinguished for personal worth. Some understand the words, *that they may dwell with me,* in a general sense thus: I will not neglect the good and inoffensive, nor will I suffer them to be unjustly molested; but I will secure, that under my administration, they shall live in a state of peace and tranquillity. But his meaning rather is, that he will exercise discretion and care, that, instead of taking persons into his service indiscriminately, he may wisely determine each man's character, so as to have those who live a life of strict integrity as his most intimate friends, and that he may intrust them with the offices of state. He speaks of the *faithful* in the first place, because, although a man may possess talents of a high order, yet if he is not devoted to fidelity and integrity, he will never rightly execute the office of a judge. This is worthy of special notice; for although a prince may be the best of men, yet if his servants and officers are not of a corresponding character his subjects will experience hardly any advantage from his uncorrupted integrity. Servants are the hands of a prince, and whatever he determines for the good of his subjects they will wickedly overthrow it, provided they are avaricious, fraudulent, or rapacious. This has been more than sufficiently demonstrated by experience. The greater part of kings, indeed, passing over the good and the upright, or, which is worse, driving them away from them, purposely seek to have as servants those who are like themselves, and who may prove fit tools for their tyranny; yea, even good and well disposed princes often manifest so much indolence and irresolution as to suffer themselves to be governed by the worst counsels, and inconsiderately prostitute the offices of state by conferring them on the unworthy.

7 *He who worketh deceit shall not dwell in the midst of my house* This verse may be explained of all magistrates to whose charge the exercise of public judgments is committed, as well as of household servants. But as David has just now spoken in general of all officers, he seems now to speak properly of those who are near the person of the king. When the chief counsellors of kings and other intimate acquaintances who have gained possession of their ears, are deceitful and crafty, this becomes the source of all corruptions; for by their example they encourage others in evil, lifting up as it were the banner of licentiousness. And it is impossible that he who does not maintain good order in his own house, can be a fit person for holding the government of a whole realm. The authority which cannot preserve its influence under the domestic roof is of little worth in state affairs.

8 *Early will I destroy all the wicked of the land* The Psalmist at length concludes by asserting, that he will endeavor to the utmost of his power to purge the land from infamous and wicked persons. He affirms that he will do this *early;* for if princes are supine and slothful, they will never seasonably remedy the evils which exist. They must therefore oppose the beginnings of evil. The judge, however, must take care not to yield to the influence of anger, nor must he act precipitately and without consideration. The original word for *early* is in the plural number, (it being properly *at the*

mornings,) which denotes unremitted exertion. It were not enough that a judge should punish the wicked sharply and severely in one or two instances: he must continue perseveringly in that duty. By this word is condemned the slothfulness of princes, when, upon seeing wicked men daringly break forth into the commission of crime, they connive at them from day to day, either through fear or an ill-regulated lenity. Let kings and magistrates then remember, that they are armed with the sword, that they may promptly and unflinchingly execute the judgments of God. David, it is true, could not purge the land from all defilements, however courageously he might have applied himself to the task. This he did not expect to be able to do. He only promises, that without respect of persons he will show himself an impartial judge, in cutting off all the wicked. Timidity often hinders judges from repressing with sufficient rigor the wicked when they exalt themselves. It is consequently necessary for them to be endued with a spirit of invincible fortitude, that relying upon Divine aid, they may perform the duties of the office with which they are invested. Moreover, ambition and favor sometimes render them pliant, so that they do not always punish offenses alike, where this ought to be done. Hence we learn that the strictness, which is not carried to excess, is highly pleasing to God; and, on the other hand, that he does not approve of the cruel kindness which gives loose reins to the wicked; as, indeed, there cannot be a greater encouragement to sin than for offenses to be allowed to pass unpunished. What Solomon says should therefore be remembered, (Proverbs 17:15) "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." What David adds, *That I may cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of God,* is also emphatic. If even heathen kings are commanded in common to punish crimes, David well knew that he was under obligations of a more sacred kind to do so, since the charge of the Church of God had been committed to him. And certainly if those who hold a situation so honorable do not exert themselves to the utmost of their power to remove all defilements, they are chargeable with polluting as much as in them lies the sanctuary of God; and they not only act unfaithfully towards men by betraying their welfare, but also commit high treason against God himself. Now as the kingdom of David was only a faint image of the kingdom of Christ, we, ought to set Christ before our view; who, although he may bear with many hypocrites, yet as he will be the judge of the world, will at length call them all to an account, and separate the sheep from the goats. And if it seems to us that he tarries too long, we should think of that morning which will suddenly dawn, that all filthiness being purged away, true purity may shine forth.

Psalm 102

PSALM 102

This prayer seems to have been dictated to the faithful when they were languishing in captivity in Babylon. Sorrowful and humbled, they first bewail their afflictions. In the next place, they plead with God for the restoration of the holy city and temple. To encourage themselves to come before him in prayer with the greater confidence, they call to remembrance the Divine promises in reference to the happy renovation both of the kingdom and of the priesthood; and they not only assure themselves of deliverance from captivity, but also beseech God to bring kings and nations in subjection to himself. In the close of the psalm, after having interposed a brief complaint concerning their distressing and afflicted condition, they draw consolation from the eternity of God; for, in adopting his servants to a better hope, he has separated them from the common lot of men.

A prayer for the afflicted, when he shall be shut up, and shall pour out his meditation before Jehovah.

Whoever of the prophets composed this psalm, it is certain that he dictated it to the faithful as a form of prayer for the re-establishment of the temple and the city. Some limit it to the time when, after the return of the Jews from Babylon, the building of the temple was hindered by the neighboring nations; but with this I cannot agree. I am rather of opinion that the poem was written before the return of the people, when the time of their promised deliverance was just at hand; for then the prophets began to be more earnest in lifting up the hearts of the godly according to these words of Isaiah, (Isaiah 40:1) “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your

God." [133] The design of the sacred poet was, not only to inspire the people with courage, but also to excite in them greater care about the welfare of the Church. The title of the psalm indicates the end and purpose which it was intended to serve. Those who translate the verbs in the past tense, *A prayer for the afflicted, when he was in distress, and poured out his meditation,* [134] seem to give an incorrect view of the mind of the prophet. He rather intended to relieve the sorrow of those whose hearts he saw depressed; as if he had said, Although you may be afflicted with anguish and despair, you must not on that account desist from prayer. Some translate the verb עטף, *ataph, when he shall hide himself,* and conceive that this is a metaphorical expression of the gesture of a man engaged in prayer, when, on account of his grief, unable to lift up his face, he, as it were, hides himself, and keeps his head wrapped up in his bosom. But there appears to me to be an elegant play upon the words, when the distresses of the mind, and its being *shut up,* are spoken of, on the one hand, and *the pouring out* of prayers on the other; teaching us that, when we are so shut up by grief as to shun the light and presence of men, the gate is so far from being shut against our prayers, that then in truth is the most proper season for engaging in prayer, for it is a singular alleviation of our sorrows when we have opportunity freely to pour out our hearts before God. The verb שוח, *suach,* often denotes *to pray;* but, as it also signifies *to meditate,* the noun derived from it properly means, in this place, *meditation.* It is, moreover, to be observed that, by these words, the Psalmist admonishes the Israelites as to the frame of mind with which it became them to use this form of prayer at the throne of grace; as if he had said, that he prescribed it to those only who were distressed on account of the desolate condition of the Church.

Psalm 102:1-2

1. O Jehovah! hear my prayer, and let my cry come to thee. **2.** Hide not thy face from me in the day of my affliction; incline thy ear to me: in the day when I cry make haste, answer me.

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"This plaintive poem was written by some pious exile towards the expiration of the seventy years of captivity during which the people of Israel were detained in Babylon. [...] The author of the psalm had most probably been carried away captive in early youth. He had survived nearly to the end of the term, and now, worn with cares and anxieties, he was earnest with God that deliverance might speedily arrive, lest he should sink into the grave without revisiting the delightful scenes by which his imagination was enraptured, without witnessing the fulfillment of the hopes which the prophets of God had excited by the predictions which they had delivered relative to the returning prosperity of his beloved country." — *Walford.* Hammond thinks that the psalm was written by Nehemiah, after the return of Ezra with commission for rebuilding the temple. See Nehemiah 1:3, etc. Others ascribe it to Jeremiah or Daniel.

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"Sa plainte." — *Fr.* "His complaint."

1 *O Jehovah! hear my prayer* This earnestness shows, again, that these words were not dictated to be pronounced by the careless and light-hearted, which could not have been done without grossly insulting God. In speaking thus, the captive Jews bear testimony to the severe and excruciating distress which they endured, and to the ardent desire to obtain some alleviation with which they were inflamed. No person could utter these words with the mouth without profaning the name of God, unless he were, at the same time, actuated by a sincere and earnest affection of heart. We ought particularly to attend to the circumstance already adverted to, that we are thus stirred up by the Holy Spirit to the duty of prayer in behalf of the common welfare of the Church. Whilst each man takes sufficient care of his own individual interests, there is scarcely one in a hundred affected as he ought to be with the calamities of the Church. We have, therefore, the more need of incitements, even as we see the prophet here endeavoring, by an accumulation of words, to correct our coldness and sloth. I admit that the heart ought to move and direct the tongue to prayer; but, as it often flags or performs its duty in a slow and sluggish manner, it requires to be aided by the tongue. There is here a reciprocal influence. As the heart, on the one hand, ought to go before the words, and frame them, so the tongue, on the other, aids and remedies the coldness and torpor of the heart. True believers may indeed often pray not only earnestly but also fervently, while yet not a single word proceeds from the mouth. There is, however, no doubt that by *crying* the prophet means the vehemence into which grief constrains us to break forth.

2 *Hide not thy face from me in the day of my affliction* The prayer, that God would not hide his face, is far from being superfluous. As the people had been languishing in captivity for the space of nearly seventy years, it might seem that God had for ever turned away his favor from them. But they are, notwithstanding, commanded, in their extreme affliction, to have recourse to prayer as their only remedy. They affirm that they cry *in the day of their affliction,* not as hypocrites are accustomed to do, who utter their complaints in a tumultuous manner, but because they feel that they are then called upon by God to cry to him.

Make haste, answer me Having elsewhere spoken more fully of these forms of expression, it may suffice, at present, briefly to observe, that when God permits us to lay open before him our infirmities without reserve, and patiently bears with our foolishness, he deals in a way of great tenderness towards us. To pour out our complaints before him after the manner of little children would certainly be to treat his Majesty with very little reverence, were it not that he has been pleased to allow us such freedom. I purposely make use of this illustration, that the weak, who are afraid to draw near to God, may understand that they are invited to him with such gentleness as that nothing may hinder them from familiarly and confidently approaching him.

Psalm 102:3-7

3. For my days are consumed like smoke [135] and my bones are burnt up as a hearth. [136] **4.** My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, because I have forgotten to eat my bread. **5.** By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my flesh. [137] **6.** I have become

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Hammond reads, "My days are consumed in the smoke." "The Syriac," says he, "read, *in smoke*, and so the sense will best bear, either *my days* or *time* of my life, כלו, *consume* and wither *in smoke*, as Psalm 119:83, *a bottle in the smoke*, afflictions have had the same effect on me as smoke on those things which are hung in it, dried me up, and deformed me: or perhaps כלו, *end* or *fail*, or consume in smoke, (as when any combustible matter is consumed, smoke is all that comes from it, and so it *ends* in that;) and to that the latter part of the verse may seem to incline it, 'And my bones, *or* members, *or* body, are burnt up,' that being all one with *consumed*."

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Hammond reads, "are burnt up as dry wood." "As for כמוקד, that is added," says he, "the interpreters differ in the understanding of it. The word coming from יקד, *accensus est*, may be either the place where the fire is, or the pot which is heated by the flame of the fire, or the wood which is set on fire. The Syriac seems to take it in the first notion, rendering it, 'my bones are grown white as the hearth,' for so the chimney or hearth doth with the fire constantly burning on it. The Chaldee reads, 'as one of the stones that is set under the pot *or* caldron.' But the LXX. read, ὡσεί φρύχιον, 'as dry wood,' and the Latin, *sicut cremium*, 'as dry combustible wood,' and that is most applicable to the matter in hand; the bones or members of the body, their being burnt up as dry wood denotes the speedy exhausting of the radical moisture, which soon ends in the consumption of the whole. And then the whole verse fitly accords, 'My days are withered away in the smoke,' or perhaps 'end in smoke, my bones are burnt up like dry wood.'"

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"Tienent a ma peau." — *Fr.* "Cleave to my skin." *Flesh* is more literal; but see Psalm 119:120, and Job 19:20.

like a pelican [138] of the wilderness; I have become like an owl [139] of

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The pelican is a bird of the desert, to which frequent allusion is made by the sacred writers. Its Hebrew name קאת, *kaath*, literally means, *the vomiter*, being derived from the verb קוא, *ko*, *to vomit* It has a large pouch, or bag, suspended from its bill and throat, which serves both as a repository for its food, and as a net for catching it. In feeding its young ones, whether this bag is loaded with water, or more solid food, it squeezes the contents of it into their mouths, by strongly compressing it upon its breast with its bill, an action which might well explain the origin of the name given to it by the Hebrews. It is a bird of solitary habits, and is said by Isidore to live "in the solitude of the river Nile:" indeed, it generally builds its nest in mossy, turfy places, in the islands of rivers or lakes, far from the abode of man. It is here described as living in the wilderness, a circumstance not inconsistent with its natural fondness for water; for lakes, as well as fountains, are to be found in the most desert parts. And although a water-fowl, it sometimes retires to a great distance from the water, where, in some remote and concealed situation, it may hatch its young with greater security. Its huge pouch, which is said to be capable of containing near the size of a man's head, seems to be given to it for the purpose of its being provided with a supply of food for itself and its young ones when at a distance from the water. Bochart thinks that קאת, *kaath*, here means *the bittern* His chief reason for this opinion is, that the Psalmist compares himself to the two birds specified, on account of his groaning, and that, therefore, both of them should have a mournful cry. But he finds that natural historians make no mention of this as a property of the pelican, whereas they all agree that the bittern, by inserting its bill in the mud of the marsh, or plunging it under water, utters a most disagreeable cry, like the roaring of a bull, or the sound of distant thunder. But the Psalmist may not so much compare his groaning to the plaintive cry of these birds, as compare his situation to their solitary condition. Sorrow, when pungent, drives the sufferer to solitude, and, on this occasion, the inspired bard, under the overwhelming pressure of grief, seems to have become weary of society, and, like the pelican, or the owl, to have contracted a relish for deep retirement. *Shaw's Travels*, volume 2, page 302; *Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture*, volume 2, pages 247-250.

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The *owl*, it is highly probable, is the bird here intended. The original word כוס, *kos*, which is evidently derived from the verb כסה, *kasah*, *to hide*, is applied, with much propriety, to denote that bird, which constantly hides itself in the day-time, and comes abroad only in the evening, or at night. כוס, *kos*, is followed in construction by חרבות, *charaboth*, which comes from חרב, *charab*, *to be destroyed*, or *laid waste*; (Isaiah 60:12; Jeremiah 26:8; Zephaniah 3:6) and signifies a waste or desolate place, as the ruins of an uninhabited house. The proper translation, then, should be, not *the owl of the desert*, but *the owl of the desolate* or *ruined buildings*, which exactly corresponds with the habits of this bird; for such ruinous places, as is well known, are its ordinary haunt, where, in undisturbed solitude, it may utter its melancholy howlings. The allusion in Gray's celebrated Elegy may illustrate the language of the text, —

"Save that from yonder ivy mantled tower,
The moping owl does to the night complain," etc.

The habit of the owl in shunning the light of day, and delighting in solitude, well describes the sensitiveness with which the Psalmist, through the greatness of his grief, shrunk from society, and courted seclusion. Bochart contends that כוס here signifies, not *the owl*, but *the ostrich*, and, if the Psalmist is comparing himself to the two birds specified, on account of his groaning, this seems to favor that translation; for the female ostrich has a most dismal and mournful voice, very much resembling the lamentation of a human being in deep distress. But, as has been before observed, the Psalmist seems to refer, not so much to the mournful voice of these birds, as to their solitary condition.

the deserts. **7.** I have watched, and have been like a sparrow which is alone upon the house-top. [140]

3 *For my days are consumed like smoke* These expressions are hyperbolical, but still they show how deeply the desolation of the Church ought to wound the hearts of the people of God. Let every man, therefore, carefully examine himself on this head. If we do not prefer the Church to all the other objects of our solicitude, we are unworthy of being accounted among her members. Whenever we meet with such forms of expression as these, let us remember that they reproach our slothfulness in not being affected with the afflictions of the Church as we ought. The Psalmist compares his days *to smoke,* and *his bones to the stones of the hearth,* which, in the course of time, are consumed by the fire. By *bones* he means the strength of man. And, were not men devoid of feeling, such a melancholy spectacle of the wrath of God would assuredly have the effect of drying up their bones, and wasting away their whole rigor.

4 *My heart is smitten, and dried up like grass* Here he employs a third similitude, declaring that his heart is withered, and wholly dried up like mown grass. But he intends to express something more than that his heart was withered, and his bones reduced to a state of dryness. His language implies, that as the grass, when it is cut down, can no longer receive juice from the earth, nor retain the life and rigor which it derived from the root, so his heart being, as it were, torn and cut off from its root, was deprived of its natural nourishment. The meaning of the last clause, *I have forgotten to eat my bread,* is, My sorrow has been so great, that I have neglected my ordinary food. The Jews, it is true, during their captivity in Babylon, did eat their food; and it would have been an evidence of their having fallen into sinful despair, had they starved themselves to death. But what he means to say is, that he was so afflicted with sorrow as to refuse all delights, and to deprive himself even of food and drink. True believers may cease for a time to partake of their ordinary food, when, by voluntary fasting, they humbly beseech God to turn away his wrath, but the prophet does not here speak of that kind of abstinence from bodily sustenance. He speaks of such as is the effect of extreme mental distress, which is accompanied with a loathing of food, and a weariness of all things. In the close of the verse, he adds, that his body was, as it were, consuming or wasting away, so that his bones clave to his skin.

6 *I have become like a pelican of the wilderness* Instead of rendering the original word by *pelican,* some translate it *bittern,* and others the *cuckoo.* The Hebrew word here used for *owl* is rendered by the Septuagint

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There is here a reference to the flat roof of the eastern houses, a usual place of retirement, in ancient times, and even at this day, to the inhabitants of these countries.

νυκτικοραξ, which signifies *a bat.* [141] But as even the Jews are doubtful as to the kind of birds here intended, let it suffice us simply to know, that in this verse there are pointed out certain melancholy birds, whose place of abode is in the holes of mountains and in deserts, and whose note, instead of being delightful and sweet to the ear, inspires those who hear it with terror. I am removed, as if he had said, from the society of men, and am become almost like a wild beast of the forest. Although the people of God dwelt in a well cultivated and fertile region, yet the whole country of Chaldea and Assyria was to them like a wilderness, since their hearts were bound by the strongest ties of affection to the temple, and to their native country from which they had been expelled. The third similitude, which is taken from *the sparrow,* denotes such grief as produces the greatest uneasiness. The word צפור, *tsippor,* signifies in general any kind of bird; but I have no doubt that it is here to be understood of the sparrow. It is described as *solitary* or *alone,* because it has been bereaved of its mate; and so deeply affected are these little birds when separated from their mates, that their distress exceeds almost all sorrow. [142]

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"La translation Grecque ha Nicticorax qui est Chauvesouris." — *Fr.*

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Although Calvin expresses himself as having no doubt that the sparrow is here intended, the most eminent expositors are of a different opinion, contending that it is difficult to reconcile with the nature of the sparrow the ideas of *wakefulness* and *solitude* which the Psalmist represents as characteristic of the bird to which he compares himself. The sparrow is not a solitary moping bird which sits mournfully on the housetop, nor so timid as to betake itself to the darkest corners for concealment, and to spend the live long night in sleepless anxiety. It is gregarious, is commonly found chirping and fluttering about in the crowd, a pert, loquacious, and bustling creature, and builds its nest in the habitations of men. Every part of the description leads to the supposition that some nocturnal bird is to be understood, which from instinct hates the light, and comes forth from its hiding-place only when the shadows of the evening fall to hunt its prey, and from amidst the fragments, of some mouldering ruin to attract the attention of mankind by its mournful voice. Accordingly, it has been thought that the Psalmist refers to some species of the owl, distinguished for its plaintive cry and solitary disposition. — *Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture*, volume 2, pages 355-357. "But," says Merrick, "as *chos*, mentioned in the preceding verse, seems also to signify an *owl*, we are perhaps to suppose two sorts of *owls* intended, one of which confines itself to deserts or ruinous places, and the other sometimes approaches cities or villages, and according to Virgil's description, (which Bochart quotes as conformable to that of the Psalmist,) *sits alone on the house-top.*

'Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo Visa queri, et longas in fletum ducere voces.' *Æneid,* lib. 4. 50. 462.

I doubt whether the Psalmist would in two verses together compare his situation to that of the very same bird, with no other difference than that of its sitting in the desert in one verse, and on the house-top in the other." Bochart thinks that the *screech-owl* is intended. The reason which Calvin assigns for the sparrow being called solitary, namely, because of the extreme sorrow which she feels when deprived of her mate, does not agree with the natural history of that bird; for, unlike the turtle, who, on losing her spouse, remains in a state of inconsolable widowhood, she accepts without reluctance the first companion that solicits her affections.

Psalm 102:8-11

8. My enemies have reviled me daily; and those who are mad against me have sworn by me. [143] **9.** For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, [or, with my tears,] **10.** On account of thy indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. **11.** My days are like a shadow which declineth; and I am dried up like the grass.

8. *My enemies have reviled me daily* The faithful, to excite the compassion of God towards them, tell him that they are not only objects of mockery to their enemies, but also that they swore by them. The indignity complained of is, that the ungodly so shamefully triumphed over God's chosen people, as even to borrow from their calamities a form of swearing and imprecation. This was to regard the fate of the Jews as a signal pattern in uttering the language of imprecation. When, therefore, at the present day the ungodly, in like manner, give themselves loose reins in pouring forth against us contumelious language, let us learn to fortify ourselves with this armor, by which such kind of temptation, however sharp, may be overcome. The Holy Spirit, in dictating to the faithful this form of prayer, meant to testify that God is moved by such revilings to succor his people; even as we find it stated in Isaiah 37:23,

"Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice? even against the Holy One of Israel;"

and in the verse immediately preceding the prophet had said, "He hath despised thee, O daughter of Zion! against thee hath he shaken the head, O daughter of Jerusalem!" It is surely an inestimable comfort that the more insolent our enemies are against us, the more is God incited to gird himself to aid us. In the second clause the inspired writer expresses more strongly the cruelty of his enemies, when he speaks of their being *mad against him* As the verb הלל, *halal,* which we have rendered *mad,* generally signifies *to*

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Horsley renders the concluding sentence, —

"And the profligate make me their standard of execration."

"Houbigant," says he, "rightly observes, that the verb נשבע, governing its objects by the prefix ב, signifies *to swear by*, not *to swear against.* For נשבעו, therefore, he would substitute another word; which, however, bears not the sense he would impose upon it. Archbishop Secker attempts to explain the text as it stands, but, in my judgment, unsuccessfully, unless נשבע may signify *to execrate* one's self or another. I find no example of this use of the verb. But the [use] of the noun in Numbers 5:21, and Isaiah 65:15, may seem, in some degree, to countenance the Archbishop's interpretation. The other passages to which he refers are little to the purpose." Rosenmüller gives a similar interpretation. "*They swear by me*; they derive their arguments and examples from my calamities; when they mean to imprecate evil on themselves as the persons swearing, or on another as the object of their malediction, they use my name as a form of execration, as if they said, 'Let our fate be that of these miserable Jews, if we speak what is false.' — See Isaiah 65:15; Jeremiah 29:22."

praise, it might here be understood as having, by the figure antiphrasis, a sense the very opposite — *those who dispraised* or *reproached me.* But it is better to follow the commonly received interpretation. Some maintain that they are called *mad,* because they manifested their own folly, making it evident from the manner in which they acted, that they were worthless persons; but this opinion does too much violence to the text. The more satisfactory sense is, that the people of God charge revilers with cruelty or furious hatred.

9 *For I have eaten ashes like bread* Some think that the order is here inverted, and that the letter כ, *caph,* the sign of similitude, which is put before לחם, *lechem,* the word for *bread,* ought to be placed before אפר, *epher,* the word for *ashes;* as if it had been said, I find no more relish for my bread than I do for ashes; and the reason is, because sorrow of heart produces loathing of food. But the simpler meaning is, that lying prostrate on the ground, they licked, as it were, the earth, *and so did eat ashes instead of bread.* It was customary for those who mourned to stretch themselves at full length with their faces on the ground. The prophet, however, intended to express a different idea — to intimate, that when he partook of his meals, there was no table set before him, but his bread was thrown upon the ground to him in a foul and disgusting manner. Speaking, therefore, in the person of the faithful, he asserts that he was so fixed to the ground that he did not even rise from it to take his food. The same sentiment is expressed in the last part of the verse, *I have mingled my drink with weeping;* for while mourners usually restrain their sorrow during the short time in which they refresh themselves with food, he declares that his mourning was without intermission. Some, instead of reading in the first clause, *as bread,* read, *in bread;* [144] and as the two letters, כ, *caph,* and ב, *beth,* nearly resemble each other, I prefer reading *in bread,* which agrees better with the second clause.

10. *On account of thy anger and thy wrath* He now declares that the greatness of his grief proceeded not only from outward troubles and calamities, but from a sense that these were a punishment inflicted upon him by God. And surely there is nothing which ought to wound our hearts more deeply, than when we feel that God is angry with us. The meaning then amounts to this — O Lord! I do not confine my attention to those things which would engage the mind of worldly men; but I rather turn my thoughts to thy wrath; for were it not that thou art angry with us, we would have been still enjoying the inheritance given us by thee, from which we have justly been expelled by thy displeasure. When God then strikes us with his hand, we should not merely groan under the strokes inflicted upon us, as

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Supposing the reading to be בלחם, *balechem*, instead of כלחם, *calechem*; and from the similarity in form between the letters ב and כ, transcribers might readily have mistaken the latter for the former.

foolish men usually do, but should chiefly look to the cause that we may be truly humbled. This is a lesson which it would be of great advantage to us to learn.

The last clause of the verse, *Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down,* may be understood in two ways. As we lift up what we intend to throw down with greater violence against the ground, the sentence may denote a violent method of casting down, as if it had been said, Thou hast crushed me more severely by throwing me down headlong from on high, than if I had merely fallen from the station which I occupied. [145] But this seems to be another amplification of his grief, nothing being more bitter to an individual than to be reduced from a happy condition to extreme misery, the prophet mournfully complains that the chosen people were deprived of the distinguished advantages which God had conferred upon them in time past, so that the very remembrance of his former goodness, which should have afforded consolation to them, embittered their sorrow. Nor was it the effect of ingratitude to turn the consideration of the divine benefits, which they had formerly received, into matter of sadness; since they acknowledged that their being reduced to such a state of wretchedness and degradation was through their own sins. God has no delight in changing, as if, after having given us some taste of his goodness, he intended forthwith to deprive us of it. As his goodness is inexhaustible, so his blessing would flow upon us without intermission, were it not for our sins which break off the course of it. Although, then, the remembrance of God's benefits ought to assuage our sorrows, yet still it is a great aggravation of our calamity to have fallen from an elevated position, and to find that we have so provoked his anger, as to make him withdraw from us his benignant and bountiful hand. Thus when we consider that the image of God, which distinguished Adam, was the brightness of the celestial glory; and when, on the contrary, we now see the ignominy and degradation to which God has subjected us in token of

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"What is meant by נשאתני, 'thou hast lifted me up,' etc., is to be judged by the immediate antecedents, *indignation* and *wrath*; by these is meant vehement displeasure and anger, and in God, in whom anger is not found, effects that bear analogy with those which proceed from angry men. To such it is ordinary *to cast to the ground* any thing that they are displeased with, and where the displeasure is vehement, *to lift it up* first as high as they can, that they may *cast it down* with more violence, and dash it in pieces by the fall. And this is the meaning of the phrase here, and so is a pathetical expression of his present affliction, heightened by the dignity of the public office wherein Nehemiah was at the time of writing this mournful psalm, (Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1.) The greater his place was at Shushan, the deeper his sorrow for his countrymen and for Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:3) pierced him, whereupon he complains that God, by way of indignation, hath dealt with him, as those that take an earthen vessel and throw it against the pavement, and that they may beat it to pieces the more certainly, *lift it up* first as high as they can, *to throw it down* with more violence. This the LXX. have fitly rendered, ἐπάρας κατέρ᾽ῥαξάς με, and the Latin, *elevans illisisti me*, 'having lifted me up, thou hast dashed me to pieces.'" — *Hammond*

his wrath, this contrast cannot surely fail of making us feel more deeply the wretchedness of our condition. Whenever, therefore, God, after having stripped us of the blessings which he had conferred upon us, gives us up to reproach, let us learn that we have so much the greater cause to lament, because, through our own fault, we have turned light into darkness.

11. *My days are like the shadow which declineth* [146] When the sun is directly over our heads, that is to say, at mid-day, we do not observe such sudden changes of the shadows which his light produces; but when he begins to decline towards the west the shadows vary almost every moment, This is the reason why the sacred writer expressly makes mention of *the shadow which declineth* What he attributes to the afflicted Church seems indeed to be equally applicable to all men; but he had a special reason for employing this comparison to illustrate the condition of the Church when subjected to the calamity of exile. It is true, that as soon as we advance towards old age, we speedily fall into decay. But the complaint here is, that this befell the people of God in the very flower of their age. By the term *days* is to be understood the whole course of their life; and the meaning is, that the captivity was to the godly as the setting of the sun, because they quickly failed. In the end of the verse the similitude of *withered grass,* used a little before, is repeated, to intimate that their life during the captivity was involved in many sorrows which dried up in them the very sap of life. Nor is this wonderful, since to live in that condition would have been worse than a hundred deaths had they not been sustained by the hope of future deliverance. But although they were not altogether overwhelmed by temptation, they must have been in great distress, because they saw themselves abandoned by God.

Psalm 102:12-14

> **12.** And thou, O Jehovah! shalt dwell for ever; and the memorial of thee from generation to generation. **13.** Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to pity her, for the appointed time, is come. **14.** For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and will have compassion upon her dust.

12. *And thou, O Jehovah! shalt dwell for ever* When the prophet, for his own encouragement, sets before himself the eternity of God, it seems, at first sight, to be a far-fetched consolation; for what benefit will accrue

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It is literally, "My days are like a shadow, stretched out." As the sun descends in the firmament, the shadow of any terrestrial object gradually lengthens, and grows fainter as it becomes longer, until shooting out to an unmeasurable length, it disappears. The Psalmist complains that his days were like a shadow nearly stretched to its utmost length, and at the point of being lost in total darkness. He felt that he had far passed his meridian, that the sun of life was about to set, and the dark night of death to fall down upon him" — See Psalm 109:23.

to us from the fact that God sits immutable on his heavenly throne, when, at the same time, our frail and perishing condition does not permit us to continue unmoved for a single moment? And, what is more, this knowledge of the blessed repose enjoyed by God enables us the better to perceive that our life is a mere illusion. But the inspired writer, calling to remembrance the promises by which God had declared that he would make the Church the object of his special care, and particularly that remarkable article of the covenant, "I will dwell in the midst of you," (Exodus 25:8) and, trusting to that sacred and indissoluble bond, has no hesitation in representing all the godly languishing, though they were in a state of suffering and wretchedness, as partakers of this celestial glory in which God dwells. The word *memorial* is also to be viewed in the same light. What advantage would we derive from this eternity and immutability of God's being, unless we had in our hearts the knowledge of him, which, produced by his gracious covenant, begets in us the confidence arising from a mutual relationship between him and us? The meaning then is, "We are like withered grass, we are decaying every moment, we are not far from death, yea rather, we are, as it were, already dwelling in the grave; but since thou, O God! hast made a covenant with us, by which thou hast promised to protect and defend thine own people, and hast brought thyself into a gracious relation to us, giving us the fullest assurance that thou wilt always dwell in the midst of us, instead of desponding, we must be of good courage; and although we may see only ground for despair if we depend upon ourselves, we ought nevertheless to lift up our minds to the heavenly throne, from which thou wilt at length stretch forth thy hand to help us." Whoever is in a moderate degree acquainted with the sacred writings, will readily acknowledge that whenever we are besieged with death, in a variety of forms, we should reason thus: As God continues unchangeably the same — "without variableness or shadow of turning" — nothing can hinder him from aiding us; and this he will do, because we have his word, by which he has laid himself under obligation to us, and because he has deposited with us his own memorial, which contains in it a sacred and indissoluble bond of fellowship.

13. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion.* We have here the conclusion drawn from the truth stated in the preceding verse — God is eternal, and therefore he will have compassion upon Zion. God's eternity is to be considered as impressed upon the memorial, or word, by which he has brought himself under obligation to maintain our welfare. Besides, as he is not destitute of the power, and as it is impossible for him to deny himself, we ought not to entertain any apprehension of his failing to accomplish, in his own time, what he has promised. We have observed, in another place, that, the verb *to arise* refers to what is made apparent to the eye of sense; for although he continues always immutable, yet, in putting forth his power, he manifests his majesty by the external act, as it is termed.

When the prophet treats of the restoration of the Church, he sets forth the divine mercy as its cause. He represents this mercy under a twofold aspect, and therefore employs different words. In the first place, as in the matter under consideration, the good deserts of men are entirely out of the question, and as God cannot be led from any cause external to himself to build up his Church, the prophet traces the cause of it solely to the free goodness of God. In the second place, he contemplates this mercy as connected with the Divine promises. *Thou shalt have mercy upon Zion, for the time appointed, according to thy good pleasure, is come* Meanwhile, it is to be observed that, in magnifying the Divine mercy, his design was to teach true believers that their safety depended on it alone. But we must now attend to what time is alluded to. The word מועד, *moed,* signifies all kind of fixed or appointed days. There is, then, beyond all doubt, a reference to the prophecy of Jeremiah, recorded in Jeremiah 29:10, and repeated in the last chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, at the 21st verse. That the faithful might not sink into despondency, through the long continuance of their calamities, they needed to be supported by the hope that an end to their captivity had been appointed by God, and that it would not extend beyond seventy years. Daniel was employed in meditating on this very topic, when "he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek, by prayer and supplications," the re-establishment of the Church, (Daniel 9:2) In like manner, the object now aimed at by the prophet was to encourage both himself and others to confidence in prayer, putting God in mind of this remarkable prophecy, as an argument to induce him to bring to a termination their melancholy captivity. And surely if, in our prayers, we do not continually remember the Divine promises, we only cast forth our desires into the air like smoke. It is, however, to be observed, that although the time of the promised deliverance was approaching, or had already arrived, yet the prophet does not cease from the exercise of prayer, to which God stirs us up by means of his word. And although the time was fixed, yet he calls upon God, for the performance of his covenant, in such a manner, as that he is still betaking himself to his free goodness alone; for the promises by which God brings himself under obligation to us do not, in any degree, obscure his grace.

14. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones* To restrict this to Cyrus and Darius is altogether unsuitable. It is not at all wonderful to find the Jewish doctors hunting, with excessive eagerness, after foolish subtilties; but I am surprised that some of our modern commentators subscribe to such a poor and cold interpretation. I am aware that, in some places, the unbelieving and the wicked are called the servants of God, as in Jeremiah 25:9, because God makes use of them as instruments for executing his judgments. Nay, I admit that Cyrus is called by name God's chosen servant, (Isaiah 44:28) but the Holy Spirit would not have bestowed so honorable a title, either on him or Darius, without some qualification. Besides, it is probable that this psalm was composed before the edict was published,

which granted the people liberty to return to their native country. It therefore follows, that God's people alone are included in the catalogue of his servants, because it is their purpose, during the whole of their life, to obey his will in all things. The prophet, I have no doubt, speaks in general of the whole Church, intimating that this was not the wish entertained merely by one man, but was shared by the whole body of the Church. The more effectually to induce God to listen to his prayer, he calls upon all the godly, who were then in the world, to join with him in the same request. It, unquestionably, very much contributes to increase the confidence of success, when supplications are made by all the people of God together, as if in the person of one man, according to what the Apostle Paul declares,

"Ye also, helping together by prayer for us, that, for the gift bestowed upon us, by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." (2 Corinthians 1:11)

Farther, when the deformed materials which remained of the ruins of the temple and city are emphatically termed *the stones of Zion,* this is designed to intimate, not only that the faithful in time past were affected with the outward splendor of the temple, when, besides attracting the eyes of men, it had power to ravish with admiration all their senses, but also, that although the temple was destroyed, and nothing was to be seen where it stood but hideous desolation, yet their attachment to it continued unalterable, and they acknowledged the glory of God, in its crumbling stones and decayed rubbish. As the temple was built by the appointment of God, and as he had promised its restoration, it was, doubtless, proper and becoming that the godly should not withdraw their affections from its ruins. Meanwhile, as an antidote against the discouraging influence of the taunting mockery of the heathen, they required to look into the Divine word for something else than what presented itself to their bodily eyes. Knowing that the very site of the temple was consecrated to God, and that that sacred edifice was to be rebuilt on the same spot, they did not cease to regard it with reverence, although its stones lay in disorder, mutilated and broken, and heaps of useless rubbish were to be seen scattered here and there. The sadder the desolation is to which the Church has been brought, the less ought our affections to be alienated from her. Yea, rather, this compassion which the faithful then exercised, [147] ought to draw from us sighs and groans; and would to God that the melancholy description in this passage were not so applicable to our own time as it is! He, no doubt, has his churches erected in some places, where he is purely worshipped; but, if we cast our eyes upon the whole world, we behold his word every where trampled under foot, and his worship defiled by countless abominations. Such being the case, his holy temple is assuredly every where demolished, and in a state

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"Mais qui plus est ceste *compassion* que les fideles ont tenu lors." — *Fr.*

of wretched desolation; yea, even those small churches in which he dwells are torn and scattered. What are these humble erections, when compared with that splendid edifice described by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah? But no desolation ought to prevent us from loving the very stones and dust of the Church. Let us leave the Papists to be proud of their altars, their huge buildings, and their other exhibitions of pomp and splendor; for all that heathenish magnificence is nothing else but an abomination in the sight of God and his angels, whereas the ruins of the true temple are sacred.

Psalm 102:15-18

> **15.** And the nations shall fear the name of Jehovah, [148] and all the kings of the earth thy glory. **16.** For Jehovah hath built up Zion, and hath appeared in his glory. **17.** He hath regarded the prayer of the solitary, [149] and hath not despised their prayers. [150] **18.** This shall be registered for the generation that is to come: and the people to be created shall praise him. [151]

15. *And the nations shall fear the name of Jehovah* The prophet here describes the fruit which would result from the deliverance of the ancient tribes; which is, that thereby God's glory would be rendered illustrious among nations and kings. He tacitly intimates, that when the Church is

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"Craindront ton nom, Seigneur." — *Fr.* "Shall fear thy name, O Lord!"

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The original word for *the solitary* is הרער, *ha-arar*; and as ערער signifies *the tamarisk* or *myrtle*, some translate, "the afflicted or dejected man;" the myrtle being an emblem of a low and depressed state of the Church. Accordingly, in the Chaldee, it is "the prayer of the desolate," and in the Septuagint, "the prayer of the humble." Houbigant derives the word from רעע, *frangere*, *to break*, and renders it, "the afflicted." Others read, "the destitute," supposing the word to come from ערה, *was naked*, as Fry: "'When he hath turned himself to the prayer of the destitute' — the people emptied, and poured forth — made bare or stripped naked." Others prefer the version, "He regarded him when exciting his prayer," as if the root of the Hebrew term were עור, *to excite*

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Horsley translates the verbs in the 16th and 17th verses in the present, —

"Truly Jehovah is building Zion;
He appeareth in his glory.
He regardeth the prayer of the destitute,
And their prayer he despiseth not."

He regards the Psalm as a "prayer and lamentation of a believer, in the time of the last Antichristian persecution;" and after observing that the 16th and 17th verses are rendered by our English Bible in the future, he says, "These futures, in the original, are all present; 'buildeth — appeareth — regardeth — and despiseth not.' The Psalmist in his confidence of the event speaks of it as doing."

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"Le Seigneur." — *Fr.* "The Lord." In the Hebrew it is יה, *Jah*

oppressed, the Divine glory is at the same time debased; even as the God of Israel was, no doubt, at the period referred to, derided by the ungodly, as if he had been destitute of the power to succor his people. It is therefore declared, that if he redeem them, it will afford such a remarkable proof of his power as to constrain the Gentiles to reverence him whom they contemned.

The concluding part of the 16th verse, *He hath appeared in his glory,* refers to the manifestation which God made of himself when he brought forth his Church from the darkness of death; even as it is said in another place concerning her first deliverance, "Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominions" (Psalm 114:2) In like manner in the present passage, by again gathering to himself his people who were dispersed, and by raising his Church, as it were, from death to life, he appeared in his glory. It is surely no ordinary consolation to know that the love of God towards us is so great, that he will have his glory to shine forth in our salvation. It is true, that when the pious Jews were in the midst of their afflictions, the working of divine power was hidden from them; but they nevertheless always beheld it by the eye of faith, and in the mirror of the divine promises.

17 *He hath regarded the prayer of the solitary* It is worthy of notice, that the deliverance of the chosen tribes is ascribed to the prayers of the faithful. God's mercy was indeed the sole cause which led him to deliver his Church, according as he had graciously promised this blessing to her; but to stir up true believers to greater earnestness in prayer, he promises that what he has purposed to do of his own good pleasure, he will grant in answer to their requests. Nor is there any inconsistency between these two truths, that God preserves the Church in the exercise of his free mercy, and that he preserves her in answer to the prayers of his people; for as their prayers are connected with the free promises, the effect of the former depends entirely upon the latter. When it is said, that *the prayers of the solitary* were heard, it is not to be understood of one man only, (for in the clause immediately following, the plural number is used;) but all the Jews, so long as they remained ejected from their own country, and lived as exiles in a strange land, are called *solitary,* because, although the countries of Assyria and Chaldea were remarkably fertile and delightful, yet these wretched captives, as I have previously observed, wandered there as in a wilderness. And as at that time this solitary people obtained favor by sighing, so now when the faithful are scattered, and are without their regular assemblies, the Lord will hear their groanings in this desolate dispersion, provided they all with one consent, and with unfeigned faith, earnestly breathe after the restoration of the Church.

18. *This shall be registered for the generation that is to come* The Psalmist magnifies still more the fruit of the deliverance of his people, for the purpose of encouraging himself and others in the hope of obtaining the object of their prayers. He intimates, that this will be a memorable work of God, the praise of which shall be handed down to succeeding ages. Many things are worthy

of praise, which are soon forgotten; but the prophet distinguishes between the salvation of the Church, for which he makes supplication, and common benefits. By the word *register,* he means that the history of this would be worthy of having a place in the public records, that the remembrance of it might be transmitted to future generations. There is in the words a beautiful contrast between the new creation of the people and the present destruction; of which interpreters improperly omit to take any notice. When the people were expelled from their country, the Church was in a manner extinguished. Her very name might seem to be dead, when the Jews were mingled among the heathen nations, and no longer constituted a distinct and united body. Their return was accordingly as it were a second birth. Accordingly, the prophet with propriety expects a new creation. Although the Church had perished, he was persuaded that God, by his wonderful power, would make her rise again from death to renovated life. This is a remarkable passage, showing that the Church is not always so preserved, as to continue to outward appearance to survive, but that when she seems to be dead, she is suddenly created anew, whenever it so pleases God. Let no desolation, therefore, which befalls the Church, deprive us of the hope, that as God once created the world out of nothing, so it is his proper work to bring forth the Church from the darkness of death.

Psalm 102:19-22

> **19.** For he hath looked down from the high place of his holiness; [152] Jehovah hath looked down from the heavens unto the earth, **20.** To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to release the sons of death; [153] **21.** That the name of Jehovah may be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; **22.** When the peoples [or the nations] shall be gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve Jehovah.

19. *For he hath looked down from the high place of his holiness* Now the prophet contemplates the deliverance after which he breathes with anxious desire, as if it had been already accomplished. That the malignity of men might not attempt to obscure such a signal blessing of Heaven, he openly and in express terms claims for God his rightful praise; and the people were constrained in many ways to acknowledge therein the divine hand. Long

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"Du haut lieu de son sanctuaire." — *Fr.* "From the high place of his sanctuary."

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"C'est, ceux qui estoyent jugez a mort." — Note, *Fr. marg.* "That is, those who were appointed to death, *or* destined to be put to death." "*Sons* of death" is a Hebraism. "According to the Hebrew idiom, the thing which is the effect, the object, the production of another thing, or in almost any way can be said to belong to it, is called 'the son' of that other. The expression is so thoroughly naturalised with us, that we are hardly aware of its origin, which appears to be in the Hebrew writers." — *Mant.*

before they were dragged into captivity, this calamity had been foretold, that when it took place the judgment of God might be clearly manifested; and at the same time deliverance had been promised them, and the time specified to be after the lapse of seventy years. The ingratitude of men therefore could not devise or invent any other cause to which to ascribe their return but the mere goodness of God. Accordingly, it is said, that *God looked down from heaven,* that the Jews might not attribute to the grace and favor of Cyrus the deliverance which evidently proceeded from Heaven. *The high place of his holiness* or *sanctuary* is here equivalent to heaven. As the temple, in some parts of Scripture, (Psalm 26:8 and Psalm 76:2) is called "the habitation of God," in respect of men, so, that we may not imagine that there is any thing earthly in God, he assigns to himself a dwelling-place in heaven, not because he is shut up there, but that we may seek him above the world.

20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner* Here the prophet repeats once more what he had previously touched upon concerning prayer, in order again to stir up the hearts of the godly to engage in that exercise, and that after their deliverance they might know it to have been granted to their faith, because, depending on the divine promises, they had sent up their groanings to heaven. He calls them *prisoners;* for although they were not bound in fetters, their captivity resembled a most rigorous imprisonment. Yea, he affirms a little after *that they were devoted to death,* to give them to understand that their life and safety would have been altogether hopeless, had they not been delivered from death by the extraordinary power of God.

21 *That the name of Jehovah may be declared in Zion* Here is celebrated a still more ample and richer fruit of this deliverance than has been previously mentioned, which is, that the Jews would not only be united into one body to give thanks to God, but that, when brought back to their own country, they would also gather kings and nations into the same unity of faith, and into the same divine worship with themselves. At that time it was a thing altogether incredible, not only that the praises of God should within a short period resound, as in the days of old, in that temple which was burnt and completely overthrown, [154] but also that the nations should resort thither from all quarters, and be associated together in the service of God with the Jews, who were then like a putrefied carcase. The prophet, to inspire the people with the hope of returning to their own land, argues that it was impossible that the place which God had chosen for himself should be left in perpetual desolation; and declares, that so far from this being the case there would be new matter for praising God, inasmuch as His name would be worshipped by all nations, and the Church would consist not of one nation only, but of the whole world. This we know has been fulfilled

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"Qui estoit brusle et du tout ruine." — *Fr.*

under the administration of Christ, as was announced in prophecy by the holy patriarch,

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and *unto him shall the gathering of the Gentiles be,*" (Genesis 49:10.)

But as the prophets are wont, in celebrating the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, to extend it to the coming of Christ, the inspired bard in this place does not lay hold on merely a part of the subject, but carries forward the grace of God, even to its consummation. And although it was not necessary that all who were converted to Christ should go up to Jerusalem, yet following the manner of expression usual with the prophets, he has laid down the observance of the divine worship which was appointed under the law, as a mark of true godliness. Farther, we may learn from this passage, that the name of God is never better celebrated than when true religion is extensively propagated, and when the Church increases, which on that account is called,

"The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," (Isaiah 61:3.)

Psalm 102:23-28

23. He hath afflicted my strength in the way; and shortened my days. **24.** I said, O my God! Cut me not off in the midst of my days: for [155] thy years are from generation to generation. **25.** Thou hast aforetime founded the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. **26.** They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: and all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: **27.** But thou art the same,

[156] and thy years shall not fail. [157] **28.** The children of thy servants shall dwell, and their seed shall be established before thee.

23. *He hath afflicted my strength in the way* Some improperly restrict this complaint to the time when the Jews were subjected to much annoyance after the liberty granted them to return to their own land. We are rather to understand the word *journey* or *way* in a metaphorical sense. As the manifestation of Christ was the goal of the race which God's ancient people were running, they justly complain that they are afflicted and weakened

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"*Car.*" — *Fr.* This supplement is not in the Latin version.

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The original word for *the same* is הוּא, *hua*, literally *He*, — "But thou art He;" that is, *the* Eternal; *necessarily eternal*; and, consequently, unchangeable and imperishable. "The Hebrew word appears to be one of the divine names, as if it were said, 'He who hath permanent existence, who exists eminently.' Lowth observes, that it is often equivalent to the true and eternal God; and that the phrase in this place expresses God's eternal and unchangeable nature." — *Mant*

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in the midst of their course. [158] Thus they set before God his promise, telling him, that although they had not run at random, but had confided in his protection, they were nevertheless broken and crushed by his hand in the midst of their journey. They do not indeed find fault with him, as if he had disappointed their hope; but fully persuaded, that he does not deal deceitfully with those who serve him, by this complaint they strengthen themselves in the hope of a favorable issue. In the same sense they add, that *their days were shortened,* because they directed their view to the fullness of time, which did not arrive till Christ was revealed. [159] It accordingly follows, — (verse 24,) *Cut me not off in the midst of my days.* They compare the intervening period until Christ should appear to the middle of life; for, as has been already observed, the Church only attained to her perfect age at his coming. This calamity, no doubt, had been foretold, but the nature of the covenant which God had entered into with his ancient people required that he should take them under his protection, and defend them. The captivity, therefore, was as it were a violent rupture, on which account the godly prayed with the greater confidence, that they might not be prematurely taken away in the midst of their journey. By speaking in this manner, they did not fix for themselves a certain term of life; but as God, in freely adopting them, had given them the commencement of life, with the assurance that he would maintain them even to the advent of Christ, they might warrantably bring forward and plead this promise. Lord, as if they had said, thou hast promised us life, not for a few days, or for a month or for a few years, but until thou shouldst renew the whole world, and gather together all nations under the dominion of thine Anointed One.

This and the two preceding verses are applied by the Apostle Paul to Christ in Hebrews 1:10, 11, 12, in proof of his superiority to angels. In this passage then, Christ, it would appear, is the person addressed; for if the apostle's inspiration is admitted, the correctness of his interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures cannot be doubted. Inappropriate applications of them, it is evident, would be inconsistent with his having spoken under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of God. And if these verses are applicable to the Savior of men, they contain an irrefragable proof of his essential divinity. He is called *Jehovah* throughout the psalm, a name peculiar to God only; the creation of all things is said to be performed by him, a work peculiar to God only; eternity and immutability are ascribed to him, attributes which in the strict and absolute sense belong exclusively to God.

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Way or *journey* is a term often used in Scripture to denote the course of a man's life; and here the Psalmist speaks, as other sacred writers not unfrequently do, of the whole Jewish nation as if it were one man, and of its continuance, which was to be until the coming of Christ, as if the life of one man. It was now, so to speak, only in its meridian. An attention to this remark will assist the reader in understanding Calvin's exposition of the passage.

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Consequently, the ruin and desolation to which they seemed given up by the Babylonish captivity, was like the cutting off or shortening of their days.

What then does the prophet mean when he prays, *Let us not perish in the midst of our course?* [160] The reason stated in the clause immediately following, *Thy years are from generation to generation,* seems to be quite inapplicable in the present case. Because God is everlasting, does it therefore follow that men will be everlasting too? But on Psalm 90:2, we have shown how we may with propriety bring forward his eternity, as a ground of confidence in reference to our salvation; for he desires to be known as eternal, not only in his mysterious and incomprehensible essence, but also in his word, according to the declaration of the Prophet Isaiah,

"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; but the word of our God shall stand for ever."
Isaiah 40:6-8

Now since God links us to himself by means of his word, however great the distance of our frail condition from his heavenly glory, our faith should nevertheless penetrate to that blessed state from which he looks down upon our miseries. Although the comparison between his eternal existence and the brief duration of human life is introduced also for another purpose, yet when he sees that men pass away as it were in a moment, and speedily evanish, it moves him to compassion, as shall presently be declared at greater length.

25 *Thou hast aforetime founded the earth* Here the sacred writer amplifies what he had previously stated, declaring, that compared with God the whole world is a form which quickly vanishes away; and yet a little after he represents the Church as exempted from this the common lot of all sublunary things, because she has for her foundation the word of God, while her safety is secured by the same word. Two subjects are therefore here brought under our consideration. The first is, that since the heavens themselves are in the sight of God almost as evanescent as smoke, the frailty of the whole human race is such as may well excite his compassion; and the second is, that although there is no stability in the heavens and the earth, yet the Church shall continue steadfast for ever, because she is upheld by the eternal truth of God. By the first of these positions, true believers are taught to consider with all humility, when they come into the divine presence, how frail and transitory their condition is, that they may bring nothing with them but their own emptiness. Such self-abasement is the first step to our obtaining favor in the sight of God, even as He also affirms that he is moved by

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"Possibly the Psalmist (whom some learned interpreters suppose to be Daniel) may have respect to that prophecy, Daniel 9:24, 25, which probably was published before this time; for this time was almost precisely the midst of the days between the building of the material temple by Solomon, and the building of the spiritual temple, or the Church, by the Messias; there being about a thousand years distance between these two periods, whereof seventy prophetical weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, were yet to come. And so he prays that God would not root them out of this Babylonish captivity, but would graciously restore them to their own land, and preserve them as a Church and nation there, until the coming of the Messias." — *Poole's Annotations.*

the sight of our miseries to be merciful to us. The comparison taken from the heavens is a very happy illustration; for how long have they continued to exist, when contrasted with the brief span of human life, which passes or rather flies away so swiftly? How many generations of men have passed away since the creation, while the heavens still continue as they were amidst this continual fluctuation? Again, so beautiful is their arrangement, and so excellent their frame-work, that the whole fabric proclaims itself to be the product of *God's hands* [161] And yet neither the long period during which the heavens have existed, nor their fair embellishment, will exempt them from perishing. What then shall become of us poor mortals, who die when we are as yet scarcely born? for there is no part of our life which does not rapidly hasten to death.

Interpreters, however, do not all explain these words, *The heavens shall perish,* in the same way. Some understand them as expressing simply the change they shall undergo, which will be a species of destruction; for although they are not to be reduced to nothing, yet this change of their nature, as it may be termed, will destroy what is mortal and corruptible in them, so that they shall become, in a manner, different and new heavens. Others explain the words conditionally, and make the supplement, "If it so please God," regarding it as a thing absurd to say that the heavens are subject to corruption. But first, there is no necessity for introducing these supplementary words, which obscure the sense instead of making it plainer. In the next place, these expositors improperly attribute an immortal state to the heavens, of which Paul declares that they "groan and travail in pain," like the earth and the other creatures, until the day of redemption, (Romans 8:22) because they are subject to corruption; not indeed willingly, or in their own nature, but because man, by precipitating himself headlong into destruction, has drawn the whole world into a participation of the same ruin. Two things are to be here attended to; first, that the heavens are actually subject to corruption in consequence of the fall of man; and, secondly, that they shall be so renewed as to warrant the prophet to say that *they shall perish;* for this renovation will be so complete that they shall not be the same but other heavens. The amount is, that to whatever quarter we turn our eyes, we will see everywhere nothing but ground for despair till we come to God. What is there in us but rottenness and corruption? and what else are we but a mirror of death? Again, what are the changes which the whole world undergoes but a kind of presage, yea a prelude of destruction? If the whole frame-work of the world is hastening to its end, what will become of the human race? If all nations are doomed to perish, what stability will there

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"The phrase is borrowed from the fact, that *hands* are the instruments by which men usually perform any operation; and this is, like other human operations and affections, figuratively transferred to God." — *Stuart* on Hebrews 1:10.

be in men individually considered? We ought therefore to seek stability no where else but in God.

28. *The children of thy servants shall dwell.* By these words the prophet intimates that he does not ask the preservation of the Church, because it is a part of the human race, but because God has raised it above the revolutions of the world. And undoubtedly, when He adopted us as his children, his design was to cherish us as it were in his own bosom. The inference of the inspired bard is not, therefore, far-fetched, when, amidst innumerable storms, each of which might carry us away, he hopes that the Church will have a permanent existence. It is true, that when through our own fault we become estranged from God, we are also as it were cut off from the fountain of life; but no sooner are we reconciled to Him than he begins again to pour down his blessings upon us. Whence it follows that true believers, as they are regenerated by the incorruptible seed, shall continue to live after death, because God continues unchangeably the same. By the word *dwell,* is to be understood an abiding and everlasting inheritance.

When it is said that the seed of God's servants shall be established *before his face,* the meaning is, that it is not after the manner of the world, or according to the way in which the heavens and the earth are established, that the salvation of true believers is made steadfast, but because of the holy union which exists between them and God. By *the seed* and *children* of the godly, is to be understood not all their descendants without exception — for many who spring from them according to the flesh become degenerate — but those who do not turn aside from the faith of their parents. Successive generations are expressly pointed out, because the covenant extends even to future ages, as we shall again find in the subsequent psalm. If we firmly keep the treasure of life intrusted to us, let us not hesitate, although we may be environed with innumerable deaths, to cast the anchor of our faith in heaven, that the stability of our welfare may rest in God.

Psalm 103

PSALM 103

By this psalm every godly man is taught to give thanks to God for the mercies bestowed upon himself in particular, and then for the grace which God has vouchsafed to all his chosen ones in common, by making a covenant of salvation with them in his law, that he might make them partakers of his adoption. But the Psalmist chiefly magnifies the mercy by which God sustains and bears with his people; and that not on account of any merit or worth of theirs, for they only deserve to be visited with severe punishment, but because he compassionates their frailty. The psalm is at length concluded with a general ascription of praise to God.

Psalm 103:1-5

A Psalm of David. [162]

1. Bless Jehovah, O my soul! and all my inward parts, bless his holy name. **2.** Bless Jehovah, O my soul! and forget not any of his benefits: **3.** Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; **4.**

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Who redeemeth thy life from the grave; who crowneth [163] thee with mercy and compassions; **5.** Who satisfieth [or filleth] thy mouth with good: thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's. [164]

1. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul!* The prophet, by stirring up himself to gratitude, gives by his own example a lesson to every man of the duty incumbent upon him. And doubtless our slothfulness in this matter has need of continual incitement. If even the prophet, who was inflamed with a more intense and fervent zeal than other men, was not free from this malady, of which his earnestness in stimulating himself is a plain confession, how much more necessary is it for us, who have abundant experience of our own torpor, to apply the same means for our quickening? The Holy Spirit, by his mouth, indirectly upbraids us on account of our not being more diligent in praising God, and at the same time points out the remedy, that every man may descend into himself and correct his own sluggishness. Not content with calling upon his *soul* (by which he unquestionably means the seat of the understanding and affections) to bless *God,* the prophet expressly adds his *inward parts,* addressing as it were his own mind and heart, and all the faculties of both. When he thus speaks to himself, it is as if, removed from the presence of men, he examined himself before God. The repetition renders his language still more emphatic, as if he thereby intended to reprove his own slothfulness.

The author of this beautiful and affecting psalm was David; but the time and occasion of its composition are uncertain. Some are of opinion that it is a song of gratitude for David's recovery from some dangerous sickness. Others think it was written upon his receiving assurance that his great sin in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah was forgiven. "I am not prepared to say," observes Walford, "that this judgment is certainly correct; but as it is a subject of no great moment, am willing to acquiesce in it. If it be correct, then we have two of the most instructive examples of enlightened and fervent piety, which are contained in the Holy Scriptures, occasioned by one failure in the conduct of a good man, who was habitually remarkable for his steadfast obedience to the laws of God. The one of these examples is in Psalm 51, in which the sacred writer records his deep and humble penitence: and the other, which is now before us, displays the feelings of sacred joy and thankfulness, in terms that are most delightful and consolatory. So admirably adapted are these two psalms to the varied sentiments and emotions of Christian feeling, that I can scarcely suppose any real believer of the gospel is to be found who has not, on multiplied occasions, made them the objects of his attentive meditation, so as to have, if not the express words, yet the sense of them, engraven on his heart and memory, in characters never to be effaced but by death."

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"Ou, envirrone." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, surroundeth."

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Walford's rendering of this verse is as follows: —

"Who satisfieth thy advancing age with good;
Thy youth is renewed as the eagle's."

In defense of reading "thy advancing age" instead of "thy mouth" as it is in our English translation, and as Calvin has it, he observes, "The version here adopted is that of the Chaldee, and is supported by the parallelism in the following clause."

2. *And forget not any of his benefits* Here, he instructs us that God is not deficient on his part in furnishing us with abundant matter for praising him. It is our own ingratitude which hinders us from engaging in this exercise. In the first place, he teaches us that the reason why God deals with such liberality towards us is, that we may be led to celebrate his praise; but at the same time he condemns our inconstancy, which hurries us away to any other object rather than to God. How is it that we are so listless and drowsy in the performance of this the chief exercise of true religion, if it is not because our shameful and wicked forgetfulness buries in our hearts the innumerable benefits of God, which are openly manifest to heaven and earth? Did we only retain the remembrance of them, the prophet assures us that we would be sufficiently inclined to perform our duty, since the sole prohibition which he lays upon us is, *not to forget them.*

3. *Who forgiveth all thy iniquities* He now enumerates the different kinds of the divine benefits, in considering which he has told us that we are too forgetful and slothful. It is not without cause that he begins with God's pardoning mercy, for reconciliation with him is the fountain from which all other blessings flow. God's goodness extends even to the ungodly; but they are, notwithstanding, so far from having the enjoyment of it, that they do not even taste it. The first then of all the blessings of which we have the true and substantial enjoyment, is that which consists in God's freely pardoning and blotting out our sins, and receiving us into his favor. Yea, rather the forgiveness of sins, since it is accompanied with our restoration to the favor of God, also sanctifies whatever good things he bestows upon us, that they may contribute to our welfare. The second clause is; either a repetition of the same sentiment, or else it opens up a wider view of it; for the consequence of free forgiveness is, that God governs us by his Spirit, mortifies the lusts of our flesh, cleanses us from our corruptions, and restores us to the healthy condition of a godly and an upright life. These who understand the words, *who healeth all thy diseases,* as referring to the diseases of the body, and as implying that God, when he has forgiven our sins, also delivers us from bodily maladies, seem to put upon them a meaning too restricted. I have no doubt that the medicine spoken of has a respect to the blotting out of guilt; and, secondly, to the curing us of the corruptions inherent in our nature, which is effected by the Spirit of regeneration; and if any one will add as a third particular included, that God being once pacified towards us, also remits the punishment which we deserve, I will not object. Let us learn from this passage that, until the heavenly Physician succor us, we nourish within us, not only many diseases, but even many deaths.

4 *Who redeemeth thy life from the grave* The Psalmist expresses more plainly what our condition is previous to God's curing our maladies — that we are dead and adjudged to the grave. The consideration that the mercy of God delivers us from death and destruction ought, therefore, to lead us to prize it the more highly. If the resurrection of the soul from the grave is the

first step of spiritual life, what room for self-gloriation is left to man? The prophet next teaches us that the incomparable grace of God shines forth in the very commencement of our salvation, as well as in its whole progress; and the more to enhance the commendation of this grace, he adds the word *compassions* in the plural number. He asserts that we are *surrounded* with them; as if he had said, Before, behind, on all sides, above and beneath, the grace of God presents itself to us in immeasurable abundance; so that there is no place devoid of it. The same truth he afterwards amplifies in these words, *thy mouth is satisfied,* by which metaphor he alludes to the free indulgence of the palate, to which we surrender ourselves when we have a well-furnished table; for those who have scanty fare dare scarcely eat till they are half satisfied. [165] Not that he approves of gluttony in greedily devouring God's benefits, as men give loose reins to intemperance whenever they have great abundance; but he borrowed this phraseology from the common custom of men, to teach us that whatever good things our hearts can wish flow to us from God's bounty, even to perfect satisfaction. Those who take the Hebrew word עדי, *adi,* for *ornament,* [166] mar the passage by a mere conceit of their own; and I am surprised how so groundless an imagination should have come into their minds, unless it may be accounted for from the circumstance that it is usual for men of a prying or inquisitive turn of mind, when they would show their ingenuity, to bring forward mere puerilities. The Psalmist next adds, that God was constantly infusing into him new vigor, so that his strength continued unimpaired, even as the Prophet Isaiah, (Isaiah 65:20) in discoursing on the restoration of the Church, says that a man of a hundred years old shall be like a child. By this mode of expression, he intimates that God, along with a very abundant supply of all good things, communicates to him also inward rigor, that he may enjoy them; and thus his strength was as it were continually renewed. From the comparison of the eagle, the Jews have taken occasion to invent, for the purpose of explanation, a fabulous story. Although they know not even the first elements of any

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"A grand' peine osent-ils manger a demi leur saoul." — *Fr.*

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"Abu Walid mentions two interpretations: 1. That of our English translators; 2. That which takes עדיך in the sense of *ornament*, 'who multiplieth thy adorning with good,' *i e.*, 'who abundantly adorneth thee with good.' Aben Ezra approves the notion of *ornament*, but applies it to the soul, the ornament of the body, *i e.*, 'who satisfieth thy soul with good.'" — *Hammond* The Septuagint reads, ἔπιθυμίαν σου, "thy desire," or "sensitive appetite," the satisfying of which is the providing for the body all the good things it stands in need of, and thus it is equivalent to "satisfying," or "filling the mouth," the organ for conveying nourishment to the body. Kimchi understands the phrase as expressing David's recovery from sickness. In sickness the soul abhorreth bread, and even dainty meat, Job 33:20. The physician, too, limits the diet of the patient, and prescribes things which are nauseous to the palate. This commentator, therefore, supposes that David here describes the blessing of health, by *his mouth being filled with good things*

science, yet so presumptuous are they, that whatever may be the matter treated of, they never hesitate to attempt to explain it, and whenever they meet with any thing which they do not understand, there is no figment so foolish that they do not bring forward, as if it were an oracle of God. Thus, for expounding the present passage, they give out that eagles, every tenth year, ascend to the elemental fire, that their feathers may be burnt, [167] and that then they plunge themselves into the sea, and immediately new feathers grow upon them. But we may easily gather the simple meaning of the Prophet from the nature of the eagle, as described by philosophers, and which is well-known from observation. That bird continues fresh and vigorous, even to extreme old age, unenfeebled by years, and exempt from disease, until it finally dies of hunger. That it is long-lived is certain; but at last, its beak or bill grows so great that it cannot any longer take food, and, consequently, is forced to suck blood, or to nourish itself by drinking. Hence the ancient proverb in reference to old men who are addicted to drinking, *The eagle's old age;* for necessity then constrains eagles to drink much. But as drink alone is insufficient to maintain life, they die rather through hunger, than fail by the natural decay of strength. [168] Now we perceive, without the help of any invented story, the genuine meaning of the Prophet to be, that as eagles always retain their rigor, and even in their

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"Afin que leurs plumes soyent bruslees." — *Fr.*

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What Calvin here asserts of the eagle has as little foundation in truth as the Jewish fiction which he justly discards. Augustine's explanation of the renewal of the youth of the eagle is equally fabulous. He affirms that in its old age its beak grows out so long, and becomes so incurvated, as to hinder it from taking food, thus endangering its life, but that it removes the excrescence, by striking its beak against a stone, so that it is enabled to take its ordinary food, and becomes young again. "There are," says Dr Adam Clarke, "as many legends of the eagle among the ancient writers as there are in the Kalendar of some saints, and all *equally true.* Even among modern divines, Bible-Dictionary men, and such like, the most ridiculous tales concerning this bird continue to be propagated; and no small portion of them have been crowded into comments on this very verse." Of these "legends of the eagle," the accounts given of it by the Jewish commentators, by Calvin himself, and by Augustine, are a specimen; for they are altogether unsupported from its natural history. The Psalmist, in speaking of the renewing of its youth, we conceive refers simply to the changing of its feathers. Like all other birds, the eagle has its annual moulting season, in which it casts its old feathers, and is furnished with a new stock. When its plumage is thus renewed, its appearance becomes more youthful and beautiful, while, at the same time, its rigour and liveliness are improved. In like manner, by the communications of Divine grace, the spiritual beauty, strength, and activity of the people of God are increased. Although any other bird would have served the Psalmist's purpose, yet he may have preferred the eagle, not only because it is the king of birds, superior to others of the feathered tribe in size, strength, and vivacity, but because it retains its vigor to a protracted old age, and preserves its youthful appearance to the last by the frequent change of its plumage. The Prophet Isaiah uses the same allusion, to illustrate the perseverance of the saints in holiness,

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles."
Isaiah 40:31

old age are still youthful, so the godly are sustained by a secret influence derived from God, by which they continue in the possession of unimpaired strength. They are not always, it is true, full of bodily vigor while in this world, but rather painfully drag on their lives in continual weakness; still what is here said applies to them in a certain sense. This unquestionably is common to all in general, that they have been brought out of the grave, and have experienced God to be bountiful to them in innumerable ways. Were each of them duly to reflect how much he is indebted to God, he would say with good reason *that his mouth is filled with good things;* just as David, in Psalm 40:5, and 139:18, confesses that he was unable to reckon up the Divine benefits, because "they are more in number than the sands of the sea." Did not our own perverseness blind our understandings, we would see that, even in famine, we are furnished with food in such a manner, as that God shows us the manifold riches of his goodness. With regard to the renovation of our strength, the meaning is, that since, when our outward man decays, we are renewed to a better life, we have no reason to be troubled at the giving way of our strength, especially when he sustains us by his Spirit under the weakness and languishing of our mortal frames.

Psalm 103:6-8

> **6.** Jehovah executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. **7.** He made known his ways to Moses, his doings to the children of Israel. **8.** Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness.

6. *Jehovah executeth righteousness* David having recounted the Divine benefits bestowed upon himself, now passes from this personal consideration to take a wider view of the subject. There is, however, no doubt that when he declares God to be the succorer of *the oppressed,* he includes himself among the number, for he had enjoyed the Divine help under many persecutions; and, from his own experience, he describes the character in which God is accustomed to manifest himself towards all who are unrighteously afflicted. As the faithful, while in this world, are always living among wolves, by using the plural number, he celebrates a variety of deliverances, to teach us that it is God's ordinary work to succor his servants whenever he sees them injuriously treated. Hence we are taught to exercise patience when we find that God takes it upon him to avenge our wrongs, and that he covers us with the shield of his justice, or defends us with the sword of his judgment, as often as we are assaulted wrongfully.

The eagle seems to have borrowed its Hebrew name נשר, *nesher*, from the shedding of its plumage. Its root is the Chaldee verb נשר, *nashar*, *decidit*, *defluxit*, *he fell*, *he shed* "The name agrees with שור, *to look at*," says Bythner, "because the eagle can look at the sun with a straight and steady gaze; also with ישר, *to be straight*, because it flies in a straight course."

7 *He hath made known his ways to Moses* David now speaks in the name of the chosen people; and this he does very suitably, being led to it by the consideration of the benefits which God had bestowed upon himself. Convinced that it was only as a member of the Church that he had been enriched with so many blessings, he immediately carries back his contemplations to the common covenant made with the people of Israel. He, however, continues the same train of thought as in the preceding verse; for these *ways,* which he says had been shown to Moses, were nothing else than the deliverance wrought for the people until they entered the promised land. He selected this as an instance of God's righteousness and judgment, surpassing all others, to prove that God always shows himself righteous in succoring those who are oppressed. But since this instance depended upon the Divine promise, he doubtless has an eye principally to it; his language implying that God's righteousness was clearly demonstrated and seen in the history of the chosen people, whom he had adopted, and with whom he had entered into covenant. God is said to have made known his ways first to Moses, who was his servant and messenger, and afterwards to all the people. Moses is here represented as invested with the office to which he was Divinely appointed; for it was God's will to be made known to the people by the hand and working of that distinguished man. The *ways,* then, and the *doings of God,* are his rising up with wonderful power to deliver the people, his leading them through the Red Sea, and his manifesting his presence with them by many signs and miracles. But as all this flowed from the free covenant, David exhorts himself and others to give thanks to God for having chosen them to be his peculiar people, and for enlightening their minds by the truths of his law. Man, without the knowledge of God, being the most miserable object that can be imagined, the discovery which God has been pleased to make to us in his Word, of his fatherly love, is an incomparable treasure of perfect happiness.

8. *Jehovah is merciful and gracious* David seems to allude to the exclamation of Moses, recorded in Exodus 34:6, where the nature of God, revealed in a remarkable way, is more clearly described than in other places. When Moses was admitted to take a nearer view of the Divine glory than was usually obtained, he exclaimed upon beholding it, "O God! merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, slow to wrath, and abundant in goodness." As, therefore, he has summarily comprehended in that passage all that is important for us to know concerning the Divine character, David happily applies these terms, by which God is there described, to his present purpose. His design is to ascribe entirely to the goodness of God the fact that the Israelites, who by their own wickedness forfeited from time to time their relation to him, as his adopted people, nevertheless continued in that relation. Farther, we must understand in general, that the true knowledge of God corresponds to what faith discovers in the written Word; for it is not his will that we should search into his secret essence, except in so far as

he makes himself known to us, a point worthy of our special notice. We see that whenever God is mentioned, the minds of men are perversely carried away to cold speculations, and fix their attention on things which can profit them nothing; while, in the meantime, they neglect those manifestations of his perfections which meet our eyes, and which afford a vivid reflection of his character. To whatever subjects men apply their minds, there is none from which they will derive greater advantage than from continual meditation on his wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and mercy; and especially the knowledge of his goodness is fitted both to build up our faith, and to illustrate his praises. Accordingly, Paul, in Ephesians 3:18, declares that our height, length, breadth, and depth, consists in knowing the unspeakable riches of grace, which have been manifested to us in Christ. This also is the reason why David, copying from Moses, magnifies by a variety of terms the mercy of God. In the first place, as we have no worse fault than that devilish arrogance which robs God of his due praise, and which yet is so deeply rooted in us, that it cannot be easily eradicated; God rises up, and that he may bring to nought the heaven-daring presumption of the flesh, asserts in lofty terms his own mercy, by which alone we stand. Again, when we ought to rely upon the grace of God, our minds tremble or waver, and there is nothing in which we find greater difficulty than to acknowledge that He is merciful to us. David, to meet and overcome this doubting state of mind, after the example of Moses, employs these synonymous terms: first, that God is merciful; secondly, that he is gracious; thirdly, that he patiently and compassionately bears with the sins of men; and, lastly, that he is abundant in mercy and goodness.

Psalm 103:9-12

> **9.** He will not always chide: nor will he keep his anger for ever. **10.** He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. **11.** For in proportion to the height of the heavens above the earth has been the greatness of his goodness [169] upon [170] them that fear him. **12.** As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

9 *He will not always chide* David, from the attributes ascribed to God in the preceding verse, draws the conclusion, that when God has been offended, he will not be irreconcilable, since, from his nature, he is always inclined to forgive. It was necessary to add this statement; for our sins would be continually shutting the gate against his goodness were there not some way of appeasing his anger. David tacitly intimates that God institutes an action against sinners to lay them low under a true sense of their guilt; and that yet

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"Ou, il a magnifie sa bonte." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, he hath magnified his goodness."

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he recedes from it whenever he sees them subdued and humbled. God speaks in a different manner in Genesis 6:3, where he says, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with man," because the wickedness of men being fully proved, it was then time to condemn them. But here David maintains that God will not always chide, because so easy is he to be reconciled, and so ready to pardon, that he does not rigidly exact from us what strict justice might demand. To the same purpose is the language in the second clause: *nor will he keep anger for ever* The expression, *to keep anger for ever,* corresponds with the French phrase, *Je lui garde, Il me l'a garde,* [171] which we use when the man, who cannot forgive the injuries he has received, cherishes secret revenge in his heart, and waits for an opportunity of retaliation. Now David denies that God, after the manner of men, keeps anger on account of the injuries done to him, since he condescends to be reconciled. It is, however, to be understood that this statement does not represent the state of the Divine mind towards all mankind without distinction: it sets forth a special privilege of the Church; for God is expressly called by Moses, (Deuteronomy 5:9) "a terrible avenger, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children." But David, passing by unbelievers, upon whom rests the everlasting and unappeasable wrath of God, teaches us how tenderly he pardons his own children, even as God himself speaks in Isaiah, (Isaiah 54:7, 8,) "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from them for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins* The Psalmist here proves from experience, or from the effect, what he has stated concerning the Divine character; for it was entirely owing to the wonderful forbearance of God that the Israelites had hitherto continued to exist. Let each of us, as if he had said, examine his own life; let us inquire in how many ways we have provoked

"Hammond prefers reading *above* "Though על," says he, "signifies *on* and *towards*, as well as *above* or *over*, and may be fitly so rendered, verses 13 and 17, where (as here) God's *mercy* is said to be על, *upon his children*, and על, *upon them that fear him*; yet the comparison that is here made between *the heaven* and *the earth*, and the *height* or excellence of the one על, (not *upon* but) *above* the other, being answered, in the ἀντα πόδοσις, by the *greatness* or *strength* (so גבר signifies) of God's *mercy*, יראיו על; that phrase must by analogy be rendered *above*, not *upon*, or *towards them that fear him* And then the meaning must needs be this, that whatsoever our *fear* or *obedience* to God be, his *mercy* towards us is as far *above* the size or proportion of that, as *the heaven is above the earth*, *i e.*, there is no proportion between them; the one is as a point to that other vast circumference; nay, the difference far greater, as God's *mercy* is infinite, like himself, and so infinitely exceeding the pitiful imperfect degree of our obedience. The other expression that follows verse 12, taken from the distance of the *East from the West*, is pitched upon, says Kimchi, because those two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, being all known and inhabited. From whence it is that geographers reckon that way their longitudes, as from North to South their latitudes."

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"I am watching him, as he has watched to do a bad turn to me."

the wrath of God? or, rather, do we not continually provoke it? and yet he not only forbears to punish us, but bountifully maintains those whom he might justly destroy.

11. *For in proportion to the height of the heavens above the earth* The Psalmist here confirms by a comparison the truth that God does not punish the faithful as they have deserved, but, by his mercy, strives against their sins. The form of expression is equivalent to saying that God's mercy towards us is infinite. With respect to the word גבר, *gabar,* it is of little consequence whether it is taken in a neuter signification, or in a transitive, as is noted on the margin; for in either way the immeasurableness of God's mercy is compared to the vast extent of the world. As the mercy of God could not reach us, unless the obstacle of our guilt were taken away, it is immediately added, (verse 12th,) that God removes our sins as far from us *as the east is distant from the west* The amount is, that God's mercy is poured out upon the faithful far and wide, according to the magnitude of the world; and that, in order to take away every impediment to its course, their sins are completely blotted out. The Psalmist confirms what I have just now stated, namely, that he does not treat in general of what God is towards the whole world, but of the character in which he manifests himself towards the faithful. Whence also it is evident that he does not here speak of that mercy by which God reconciles us to himself at the first, but of that with which he continually follows those whom he has embraced with his fatherly love. There is one kind of mercy by which he restores us from death to life, while as yet we are strangers to him, and another by which he sustains this restored life; for that blessing would forthwith be lost did he not confirm it in us by daily pardoning our sins. Whence also we gather how egregiously the Papists trifle in imagining that the free remission of sins is bestowed only once, and that afterwards righteousness is acquired or retained by the merit of good works, and that whatever guilt we contract is removed by satisfactions. Here David does not limit to a moment of time the mercy by which God reconciles us to himself in not imputing to us our sins, but extends it even to the close of life. Not less powerful is the argument which this passage furnishes us in refutation of those fanatics who bewitch both themselves and others with a vain opinion of their having attained to perfect righteousness, so that they no longer stand in need of pardon.

Psalm 103:13-16

13. As a father is compassionate towards his children, so has Jehovah been compassionate [172] towards them that fear him. **14.** For he knoweth of what we are made; he hath remembered that we are dust. **15.** As for man, his days are like the grass: as a flower of the field,

172 In the French the verb is in the present tense, "So Jehovah is compassionate."

so he flourisheth. **16.** As soon as the wind passeth over it, it is gone; [173] and its place shall know it no more.

13. *As a father is compassionate towards his children,* The Psalmist not only explains by a comparison what he has already stated, but he at the same time assigns the cause why God so graciously forgives us, which is, because he is a *father* It is then in consequence of God's having freely and sovereignly adopted us as his children that he continually pardons our sins, and accordingly we are to draw from that fountain the hope of forgiveness. And as no man has been adopted on the ground of his own merit, it follows that sins are freely pardoned. God is compared to earthly fathers, not because he is in every respect like them, but because there is no earthly image by which his unparalleled love towards us can be better expressed. That God's fatherly goodness may not be perverted as an encouragement to sin, David again repeats that God is thus favorable only to those who are his sincere worshippers. It is indeed a proof of no ordinary forbearance for God to "make his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," (Matthew 5:45;) but the subject here treated is the free imputation of the righteousness by which we are accounted the children of God. Now this righteousness is offered only to those who entirely devote themselves to so bountiful a Father, and reverently submit to his word. But as our attainments in godliness in this world, whatever they may be, come far short of perfection, there remains only one pillar on which our salvation can securely rest, and that is the goodness of God.

14. *For he knoweth* David here annihilates all the worth which men would arrogate to themselves, and asserts that it is the consideration of our misery, and that alone, which moves God to exercise patience towards us. This again we ought carefully to mark, not only for the purpose of subduing the pride of our flesh, but also that a sense of our unworthiness may not prevent us from trusting in God. The more wretched and despicable our condition is, the more inclined is God to show mercy, for the remembrance that we are clay and dust is enough to incite him to do us good.

To the same purpose is the comparison immediately following, (verse 15,) that all the excellency of man withers away like a fading flower at the first blast of the wind. Man is indeed improperly said *to flourish.* But as it might be alleged that he is, nevertheless, distinguished by some endowment or other, David grants that he flourishes like the grass, instead of saying, as he might justly have done, that he is a vapor or shadow, or a thing of nought. Although, as long as we live in this world, we are adorned with natural gifts,

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It has been supposed that there is here a reference to that pestilential destructive wind of the East, called the Simoon, which, from its extreme heat, destroys at once every green thing. Disease and death overtake man, and reduce him to his original dust, as surely and speedily as this scorching wind blasts the tender flower.

and, to say nothing of other things, "live, and move, and have our being in God," (Acts 17:28;) yet as we have nothing except what is dependent on the will of another, and which may be taken from us every hour, our life is only a show or phantom that passes away. The subject here treated, is properly the brevity of life, to which God has a regard in so mercifully pardoning us, as it is said in another psalm: "He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again," (Psalm 78:39.) If it is asked why David, making no mention of the soul, which yet is the principal part of man, declares us to be dust and clay? I answer, that it is enough to induce God mercifully to sustain us, when he sees that nothing surpasses our life in frailty. And although the soul, after it has departed from the prison of the body, remains alive, yet its doing so does not arise from any inherent power of its own. Were God to withdraw his grace, the soul would be nothing more than a puff or blast, even as the body is dust; and thus there would doubtless be found in the whole man nothing but mere vanity.

Psalm 103:17-18

17. But the goodness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness upon the children's children; **18.** To those who keep his covenant, and remember his statutes to do them

17. *But the goodness of Jehovah, etc* The Psalmist leaves nothing to men to rely upon but the mercy of God; for it would be egregious folly to seek a ground of confidence in themselves. After having shown the utter emptiness of men, he adds the seasonable consolation, that, although they have no intrinsic excellence, which does not vanish into smoke, yet God is an inexhaustible fountain of life, to supply their wants. This contrast is to be particularly observed; for whom does he thus divest of all excellence? The faithful who are regenerated by the Spirit of God, and who worship him with true devotion, these are the persons whom he leaves nothing on which their hope may rest but the mere goodness of God. As the Divine goodness is everlasting, the weakness and frailty of the faithful does not prevent them from boasting of eternal salvation to the close of life, and even in death itself. David does not confine their hope within the limits of time — he views it as commensurate in duration with the grace on which it is founded. To *goodness* is subjoined *righteousness*, a word, as we have had occasion frequently to observe before, denoting the protection by which God defends and preserves his own people. He is then called righteous, not because he rewards every man according to his desert, but because he deals faithfully with his saints, in spreading the hand of his protection over them. The Prophet has properly placed this righteousness after goodness, as being the effect of goodness. He also asserts that it extends to the children and children's children, according to these words in Deuteronomy 7:9, "God

keepeth mercy to a thousand generations." It is a singular proof of his love that he not only receives each of us individually into his favor, but also herein associates with us our offspring, as it were by hereditary right, that they may be partakers of the same adoption. How shall He cast us off, who, in receiving our children and children's children into his protection, shows to us in their persons how precious our salvation is in his sight?

Farther, as nothing is more easy than for hypocrites to flatter themselves under a false pretext, that they are in favor with God, or for degenerate children groundlessly to apply to themselves the promises made to their fathers, it is again stated, by way of exception, in the 18th verse, that God is merciful only to *those who,* on their part, *keep his covenant,* which the unbelieving make of none effect by their wickedness. The *keeping,* or *observing of the covenant,* which is here put instead of the *fear of God,* mentioned in the preceding verse, is worthy of notice; for thus David intimates that none are the true worshippers of God but those who reverently obey his Word. Very far from this are the Papists, who, thinking themselves equal to the angels in holiness, nevertheless shake off the yoke of God, like wild beasts, by trampling under foot his Holy Word. David, therefore, rightly judges of men's godliness, by their submitting themselves to the Word of God, and following the rule which he has prescribed to them. As the covenant begins with a solemn article containing the promise of grace, faith and prayer are required, above all things, to the proper keeping of it. Nor is the additional clause superfluous — *who remember his statutes;* for, although God is continually putting us in mind of them, yet we soon slide away to worldly cares — are confused by a multiplicity of avocations, and are lulled asleep by many allurements. Thus forgetfulness extinguishes the light of truth, unless the faithful stir up themselves from time to time. David tells us that this remembrance of God's statutes has an invigorating effect when men employ themselves in doing them. Many are sufficiently forward to discourse upon them with their tongues whose feet are very slow, and whose hands are well nigh dead, in regard to active service.

Psalm 103:19-22

> **19.** Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. **20.** Bless Jehovah, ye his angels, who are mighty in strength, who do his commandment, in hearing [174] the voice of his word. **21.** Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts; ye his ministers, who

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In the French version it is "en obeissant," "in obeying." Hammond reads, "at hearing;" and observes," The sense of לשמע in this place seems best expressed by the Arabic, as soon as they hear; for that is the character of the angels' obedience, that as soon as they hear the voice of God's word, as soon as his will is revealed to them, they promptly and presently obey it. The Chaldee renders it, 'at his voice being heard;' and the LXX. Τοῦ ἀκοῦσαι, 'as they hear,' or 'as soon as they hear.'"

do his pleasure. **22.** Bless Jehovah, all ye his works in all places of his dominion: bless Jehovah, O my soul!

19. *Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens* David having recounted the benefits by which God lays each of us in particular, and also the whole Church, under obligation to him, now extols in general his infinite glory. The amount is, that whenever God is mentioned, men should learn to ascend in their contemplations above the whole world, because his majesty transcends the heavens; and they should farther learn not to measure his power by that of man, since it has under its control all kingdoms and dominions. That none may think that earthly creatures only are here put in subjection to God, the Psalmist chiefly addresses the angels. In calling upon them to join in praising God, he teaches both himself and all the godly, that there is not a better nor a more desirable exercise than to praise God, since there is not a more excellent service in which even the angels are employed. The angels are doubtless too willing and prompt in the discharge of this duty, to stand in need of incitement from us. With what face then, it may be said, can we, whose slothfulness is so great, take it upon us to exhort them? But although these exalted beings run swiftly before us, and we with difficulty come lagging after them, yet David enjoins them to sing God's praises for our sake, that by their example he may awaken us from our drowsiness. The object he has in view, as I have adverted to before, is to be noted, which is, by addressing his discourse to the angels to teach us, that the highest end which they propose to themselves is to advance the divine glory. Accordingly, while in one sentence he clothes them with *strength,* in the immediately following, he describes them as hanging on God's word, waiting for his orders, — *Ye who do his commandment* However great the power, as if he had said, with which you are endued, you reckon nothing more honorable than to obey God. And it is not only said that they execute God's commandments, but to express more distinctly the promptitude of their obedience, it is asserted, that they are always ready to perform whatever he commands them.

21 *Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts.* By *hosts* is not to be understood the stars, as some explain it. The subject of the preceding verse is still continued. Nor is the repetition superfluous; for the word *hosts* teaches us that there are myriads of myriads who stand before the throne of God, ready to receive every intimation of his will. Again, they are called *his ministers who do his pleasure,* to intimate to us, that they are not there intent in idly beholding God's glory, but that having been appointed as our ministers and guardians, they are always ready for their work. Instead of *word,* the term *pleasure* is here used, and both are employed with much propriety; for although the sun, the moon, and the stars, observe the laws which God has ordained for them, yet being without understanding, they cannot properly be said to obey his word and his voice. The term *obey* is indeed sometimes transferred

to the mute and insensible parts of creation. [175] It is, however, only in a metaphorical sense that they can be said *to hearken to God's voice,* when by a secret instinct of nature they fulfill his purposes. But this in the proper sense is true of angels, who actively obey him upon their understanding from his sacred mouth what he would have them to do. The word *pleasure* expresses more plainly a joyful and cheerful obedience, implying that the angels not only obey God's commandments, but also willingly and with the greatest delight receive the intimations of his will, that they may perform what he would have them to do. Such is the import of the Hebrew noun, as has been stated elsewhere.

22 *Bless Jehovah, all ye his works* The Psalmist in conclusion addresses all creatures; for although they may be without speech and understanding, yet they ought in a manner to re-echo the praises of their Creator. This he does on our account, that we may learn that there is not a corner in heaven or on earth where God is not praised. We have less excuse, if, when all the works of God by praising their Maker reproach us for our sloth we do not at least follow their example. The express mention of *all places of his dominion,* seems to be intended to stir up the faithful to greater ardor in this exercise; for if even those countries where his voice is unheard ought not to be mute in his praise, how can we lawfully remain silent to whom he opens his mouth, anticipating us by his own sacred voice? In short, David shows that his design in recounting God's benefits, and magnifying the extent of his empire, was to animate himself the more to the exercise of praising him.

175 "Aux creatures muetes et insensibles." — *Fr.*

Psalm 104

PSALM 104

This psalm differs from the preceding, inasmuch as it neither treats of the special benefits which God bestows upon his Church, nor lifts us up to the hope of the heavenly life, but by presenting to us a lively image of his wisdom, power, and goodness in the creation of the world, and in the order of nature, encourages us to praise him for the manifestation he has made of himself as a father to us in this frail and perishable life. [176]

Psalm 104:1-4

1. Bless Jehovah, O my soul! O Jehovah my God! thou art exceeding great; thou hast clothed thyself with praise and glory. **2.** Being arrayed [177] with light as with a garment; and spreading out the

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"For regularity of composition, richness of imagery, sublimity of sentiment, and elegance and perspicuity of diction, this hymn is perhaps the principal poem in the whole collection of these inspired songs. As there is no allusion in it to the Mosaic ritual, nor any mention of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, it should seem that it was of an earlier age than the Exodus. It consists of parts sung alternately by two companies. The parts are easily distinguished, inasmuch as one Semichorus always speaks of God in the third person, the other addresses him in the second." — *Horsley.*

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heavens as a curtain: **3.** Laying the beams of his upper rooms [178] in the waters; making the clouds his chariot; and walking upon the wings of the wind; **4.** Making the winds his messengers; and his ministers a flaming fire.

1 *Bless Jehovah, O my soul!* After having exhorted himself to praise God, the Psalmist adds, that there is abundant matter for such an exercise; thus indirectly condemning himself and others of ingratitude, if the praises of God, than which nothing ought to be better known, or more celebrated,

"It is a singular circumstance," says Horsley, "in the composition of this psalm, that each of the parts of the First Semichorus after the first, [that is, verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 19,] begins with a participle. And these participles are accusatives, agreeing with יהוה, the object of the verb ברכי, at the beginning of the whole psalm. Bless Jehovah — putting on — extending — laying — constituting — travelling — making — setting — sending — watering — making — making. Thus, this transitive verb, in the opening of the psalm, extending its government through the successive parts of the same semichorus, except the last, unites them all in one long period. As this singular artifice of composition seems to be the characteristic of a particular species of ode, in this psalm, I have scrupulously conformed to it in my translation, at the expense of the elegance of my English style." Calvin, for the most part, translates these words as participles, but in the nominative case.

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"The original word, which comes from עלה, *ascendit,* signifies any *upper room* to which persons ascend. So 2 Samuel 18:32, 'he went up to השער עלית, the chamber over the gate.' Accordingly, the LXX. Here render it, ὑπερῶσς, 'an upper room', and the Latin, 'superiora ejus', 'his upper stories.' By עליותיו, therefore, must be meant, though not the supreme, yet the superior or middle region of the air, which is here described as an upper story in a house laid firm with beams, (accounting the earth and the region of air about that as the lower room,) and this floor is here said poetically to be 'laid in the waters,' those waters which (Genesis 1) are above the expansion or lower region of the air, which divides the waters from the waters. This is most evident by verse 13, where God is said to 'water the mountains מעליותיו, *from* these *his upper rooms,* these clouds whence the rain descends.' In them, saith the Psalmist, 'the beams of these upper rooms were laid,' *i.e.,* whereas in the building of an *upper story,* there must be some walls or pillars to support the weight of it, and in that the *beams* are laid, God here by his own miraculous immediate power *laid,* and ever since supported these upper rooms, there being nothing there but *waters* to support them, and those we know the most fluid tottering body, not able to support itself; and therefore that is another work of his divine power, that the *waters* which are so fluid, and unable to contain themselves within their own bounds, should yet hang in the middle of the air, and be as walls or pillars to support that region of air, which is itself another fluid body " — *Hammond.* Fry, after quoting Dr Geddes' version, — "Flooring his chambers with waters," and Bishop Horsley's "Laying the floors of his chambers upon the waters," goes on to say: — "After referring, however, to the different places where the word occurs, and considering the structure of ancient buildings, I conceive the allusion to be to the roof, or contignated frame of the house. Genesis 19:8, seems decisive. We seem to lose somewhat of the beauty of the original by translating עליות too literally. It signifies certainly, *upper rooms,* or *stories*; but the allusion is not to these on account of their situation, but as the part of the house principally inhabited by its owner, the lower parts of eastern houses being used for offices. — See Parkhurst and authors there quoted: compare Psalm 18, 'He set darkness his veil around him, — his canopy the waters and thick mists of the clouds.'" Fry's translation is, "And framing his habitation with waters."

are buried by silence. In comparing *the light* with which he represents God as *arrayed* to a garment, he intimates, that although God is invisible, yet his glory is conspicuous enough. In respect of his essence, God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendor, this is the garment in which He, who is hidden in himself, appears in a manner visible to us. The knowledge of this truth is of the greatest importance. If men attempt to reach the infinite height to which God is exalted, although they fly above the clouds, they must fail in the midst of their course. Those who seek to see him in his naked majesty are certainly very foolish. That we may enjoy the light of him, he must come forth to view with his clothing; that is to say, we must cast our eyes upon the very beautiful fabric of the world in which he wishes to be seen by us, and not be too curious and rash in searching into his secret essence. Now, since God presents himself to us clothed with light, those who are seeking pretexts for their living without the knowledge of him, cannot allege in excuse of their slothfulness, that he is hidden in profound darkness. When it is said that *the heavens are a curtain,* it is not meant that under them God hides himself, but that by them his majesty and glory are displayed; being, as it were, his royal pavilion.

3. *Laying the beams of his chambers in the waters* David now proceeds to explain at greater length what he had briefly stated under the figure of God's raiment. The scope of the passage is shortly this, that we need not pierce our way above the clouds for the purpose of finding God, since he meets us in the fabric of the world, and is everywhere exhibiting to our view scenes of the most vivid description. That we may not imagine that there is any thing in Him derived, as if, by the creation of the world, he received any addition to his essential perfection and glory, we must remember that he clothes himself with this robe for our sake. The metaphorical representation of God, as *laying the beams of his chambers in the waters,* seems somewhat difficult to understand; but it was the design of the prophet, from a thing incomprehensible to us, to ravish us with the greater admiration. Unless beams be substantial and strong, they will not be able to sustain even the weight of an ordinary house. When, therefore, God makes the waters the foundation of his heavenly palace, who can fail to be astonished at a miracle so wonderful? When we take into account our slowness of apprehension, such hyperbolical expressions are by no means superfluous; for it is with difficulty that they awaken and enable us to attain even a slight knowledge of God.

What is meant by his *walking upon the wings of the wind,* is rendered more obvious from the following verse, where it is said, that *the winds are his messengers* God rides on the clouds, and is carried upon the wings of the wind, inasmuch as he drives about the winds and clouds at his pleasure, and by sending them hither and thither as swiftly as he pleases, shows thereby the signs of his presence. By these words we are taught that the winds do

not blow by chance, nor the lightnings flash by a fortuitous impulse, but that God, in the exercise of his sovereign power, rules and controls all the agitations and disturbances of the atmosphere. From this doctrine a twofold advantage may be reaped. In the first place, if at any time noxious winds arise, if the south wind corrupt the air, or if the north wind scorch the corn, and not only tear up trees by the root, but overthrow houses, and if other winds destroy the fruits of the earth, we ought to tremble under these scourges of Providence. In the second place, if, on the other hand, God moderate the excessive heat by a gentle cooling breeze, if he purify the polluted atmosphere by the north wind, or if he moisten the parched ground by south winds; in this we ought to contemplate his goodness.

As the apostle, who writes to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 1:7) quotes this passage, and applies it to the angels, both the Greek and Latin expositors have almost unanimously considered David as here speaking allegorically. In like manner, because Paul, in quoting Psalm 19:4, in his Epistle to the Romans, (Romans 10:18) seems to apply to the apostles what is there stated concerning the heavens, the whole psalm has been injudiciously expounded as if it were an allegory. [179] The design of the apostle, in that part of the Epistle to the Hebrews referred to, was not simply to explain the mind of the prophet in this place; but since God is exhibited to us, as it were, visibly in a mirror, the apostle very properly lays down the analogy between the obedience which the winds manifestly and perceptibly yield to God, and that obedience which he receives from the angels. In short, the meaning is, that as God makes use of the winds as his messengers, turns them hither and thither, calms and raises them whenever he pleases, that by their ministry he may declare his power, so the angels were created to execute his commands. And certainly we profit little in the contemplation of universal nature, if we do not behold with the eyes of faith that spiritual glory of which an image is presented to us in the world.

Psalm 104:5-9

> **5.** He hath founded the earth upon its foundations, so that it shall not be moved for ever. **6.** He hath covered it with the deep as with a garment: the waters shall stand above the mountains. **7.** At thy rebuke they shall flee; at the voice of thy thunder they shall haste away.
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> [180] **8.** The mountains shall ascend, and the valleys shall descend [181] to the place which thou hast founded for them. **9.** Thou hast fixed a

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See volume 1, page 314.

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"The waters, by a beautiful prosopopoeia, are supposed to be put into a panic at the voice of Jehovah. See Psalm 77:16" — *Dimock.*

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bound over which they shall not pass; they shall not return to cover the earth.

5 *He hath founded the earth upon its foundations* Here the prophet celebrates the glory of God, as manifested in the stability of the earth. Since it is suspended in the midst of the air, and is supported only by pillars of water, how does it keep its place so steadfastly that it cannot be moved? This I indeed grant may be explained on natural principles; for the earth, as it occupies the lowest place, being the center of the world, naturally settles down there. But even in this contrivance there shines forth the wonderful power of God. Again, if the waters are higher than the earth, because they are lighter, why do they not cover the whole earth round about? Certainly the only answer which philosophers can give to this is, that the tendency of the waters to do so is counteracted by the providence of God, that a dwelling-place might be provided for man. If they do not admit that the waters are restrained by the determinate appointment of God, they betray not only their depravity and unthankfulness, but also their ignorance, and are altogether barbarous. The prophet, therefore, not without reason, recounts among the miracles of God, that which would be to us wholly incredible, did not even experience show its truth. We are very base indeed if, taught by such undoubted a proof, we do not learn

Calvin here renders *mountains* and *valleys* in the nominative case. In our English version they are rendered in the accusative: "They go up by the mountains, they go down by the valleys." "It is not here certain," says Hammond, "whether הרים, *mountains,* and בקעות, *valleys* or *plains,* be to be read in the nominative or in the accusative case. If they be in the nominative, then we must read as in a parenthesis, ('the mountains ascend, the plains or valleys slink down,') joining the end of the verse, 'unto the place,' etc. to 'haste away,' verse 7, thus: The waters once stood above the mountains, — those places which now are such; — but at the uttering God's *voice,* they fled and hasted away (the mountains ascending and the valleys descending) unto the place which thou hast prepared for them.' Thus the LXX. and Latin understand it, ἀναβαίνουσιν ὄρη καταβαίνουσι πεδία, 'ascendunt montes, et descendunt campi,' 'the mountains ascend, and the plains descend,' referring to the change that was made in the earth from being perfectly round and encompassed with waters, into that inequality wherein now it is, great mountains in some parts, and great cavities in other parts, wherein the waters were disposed, which before covered the face of the earth. But they may be more probably in the accusative case, and then מים, the 'waters,' verse 6, which were understood, verse 7, though not mentioned, (for it was the waters that there fled and hasted away,) must be here continued also, viz., that 'the waters יעלו, ascend,' or 'climb the mountains,' and ירדו, 'descend,' or 'fall down upon the valleys,' or 'fissures,' or 'hollow places,' ditches, and the like receptacles of waters, (for so בקוע now signifies among the Rabbins.) And this sense the Chaldee follows, 'They ascend from the abyss to the mountains, and they descend into the valleys, to the place,' etc. And this is the clearest exposition of it, rendering an account of the course of *waters,* since the gathering of them together in the ocean, that from thence they are, by the power of God, directed to pass through subterranean *meatus* to the uppermost parts of the earth, the hills and mountains, where they break forth in springs, and then, by their natural weight, descend, and either find or make channels, by which they run into the ocean again, that מקום, *place*, which God hath hewed out as a receptacle for them; and by their thus passing, they are profitable for the use of men, in watering the cattle, and the fruits that grow in the earth, verse 10, etc."

that nothing in the world is stable except in as far as it is sustained by the hand of God. The world did not originate from itself, consequently, the whole order of nature depends on nothing else than his appointment, by which each element has its own peculiar property. Nor is the language of the prophet to be viewed merely as an exhortation to give thanks to God; it is also intended to strengthen our confidence in regard to the future, that we may not live in the world in a state of constant fear and anxiety, as we must have done had not God testified that he has given the earth for a habitation to men. It is a singular blessing, which he bestows upon us, in his causing us to dwell upon the earth with undisturbed minds, by giving us the assurance that he has established it upon everlasting pillars. Although cities often perish by earthquakes, yet the body of the earth itself remains. Yea, all the agitations which befall it more fully confirm to us the truth, that the earth would be swallowed up every moment were it not preserved by the secret power of God.

6. *He hath covered it with the deep as with a garment,* This may be understood in two ways, either as implying that now the sea covers the earth as a garment, or that at the beginning, before God by his omnipotent word held gathered the waters together into one place, the earth was covered with the deep. But the more suitable sense appears to be, that the sea is now the covering of the earth. At the first creation the deep was not so much a garment as a grave, inasmuch as nothing bears less resemblance to the adorning of apparel than the state of confused desolation and shapeless chaos in which the earth then was. Accordingly, in my judgment, there is here celebrated that wonderful arrangement by which the deep, although without form, is yet the garment of the earth. But as the context seems to lead to a different view, interpreters are rather inclined to explain the language as denoting, That the earth was covered with the deep before the waters had been collected into a separate place. This difficulty is however easily solved, if the words of the prophet, *The waters shall stand above the mountains,* are resolved into the potential mood thus, *The waters would stand above the mountains;* which is sufficiently vindicated from the usage of the Hebrew language. I have indeed no doubt that the prophet, after having said that God had clothed the earth with waters, adds, by way of exposition, that the waters would stand above the mountains, were it not that they flee away at God's rebuke. Whence is it that the mountains are elevated, and that the valleys sink down, but because bounds are set to the waters, that they may not return to overwhelm the earth? The passage then, it is obvious, may very properly be understood thus, — that the sea, although a mighty deep, which strikes terror by its vastness, is yet as a beautiful garment to the earth. The reason of the metaphor is, because the surface of the earth stands uncovered. The prophet affirms that this does not happen by chance; for, if the providence of God did not restrain the waters, would they not immediately rush forth to overwhelm the whole earth? He, therefore, speaks

advisedly when he maintains that the appearance of any part of the earth's surface is not the effect of nature, but is an evident miracle. Were God to give loose reins to the sea, the waters would suddenly cover the mountains. But now, fleeing at God's rebuke, they retire to a different quarter. By *the rebuke of God, and the voice of his thunder,* is meant the awful command of God, by which he restrains the violent raging of the sea. Although at the beginning, by his word alone, he confined the sea within determinate bounds, and continues to this day to keep it within them, yet if we consider how tumultuously its billows cast up their foam when it is agitated, it is not without reason that the prophet speaks of it, as kept in check by the powerful command of God; just as, both in Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 5:22) and in Job, (Job 28:25) God, with much sublimity, commends his power, as displayed in the ocean. *The ascending of the mountains, and the descending of the valleys,* are poetical figures, implying, that unless God confined the deep within bounds, the distinction between mountains and valleys, which contributes to the beauty of the earth, would cease to exist, for it would engulf the whole earth. It is said that God *has founded a place for the valleys;* for there would be no dry land at the foot of the mountains, but the deep would bear sway, did not God command the space there to be unoccupied by the sea, as it were contrary to nature.

9. *Thou hast set a bound which they shall not pass* The miracle spoken of is in this verse amplified, from its perpetuity. Natural philosophers are compelled to admit, and it is even one of their first principles, that the water is circular, and occupies the region intermediate between the earth and the air. It is entirely owing to the providence of God, that part of the earth remains dry and fit for the habitation of men. This is a fact of which mariners have the most satisfactory evidence. Yea, were even the rudest and most stupid of our race only to open their eyes, they would behold in the sea mountains of water elevated far above the level of the land. Certainly no banks, and even no iron gates, could make the waters, which in their own nature are fluid and unstable, keep together and in one place, as we see to be the case. I have just now said that earthquakes, which bring destruction upon some places, leave the globe, upon the whole, as it was before; and in like manner, although the sea, in some parts of the world, overpasses its boundaries, yet the law, which confines it; within certain limits, stands fast, that the earth may be a fit habitation for men. The Baltic Sea, in our own time, inundated large tracts of land, and did great damage to the Flemish people and other neighboring nations. By an instance of this kind we are warned what would be the consequence, were the restraint imposed upon the sea, by the hand of God, removed. How is it that we have not thereby been swallowed up together, but because God has held in that outrageous element by his word? In short, although the natural tendency of the waters is to cover the earth, yet this will not happen, because God has established,

by his word, a counteracting law, and as his truth is eternal, this law must remain steadfast.

Psalm 104:10-15

> **10.** Sending out springs by the valleys, which shall run between [182] the hills. **11.** All the beasts of the field shall drink thereof: the wild asses [183] shall quench [184] their thirst. **12.** Nigh them the fowls of the air shall dwell, from the midst of the branches they shall send out their voice. [185] **13.** Watering the mountains from his chambers: the earth shall be satisfied from the fruit of thy [186] works. **14.** Making grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may produce bread out of the earth. **15.** And wine cheereth the heart of man, to make his face to shine with oil, and bread sustaineth man's heart. [187]

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In our English version it is *among*; but *between* is the more proper rendering. "בין," says Hammond, "must be rendered, not *among* but *between,* ἀναμέσον, say the LXX., to denote the hollow receptacles for waters betwixt the hills, or risings of the ground on both sides."

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The wild ass differs from the tame only by being stronger and nimbler, more courageous and lively. Wild asses are still found in considerable numbers in the deserts of Great Tartary, in Persia, Syria, the islands of the Archipelago, and throughout Mauritania. They are gregarious, and have been known to assemble by hundreds and thousands. It has been observed of these animals that, though dull and stupid, they are remarkable for their instinct in discovering in the arid desert the way to rivers, brooks, or fountains of water, so that the thirsty traveler has only to observe and follow their steps, in order to his being led to the cooling stream.

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The literal rendering of the Hebrew word ישברו, *yeshberu,* is *shall break,* being derived from שבר, *shabar, to break.* As applied to hunger, it must signify *to allay,* or, as here, to thirst, it must mean *to quench.* The phrase is communicated to other languages, and is usual among us, who, by *breaking of fasting,* understand eating.

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"'From between these boughs or leaves the fowls of the air send out their voice'; not by *singing* only, (for that is peculiar to few,) but by making any noise that is proper to them " — *Hammond.* On the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses, Dimock observes, — "The murmuring brooks, the great number of beasts and cattle, with the melodious birds, afford a most picturesque scene of rural delight."

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In the preceding clause God is spoken of in the third person, and here in the second. The change of persons from the second to the third, and from the third to the second, is very observable throughout this psalm. — See page 143, note.

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In the French version it is, "Et le vin qui resjouit le coeur de l'homme, et l'huile pour faire reluire sa face, et le pain *qui* soustient le coeur de l'homme." — "And wine that cheereth the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread *that* sustains the heart of man "

10. *Sending out springs by the valleys* The Psalmist here describes another instance both of the power and goodness of God, which is, that he makes fountains to gush out in the mountains, and to run down through the midst of the valleys. Although it is necessary for the earth to be dry, to render it a fit habitation for us, yet, unless we had water to drink, and unless the earth opened her veins, all kinds of living creatures would perish. The prophet, therefore, speaks in commendation of that arrangement by which the earth, though dry, yet supplies us with water by its moisture. The word נחלים, *nechalim,* which I have rendered *springs,* is by some translated, *torrents* or *rivers;* but *springs* is more appropriate. In the same sense it is added immediately after, that *they run among the hills;* and yet, it is scarcely credible that fountains could spring forth from rocks and stony places. But here it may be asked, why the prophet says that *the beasts of the field quench their thirst,* rather than men, for whose sake the world was created? I would observe, in reply, that he obviously spake in this manner, for the purpose of enhancing the goodness of God, who vouchsafes to extend his care to the brute creation, yea, even to the *wild asses,* under which species are included all other kinds of wild beasts. And he purposely refers to desert places, that each of us may compare with them the more pleasant, and the cultivated parts of the earth, afterwards mentioned. Rivers run even through great and desolate wildernesses, where the wild beasts enjoy some blessing of God; and no country is so barren as not to have trees growing here and there, on which birds make the air to resound with the melody of their singing. Since even those regions where all lies waste and uncultivated, furnish manifest tokens of the Divine goodness and power, with what admiration ought we to regard that most abundant supply of all good things, which is to be seen in cultivated and favorable regions? Surely in countries where not only one river flows, or where not only grass grows for the feeding of wild beasts, or where the singing of birds is heard not only from a few trees, but where a manifold and varied abundance of good things everywhere presents itself to our view, our stupidity is more than brutish, if our minds, by such manifestations of the goodness of God, are not fixed in devout meditation on his glory.

The same subject is prosecuted in the 13th verse, where it is said *that God watereth the mountains from his chambers* It is no ordinary miracle that the mountains, which seem to be condemned to perpetual drought, and which, in a manner, are suspended in the air, nevertheless abound in pastures. The prophet, therefore, justly concludes that this fruitfulness proceeds from nothing else but the agency of God, who is their secret cultivator. Labour cannot indeed, in the proper sense, be attributed to God, but still it is not without reason applied to him, for, by merely blessing the earth from the

place of his repose, he works more efficaciously than if all the men in the world were to waste themselves by incessant labor.

14. *Making grass to grow for cattle* The Psalmist now comes to men, of whom God vouchsafes to take a special care as his children. After having spoken of the brute creation, he declares, that corn is produced, and bread made of it, for the nourishment of the human race; and he mentions in addition to this, wine and oil, two things which not only supply the need of mankind, but also contribute to their cheerful enjoyment of life. Some understand the Hebrew word לעבדת, *laäbodath,* which I have rendered *for the service,* to denote the labor which men bestow in husbandry; for while grass grows on the mountains of itself, and without human labor, corn and herbs, which are sown, can only be produced, as is well known, by the labor and sweat of men. According to them the meaning is, that God blesses the toil of men in the cultivation of the fields. But this being too strained an interpretation, it is better to understand the word *service,* in the ordinary sense of the term. With respect to the word *bread,* I do not object to the view of those who understand it in a restricted sense, although it probably includes all kinds of food; only I dislike the opinion of those who exclude bread. There is no force in the reason which they allege for taking this view, namely, that in the following verse another use of bread is added, when it is said, that it strengthens the heart of man; for there the same thing is expressed in different words. The prophet, in stating that God causeth the earth to bring forth *herbs* for the support of men, intends to say that the earth supplies them not only with food in corn, but also with other herbs and fruits; for the means of our sustenance is not limited exclusively to one kind of food.

15. *And wine that cheereth the heart of man* In these words we are taught, that God not only provides for men's necessity, and bestows upon them as much as is sufficient for the ordinary purposes of life, but that in his goodness he deals still more bountifully with them by cheering their hearts with wine and oil. Nature would certainly be satisfied with water to drink; and therefore the addition of wine is owing to God's superabundant liberality. The expression, *and oil to make his face to shine,* has been explained in different ways. As sadness spreads a gloom over the countenance, some give this exposition, That when men enjoy the commodities of wine and oil, their faces shine with gladness. Some with more refinement of interpretation, but without foundation, refer this to *lamps.* Others, considering the letter מ, *mem* to be the sign of the comparative degree, take the meaning to be, that wine makes men's faces shine more than if they were anointed with oil. But the prophet, I have no doubt, speaks of unguents, intimating that God not only bestows upon men what is sufficient for their moderate use, but that he goes beyond this, giving them even their delicacies.

The words in the last clause, *and bread that sustains man's heart,* I interpret thus: Bread would be sufficient to support the life of man, but God

over and above, to use a common expression, bestows upon them wine and oil. The repetition then of the purpose which bread serves is not superfluous: it is employed to commend to us the goodness of God in his tenderly and abundantly nourishing men as a kind-hearted father does his children. For this reason, it is here stated again, that as God shows himself a foster-father sufficiently bountiful in providing bread, his liberality appears still more conspicuous in giving us dainties.

But as there is nothing to which we are more prone, than to abuse God's benefits by giving way to excess, the more bountiful he is towards men, the more ought they to take care not to pollute, by their intemperance, the abundance which is presented before them. Paul had therefore good reason for giving that prohibition, (Romans 13:14)

"Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof;"

for if we give full scope to the desires of the flesh, there will be no bounds. As God bountifully provides for us, so he has appointed a law of temperance, that each may voluntarily restrain himself in his abundance. He sends out oxen and asses into pastures, and they content themselves with a sufficiency; but while furnishing us with more than we need, he enjoins upon us an observance of the rules of moderation, that we may not voraciously devour his benefits; and in lavishing upon us a more abundant supply of good things than our necessities require, he puts our moderation to the test. The proper rule with respect to the use of bodily sustenance, is to partake of it that it may sustain, but not oppress us. The mutual communication of the things needful for the support of the body, which God has enjoined upon us, is a very good check to intemperance; for the condition upon which the rich are favored with their abundance is, that they should relieve the wants of their brethren. As the prophet in this account of the divine goodness in providence makes no reference to the excesses of men, we gather from his words that it is lawful to use wine not only in cases of necessity, but also thereby to make us merry. This mirth must however be tempered with sobriety, first, that men may not forget themselves, drown their senses, and destroy their strength, but rejoice before their God, according to the injunction of Moses, (Leviticus 23:40;) and, secondly, that they may exhilarate their minds under a sense of gratitude, so as to be rendered more active in the service of God. He who rejoices in this way will also be always prepared to endure sadness, whenever God is pleased to send it. That rule of Paul ought to be kept in mind, (Philippians 4:12,)

"I have learned to abound, — I have learned to suffer want."

If some token of the divine anger is manifest, even he who has an overflowing abundance of all kinds of dainty food, will restrict himself in his diet knowing that he is called to put on sackcloth, and to sit among ashes. Much more ought he whom poverty compels to be temperate and sober, to abstain from such delicacies. In short, if one man is constrained to

abstain from wine by sickness, if another has only vapid wine, and a third nothing but water, let each be content with his own lot, and willingly and submissively wean himself from those gratifications which God denies him.

The same remarks apply to oil. We see from this passage that ointments were much in use among the Jews, as well as among the other eastern nations. At the present day, it is different with us, who rather keep ointments for medicinal purposes, than use them as articles of luxury. The prophet, however, says, that oil also is given to men, that they may anoint themselves therewith. But as men are too prone to pleasure, it is to be observed, that the law of temperance ought not to be separated from the beneficence of God, lest they abuse their liberty by indulging in luxurious excess. This exception must always be added, that no person may take encouragement from this doctrine to licentiousness.

Moreover, when men have been carefully taught to bridle their lust, it is important for them to know, that God permits them to enjoy pleasures in moderation, where there is the ability to provide them; else they will never partake even of bread and wine with a tranquil conscience; yea, they will begin to scruple about the tasting of water, at least they will never come to the table but in fearfulness. Meanwhile, the greater part of the world will wallow in pleasures without discrimination, because they do not consider what God permits them; for his fatherly kindness should be to us the best mistress to teach us moderation.

Psalm 104:16-18

16. The trees of Jehovah [188] shall be satiated; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; **17.** For there the birds build their nests: the stork, [189] whose dwelling is the fir trees. **18.** The high mountains are

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"In the Septuagint it is, ξύλα του πεδίου, 'trees of the field;' they, therefore, read שדי עצי; and שדיbeing a name of the Almighty, when differently pointed, thus, שדי, was afterwards changed to יהוה, 'Jehovah,' as the text now is. Theodoret notices in his time, that the Hebrew, and other Greek interpreters of it, had ξύλα του κυρίου, 'trees of the Lord.' So was the Hebrew in Jerome's time, who has it *ligna Domini.*" — *Reeves*' *Collation, etc.*

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for the deer [190] and the rocks are a place of shelter for the hedgehogs. [191]

16. *The trees of Jehovah shall be satiated* The Psalmist again treats of God's general providence in cherishing all the parts of the world. In the

"חסידה, *chasidah,* the original word for *the stork,* is from חסד, *piety, beneficence,* because, says Bythner, "the stork nourishes, supports, and carries on its back, when weary, its aged parents." Storks are a species of birds very numerous in Palestine, and other eastern countries. Doubdan thus speaks of them in his account of a journey from Cana to Nazareth in Galilee, (page 513,) "All these fields were so filled with flocks of storks, that they appeared quite white with them, there being above a thousand in each flock, and when they rose and hovered in the air they seemed like clouds. The evening they rest in trees." This account is confirmed by Dr Shaw, who informs us, that as he lay at anchor near Mount Carmel, he saw "three flights of them, some of which were more open and scattered, with larger intervals between them; others were closer and more compact, as in the flight of wrens and other birds, each of which took up more than three hours in passing by us, extending itself at the same time more than half a mile in breadth." — See his *Travels,* volume 2, page 269. The stork constructs her nest with exquisite skill of dry twigs of trees and coarse grass from the marsh. But instead of confining herself to one situation, she builds it sometimes on the highest parts of old ruins and houses, — sometimes in the canals of ancient aqueducts, and sometimes on the tops of the eastern mosques and dwelling-houses; so very familiar is she by being never molested, the Mahometans accounting it profane to kill, or even to hurt, or disturb this species of bird, because of their important services in clearing the country of serpents, and other venomous animals, on which they feed. She frequently retires from the noise and bustle of the town to the adjacent field, selecting the highest tree of the forest on which to build her nest, and always preferring the fir, when it is equally suitable to her purpose — *Ibid.* volume 2, page 272. Harmer remarks, that חסידה, c*hasidah,* seems to signify *the heron* as well as *the stork*; and Dr Adam Clarke is of opinion, that *the heron* is here meant, conceiving the description of its making the fir-tree its house, as other bird.make their nests in the cedars of Lebanon, to be more agreeable to its natural history than to that of the stork properly speaking. He farther observes, that Aquila, who has given us an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, and who is said to have been exquisitely skilled in the original language, always understood the *chasidah* to mean *the heron,* rather than *the stork.* "But," he adds, "the two species resemble each other so much, that it is not improbable but one Hebrew word stood for both," and refers to Doubdan, who supposes that storks in Palestine roost in trees — *Harmer's Observations,* volume 2, page 465, and volume 3, page 338.

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"On, chevreux." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, the kids." Calvin, by giving two different translations of the original word, appears to have been at a loss as to the animal meant. "The animal here intended," says Mant, "is the Ibex or Rock Goat, a species of wild goat, deriving its Hebrew name from the wonderful manner in which it *mounts* to the top of the highest rocks, to which quality the sacred writers allude in the other two passages where the word occurs as well as in this. — See 1 Samuel 24:3; Job 39:1. To this quality natural historians bear abundant witness. Mr Cox thus describes the action of the Ibex, in ascending the mountains of Switzerland: — 'He mounts a perpendicular rock of fifteen feet at three leaps, or rather three successive bounds of five feet each. It does not seem as if he found any footing on the rock, appearing to touch it merely to be repelled, like an elastic substance striking against a hard body. He is not supposed to take more than three successive leaps in this manner. If he is between two rocks which are near each other, and wants to reach the top, he leaps from the side of one rock to the other alternately, till he has obtained the summit.'"

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first place, he asserts, that by the watering of which he had spoken the trees are satiated, or filled with sap, that thus flourishing they may be a place of abode to the birds. He next declares, that the wild deer and conies have also their places of shelter, to show that no part of the world is forgotten by Him, who is the best of fathers, and that no creature is excluded from his care. The transition which the prophet makes from men to trees is as if he had said, It is not to be wondered at, if God so bountifully nourishes men who are created after his own image, since he does not grudge to extend his care even to trees. By *the trees of the Lord,* is meant those which are high and of surpassing beauty; for God's blessing is more conspicuous in them. It seems scarcely possible for any juice of the earth to reach so great a height, and yet they renew their foliage every year.

Psalm 104:19-23

19. He hath appointed the moon to distinguish seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. **20.** Thou makest darkness, and it is night;

"Ou, connils." — *Fr marg.* "Or, the conies, *or* rabbits." The Hebrew name of this animal, שפן, *shaphan,* from the verbs שפן, *shaphan,* or ספן, *saphan, to hide,* seems to indicate a creature of a timid and harmless disposition. Feeble, and apprehensive of danger, it seeks a shelter among the fissures of the rocks, where it may be concealed from its enemies. To this circumstance allusion is here made; and it is also referred to by Solomon, (Proverbs 30:26) "The shaphans are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." It is evident from these words, that the shaphan is gregarious. What particular animal then is indicated by this name? Calvin, from giving the original term, one translation in the text, and a different one on the margin, seems to have been uncertain as to the species of animal intended, and on this point considerable variety of opinion has obtained. Some copies of the Septuagint have *hedgehogs,* and others, *hares,* the former being probably the right reading, as the Vulgate agrees with it. Bochart supposed the *jerboa,* or *jumping-mouse,* to be meant. But to this it has been justly objected, that the jerboa always digs its habitation in the smoother places of the desert, especially where the soil is fixed gravel; that it is not gregarious, nor distinguished by feebleness, which it supplies by its wisdom. Nor can it be the coney, or rabbit, that is here referred to; for, instead of seeking a habitation among the rocks, it delights to burrow in the sandy downs; and if it sometimes digs a place of shelter among the rocks, it is only where the openings are filled with earth. It is now pretty generally agreed, that *the shaphan* is the *Daman Israel,* as suggested by Dr Shaw. "The Daman Israel," says this traveler, "is an animal likewise of Mount Lebanus, though common in other places of this country. It is a harmless creature, of the same size and quality with the rabbit, and with the like incurvating posture and disposition of the fore-teeth. But it is of a browner color with smaller eyes, and a head more pointed, like the marmots. The fore-feet likewise are short, and the hinder are nearly as long in proportion as those of the jerboa. Though this animal is known to burrow sometimes in the ground, yet as its usual residence and refuge is in the holes and clifts of the rocks, we have so far a more presumptive proof, that this creature may be the shaphan of the Scriptures, than the jerboa. I could not learn why it was called *Daman Israel, i.e., Israel's lamb,* as those words are interpreted." Travels, volume 2, pages 160, 161. It is called in Amhara, "Ashkoko." Bruce confirms Dr Shaw's opinion. He identifies the animals by the several other particulars mentioned in Scripture, as well as by their attachment to rocks, and their constant residence in holes and caves, as noticed in this psalm. See also Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture, volume 2, pages 204-209.

wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth. **21.** The lions roar after their prey, and in seeking their food from God. [192] **22.** The sun shall rise, and they shall gather themselves together, and lie down in their dens. [193] **23.** Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labor, until the evening.

19. *He hath appointed the moon to distinguish seasons* The Psalmist now comes to another commendation of God's providence as manifested in the beautiful arrangement by which the course of the sun and moon alternately succeeds each other; for the diversity in their mutual changes is so far from producing confusion, that all must easily perceive the impossibility of finding any better method of distinguishing time. When it is said, that the *moon was appointed to distinguish seasons,* interpreters agree that this is to be understood of the ordinary and appointed feasts. The Hebrews having been accustomed to compute their months by the moon, this served for regulating their festival days and assemblies, both sacred and political. [194] The prophet, I have no doubt, by the figure synecdoche, puts a part for the whole, intimating, that the moon not only distinguishes the days from the nights, but likewise marks out the festival days, measures years and months, and, in fine, answers many useful purposes, inasmuch as the distinction of times is taken from her course. As to the sentence, The *sun knoweth his going down,* I understand it not only of his daily circuit, but as also denoting that by gradually approaching nearer us at one time, and receding farther from us at another, he knows how to regulate his movements by which to make summer, winter, spring, and autumn. It is farther stated, *that the beasts of the forest creep forth during the night,* because they go out of their dens with fear. Some translate the verb רמש*, ramas, to walk;* but

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"What is here said of the *lions* peculiarly, that they 'roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God,' may be illustrated by what is observed of those creatures, that to their great strength and greediness and rapacity, they are not proportionably provided with swiftness of body to pursue in the desert those beasts on which they prey, nor yet so quick-scented, as to be able to follow and trace them to their places of repose. It hath therefore been necessary to the providing for these animals, that some supply should be made to these defects by some other way. And it hath been affirmed by some, that their very *roaring* is useful to them for this end, and that when they cannot overtake their prey, they do by that fierce noise so astonish and amaze the poor beasts, that they fall down before them. If this have that truth, which it professes to have, it gives a clear account both of the phrase of *roaring after their prey,* and of *seeking it* from God — of *roaring,* as being able to do nothing else toward the getting it, but only thus to frighten the hearers, and express his own hunger and want." — *Hammond.*

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In the French version all the verbs in this verse are translated in the present tense.

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"The greatest part of the Jewish feasts, as the New Moon, the Passover, the Pentecost, etc., were governed by the moon." — *Dimoch.*

its proper signification which I have given is not unsuitable; for although hunger often drives wild beasts into fury, yet they *watch* for the darkness of the night, that they may move abroad from their hiding-places, and on account of this fearfulness they are said to creep forth.

21. The *lions roar after their prey* Although lions, if hunger compels them, go forth from their dens and roar even at noon-day, yet the prophet describes what is most usually the case. He therefore says, that lions do not venture to go abroad during the daytime, but that, trusting to the darkness of the night, they then sally forth in quest of their prey. Herein is manifested the wonderful providence of God, that a beast so dreadful confines itself within its den, that men may walk abroad with the greater freedom. And if lions sometimes range with greater liberty, this is to be imputed to the fall of Adam, which has deprived men of their dominion over the wild beasts. There are, however, still some remains of the original blessing conferred by God on men, inasmuch as he holds in check so many wild beasts by the light of day, as if by iron cages or chains. The expression, *They seek their food from God,* is not to be understood of their casting themselves upon the care of God, as if they acknowledged him to be their foster-father, but it points out the fact itself, that God in a wonderful manner provides food for such ravenous beasts.

22. *The sun shall rise* The Psalmist continues to prosecute the same subject, showing that God so distributes the successions of time, as that the day belongs properly to man. Did not God put a restraint upon so many wild beasts which are hostile to us, the human race would soon become extinct. As wild beasts since the fall of man may seem to be born to do us hurt, and to rend and tear in pieces all whom they meet with, this savage cruelty must be kept under check by the providence of God. And in order to keep them shut up within their dens, the only means which he employs is to inspire them with terror, simply by the light of the sun. This instance of divine goodness, the prophet commends the more on account of its necessity; for were it otherwise, men would have no liberty to go forth to engage in the labors and business of life. Man being thus protected by the light against the violence and injuries of wild beasts, in this is to be seen the unparalleled goodness of God, who in so fatherly a manner has provided for his convenience and welfare.

Psalm 104:24-26

> **24.** O Jehovah! how magnificent are thy works! thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is full of thy riches. **25.** Great is this sea, and wide in extent; therein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great animals. **26.** There go the ships [195] and the leviathan, which thou hast made to sport itself in it.

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24. *O Jehovah! how magnificent are thy works* The prophet does not make a full enumeration of the works of God, which would be an endless task, but only touches upon certain particulars, that every one may be led from the consideration of them to reflect the more attentively on that wisdom by which God governs the whole world, and every particular part of it. Accordingly, breaking off his description, he exclaims with admiration, — *How greatly to be praised are thy works!* even as we then only ascribe to God due honor when seized with astonishment, we acknowledge that our tongues and all our senses fail us in doing justice to so great a subject. If a small portion of the works of God make us amazed, how inadequate are our feeble minds to comprehend the whole extent of them! In the first place, it is said, *that God has made all things in wisdom,* and then it is added, *that the earth is full of his riches* The mention of *wisdom* only is not intended to exclude the divine power, but the meaning is, that there is nothing in the world confused, — that, so far from this, the vast variety of things mixed together in it are arranged with the greatest wisdom, so as to render it impossible for any thing to be added, abstracted, or improved. This commendation is set in opposition to the unhallowed imaginations, which often creep upon us when we are unable to discover the designs of God in his works, as if indeed he were subject to folly like ourselves, so as to be forced to bear the reprehension of those who are blind in the consideration of his works. The prophet also, by the same eulogium, reproves the madness of those who dream, that the world has been brought into its present form by chance, as Epicurus raved about the elements being composed of atoms. As it is an imagination more than irrational to suppose, that a fabric so elegant, and of such surpassing embellishment, was put together by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the prophet here bids us attend more carefully to the wisdom of God, and to that wonderful skill which shines forth in the whole government of the world. Under *riches* are comprehended the goodness and beneficence of God; for it is not on his own account that he has so richly replenished the earth but on ours, that nothing which contributes to our advantage may be wanting. We ought to know that the earth does not

Fry reads in the text, "There pass the ships," and at the foot of the page, "There go the whales." "I cannot," says he, "but indulge a conjecture in this place, that either the word we translate *ships* had anciently another meaning, and signified some aquatic animal; or that for אניות, we should read תנינים, or תנים: compare Genesis 1:21, 'And God created great whales, הגדלים חנינים, and every living creature that moveth, הרמשת החיה, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind.' It has, however, been thought by some, that not whales, but some large marine animals, known on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, are intended by the term." — "The first line of this verse," says Dimock, "should probably be read in a parenthesis, if it is not an interpolation; and the grammatical construction requires that we should read הלכון. That wonderful piece of mechanism, *a ship,* whereby man becomes the lord of the sea, seems to have been originally constructed under the divine direction. — See Genesis 6:14."

possess such fruitfulness and riches of itself, but solely by the blessing of God, who makes it the means of administering to us his bounty.

25. *Great is this sea, and wide in extent* After having treated of the evidences which the earth affords of the glory of God, the prophet goes down into the sea, and teaches us that it is a new mirror in which may be beheld the divine power and wisdom. Although the sea were not inhabited by fishes, yet the mere view of its vastness would excite our wonder, especially when at one time it swells with the winds and tempests, while at another it is calm and unruffled. Again, although navigation is an art which has been acquired by the skill of men, yet it depends on the providence of God, who has granted to men a passage through the mighty deep. But the abundance and variety of fishes enhance in no small degree the glory of God in the sea. Of these the Psalmist celebrates especially *the leviathan or the whale* [196] because this animal, though there were no more, presents to our view a sufficient, yea, more than a sufficient, proof of the dreadful power of God, and for the same reason, we have a lengthened account of it in the book of Job. As its movements not only throw the sea into great agitation, but also strike with alarm the hearts of men, the prophet, by the word *sport,* intimates that these its movements are only sport in respect of God; as if he had said, The sea is given to the leviathans, as a field in which to exercise themselves.

Psalm 104:27-30

> **27.** All things wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them food in their season. **28.** Thou shalt give it to them, and they shall gather it: thou shalt open thy hand, and they shall be filled [or satiated] with good. **29.** Thou shalt hide thy face, and they shall be afraid: thou shalt take away their spirit, and they shall die, and return to their dust. **30.** Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created: [197] and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

27. *All these wait upon thee* The prophet here again describes God as acting the part of the master of a household, and a foster-father towards all sorts of living creatures, by providing liberally for them. He had said before,

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The leviathan, which is described at large in Job 40., is now generally understood by commentators to be not the whale, but the crocodile, an inhabitant of the Nile. That it should here be numbered with the marine animals, need not surprise us, as the object of the divine poet is merely to display the kingdom of the *watery world.* Of these wide domains the *sea of the Nile* forms, in his view, a part. "ים transfertur ad omnia flumina majora. Est igitur in specie *Nilus.* Jes. 19, 5; Nab. 3, 8." — *Sire. Lex. Heb.* — See volume 3, page 175, note 1.

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"This alludes to Genesis 1:2 as the continual succession of things is a kind of creation." — *Dimock.*

that God made food to grow on the mountains for the support of cattle, and that sustenance is ministered to the very lions by the hand of the same God, although they live upon prey. Now he amplifies this wonder of the divine beneficence by an additional circumstance. While the different species of living creatures are almost innumerable, and the number in each species is so great, there is yet not one of them which does not stand in need of daily food. The meaning then of the expression, *All things wait upon thee,* is, that they could not continue in existence even for a few days, unless God were to supply their daily need, and to nourish each of them in particular. We thus see why there is so great a diversity of fruits; for God assigns and appoints to each species of living creatures the food suitable and proper for them. The brute beasts are not indeed endued with reason and judgment to seek the supply of their wants from God, but stooping towards the earth, they seek to fill themselves with food; still the prophet speaks with propriety, when he represents them as waiting upon God; for their hunger must be relieved by his bounty, else they would soon die. Nor is the specification of *the season* when God furnishes them with food superfluous, since God lays up in store for them, that they may have the means of sustenance during the whole course of the year. As the earth in winter shuts up her bowels, what would become of them if he did not provide them with food for a long time? The miracle, then, is the greater from the circumstance, that God, by making the earth fruitful at stated seasons, extends in this way his blessing to the rest of the year which threatens us with hunger and famine. How wretched would we be when the earth in winter shuts up her riches, were not our hearts cheered with the hope of a new increase? In this sense, the Psalmist appropriately affirms, that God *opens his hand* If wheat should grow up daily, God's providence would not be so manifest. But when the earth becomes barren, it is as if God shut his hand. Whence it follows, that when he makes it fruitful, he, so to speak, stretches out his hand from heaven to give us food. Now if he supply wild and brute beasts with sustenance in due season, by which they are fed to the full, his blessing will doubtless be to us as an inexhaustible source of plenty, provided we ourselves do not hinder it from flowing to us by our unbelief.

29 *Thou shalt hide thy face, and they shall be afraid* In these words, the Psalmist declares, that we stand or fall according to the will of God. We continue to live, so long as he sustains us by his power; but no sooner does he withdraw his life-giving spirit than we die. Even Plato knew this, who so often teaches that, properly speaking, there is but one God, and that all things subsist, or have their being only in him. Nor do I doubt, that it was the will of God, by means of that heathen writer, to awaken all men to the knowledge, that they derive their life from another source than from themselves. In the first place, the Psalmist asserts, that *if God hide his face they are afraid;* and, secondly, that *if he take away their spirit they die, and return to their dust;* by which words he points out, that when God vouchsafes

to look upon us, that look gives us life, and that as long as his serene countenance shines, it inspires all the creatures with life. Our blindness then is doubly inexcusable, if we do not on our part cast our eyes upon that goodness which gives life to the whole world. The prophet describes step by step the destruction of living creatures, upon God's withdrawing from them his secret energy, that from the contrast he may the better commend that continued inspiration, by which all things are maintained in life and rigor. He could have gone farther, and have asserted, that all things, unless upheld in being by God, would return to nothing; but he was content with affirming in general and popular language, that whatever is not cherished by Him falls into corruption. He again declares, that the world is daily *renewed,* because *God sends forth his spirit* In the propagation of living creatures, we doubtless see continually a new creation of the world. In now calling *that* God's spirit, which he before represented as the spirit of living creatures, there is no contradiction. God sendeth forth that spirit which remains with him whither he pleases; and as soon as he has sent it forth, all things are created. In this way, what was his own he makes to be ours. But this gives no countenance to the old dream of the Manicheeans, which that filthy dog Servetus has made still worse in our own day. The Manicheeans said that the soul of man is a particle of the Divine Spirit, and is propagated from it as the shoot of a tree; but this base man has had the audacity to assert, that oxen, asses, and dogs, are parts of the divine essence. The Manichees at least had this pretext for their error, that the soul was created after the image of God; but to maintain this with respect to swine and cattle, is in the highest degree monstrous and detestable. Nothing was farther from the prophet's intention, than to divide the *spirit of God* into parts, so that a portion of it should dwell essentially in every living creature. But he termed that the *spirit of God* which proceeds from him. By the way, he instructs us, that it is ours, because it is given us, that it may quicken us. The amount of what is stated is, that when we see the world daily decaying, and daily renewed, the life-giving power of God is reflected to us herein as in a mirror. All the deaths which take place among living creatures, are just so many examples of our nothingness, so to speak; and when others are produced and grow up in their room, we have in that presented to us a renewal of the world. Since then the world daily dies, and is daily renewed in its various parts, the manifest conclusion is, that it subsists only by a secret virtue derived from God.

Psalm 104:31-35

31. Glory be to Jehovah for ever; let Jehovah rejoice in his works. **32.** When he looketh upon the earth, it shall tremble: if he touch the mountains, they shall smoke. [198] **33.** I will sing to Jehovah whilst

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I live: I will sing psalms to my God as long as I have my being. [199] **34.** Let my speech [or words [200]] be acceptable to him: [201] I will rejoice in Jehovah. **35.** Let sinners perish from the earth, and the wicked till they cease to be any more. O my soul! bless thou Jehovah. Hallelujah.

31. *Glory be to Jehovah for ever* The inspired writer shows for what purpose he has celebrated in the preceding part of the psalm the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in his works, namely, to stir up men to praise him. It is no small honor that God for our sake has so magnificently adorned the world, in order that we may not only be spectators of this beauteous theater, but also enjoy the multiplied abundance and variety of good things which are presented to us in it. Our gratitude in yielding to God the praise which is his due, is regarded by him as a singular recompense. What the Psalmist adds, *Let Jehovah rejoice in his works,* is not superfluous; for he desires that the order which God has established from the beginning may be continued in the lawful use of his gifts. As we read in Genesis 6:6, that "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth," so when he sees that the good things which he bestows are polluted by our corruptions, he ceases to take delight in bestowing them. And certainly the confusion and disorder which take place, when the elements cease to perform their office, testify that God, displeased and wearied out, is provoked to discontinue, and put a stop to the regular course of his beneficence; although anger and impatience have strictly speaking no place in his mind. What is here taught is, that he bears the character of the best of fathers, who takes pleasure in tenderly cherishing his children, and in bountifully nourishing them. In the following verse it is shown, that the stability of the world depends on this rejoicing of God in his works; for did he not give vigor to the earth

"*They smoke.* Gejerus, Patrick, etc., refer this to Exodus 19:18. But may it not have respect also to volcanic mountains in general?" — *Dimock.*

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"*Through the whole of my existence,* בעודי, *for my perpetuality.* — See the word used in the same sense, Psalm 139:18." — *Horsley.*

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"Ou, meditation." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, meditation."

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In our English Bible it is, my meditation of him shall be sweet." As the prefix על, *al,* signifies *to,* as well as *on,* it may be doubtful whether עליו should be rendered *to him* or *on him.* If in the latter sense, our English version is correct, "My meditation of *or* on him shall be sweet;" and with this the last clause of the verse would well accord, "I will be glad in the Lord," which is an effect of the sweetness felt in meditating upon him. But all the ancient versions give the former rendering, according to these words in Psalm 19:14, "Let the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight." Thus the Septuagint has ἡδυνθείη αὐτῷ, "Let it be sweet to him," and similar is the rendering in the other versions.

by his gracious and fatherly regard, as soon as he looked upon it with a severe countenance, he would make it tremble, and would burn up the very mountains.

33. *I will sing to Jehovah whilst I live* Here the Psalmist points out to others their duty by his own example, declaring, that throughout the whole course of his life he will proclaim the praises of God without ever growing weary of that exercise. The only boundary which he fixes to the celebration of God's praises is death; not that the saints, when they pass from this world into another state of existence, desist from this religious duty, but because the end for which we are created is, that the divine name may be celebrated by us on the earth. Conscious of his unworthiness to offer to God so precious a sacrifice, he humbly prays, (verse 34,) *that the praises which he will sing to God may be acceptable to him,* although they proceed from polluted lips. It is true, that there is nothing more acceptable to God, nor any thing of which he more approves, than the publication of his praises, even as there is no service which he more peculiarly requires us to perform. But as our uncleanness defiles that which in its own nature is most holy, the prophet with good reason betakes himself to the goodness of God, and on this ground alone pleads that He would accept of his song of praise. Accordingly, the Apostle, in Hebrews 13:15 teaches that our sacrifices of thanksgiving are well pleasing to God, when they are offered to him through Christ. It being however the case, that whilst all men indiscriminately enjoy the benefits of God, there are yet very few who look to the author of them, the prophet subjoins the clause, *I will rejoice in the Lord;* intimating, that this is a rare virtue; for nothing is more difficult than to call home the mind from those wild and erratic joys, which disperse themselves through heaven and earth in which they evanish, that it may keep itself fixed on God alone.

35. *Let sinners perish from the earth* This imprecation depends on the last clause of the 31st verse, *Let Jehovah rejoice in his works* As the wicked infect the world with their pollutions, the consequence is, that God has less delight in his own workmanship, and is even almost displeased with it. It is impossible, but that this uncleanness, which, being extended and diffused through every part of the world, vitiates and corrupts such a noble product of his hands, must be offensive to him. Since then the wicked, by their perverse abuse of God's gifts, cause the world in a manner to degenerate and fall away from its first original, the prophet justly desires that they may be exterminated, until the race of them entirely fail. Let us then take care so to weigh the providence of God, as that being wholly devoted to obeying him, we may rightly and purely use the benefits which he sanctities for our enjoying them. Farther, let us be grieved, that such precious treasures are wickedly squandered away, and let us regard it as monstrous and detestable, that men not only forget their Maker, but also, as it were, purposely turn to a perverse and an unworthy end, whatever good things he has bestowed upon them.

Psalm 105

PSALM 105

The Psalmist magnifies the singular grace of God displayed in selecting and freely adopting one people from amongst all nations of the world. To show that it was not in word only that he had made a covenant with Abraham and his offspring, God did not cease, after having delivered them from Egypt, to confer upon them innumerable benefits; and his design in this was, that those who had been delivered might on their part faithfully keep his covenant, and devote themselves unfeignedly to his service. [202]

Psalm 105:1-5

1. Praise ye Jehovah; invoke his name: announce his works among the peoples. **2.** Sing ye to him: sing psalms to him: speak ye of all his wonders. **3.** Rejoice ye in his holy name: [203] let the heart of

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This psalm has no title in the Hebrew or Chaldee, but in the Vulgate, Septuagint, Æthiopic, and Arabic versions, the *hallelujah* which concludes the preceding psalm is prefixed as the inscription. The first fifteen verses correspond with the first part of a song of thanksgiving, which David composed to be sung after the ark had been brought from Obed-edom to Zion. — See 1 Chronicles 15:8-22. Hence some conclude, that David was its inspired penman, and that he probably enlarged it at some subsequent period of his history, that it might supply a more complete commemoration of God's signal and extraordinary goodness towards the Israelites from the days of Abraham to their final settlement in the land of Canaan; while others conclude, that it was enlarged by some Hebrew bard, at the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. This psalm bears a strong resemblance to the 78th, as well in the subject as in the style, except perhaps that the diction here is rather of a more simple cast.

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those who seek Jehovah rejoice. **4.** Seek ye Jehovah, and his strength: seek his face continually. **5.** Remember the marvelous works which he hath performed; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.

1 *Praise ye Jehovah, etc.* The object of these opening words simply is, that the offspring of Abraham should place all their blessedness in the free adoption of God. It was indeed a blessing not to be despised that they had been created men, that they had been cherished in the world by God's fatherly care, and that they had received sustenance at his hand; but it was a far more distinguished privilege to have been chosen to be his peculiar people. While the whole human race are condemned in Adam, the condition of the Israelites was so different from all other nations, as to give them ground to boast, that they were consecrated to God. This is the reason why the prophet heaps together so many words in commendation of this grace. He does not treat of the government of the whole world as he did in the preceding psalm, but he celebrates the fatherly favor which God had manifested towards the children of Israel. He indeed names in general *his works,* and *his wonders,* but he limits both to that spiritual covenant by which God made choice of a church, that might lead on earth a heavenly life. He does not intend to include as among these wonders, that the sun, moon, and stars, daily rise to give light to the world, that the earth produces its fruit in its seasons, that every living creature is supplied with abundance of all good things for its food, and that the human family are liberally provided with so many conveniences; but he celebrates the sovereign grace of God, by which he chose for himself from amongst the lost race of Adam a small portion to whom he might show himself to be a father. Accordingly, he enjoins them *to rejoice in the name of God,* and *to call upon him;* a privilege by which the Church alone is distinguished. Whence it follows, that this language is addressed to none but true believers, whom God would have to glory in his name, since he has taken them under his special protection.

4 *Seek ye Jehovah, and his strength* [204] Although he had in the preceding verse characterized the faithful by the honorable designation, *those who seek God,* yet he again exhorts them to earnestness in seeking him, which is not an unnecessary exhortation. Seeking God, it is true, is the mark by which

In the French version it is, "Praise ye his holy name." Hammond, agreeably to this, would read, "Praise ye the name of his holiness;" thinking that ב, *beth, in,* is a pleonasm.

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"For וז, *his strength,* the LXX. seem to have read עז, *be strengthened,* and accordingly render it κραταιωθῶτε, the Latin 'confirmamini', 'be confirmed,' and so the Syriac, 'be strengthened.' This the sense would well bear, 'Seek the Lord, and be confirmed;' let all your strength be sought from him. So the Jewish Arab, 'Seek the Lord, and seek that he would strengthen you, *or* strength from him, *or* you shall certainly be strengthened,' if by prayer you diligently seek him." — *Hammond.* Horsley also reads, "Seek the Lord, and be strong."

all genuine saints are particularly distinguished from the men of the world; but they come far short of seeking him with due ardor; and, accordingly, they have always need of incitements, to urge them on to this exercise, although they run of their own accord. Those whom the prophet here stirs up to seek God are not fickle persons, nor such as are altogether indolent, and who cleave to the impurities of earth, but those who with a prompt and ready mind already aim at doing this; and he thus stimulates them, because he perceives that they are obstructed by many impediments from advancing in their course with sufficient rapidity. However willing then we may be, we have notwithstanding, need of such incitement to correct our slowness. *The strength* and *face of God,* doubtless refer to that kind of manifestation by which God, accommodating himself to the rudeness of the times, drew at that time true believers to himself. The ark of the covenant is in many other places called both *the strength* and *the face of God,* because by that symbol the people were reminded, that he was near them, and also really experienced his power. [205] The more familiarly then God showed himself to them, with the more promptitude and alacrity would the prophet have them to apply their hearts in seeking him; and the aid by which God relieves our weakness should prove an additional stimulus to our zeal. Modesty also is recommended to us, that, mindful of our slowness in seeking God, we may keep the way which he has prescribed to us, and may not despise the rudiments through which he by little and little conducts us to himself. It is added *continually,* that no person may grow weary in this exercise, or, inflated with a foolish opinion of having reached perfection, may neglect the external aids of piety, as is done by many, who, after having advanced a few degrees in the knowledge of God, exempt themselves from the common rank of others, as if they were elevated above the angels. Again, the injunction is given *to remember the marvelous works which God had performed,* in the deliverance of his people from Egypt, when he displayed his power in new and unusual ways. By *the judgments of his mouth,* some understand the law. But as I read all the three expressions, *his marvelous works, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth,* as referring to one series of events, I prefer explaining it rather of the miracles by which God subdued the pride of Pharaoh. Still, however, there is some doubt as to the reason of this manner of speaking. Some are of opinion, that these miracles are called the judgments of God's mouth, because he had foretold them by Moses, which is highly probable. At the same time, the expression might

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With this agrees the interpretation of Lowth: "The *holy ark,* and the *shechinah* which remained upon it, the symbol of the divine presence, is called the *face of God*; and to seek the face of God, is to appear before the ark, to worship at the sanctuary of God, which was required of the Israelites thrice a year. — See 2 Samuel 21:1; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 27:8; Exodus 23:17, — *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,* volume 2, page 24l.

be taken more simply, as denoting that the power of God was manifested in an extraordinary manner in these miracles; from which it would be easy to gather, that they were performed by him. I do not mean to exclude the ministry of Moses, whom God had raised up to be a prophet to the Egyptians, that in denouncing what was to come to pass, he might show that nothing happened by chance. Yet I think there is an allusion to the manifest character of the miracles, as if it had been said, Although God had not uttered a word, the facts themselves evidently showed, that he was the deliverer of his people.

Psalm 105:6-11

6. Ye seed of Abraham his servant, the sons of Jacob his chosen.
7. He is Jehovah our God: his judgments are through all the earth.
8. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; [206] **9.** Which he made with Abraham; and his oath which he swore to Isaac; [207] **10.** And established it to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: [208] **11.** Saying, I will give thee the land of Canaan, the cord [or measuring line [209]] of your inheritance.

6 *Ye seed of Abraham his servant.* The Psalmist addresses himself by name to his own countrymen, whom, as has been stated, God had bound to himself by a special adoption. It was a bond of union still more sacred, that by the mere good pleasure of God they were preferred to all other nations. By calling them *the seed of Abraham, and the sons of Jacob,* he reminds

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See Genesis 15:17, 18; 17:2; 22:16; 26:3; 35:11.

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See Genesis 26:3.

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To Jacob also he renewed at Beersheba all the gracious assurances of the covenant which he had made with Abraham, and ratified to Isaac, (Genesis 28:10-15;) and he again renewed them at Padan-aram, (Genesis 35:9-15; 13:1-5,) when he changed his name from Jacob to Israel.

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In our English version it is *lot.* But the original word signifies a *cord* or *line.* There is here an illusion to the several lots or portions into which the land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes; which were measured by lines. See volume 1, page 225, note 4. It being thought by some learned men that the descendants of Heber possessed the land of Canaan before the Canaanites, and that the latter unjustly dispossessed them, (see volume 3, page 264, note 3;) Dimock supposes that the phrase, "the lot of your inheritance," refers to this prior and rightful possession. But the appellation given them in verse 12th, as *strangers in it,* seems to militate against such an opinion. Nor is it necessary for vindicating God to have recourse to such a supposition. As he is the supreme proprietor of all the earth, he has a right to give it to whomsoever he pleases; and the wickedness of the Canaanites sufficiently justified their expulsion.

them that they had not attained so great dignity by their own power, but because they were descended from the holy fathers. He, however, affirms at the same time, that the holiness of their fathers flowed exclusively from God's election, and not from their own nature. He expressly states both these truths, first, that before they were born children of Abraham, they were already heirs of the covenant, because they derived their origin from the holy fathers; and, secondly, that the fathers themselves had not acquired this prerogative by their own merit or worth, but had been freely chosen; for this is the reason why Jacob is called *God's chosen* Although Abraham is also here called *God's servant,* (Genesis 26:24) because he purely and sincerely worshipped him, yet in the second clause it is testified that the commencement of this distinction was not to be traced to men, but to God alone, who conferred upon the Israelites the honor of choosing them to be his peculiar possession.

From this covenant the Psalmist infers that although the government of God extends through the whole world, and although he executes his judgment in all places, he was nevertheless especially the God of that one people, (verse 7) according to the statement in the song of Moses,

"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel: For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Deuteronomy 32:8, 9

The prophet again intended to show that the reason why the children of Israel excelled others was not because they were better than others, but because such was the good pleasure of God. If the divine judgments are extended through all the regions of the globe, the condition of all nations is in this respect equal. Whence it follows that the difference referred to proceeded from the love of God, — that the source of the superiority of the Israelites to other nations was his free favor. Although, then, He is the rightful proprietor of the whole earth, it is declared that he chose one people over whom he might reign. This is a doctrine which applies to us also at the present day. If we duly ponder our calling, we will undoubtedly find that God has not been induced from anything out of himself to prefer us to others, but that he was pleased to do so purely from his own free grace.

8 *He hath remembered his covenant for ever* The Psalmist now celebrates the effect and actual fulfillment of the covenant, and proves from the deliverance wrought for the Israelites what he had stated before, namely, That God, while he reigned alike over all nations, extended his peculiar favor to the offspring of Abraham alone. How comes it to pass that God, in delivering his people, displayed the might of his arm by so many miracles, if it was not that he might faithfully perform the promise which he had made to his servants in time past? It is evident, then, that the ancient covenant was the cause of the deliverance granted to the chosen tribes; for in order that God might faithfully keep his promises, it behooved him first

to be merciful. As a long series of years had elapsed between the promise and the performance, the prophet uses the word *remember,* intimating that the Divine promises do not become obsolete by length of time, but that even when the world imagines that they are extinguished and wholly forgotten, God retains as distinct a remembrance of them as ever, that he may accomplish them in due season. This is more strongly confirmed in the next clause, where the correspondence between the form or tenor of the covenant and the accomplishment is celebrated. It is not for a day, he would say, or for a few days, that God has made a covenant with Abraham, nor has he limited the continuance of his covenant to the life of man, but he has promised to be the God of his seed even to a thousand generations. Although, therefore, the fulfillment was for a long time suspended, God nevertheless showed by the effect that his promise did not fail by length of time.

As Abraham was the first who was called when he was mingled with idolaters, the prophet begins with him. He, however, afterwards declares that the covenant was also confirmed in the hand of his son and his son's son. God then deposited his covenant with Abraham, and by solemn oath engaged to be the God of his seed. But to give greater assurance of the truth of his promise, he was graciously pleased to renew it to Isaac and Jacob. The effect of such an extension of it is, that his faithfulness takes deeper hold on the hearts of men; and, besides, his grace, when it is thus testified on frequent recurring occasions, becomes better known and more illustrious among men. Accordingly, it is here declared by gradation how steadfast and immovable this covenant is; for what is affirmed concerning each of the patriarchs belongs equally to them all. It is said that God *swore to Isaac.* But had he not sworn to Abraham before? Undoubtedly he had. It is also *said that it was established to Jacob for a law, and for an everlasting covenant* Does this mean that the covenant was previously only temporal and transitory, and that then it had changed its nature? Such an idea is altogether at variance with the meaning of the sacred writer. By these different forms of expression he asserts that the covenant was fully and perfectly confirmed, so that, if perhaps the calling was obscure in one man, it might be more evident, by God's having transmitted the testimony of it to posterity; for by this means the truth of it was the better manifested. Here again we must remember that God with great kindness considers our weakness when, both by his oath, and by frequently repeating his word, he ratifies what he has once promised to us. Our ingratitude then appears the fouler in disbelieving him when he not only speaks but also swears.

11. *Saying, I will give thee the land of Canaan* As this was only a small portion of the blessings offered to the fathers, the prophet seems at first view too much to limit the covenant of God, which extended even to the hope of an eternal inheritance. But he considered it enough to show, by the figure synecdoche, that a part of what God had promised to the fathers had

received its complete accomplishment. His drift is to intimate that they did not possess the land of Canaan by any other right than because it was the legitimate inheritance of Abraham according to the covenant which God had made with him. If man exhibit the promised earnest of a contract, he does not violate the contract. When, therefore, the prophet proves by a visible symbol that God did not make a covenant with his servants in vain, and that he did not disappoint their hope, he does not take away or abolish the other blessings included in it. Nay, rather, when the Israelites heard that they possessed the land of Canaan by right of inheritance, because they were the chosen people of God, it became them to look beyond this, and to take comprehensive view of all the privileges by which He had vouchsafed to distinguish them. Hence it is to be noted, that when He in part fulfills his promises towards us, we are base and ungrateful if this experience does not conduce to the confirmation of our faith. Whenever he shows himself to be a father towards us, he undoubtedly really seals on our hearts the power and efficacy of his word. But if the land of Canaan ought to have led the children of Israel in their contemplations to heaven, since they knew that they had been brought into it on account of the covenant which God had made with them, the consideration that He has given to us his Christ, "in whom all the promises are yea and amen," (2 Corinthians 1:20) ought to have much greater weight with us. When it is said, *I will give thee the measuring line of Your inheritance,* the change of the number points out that God made a covenant with all the people in general, though he spake the words only to a few individuals; even as we have seen a little before that it was a decree or an everlasting law. The holy patriarchs were the first and principal persons into whose hands the promise was committed; but they did not embrace the grace which was offered to them as what belonged only to themselves, but as what their posterity in common with them were to became sharers of.

Psalm 105:12-15

> **12.** When they were but very few in number; and strangers in it. **13.** And walked about from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people. **14.** He did not suffer men to hurt them; and rebuked kings for their sake; **15.** Saying, Touch not my anointed ones, and do my prophets no wrong. [210]

12. *When they were but very few in number* The prophet here recounts the benefits which God had conferred upon the holy fathers from the commencement, to manifest that even long before the deliverance from Egypt, the covenant was not ineffectual. The great object aimed at in this recital, is to show that ever since God took Abraham under his protection, he cherished him in a wonderful manner, and also that his fatherly love and

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care were displayed in maintaining and defending the other two patriarchs. When it is said, that *they were but very few in number,* the power of God by this circumstance is not only magnified, but the cause why he was so beneficent towards them is also pointed out. We must then, in the first place, attend to this, that the prophet, lest the Jews should arrogate anything to themselves, expressly declares, that their fathers had experienced the divine favor, even when they were feeble and despised, wandering from place to place, in every respect poor and miserable according to the flesh. Thus also Moses reproaches them,

"The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you." Deuteronomy 7:7, 8,

In short, in the choosing of this people, no regard was had either to number, or to any excellence whatever. There was only the house of Abraham, and yet it was barren. Isaac was compelled to banish to a distance from him one of his two sons, and he saw the other cut off from his family. The house of Jacob was indeed more fruitful, but it was nevertheless of a low condition. Besides, they were not only ignoble and despised when sojourning in a strange land, but famine, and the want of other things also, compelled them frequently to go from one place to another. All these things being taken into view, the consideration of human worth falls to the ground, and it is clearly seen, that all the blessings which God had bestowed upon them flowed from no other fountain than his own free love. And the cause of this love is not to be sought for out of himself. If the Holy Spirit is so careful in magnifying the grace of God in these earthly blessings, how much more must he observe this rule, when the subject of which he speaks is the heavenly inheritance! When it is said, that *they walked about from nation to nation,* this intimates the more plainly how wonderfully the divine protection was displayed in preserving them. Had they found any quiet nest in which to repose, such comfort would have been a notable sign of the divine goodness; but when they were as exiles in divers countries, and were driven from one place to another with bitter scorn, as chaff is driven about by the wind, the guardianship which God exercised over them shone forth much more conspicuously. Since their life everywhere hung only by a thread, and the

Dr Morison explains the 13th, 14th, and 15th verses thus: — "When they went from one part of Canaan to another, which they found possessed by seven great nations, (Genesis 7:1;) when they were driven from one kingdom to another people, — sometimes in Egypt, (Genesis 12:10) sometimes in Gerar, (Genesis 20:1; 26,) and sometimes in the country of the East, from whence they came, (Genesis 29:1,) he suffered no one to injure them; on the contrary, he raised up friends for them, (Genesis 31:24, 42,) rebuked the kings of Egypt (Genesis 12:16, 17) and Gerar (Genesis 20:3) for their sakes, and counseled them in the most solemn terms not to touch or injure the persons of his anointed servants, (Genesis 26:11, 29,) by whom, that is by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Most High communicated his will to his Church, pouring his Spirit upon them, and making them kings and priests in the distinguished families to which they belonged."

changing of their place of sojourn exposed them from time to time to fresh injuries, it is evident that it was the divine power alone which preserved them in safety.

14. *He did not suffer men to hurt them* Abraham and his children had not merely two or three enemies: they were harassed by whole nations. As then many rose up one after another in troops against them, the Psalmist says indefinitely, that men were withheld from hurting them; for אדם, *adam,* is the word here used, which is the one most generally employed to signify *man* He next amplifies the love of God towards his servants, in setting himself in opposition to kings for their sake. When God did not spare even the kings of Egypt and Gerar, it is evident how precious the welfare of Abraham and his offspring was in his sight. We have said a little before that the holy fathers were of no estimation in the eyes of the world. God therefore displayed his goodness so much the more signally in preferring them to kings. Now we here see, that the Jews were humbled in the person of their fathers, that they might not imagine that they found favor in the sight of God by any merit of their own.

15. *Saying, Touch not my anointed ones* The Psalmist proceeds farther, affirming, that when God made war against kings for the sake of his servants, they were defended by him, not only as he is accustomed to succor the miserable and the unjustly oppressed, but because he had taken them under his special guardianship. God protects his people, not only upon a general ground, but because he has declared on account of his free adoption, that he will maintain them. This is the reason why these holy patriarchs are here honored with two designations, *his prophets* and *his anointed ones* In speaking of other men, God would have said, Touch not these men who have done wrong to nobody, hurt not these poor wretched creatures who have deserved no such treatment at your hands. But in the person of Abraham and his children, he shows that there was another reason for his defending them. He calls them *anointed ones,* because he had set them apart to be his peculiar people. In the same sense, he designates them *prophets,* (a title with which Abraham is also honored, Genesis 20:7) not only because God had manifested himself more intimately to them, but also because they faithfully spread around them divine truth, that the memory of it might survive them, and flourish after their death. Anointing, it is true, was not as yet in use, as it was afterwards under the law; but the prophet teaches, that what God at a subsequent period exhibited in the ceremonies of the law was really and in very deed in Abraham, even as God engraves the mark of sanctification on all his chosen ones. If God's inward anointing was of such powerful efficacy, even at the time when he had not yet appointed, or delivered the figures of the law, with how much greater care will he defend his servants now, after having exhibited to us the plenitude of anointing in his only begotten Son!

Psalm 105:16-19

> **16.** And he called a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. **17.** He sent a man before them; Joseph was sold for a slave. **18.** They afflicted his feet in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul. **19.** Until the time that his word came: the word of Jehovah tried him.

16. *And he called a famine upon the land* Here the inspired writer recounts a most illustrious proof of divine providence towards the chosen people, at the time when the covenant might seem to be void and disannulled. The inheritance of the land of Canaan (as has been stated above) was added, as an earnest or pledge for confirmation. The descent of Jacob into Egypt, which deprived his house of the sight of the land, could not make the covenant to perish. In this the constancy of God shone forth the brighter; yea, by this trial he manifested more plainly how provident a father he was in preserving the seed of Abraham. But it is better to consider each particular in the verse. In the first place, it is taught, that the famine which drove Jacob into Egypt did not happen by chance. Although only one particular famine is here treated of, it is to be held as a general principle, that there is no other cause of any scarcity of sustenance except this, that God, in withdrawing his hand, takes away the means of support. The curse of God is expressed more emphatically, when it is said, that *the famine was called;* as if it were ready at his command, as a minister of his wrath. By this we are instructed, that famine, pestilence, and other scourges of God, do not visit men by chance, but are directed by his hand whither it pleases him, and are obedient to his will. [211] The manner in which the famine was called is next stated, namely, when he *brake the staff of bread* The metaphor of *staff* is very appropriate; for God has put into bread the power and property of strengthening man, by a secret virtue which fits it to sustain us. So long as it pleases him to nourish us by such means, a staff as it were lies hidden within it. This staff is broken in two ways; either, first, when he takes away the supply of grain necessary for our nourishment, the sense in which it seems to be used in Ezekiel

"Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment;" Ezekiel 4:16

or, secondly, when he breathes in anger upon the bread itself, so that those who would satisfy themselves by devouring it, instead of having their hunger thereby removed, remain famished still. And certainly to the barrenness of

211 "Famine is here finely represented as a servant, ready to come and go at the 'call' and command of God; for calamities, whether public or private, are the messengers of divine justice." — *Horne.*

the earth this second is commonly added, namely, that he takes away the sustaining power which is in bread; for, as it is declared in Deuteronomy 8:3, bread does not give life of itself, but borrows its secret virtue from the mouth of God.

17. *He sent a man before them* This whole passage graphically teaches us, that whatever befell that people was by the hand and counsel of God. The simple recital would have been to say, that the famine came upon the land, after Joseph had been sold by his brethren, and carried into Egypt. But the prophet speaks emphatically, declaring that Joseph by the divine counsel had been sent before into Egypt, to support his father's house, that afterwards the famine was called, and that then, by God's providence, a remedy was presented beyond all hope. This, indeed, is generally true in human affairs; but there is here commemorated a special care which God took in governing and nourishing his Church. Moreover, the prophet mentions that as second in place which was first in the order of time. Accordingly, in regard to the word *send,* the pluperfect tense would better express the sense, he *had sent;* implying that before God afflicted the land of Canaan with famine, he had prepared a remedy for his servant Jacob, and for his household, in having sent Joseph before as a steward to provide them with food. Here two contraries as it were are stated, to render the divine superintendence in the whole the more conspicuous. How was Joseph sent of God? It was in this way:- When he was doomed to death, it happened that his brethren preferred selling him to leaving him in his grave. This selling, if considered merely by itself, like a cloud interposed, obscured and concealed the divine providence. When counsel was taken to put Joseph to death, who would have expected that he was to be the sustainer of his father's house? Afterwards a kind of death was devised for him less cruel; but then he was cast into a well or pit, and in that situation how could he succor others? The last hope was, that at length being sold, he came forth from the pit. But again, he was well nigh rotting all his life long in prison.

Who could think that processes so intricate and circuitous were controlled by divine providence? The prophet therefore meets this difficulty by saying, that in respect of men, he was indeed *sold;* but that he had nevertheless been previously sent by the divine purpose. The passage is worthy of notice, admirably vindicating, as it does, the providence of God against the perverse stupidity of our corrupt nature. Resting on the second causes which meet the eye, or ascribing to the direction of man whatever is done in this world, or thinking that all things happen by chance, very few trace them to the appointment of God. And yet the selling of Joseph is not here interposed as a veil to hide divine providence; but is rather set forth as a signal instance of it to teach us that whatever men may undertake, the issues are in the hand of God; or rather, that by a secret influence, he bends the hearts of men in whatever direction he pleases, that by their instrumentality, whether they will or no, he may bring to pass what he has

determined should be done. Agreeably to this Joseph said to his brethren, "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life," (Genesis 45:5) Farther, God so governs human affairs by his secret controlling influence, and overrules men's wicked devices to a right end, as that his judgments are notwithstanding uncontaminated by the depravity of men. The brethren of Joseph wickedly conspire his death; they also wrongfully sell him: the fault is in themselves. Contemplate now how God directs and controls all. By the hand of these brethren he provides for the good both of themselves and of their father Jacob, yea for that of the whole Church. This holy purpose contracts no defilement or spot from the malice of those who aimed at an entirely opposite end; even as Joseph testified afterwards,

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive," (Genesis 1:20)

18 *They afflicted his feet in the fetters* It is not without cause that the Psalmist prosecutes the winding course of Jacob's early history, which might so confuse the minds of men as to prevent them from directing their attention to the counsel of God. What seemed less likely than to believe that God, by so directly opposite and circuitous a path, meant to accomplish what he had purposed? But his providence, by surmounting so many obstacles, is brought out more conspicuously, than if he had despatched the whole matter by a short and easy road. Had Joseph, as soon as he arrived in Egypt, been presented to the king, and made its governor, the way to what followed would have been easy. But when he was carried away to prison, and lay there separated from the society of men, living as one half-dead; and when his becoming known to the king was a long time subsequent to this, and beyond all expectation, such a sudden change renders the miracle much more evident. This circuitous course then, which the prophet recounts, serves not a little to illustrate the subject in hand. Joseph was many times dead before he was sold. Hence it follows, that God as often showed his care of his Church by delivering him who might be termed her father. When after, having been brought into Egypt, Joseph was conveyed from hand to hand till he descended into another grave, is it not the more clearly manifest from this that God, while he seems to be asleep in heaven, is all the while keeping the strictest watch over his servants, and that he is carrying forward his purpose more effectually by these various windings, than if he had gone straight forward, yea, than if he had run with rapid pace? For this reason the prophet affirms that *his feet were afflicted in the fetters;* a fact which, although not stated in the narrative of Moses, he speaks of as well known. And no doubt, many things were delivered by tradition to the Jews of which no mention is made in the Scriptures. [212] It is also probable enough, that, instead of being put at first under mild restraint, as was afterwards the case, he was rigorously confined. Whether we read, *his soul entered into the iron,*

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or *the iron entered into his soul,* [213] the meaning, which, in either case, is exactly the same, amounts to this, that the holy man was so galled with fetters, that it seemed as if his life had been given over to the sword. Whence it follows, that the safety of his life was as hopeless as the restoration of life to a dead body.

19. *Until the time that his word came* Here the prophet teaches, that although, according to the judgment of the flesh, God seems to be too tardy in his steps, yet he holds supreme rule over all things, that he may at length accomplish in due time what he has determined. As to the term *word,* it is here doubtless to be taken, not for doctrine or instruction, but for a heavenly decree. The relative *his* admits of being understood as well of God himself as of Joseph; but its application to the latter appears to me to be preferable, implying that Joseph remained in prison until the issue of his affliction was manifested, which was hidden in the divine purpose. It is always to be kept in mind, that the prophet calls back the minds of men from that impious imagination, which would represent fortune as exercising a blind and capricious control over human affairs. Since nothing could be more involved in uncertainty than the welfare of the Church, whilst Joseph was accounted as a condemned person, the prophet here elevates our minds, and bids us look at the hidden word, that is, the decree, the proper opportunity and time for the manifestation of which had not yet arrived. After the same manner I explain what follows, *the word of God tried him* To expound it of Joseph's prophesying, [214] as many do, seems too refined. Until the happy issue appeared, which God kept long hidden and in suspense, Joseph's patience was severely tried. What worldly men, who acknowledge not God to be the Governor of human affairs, call *fate,* the prophet distinguishes by a more appropriate name, terming it *word,* and the word of each man. Nor do I see any impropriety in using the French word *destinée.* When the Stoics dispute, or rather babble, about destiny, they not only involve themselves and the thing also of which they treat in

The memory of this circumstance might, therefore, have been preserved by tradition; or it may be simply a conclusion drawn from Joseph's being incarcerated, and from the crime of which he was accused. When it is considered that prisoners were ordinarily secured by chains, and when the magnitude of the crime charged upon him, that of making an attempt upon the chastity of his mistress, is farther taken into account, it is a very probable inference, that when cast into prison, he was put in chains.

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The first of these readings is the most probable. The Hebrew is נפשו באה ברזל. "The verb being here in the feminine gender shows that the subject is נפשו, and that ברזל is accusative. In this manner the phrase is rendered by the LXX. Σίδηρον διῶλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ, 'his soul passed through iron;' and so the Syriac, 'his soul went into iron;' but the Chaldee, disregarding the gender, has taken it the other way, 'the chain of iron went into his soul.'" — (*Phillips*' *Psalms in Hebrew, with a Critical, Exegetical, and Philological Commentary.*)

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intricate mazes, but, at the same time, involve in perplexity an indubitable truth; for in imagining a concatenation of causes, they divest God of the government of the world. It is an impious invention so to link together causes, interwoven with each other, as that God himself should be tied to them. Our faith then ought to mount up to his secret counsel, by which, uncontrolled, he directs all things to their end. This passage also teaches us that God will continue the afflictions of the godly only until they are thereby thoroughly proved.

Psalm 105:20-24

20. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and set him free. **21.** He made him lord over his house; and ruler over all his substance: **22.** To bind his princes [215] at his pleasure; and to teach his elders wisdom. **23.** And Israel came into Egypt; and Jacob

It is so understood by Dr Kennicott. He refers the first clause of the verse to the completion of Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of the chief butler and baker; an opinion which cannot be admitted, for Joseph was not delivered at that time, but *two years after* it, Genesis 41:1. He refers the second clause to the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, called the Word *or* Oracle of Jehovah, because sent by him to Pharaoh. In this sense Hammond also interprets it. "*The word of the Lord.*" says he, "is God's showing him the meaning of those dreams, (Genesis 41:39) God's telling him, or revealing to him, the interpretation of them." Some who take this view explain the verb *tried,* not as referring to the trial of Joseph's patience, but as referring to the proof of his innocence. "צרף," says Street, "in its primary sense, signifies *to refine metals,* or *to examine their purity by fire*: by metaphor it is applied to the human heart, and signifies *to purify, to prove, to examine*; but as metal, already free from dross, would not be refined, but only *show its purity* on being assayed, so here the Word seems to signify *showed him to be innocent.* Joseph, protesting his innocence to Pharaoh's butler, says, (Genesis 40:10) 'Here also have I done nothing that they should put me in the dungeon;' and Pharaoh assigns it as his reason for taking him from prison, and setting him over the land of Egypt, (Genesis 41:38) 'Can ye find as this is a man in whom the Spirit of God is?' His interpreting, by the inspiration of God, their dreams, exempted him at once from being any longer looked on as a criminal, and raised him to the highest honors." "This word," says Phillips, "proved Joseph, or purified him, as the verb literally means, for it made him appear pure or innocent in the eyes of the people, who were thus assured that God was with him, and that he must therefore be a pious person, and not guilty of the crime for which he was thrown into a dungeon."

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"The meaning of *to bind his princes* is to exercise control over the greatest men in the kingdom, which power was conferred on Joseph by Pharaoh: see Genesis 41:40; also verses 43, 44. The capability of binding is to be regarded as an evidence of authority; a power of compelling obedience; or, in default thereof, of inflicting punishment." — *Phillips.*

sojourned in the land of Ham. [216] **24.** And he greatly increased his people, and multiplied [217] them above their oppressors.

20. *The king sent and loosed him* The Psalmist celebrates in high terms the deliverance of Joseph; for God's singular power was conspicuously displayed in a matter so incredible. What is of more rare occurrence than for a most powerful monarch to bring a stranger out of prison to constitute him ruler over his whole kingdom, and to raise him to a rank of honor, second only to himself? The phrase in verse 22, *to bind his princes,* is commonly explained as implying that Joseph was invested with the chief sovereignty in the administration of the government, so that he could cast into prison, at his pleasure, even the nobles of the realm. Others, conceiving this interpretation to be somewhat harsh, derive the verb לאסור, *lesor,* which Moses employs, not from אסר, *asar,* which signifies *to bind,* but from יסר, *yasar,* which signifies *to instruct,* by changing the letter י, *yod,* into א, *aleph.* [218] But I am surprised that neither of them have perceived the metaphor contained in this word, which is, that Joseph held the lords of Egypt bound to him at his pleasure, or subject to his power. What is here spoken of is not fetters, but the bond or obligation of obedience, both the princes and all others being dependent on his will. The expression, which is added a little after, *to teach his elders wisdom,* evinces that Joseph did not bear sway like a tyrant, difficult and rare a thing as it is for men, when invested with sovereign power, not to give loose reins to their own humor: but that he was a rule and a pattern, even to the chief of them, in the high degree of discretion which he exemplified in the administering the affairs of state.

23. *And Israel came into Egypt* The prophet does not rehearse the whole history, nor was this necessary. He only presents to our view how divine providence was concerned in it, which very few consider in reading the narrative of Moses. He accordingly declares, that after Joseph had been sent before into Egypt, to be the means of supporting his father and the whole family, Jacob then came into Egypt, that is, he did so when all things were admirably arranged, that he might find abundance of bread among a people,

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"As the two members of the verse express substantially the same thing, we infer the land of Ham to be the same as Egypt. Ham, the son of Noah, was father to Mizraim, who is supposed to have been the founder of the Egyptians, and hence the two names of the country. Jerome, in his note on Genesis 10:6, observes that Egypt was called in his day, in the Egyptian language, by the name of Ham." — *Ibid.*

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"Ou, fortifia." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, strengthened."

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"For לאסר, the LXX., Vulgate, and Jerome, certainly had ליסר, 'to tutor;' or they took אסר in the sense of יסר, as they took it in Hosea, chapter 10:10." — *Horsley.*

the proudest of the whole world, [219] when all others were perishing for want of food. From this it appears, that what is accounted to be slowness in God, tends to no other end than to accomplish his work on the best possible occasion.

24. *And he greatly increased his people* The singular favor of God towards his Church is now commended by the additional circumstance, that within a short space of time, the chosen people increased beyond the common proportion. In this matter the wonderful blessing of God was strikingly displayed. So much the more offensive then is the barking of some dogs, who insolently scoff at the account given by Moses of the multiplying of the people, because it goes far beyond what takes place in the ordinary course of things. Had the people increased only at the common rate, these persons would have immediately objected, that therein no work of God was to be seen. Thus the object which they pursue by their cavillings is nothing else than to make it to be believed, that the blessing of God had no connection with the case. But we, who are persuaded that it is unwarrantable for us to measure God's power according to our own understandings, or according to what happens by the common law of nature, reverently admire this extraordinary work of his hand. The subsequent clause is a little obscure, especially if we read, *The people were strengthened;* [220] for the prophet does not seem to refer to that period when the Israelites lived at ease and in prosperity, but to the time when they were contemptuously and barbarously dealt with as slaves. We may, however, understand the language as spoken by anticipation, — as pointing to what was to happen. In the following verse, it is affirmed, that the Egyptians having changed their mind, began to treat the people with cruelty. Although then the Egyptians did not as yet openly exercise their cruelty against the people, when they were increasing both in number and strength, yet the prophet calls them persecutors. It is certain, that the Israelites, even when they were oppressed as slaves, were a terror to their enemies; and Moses plainly affirms, (Exodus 1:12) that when they were under tyranny and wrongful oppression, it was still abundantly manifest, that the blessing of God rested upon them.

Psalm 105:25-30

25. He turned their heart, so that they hated his people, and dealt craftily with his servants. **26.** He sent Moses his servant; Aaron

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"En un peuple le plus superbe de tout le monde." — *Fr.*

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"The root עצם," says Phillips, "signifies *to be strong,* not only with regard to physical force, but also with respect to number: Psalm 38:20; 40:6; 69:5, etc.; in German, a great number is called *eine starke Anzahl, a strong number.* Number seems to be referred to in this passage."

whom he had chosen. **27.** They set among them the words of his signs and his miracles in the land of Ham. **28.** He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they were not rebellious against his words. **29.** He turned their waters into blood, and killed their fish. **30.** Their land brought forth frogs, yea, even within the chambers of their kings.

25. *He turned their heart, so that they hated his people* The Egyptians, though at first kind and courteous hosts to the Israelites, became afterwards cruel enemies; and this also the prophet ascribes to the counsel of God. They were undoubtedly driven to this by a perverse and malignant spirit, by pride and covetousness; but still such a thing did not happen without the providence of God, who in an incomprehensible manner so accomplishes his work in the reprobate, as that he brings forth light even out of darkness. The form of expression seems to some a little too harsh, and therefore they translate the verb passively, *their* (*i.e.,* the Egyptians') *hearts were turned.* But this is poor, and does not suit the context; for we see that it is the express object of the inspired writer to put the whole government of the Church under God, so that nothing may happen but according to his will. If the delicate ears of some are offended at such doctrine, let it be observed, that the Holy Spirit unequivocally affirms in other places as well as here, that the minds of men are driven hither and thither by a secret impulse, (Proverbs 21:1) so that they can neither will nor do any thing except as God pleases. What madness is it to embrace nothing but what commends itself to human reason? What authority will God's word have, if it is not admitted any farther than we are inclined to receive it? Those then who reject this doctrine, because it is not very grateful to the human understanding, are inflated with a perverse arrogance. Others malignantly misrepresent it, not through ignorance or by mistake, but only that they may excite commotion in the Church, or to bring us into odium among the ignorant. Some over-timid persons could wish, for the sake of peace, that this doctrine were buried. They are surely ill qualified for composing differences. This was the very cause why in former times the doctors of the Church, in their writings, swerved from the pure and genuine truths of the gospel, and turned aside to a heathen philosophy. Whence originated the doctrine of free-will, whence that of the righteousness of works, but because these good fathers were afraid of giving occasion to evil-tongued or malignant men if they freely professed what is contained in the sacred Scriptures? And had not God, as it were by a strong hand, prevented Augustine, he would, in this respect, have been exactly like the rest. But God, so to speak, polishing him with a hammer, corrected that foolish wisdom, which rears its crest against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, we see, affirms that the Egyptians were so wicked, that God turned their hearts to hate his people. The middle-scheme men seek to evade and qualify this statement, by saying, that his turning their hearts, denotes his permitting this; [221] or, that when the Egyptians set their hearts

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upon hating the Israelites, he made use of their malice, as what, so to speak, came accidentally in his way; as if the Holy Spirit, from being defective in the power of language, spoke one thing, when he meant another. If the doctrine of this text, at first sight, seem strange to us, let us remember that God's judgments, in other places, are justly called *"unsearchable,"* (Romans 11:33) and "a great deep," (Psalm 36:6) Did not our capacity fail in reaching the height of them, they would not have that intricacy and mystery by which they are characterized. It is, however, to be observed, that the root of the malice was in the Egyptians themselves, so that the fault cannot be transferred to God. I say, they were spontaneously and innately wicked, and not forced by the instigation of another. In regard to God, it ought to suffice us to know, that such was his will, although the reason may be unknown to us. But the reason is also apparent, which vindicates his righteousness from every objection. If we learn and keep in mind only this small word of advice, That the revealed will of God ought to be reverently acquiesced in, we will receive, without disputation, those mysteries which offend either the proud, or such as would be over-careful to remove the difficulties, in which, according to their view, such mysteries seem to be involved. [222] The prophet next expresses the manner in which the Egyptians wrought mischief against the people of God: they did not assault them openly, that they might put them to death, but they endeavored, in the way of craft and policy, to oppress them by little and little. His expression is borrowed from Moses himself. And it is purposely used, that we may not think that the hearts of the ungodly are permitted without restraint to work our destruction. It is a consideration which ought surely to satisfy our minds, that whatever the devil and wicked men may plot against us, God nevertheless represses their attempts. But it is a double confirmation of our faith, when we hear that not only their hands are bound, but also their hearts and thoughts, so that they can purpose nothing except what God pleases.

26 *He sent Moses his servant* Here the prophet briefly adverts to such things regarding the deliverance of the people as were worthy of particular notice. Had the Egyptians of their own accord suffered the people to depart, neither the service of Moses nor miracles would have been required. God then appointed that their deliverance should take place in such a way, as would render the denial of his being its author impossible. Moses is called *the servant of the Lord,* to teach us that he was not self-elected to his office, and that he attempted nothing by his own authority, but, being the minister of God, executed the office with which he had been intrusted. The same

"Chrysostom says that *he turned* is the same as *he permitted to turn.* See his note on the verse." — *Phillips.*

222 "Ou ceux qui veulent estre trop prudens pour remedier aux inconvenions, ce leur semble." — *Fr.*

thing is expressed still more plainly with respect to Aaron, when he is said *to have been chosen* What is attributed to each of these eminent men in particular, applies equally to both, and therefore the sentence ought to be explained thus: God sent Moses and Aaron, his servants, not because of their own intrinsic fitness, or because they spontaneously offered to him their service, but because he chose them. This passage teaches us, that those who are engaged in active and useful service for the Church, are not prepared exclusively by their own exertions, or framed to it by their own talents, but are stirred up thereto by God. Moses was a man of heroic virtue: but, considered merely in himself, he was nothing. Accordingly, the prophet would have all that is accounted worthy of remembrance in Moses, as well as in Aaron, to be ascribed to God alone. Thus it appears that whatever men do for the welfare of the Church, they owe the power of doing it to God, who, of his free goodness, has been pleased thus to honor them.

27. *They set among them the words of his signs* [223] The prophet, in the first place, briefly glances at those things which Moses has detailed at greater length. Nor does he follow the order of the events observed in the history; for he contents himself with showing, that the deliverance of the chosen people was the work of God. He again distinguishes between the power of God, and the ministry of Moses and Aaron. He indeed asserts that these men performed *miracles,* but these miracles proceeded from God, so that celestial power was not obscurely displayed by their instrumentality.

In the **28th** verse he specifics one of these miracles, which yet was not the first in order, but from which it is easy to gather that God was the author of the deliverance of Israel, and in which the course of nature was entirely changed; for nothing is more astonishing than to see the light turned into darkness. In the second clause, he commends the faithfulness of Moses and Aaron, in courageously executing whatever God had commanded them: *And they were not rebellious against his words* [224] There was, as if it had been said, the most perfect harmony between the command of God and the obedience of both his servants.

29. *He turned their waters into blood* How grievous this plague was to the Egyptians may be conjectured from the consideration, that the element of water is one of the two great means of supporting life. And the power of God shines forth the brighter, from the fact, that although the land

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"*The words of his signs, — i.e.,* declarations; which were afterwards confirmed by miracles." — *Cresswell.* "In this phrase," says Hammond, "*the words of his signs* or *prodigies,* דברי, *words,* seems to be somewhat more than a pleonasm. God had told them what signs they should use, to convince the people first, and then Pharaoh, of their mission; and so in each judgment God commands, and they show the sign; and God's thus telling or speaking to them is, properly, דברי, *words,* and the matter of these words expressed by אתותיו, *signs* or *prodigies of his,* — viz., which as he directed, he would also enable them to do among them."

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of Egypt is well irrigated, yet the Egyptians were parched with drought amidst abundance of water. It is afterwards said, that *frogs were brought forth,* [225] and entered even *into the chambers of the kings;* by which God manifestly evinced that he was the author of the miracle; for although all Egypt swarmed with frogs, the courts of the kings ought to have been exempt from this nuisance. By the term *kings,* is denoted either the nobles of the realm, or the king's sons, who were brought up in the expectation of the royal power; for at that time, as is well known, one king alone reigned over all Egypt. From this we learn how easily, and as it were by a kind of mockery, God humbles those who pride themselves in the flesh. He did not gather together an army to fight against the Egyptians, nor did he forthwith arm his angels, or thunder out of heaven, but brought forth frogs, which contemptuously trampled upon the pride of that haughty nation, who held in contempt the whole world beside. It would have been no disgrace for them to have been conquered by powerful enemies; but how dishonorable was it to be vanquished by frogs? God thus intended to show that he has no need of powerful hosts to destroy the wicked; for he can do this, as it were in sport, whenever he pleases.

Psalm 105:31-38

31. He spake, and there came a swarm of flies, [226] and lice [227] in all their borders. **32.** He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire upon their land. **33.** And he smote their vines and their fig trees; and

They executed the command of God, with respect to the plagues brought on the Egyptians, although they knew that in thus acting they would incur the heavy displeasure of Pharaoh, and expose their lives to considerable danger. "The import of לא מרו, *they resisted not,*" says Hammond, "seems no more than what is affirmed in the story, Exodus 10:21, 22, 'The Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thy hand. — And Moses stretched forth his hand,' — *i.e.*, readily obeyed, and did what God directed, and that at a time when Pharaoh was likely to be incensed, and vehemently offended with him and Aaron. For which consideration the story there gives us this farther ground: for as, verse 10, he had before expressed some anger and threats, — 'Look to it, for evil is before you,' and 'they were driven from his presence,' verse 11; so now, upon the hardening his heart, which follows this plague of darkness, he said to Moses, 'Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more, for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die the death,' verse 28. This rage of Pharaoh, Moses in reason might well foresee, but he dreaded it not; but boldly did as God directed, and that is the meaning of "they resisted not God's word.'"

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The Hebrew verb for *brought forth* is שרף, *sharats,* which signifies *to multiply exceedingly*; and "the noun is used for creeping things, because they procreate in great abundance. It cannot therefore be more fitly translated, as is observed by Hammond, than by *swarming.*" — *Phillips.*

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The original word for *a swarm of flies* is ערב, *arob.* For some account of the noxious insects here meant, see volume 3, page 258, note 2.

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destroyed the trees throughout their borders. **34.** He spake, and the grasshopper came, and the caterpillar [228] without number, **35.** And they devoured all the herbage in their land, and consumed the fruit of their ground. **36.** And he smote all the first-born in their country, even the beginning of all their strength. [229] **37.** And he brought

The Hebrew word for *lice* is כנים, *kannim.* The reading in the Septuagint is σκνιφες, and in the Vulgate *sciniphes,* which signifies a species of little gnats that sting painfully in the marshy country of Egypt; the *culex reptans* of Linnaeus, or the *culex molestus* of Forskal. In support of the accuracy of this interpretation it has been said, that as the translators of the Septuagint dwelt in Egypt, it can hardly be supposed that they were ignorant of what was intended by the Hebrew name. Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, and Origen, a Christian father, who likewise lived at Alexandria, have also been produced as confirming this interpretation. Both Philo and Origen represent these insects as being very small, but very troublesome. The latter describes them as winged insects, but so small as to escape any but the acutest sight; and says, that when settled on the body, they wound it with a most sharp and painful piercer. Jerome also supports this view, while Gesenius, Boothroyd, and others, concur in it. The Jewish interpreters, however, and Josephus, understand the original word as denoting *lice*; which has been adopted by the translators of our English Bible, and which Bochart likewise follows, with most of the modern commentators. Bochart argues that gnats could not be intended: — 1. Because the creatures here mentioned sprang from the dust of the earth, and not from the waters. 2. Because they were both on men and cattle, which cannot be spoken of gnats. 3. Because their name comes from a root which signifies to make firm, fix, establish, which could not apply to gnats, flies, etc., as they are almost constantly on the wing. 4. Because כנה, *kinah,* is the term given by the Talmudists for *louse.* The translation given by Calvin, and in our English Bible, appears the most correct, but whichever we adopt, it is necessary to conclude (which the history expressly states) that the creatures were brought in swarms, most extraordinary even for Egypt, and thus a miraculous interposition was made manifest. This judgment was the more noisome and disgraceful to the Egyptians, from the great external purity which they affected, and from their being very nice both in their persons and clothing; bathing and making ablutions continually. They were particularly solicitous not to harbour any vermin, thinking it would be a great profanation of the temple which they entered, if any animalculae of this sort were concealed in their garments.

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The Hebrew word translated *caterpillar* is ילק, *yelek.* This word is in our English Bible rendered *caterpillar* here, and in Jeremiah 51:27; but in Joel 1:4, 2:25, and Nahum 3:15, it is rendered *cankerworm.* In the passage in Nahum the creature is spoken of as winged and bristled, whence some commentators suppose that a kind of locust is intended. "It certainly means some insect remarkable for destroying vegetables, probably the 'chafer' or 'maybug,' βρουχος, as the LXX. render it in five passages out of eight wherein it occurs. The Vulgate throughout renders it *bruchus,* the 'chafer.' Michaelis thinks it means the 'chafer,' particularly in its *vermicular* state, when it is much more destructive to plants, namely, by gnawing, eating, and cankering their roots, than after it has taken wing." — *Parkhurst's Lexicon on* ילק, *under* לק, 2.

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The beginning, or *the first-fruit of all their strength,* is understood by Lowth to mean the first-born of the mother. His note on the verse in *Merrick's Annotations* is as follows: — "Απαρχὴν πόνου, *Primitias laboris* vel *partus* LXX. *Vulg. Hieron.* Compare Genesis 35:18. This, I think, is the right translation. The first-born, that were slain on this occasion, were those that opened the womb; the first-born of the mother, not of the father, as it appears from the circumstances of the history." The first-born of cattle is no doubt also intended. — See Genesis 49:3; and Psalm 78:51

them forth with silver and gold: nor was there a feeble person among his tribes. **38.** Egypt rejoiced at their departure: for their terror had fallen upon them.

31. *He spake, and there came a swarm of flies* By the word *spake* the Psalmist intimates that *the flies* and *lice* came not forth by chance. The command, we know, was uttered by the mouth of Moses; for although God could have given the command himself, he interposed Moses as his herald. God, however, gave no less efficacy to his word, when he commanded it to be uttered by a man, than if he himself had thundered from heaven. When the minister executes his commission faithfully, by speaking only what God puts into his mouth, the inward power of the Holy Spirit is joined with his outward voice. Here again it is to be observed, that the Egyptians were afflicted with the plague of the flies and lice, that God, with the greater ignominy, might subdue their rebellion and obstinacy. When it is said, that he *gave them hail for rain,* it denotes a hail of such appalling violence, that it could not be attributed to natural causes. It is probable that Egypt is not so subject to this annoyance as other countries, and it is very seldom visited even with rain, being watered with the Nile. This made it appear to the Egyptians the more wonderful that their country was stricken with hail. To render this calamity the more dreadful, God also mingled with it fire. The hail, then, was accompanied with a tempestuous whirlwind, that the Egyptians who had hardened themselves against the other miracles, inspired with terror, might know that they had to deal with God.

34. *He spake, and the grasshopper came* This calamity, which was brought upon the fields, could not be attributed to Fortune; for the grasshoppers made their appearance suddenly and in countless multitudes, so that they covered all the land of Egypt. The miracle was very evident from the word spoken, by which it was introduced. Its being announced as to happen, removed all doubt of its being the work of the Most High. Accordingly, it is expressly said, that grasshoppers and caterpillars rushed in at the commandment of God, as if soldiers should run to battle at the sound of the trumpet. Whenever these insects molest us and destroy the fruits of the earth, they are assuredly the scourges of God, but it is here intended to point out an extraordinary work of his hand. In fine, the prophet recites the last miracle, which was wrought by the angel on the night previous to the departure of the people, when he slew all the first-born throughout Egypt. I only take a hasty and passing glance at this history, as I have, in like manner, done of the other facts preceding, because they have been more copiously treated elsewhere, and at this time it is sufficient for us to know the design of the sacred writer. He, however, amplifies this display of the Divine power by a repetition, declaring that *the first-born and the flower of their strength were destroyed* Some translate, but unhappily, *The beginning*

of their sorrow. As man's strength shows itself in generation, the Hebrews term the first-begotten *the beginning of strength,* as we have explained on Genesis 49:3, —

"Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might,
and the beginning of my strength."

37. *And he brought them forth with silver and gold* [230] The prophet, on the other hand, celebrates the grace of God which preserved the chosen people untouched and safe from all these plagues. If both parties had been indiscriminately afflicted with them, the hand of God would not have been so signally manifest. But now when the Israelites, amidst so many calamities, experienced an entire exemption from harm, this difference exhibits to us, as in a picture, God's fatherly care about his own people. For this reason, it is stated, *Nor was there a feeble person,* or *one who stumbled;* [231] for the verb כשל, *kashal,* has both these meanings. But I prefer taking it simply in this sense, That whilst Egypt was hastening to destruction, the people of God were vigorous, and free from every malady. When it is said, *He brought them forth,* and when it is afterwards added, *in his tribes,* there is a change of the number, which is quite common in the Hebrew language. Some refer the word *his* to God; but this I am afraid is too forced.

38. *Egypt rejoiced at their departure* The Psalmist sets forth the power of God from the additional circumstance, that the Egyptians willingly allowed the chosen people to depart, when yet nothing was farther from their intention. Although they wished them destroyed a hundred times, yet they thought that they had the wolf by the ears, as we say; [232] and thus the fear of revenge made them more determined to blot out the memory of that people. Whence it follows, that when they all at once laid aside their former purpose, it was a secret work of divine providence. [233] To the same effect is the statement in the preceding verse, *that they were brought forth with gold and silver* The Egyptians could never have had the heart voluntarily to strip themselves, to enrich those whom they would have willingly deprived of life.

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Allusion is made to the Israelites carrying with them in their departure from Egypt, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, which they borrowed of the Egyptians, Exodus 12:36.

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"*And there was not any one stumbling among his tribes.* The LXX. have rendered כושל by ἀσθενης *infirm,* so that they understood the Psalmist to say, there was no one incapable of following the multitude, — no one was prevented by disease or infirmity from accomplishing the journey." — *Phillips.* What a striking contrast between their condition and that of their oppressors! While in every Egyptian dwelling, death had left his victim, not one of all the children of Israel was unable to prosecute his heaven-directed flight from that land of bondage.

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The meaning of this proverb is to be in danger, or hard set on every side; for if you hold the wolf, he bites you by the fingers; if you let him go, he may destroy you.

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This was then the bounty of God, in whose hand, and at whose disposal, are all the riches of the world. He might have taken by force from the Egyptians what he had given them; but he bowed their hearts, so that of their own accord they denuded themselves. The expression, *for their terror had fallen upon them,* is to be understood passively; for the Israelites were not afraid of the Egyptians, but, on the contrary, were terrible to them. Nor does the prophet speak of an ordinary fear. A little before fear had stirred them up to cruelty and tyranny; but as even to that day, they had endeavored, with indomitable audacity, to shake off all fear, God suddenly laid them prostrate by the extraordinary terror which fell upon them. It is, therefore, here justly reckoned among the displays of the wonderful power of God, that he subdued the impetuous fury with which the Egyptians boiled before, that they might allow those to depart free, whom they had determined to handle rudely, and to waste in servile employments; which was like rendering sheep terrible to wolves.

Psalm 105:39-43

> **39.** He spread out a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light during the night. **40.** He asked, [234] and he brought quails, and filled them with the bread of heaven. **41.** He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river. **42.** For he remembered his holy promise, which he had spoken to Abraham his servant. **43.** And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness.

39. *He spread out a cloud for a covering* The Psalmist enumerates certain miracles by which God continued his grace towards his people in the wilderness. This order is worthy of notice; for it was no small confirmation which was added to that incomparable work of redemption, when God ceased not to show himself the guide of their journey. Accordingly, after they had passed through the Red Sea, he spread a cloud over them by day to protect them from the heat of the sun; and during the night, he gave them light by a pillar of fire, that even in the midst of the darkness they might have a bright token of his presence. This continued display of his goodness was surely an unquestionable proof of his perpetual love, an open demonstration that he had adopted the children of Abraham, to foster them under his protection even to the end. What follows concerning *quails,* is introduced

From the heavy and overwhelming judgments inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people, for refusing to allow the Israelites to depart, they came to associate the presence of that people in their land, with the most terrible manifestations of divine displeasure. This at last led them, after all their inveterate impenitence, to hail with gratitude the departure of the hated tribes.

234 See volume 3, page 248, note.

for a different purpose than that for which reference is made to the same fact in Psalm 78:26. In that passage, God's bringing in an abundance of quails is ascribed rather to his wrath than to his beneficence, that the people might satiate the flesh; and we have seen in the exposition of that place, that this is mentioned as a matter of reproach to them. But in the text before us, passing over their ingratitude, the prophet celebrates the unremitting exercise of the divine loving-kindness towards them. Some, however, may be rather inclined to take the word *ask* in a bad sense, because the people besought not God with humility, [235] but through their impatience proceeded at once to murmuring, or rather arrogantly spake against him. Thus taken, the passage, by way of amplification, would mean that God, departing from his own right, humoured even their unhallowed lust. As, however, their fault is not here mentioned, let us rest in that meaning which is the most simple, namely, that the blessings by which God ratified the redemption which he had wrought are here clustered together. It next follows, that *they were filled with the bread of heaven* This appellation, as we have seen elsewhere, is given to the manna by way of eminence. The natural way in which the food which we eat is obtained is from the ground; but God then opened his hand more widely to the Jews, and fed them even from heaven. As it was not enough for them to be refreshed with food when they were hungry, unless they were also supplied with drink, it is added, that *the rock was opened,* and that *the waters flowed from it through the dry places, or the desert.*

42. *For he remembered his holy promise* The Psalmist again mentions the cause why God dealt so graciously with that people, and sustained them so tenderly, namely, that he might fulfill his promise; for he had entered into a covenant with Abraham, engaging to be the God of his seed. Nor did the prophets without cause teach so carefully as we find them doing, that the free covenant is the fountain whence the deliverance, and the continual welfare of the people flowed. Thereby the grace of God became better known, since what took place, so far from happening upon the sudden, and without anticipation, was only the fulfillment of what he had promised four hundred years before. God then, for ages previous to this, gave the light of his word of promise, that his grace and truth might be brought the more distinctly into view. For this reason the prophet again repeats, that God was not led from some new cause to deliver his people, but that his design in doing so was to prove the faithfulness of his covenant, and to give it effect; just as if a man should dig up from the ground a treasure which he had buried in it. Nor is it to be doubted, that the prophet aimed at leading the faith of his countrymen still farther, — that his object was that their posterity might be

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"It does not appear from the history, that the Israelites supplicated God at all, but only murmured against Moses and Aaron for bringing them into the wilderness." — *Phillips.*

persuaded beyond all doubt, that as God had then proved, in the experience of that generation, the sure and substantial truth of his promise delivered many hundred years before, so he would not be to them otherwise than their fathers had found him to be in times past. Accordingly, he signalises this promise by the epithet, *holy,* intimating, that after the death of Abraham it retained its virtue and efficacy unimpaired. God had spoken it to Abraham; but the force of the covenant died not with him. God continued to show himself faithful towards the posterity of the patriarch.

43. *And he brought forth his people with joy* The prophet makes mention of *joy* and *gladness,* the more highly to magnify the greatness of God's grace. It was no small matter, that at the very time when the Egyptians were afflicted by a severe and dreadful plague, — when the whole kingdom was full of weeping and howling, — and when in almost every house there was a dead body, — the people who a little before were groaning in great distress, or rather lay almost dead, went forth with joyful hearts. By the appellation *the chosen of God,* they are reminded, that his favor was not thus exercised towards them on account of their own merits, or on account of the worth of their race, but because he had adopted them, that men having nothing left them in which to vaunt themselves might learn to glory in God alone.

Psalm 105:44-45

44. And he gave them the countries of the nations: and they possessed the labor of the peoples. [236] **45.** That they might observe his ordinances, and keep his law. Hallelujah.

44 *And he gave them the countries of the nations* The Psalmist sets forth the final cause why God in so many ways displayed his wonderful power in redeeming the people, why he did not cease to cherish and defend them in the deserts — why he gave them the possession of the land as he had promised; and this was, that they might dedicate and devote themselves wholly to his service. And, in fact, the end which God proposed in our election was, that he might have on the earth a people by whom he should be called upon and served. The more effectually to stir up the Jews to gratitude, the prophet magnifies the greatness of the divine goodness, by declaring, that they occupied far and wide *the countries of the nations,* and that all the property which many states had acquired with great labor, they now possessed as it were by right of inheritance. The plural number, both as to the word *countries* and *nations,* serves to exhibit in a still more striking

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That is, the products of their labor; their buildings, vineyards, cultivated fields, etc. The Israelites took possession of the land of Canaan, and of course possessed themselves of the advantages arising from its occupation, and cultivation by those who previously inhabited it. — See Deuteronomy 6:10, 11; Joshua 24:13.

light the divine goodness in this matter. The psalm concludes with briefly defining the manner of glorifying God, *That they might keep his law* It would not be enough to celebrate his grace only with the tongue. To this there must be added practical and experimental piety. And as God rejects all religious services of men's invention, the only way of rightly serving him which remains, consists in keeping his commandments.

Psalm 106

PSALM 106

This psalm differs from the preceding, inasmuch as there the Psalmist showed that God had been more than a bountiful father to his chosen people, in order to procure for himself, in coming ages, a race of pure worshippers, while here he acknowledges that these remarkable benefits had been turned to a bad account; because the Jews from time to time threw off the yoke of God, basely abused his kindness, defiled themselves with many pollutions, and also perfidiously departed from his word. Nevertheless, it is not so much in the shape of a reproof or complaint, as a confession of their sins, in order to the obtaining the pardon of them. For the prophet commences with the praises of God, with the design of encouraging both himself and others to cherish good hope in him. Then he prays that God would continue his blessing to the seed of Abraham. But because the people, after so frequently revolting from God, were unworthy of the continuation of his kindness, he asks pardon to be extended to them, and this after he had confessed that from first to last, they had provoked God's wrath by their malice, ingratitude, pride, perfidy, and other vices. [237]

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The first and two last verses of this psalm form a part of that psalm which David delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to be sung before the ark of the covenant, after it was brought from the house of Obed-edom to mount Zion. See 1 Chronicles 16:34-36. Hence it has been ascribed to the pen of David. Many of the ancients thought, and they are followed by Horsley and Mudge, that it was written during the captivity; resting their opinion chiefly on verse 47; but as that verse occurs in the psalm of David recorded in 1 Chronicles 16, at the 35th verse, this argument is clearly without force.

Psalm 106:1-5

> **1.** Hallelujah. [238] Praise ye Jehovah; because he is good; [239] because his mercy endureth for ever. **2.** Who shall express the power of Jehovah? who shall declare all his praise? **3.** Blessed are they that keep judgment, and blessed is he who worketh in righteousness at all times. [240] **4.** Remember me, O Jehovah! with the good will which thou bearest towards thy people: visit me with thy salvation; **5.** That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, and glory with thy heritage.

1. *Praise ye Jehovah* This exhortation supplies the want of a title; not that the psalm contains nothing else than thanksgiving and praise to God, but that the people, from the experience of past favors, may obtain the assurance of reconciliation; and thus entertain the hope that God, although at present offended, would soon be pacified towards them. In celebrating the praises of God, therefore, he orders them to call to mind such things as would have a tendency to assuage their grief on account of present ills, and to animate their spirits, and prevent them from sinking into despair. [241]

2 *Who shall express.* This verse is susceptible of two interpretations; for if you read it in connection with the one immediately following, the sense will be, that all men are not alike equal to the task of praising God, because the ungodly and the wicked do nothing else than profane his holy name with their unclean lips; as it is said in the fiftieth psalm: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" And hence to this sentence the following clause should have been annexed, in the form of a reply, *Blessed are they that keep judgment* I am of opinion, however, that the prophet had another design, namely, that there is no man who has ever endeavored

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"יה הללו, *Praise the Lord.* These words constitute the title, and are not to be considered as making any part of the text of the psalm. The Chaldee retains them as a title; the LXX. and Vulgate have the Hebrew words, which are joined into one; whilst the Syriac has in their stead a sort of table of contents of the psalm " — *Phillips.*

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"טוב-כי*, For he is good.* משפטיו is employed emphatically, denoting that God is good, without any mixture of evil, perfectly good in himself, and is, as it were, the fountain from which flows every good, and nothing but good. Hence we read in Matthew 19:17, 'There is none good but one, that is, God.'" — *Ibid.*

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Bishop Horsley, following the Syriac, which reads משפטיו, and all the other versions, which read עשי, translates the verse, "Blessed are they that keep his judgments, and do righteousness at all seasons."

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It is the province of faith to celebrate the divine mercy in the most trying circumstances.

to concentrate all his energies, both physical and mental, in the praising of God, but will find himself inadequate for so lofty a subject, the transcendent grandeur of which overpowers all our senses. Not that he exalts the power of God designedly to deter us from celebrating its praises, but rather as the means of stirring us up to do so to the utmost of our power. Is it any reason for ceasing our exertions, that with whatever alacrity we pursue our course, we yet come far short of perfection? But the thing which ought to inspire us with the greatest encouragement is, the knowledge that, though ability may fail us, the praises which from the heart we offer to God are pleasing to him; only let us beware of callousness; for it would certainly be very absurd for those who cannot attain to a tithe of perfection, to make that the occasion of their not reaching to the hundredth part of it.

3 *Blessed are they that keep judgment* I make a distinction between this and the preceding verse, and yet so as to preserve the connection between them. For the prophet, having declared the magnitude of God's power to be such that no tongue could utter all its praises, now says, that the praises of the lip merely are not acceptable to God, but that the concurrence of the heart is indispensable, nay, that even the whole of our deportment must be in unison with this exercise. Now, when he first commands to *keep judgment,* and then to *work righteousness,* he gives us a short description of genuine godliness. I have no doubt, that in the former clause he describes the sincere affection of the heart, and that, in the latter, he refers to external works. For we know, there is nothing but the mere shadow of righteousness, unless a man cordially devote himself to the practice of honesty. He requires perseverance, too, that no one may imagine that he has discharged this duty properly, excepting he whose constant and continued aim it is to live righteously and justly. We behold not a few who have only an empty profession; others show some signs of virtue, but do not maintain a consistent course of conduct.

4 *Remember me* By these words the prophet declares it to be his chief desire, that God would extend to him that love which he bore towards the Church, that he might thus become a participator of all the blessings which, from the very first, he bestows upon his chosen, and which day by day he continues with them. Nor does he desire this for himself alone, but in name of the Church Catholic, offers up a prayer alike for all, that, by his example, he might stimulate the faithful to present similar petitions.

Remember me, says he, *with the good will which thou bearest towards thy people;* that is to say, grant to me the same unmerited kindness which thou art pleased to confer upon thy people, that so I may never be cut off from thy Church, but always be included among the number of thy children; for the phrase, *good will towards thy people,* is to be understood passively of that love which God graciously bears to his elect. It is, however, by a metonymy employed by the prophet to point out the marks of God's love. For from this gracious source flows that proof which he actually and experimentally

gives of his grace. But the prophet, if accounted to belong to the number of the people of God, would consider this to be the summit of true happiness; because, by this means, he would feel that God was reconciled to him, (than which nothing is more desirables) and thus, too, he would experience that he was bountiful. The term, *remember,* relates to the circumstance of time, as we shall see towards the end of the psalm that it was penned when the people were in a state so sad and calamitous, that the faithful might entertain some secret apprehension that their God had forgotten them. To obviate this is the tendency of the next clause, *visit me with thy salvation* For God is said to visit those from whom he had apparently withdrawn himself; and their salvation is a demonstration of his good-will towards them. In the next verse he repeats the same sentiment, *that I may see the good of thy chosen* For he desires to be an associate and participator of the blessings which are constantly realised by the elect of God. The verb *to see,* is very plainly taken to denote the enjoyment of the blessings, as "to see the kingdom of God," (John 3:3;) and "to see good and life" (1 Peter 3:10,) denote the corresponding blessings. Those who expound it, that I may see thee do good to the chosen, are mistaken; because the preceding verse upon which this depends will not bear this interpretation, and the exposition which I have given is supported by the words which follow, *that I may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, and glory with thy heritage* For it is quite obvious that the prophet is solicitous to become a sharer in all the benefits which are the portion of the chosen, that, satisfied with God alone, he may, under his providential care, live joyfully and happily. Whatever might be the then mournful state of the Church, the prophet, amid all such tumult, still clings fast by this principle, that there is nothing better than to be regarded as belonging to the flock and people of God, who will always prove the best of fathers to his own, and the faithful guardian of their welfare. All that he asks is, that God would deal with him, as he is wont to deal with his Church; and declares that he could not bear the thought of being severed or separated from the common lot of the Church. These words, however, imply a tacit complaint that at that time God was withholding his loving-kindness from his afflicted Church, as if he had cast her off altogether.

Psalm 106:6-11

> **6.** We have sinned with our fathers, we have acted iniquitously, we have done wickedly. **7.** Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy kindnesses; they rebelled at the sea, even the Red Sea. **8.** Yet he saved them for his own name's sake, that he might make his power to be known. **9.** Also he rebuked the Red Sea, and dried it up; and made them walk through the depths, as through the desert. **10.** And saved them from the hand of the enemy, and delivered them from the hand of the wicked. **11.** And the waters covered their oppressors: there was not one of them left.

6 *We have sinned with our fathers* It is quite plain from these words, that although the prophet may have spoken in the person of one man, he yet dictates a form of prayer for the common use of the whole Church, seeing that he now identifies himself with the whole body. And from this to the end of the psalm, he gleans from ancient histories that their fathers had always been of a malign and perverse spirit, of corrupt practice, rebellious, ungrateful and perfidious towards God; and confesses that their descendants were not better; and having made this confession, [242] they come and ask the remission of their sins. And as we are unable to obtain the pardon of our sins until we have first confessed ourselves to be guilty of sin, and as our hardness of heart shuts out the grace of God from us, the prophet, therefore, with great propriety, humbly acknowledges the guilt of the people in this their severe and sore chastisement, and that God might justly inflict upon them a yet harder punishment. On another account it was advantageous for the Jews to have their sins set before them; because, if God punish us severely, we at once suppose that his promises have failed. But when, on the contrary, we are reminded that we are receiving the reward due to us for our transgressions, then if we thoroughly repent, those promises in which God appears as pacified towards us will come to our aid. Besides, by the three expressions which he employs in reference to their transgressions, he points out their enormity, that (as is usually the case) their hearts might not be slightly affected, but deeply wounded with sorrow. For we know how men are fettered by their vices, and how ready to let themselves alone, until compelled to examine themselves in good earnest; nay, what is more, when God calls them to judgment, they make a kind of verbal confession of their iniquities, while, at the same time, hypocrisy blinds their minds. When, therefore, the prophet says, that the *people acted iniquitously in sinning,* and had become ungodly and wicked, he employs no useless or unnecessary accumulation of words. Let any of us examine ourselves, and we will easily find that we have equal need to be constrained to make an ingenuous confession of our sins; for though we dare not say that we have no sin, yet there is not one of us but is disposed to find a cloak and subterfuge for his sin.

In a very similar manner, Daniel, in the ninth chapter of his prophecies, acknowledges the guilt of his own iniquities and those of the people; and it may be that the author of this psalm followed his example. From both let us learn, that the only way of pleasing God is to institute a rigid course of self-examination. Let it also be carefully observed, that the holy prophets, who never departed from the fear and worship of God, uniformly confessed their own guilt in common with the people; and this they did, not out of feigned humility, but because they were aware that they themselves were

242 "Ils vienent a demander pardon de leurs pechez." — *Fr.*

tainted with manifold corruptions, for when iniquity abounds, it is almost impossible for even the best of men to keep themselves from being infected by its baneful effects. Not comparing themselves with others, but sisting themselves before God's tribunal, they at once perceive the impossibility of making their escape.

At that time impiety had attained to such a degree of enormity among the Jews, that it is not astonishing if even the best and most upright men were carried away, as if by the violence of a tempest. How very abominable, then, is the pride of those who hardly imagine that they offend in the least possible way; nay, who even, like certain fanatics of the day, conceive that they have attained to a state of sinless perfection! It must be borne in mind, however, that Daniel, who carefully kept himself under the fear of God, and whom the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, declares to be one of the most upright of men, did not with reigned lips acknowledge his own transgressions, and those of the people, when he confessed them, under a deep sense of their grievously and dreadfully abhorrent character in the eyes of God. True, indeed, he was not overwhelmed in the same torrent of iniquity with others; but he knew that he had contracted a very large amount of guilt. Besides, the prophet does not bring forward their fathers for the purpose of palliating his own delinquency, (as many at the present day set at nought all reproof, shielding themselves with this, namely, that they have been so taught by their fathers, and that, therefore, their bad education, and not they, is at fault,) but rather to show that he and those of his own nation were obnoxious to severe punishment, because even from the very first, and as if co-existent with their early infancy, they never ceased to provoke the displeasure of God against themselves more and more by their fresh transgressions. It is in this manner that he involves the fathers with the children in many of the grounds of condemnation. [243]

7 *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt,* Here he relates how the people immediately, from the very commencement of their emancipation from bondage, were ungrateful to God, and conducted themselves in a rebellious manner. Nor does he confine himself to the history of one period only, but the whole drift of his narrative is to point out that the people had never ceased from doing wickedly, although God met them in return with inconceivable kindness; which is a proof of the invincible and desperate perversity of this nation. He first blames the folly of the people as the occasion of such ingratitude. In calling it folly, he does not intend to lessen the offense, (as some are often wont to do,) but to expose the vile and disgraceful stupidity of the people, in being blind in matters so plain; for God's works were such that even the blind might behold them. Whence could such gross ignorance originate, unless that Satan had so maddened

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"En beaucoup d'articles de condemnation." — *Fr.*

them that they did not regard the miracles of God, which might have moved the very stones? Now, when he adds, *they remembered not,* he expresses more forcibly the inexcusable nature of their ignorance, nay, that their blindness was the result of stupid indifference, more than the want of proper instruction. For the cause of their ignorance was their overlooking those matters which, in themselves, were abundantly manifest. He further mentions how quickly that forgetfulness came upon them, which tended to increase their guilt. For it was marvelous that not even the very sight of these things could arouse their spirits. Hence it came to pass, that while they had scarcely made their departure from Egypt, and were passing through the sea, they proudly rose up against their deliverer. Surely not one year, nor even a century, ought to have erased from their minds deeds so worthy of being remembered. What madness, then, at that very time to murmur against God, as if he had abandoned them to be slaughtered by their enemies? That arm of the sea through which the people passed is, in the Hebrew, called *the Sea of Suph.* Some translate it *the Sea of Sedge,* and will have the word סוף, *suph,* to signify *sea-weed.* [244] But whatever be its derivation, there can be no doubt about the place. It is very likely that the name was given to it because it abounded with rushes.

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"*At the Red Sea, i.e., at the Arabian Gulf*; literally, *at the Sea of Suph,* which, if Suph be not here a proper name, (as it seems to be in Deuteronomy 1:1 and, with a slight variation, in Numbers 21:14) means *the sea of weeds*; and that sea is still called by a similar name in modern Egypt. This, its designation throughout the books of the Old Testament, is in the Syriac version and the Chaldee paraphrase likewise rendered *the sea of weeds*; which name may have been derived from the weeds growing near its shore, or from the weeds, or coralline productions, with which, according to Diodorus Siculus and Kircher, it abounded; and which were seen through its translucent waters. Finati, quoted by Laborde, speaks of the transparency of its waters, and the corals seen at its bottom " — *Cresswell.* It has sometimes been asserted that this sea received the appellation of *Red* from its color. But it has been abundantly attested by those who have seen it, that it is no more red than any other sea. Niebuhr, in his description of Arabia, says, "The Europeans are accustomed to give the Arabian Gulf the name of Red Sea; nevertheless, I have not found it any more *red* than the Black Sea or the White Sea, or any other sea in the world." Artemidorus in Strabo expressly tells us that "it looks of a *green* color, by reason of the abundance of *sea-weed* and moss that grow in it;" which Diodorus Siculus also asserts of a particular part of it. It appears to have derived its name of "Red Sea" from Edom, which signifies *red.* Although throughout the whole Scriptures of the Old Testament it is called *Yam Suph, the weedy sea,* yet among the ancient inhabitants of the countries adjoining it was called *Yam Edom, the sea of Edom,* (1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chronicles 8:17, 18,) the land of Edom having extended to the Arabian Gulf; and the Edomites or Idumeans having occupied at one time a part, if not the whole, of Arabia Petraea. The Greeks, who took the name of the sea from the Phoenicians, who called it *Yam Edom,* instead of rendering it *the sea of Edom,* or, *the Idumean Sea,* as they ought to have done, took the word Edom, by mistake, for an appellative, instead of a proper name, and accordingly rendered it ερυθρα θαλασσα, that is, *the Red Sea.* Hence the LXX. translate *Yam Suph,* by the *Red Sea*; in which they have been followed by the authors of our English version. But *the sea of weeds* is undoubtedly the best translation of the Hebrew text. — See *Prideaux*' *Connections, etc.,* volume 1, pages 39, 40.

8 *And saved them* The prophet here teaches what any one could easily learn from the preceding sentence, that the Israelites were saved, not on account of their deserving to be so, but because God had a regard to his own glory. That obstacle being removed, God went on to accomplish that deliverance which he had commenced, in order that his holy name might not become a reproach among the heathen. Besides, we must not overlook the antithesis between the *name of God* and the merits of men, because God, out of a regard to his own glory, can find in us no cause wherefore he should be moved to save us. The inestimable kindness of God, which, for the sake of a people so perverse, altered the usual order of nature, is more illustriously displayed by the account which is afterwards given of the means by which they were preserved. When he says that the *sea was rebuked,* he extols the power of God, at whose command and will the sea was dried up — the waters receded, so that a free passage was opened up between the opposite heaps of waters. With the design of magnifying the miracle, he employs a similitude, which, in all likelihood, was drawn from Isaiah; for in the sixty-third chapter and thirteenth verse, he says, "Thou hast made thy people to walk through the deeps, as an horse in the wilderness, that he might not stumble." When the people walked through the sea as upon a dry plain, the prophet informs us that this was done solely by the astonishing power of God. It is quite possible, that in the desert in which the people wandered, there was many an abyss, the path rugged, and many a hill and dale and ragged rock. But it cannot be doubted that the prophet extols the power of God in the passage through the sea, and enhances it by this consideration, that the path through that deep sea was smooth. Besides, he gives greater strength to the miracle in saying that *their enemies were drowned;* because, when the sea afforded a free passage to the children of Israel, and covered and engulfed the Egyptians, so *that not one of them escaped alive,* whence proceeded this instantaneous difference, but from this, that God made a distinction between the one people and the other?

Psalm 106:12-15

> **12.** Then they believed his words; they sang his praises. **13.** They made haste, and forgot his works; they did not attend to his counsel; **14.** And lusted greatly in the desert, and tempted God in the wilderness. **15.** And he gave them their desire; but sent leanness into their soul.

12. *Then they believed his words* In stating that they believed God's word, and sang his praise, the prophet does not say this to their commendation, but rather to increase, in a twofold manner, their guilt; because, being convinced by such indubitable testimony, they yet instantly resumed their wonted disposition of mind, and began to rebel against God, as if they had never beheld his wonderful works. How very inexcusable was that impiety

which in a moment could forget the remarkable benefits which they had been constrained to admit! Overpowered by the grandeur of God's works, they were, he says, in spite of themselves, compelled to believe in God, and give glory to him, and thus the criminality of their rebellion was increased; because, although their stubbornness was overcome, yet they immediately relapsed into their former state of unbelief. A question, however, arises, seeing that true faith always corresponds with the nature of the word, and as the word is an incorruptible seed, so though it may happen to be almost, it never can be totally destroyed. But there is a temporary faith, as Mark calls it, (Mark 4:17) which is not so much a fruit of the Spirit of regeneration, as of a certain mutable affection, and so it soon passeth away. It is not a voluntary faith which is here extolled by the prophet, but rather that which is the result of compulsion, namely, because men, whether they will or not, by a sense which they have of the power of God, are constrained to show some reverence for him. This passage ought to be well considered, that men, when once they have yielded submission to God, may not deceive themselves, but may know that the touchstone of faith is when they spontaneously receive the word of God, and constantly continue firm in their obedience to it.

In order to point out the inconstancy of the people, he says, *they made haste* Some explain this in the following manner, namely, that after they had set out on their journey, they hastened to come to the place called Marah. This, however, is to give a very tame representation of the emphatic style in which the prophet speaks, when severely reprehending their hasty and headlong departure from the way, in that they believed only for a very short time, and speedily forgot God's works; for they had only journeyed three days from their passage through the sea till they came to Marah, and yet they began to murmur against God, because they could not procure pleasant waters. [245] Meantime, we must here observe what we have seen elsewhere, that the alone cause why men are so ungrateful towards God, is their despising of his benefits. Were the remembrance of these to take fast hold of our hearts, it would serve as a bridle to keep us in his fear. The prophet declares what their transgression was, namely, that they did

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The history to which reference is here made is recorded in Exodus 15 We read in the 22nd verse of that chapter, that the Israelites "went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." They then came to Marah, where there was abundance of water; but it was so bitter that they could not drink of it. Being thus disappointed in the hopes with which the first sight of these waters inspired them, they murmured against Moses, and said, "*What shall we drink*?" How rapid the transition from gratitude and praise to discontent and murmuring! No sooner did a new trouble befall that people, than they forthwith yielded to impatience, forgat the long series of miracles which had been wrought for their deliverance from Egypt, and distrusting God, appeared to be at once prepared to break out in rebellion against him and Moses their leader.

not suspend their desires till a fitting opportunity occurred for granting them. The insatiable nature of our desires is astonishing, in that scarcely a single day is allowed to God to gratify them. For should he not immediately satisfy them, we at once become impatient, and are in danger of eventually falling into despair. This, then, was the fault of the people, that they did not cast all their cares upon God, did not calmly call upon him, nor wait patiently until he was pleased to answer their requests, but rushed forward with reckless precipitation, as if they would dictate to God what he was to do. And, therefore, to heighten the criminality of their rash course, he employs the term *counsel;* because men will neither allow God to be possessed of wisdom, nor do they deem it proper to depend upon his counsel, but are more provident than becomes them, and would rather rule God than allow themselves to be ruled by him according to his pleasure. That we may be preserved from provoking God, let us ever retain this principle, That it is our duty to let him provide for us such things as he knows will be for our advantage. And verily, faith divesting us of our own wisdom, enables us hopefully and quietly to wait until God accomplish his own work; whereas, on the contrary, our carnal desire always goes before the counsel of God, by its too great haste.

14. *And they lusted* He goes on, according to the history, to mention the sin which, agreeably to the duty of his office as a teacher, he had briefly noticed. Should any one inquire in what way they did not attend to God's counsel, he answers, because they had indulged in the gratification of their lusts; for the only way of acting with proper moderation is, when God rules and presides over our affections. It is therefore the more necessary to bridle that strong tendency to fleshly lusts which naturally rage within us. For whoever allows himself to desire more than is needful, openly sets himself in direct opposition to God, inasmuch as all fleshly lusts are directly opposed to him.

To tempt God is not to acquiesce in his will, but to desire more than he is willing to grant. And since there are a variety of modes of tempting God, the prophet here adverts to one mode of doing so, namely, that the people had been so presumptuous as to limit God to means of their own devising; and thus, in rejecting the way which they ought to have followed, they ascribed to God a property altogether novel, as much as to say, If God do not feed us with flesh we will not regard him as God. He gave them the food which ought to have satisfied them. And though God is not limited by any means whatsoever, yet it is his will that our minds be rendered subservient to the means which he has appointed. For instance, although he can nourish us without bread, nevertheless it is his will that our life be sustained by such provision; and if we neglect it, and wish to point out to him another way of nourishing us, we tempt his power.

15. *He gave them their desire* There is a fine paronomasia in the word רזון, *razon,* for if, instead of ז, *zain,* we read ץ, *tsädhé,* the word would

signify *good pleasure.* The prophet, therefore, in allusion to their lusting, by a word which is very similar to good pleasure or desire, says that *God sent leanness into their souls;* meaning by that, that he had indeed gratified the inordinate desires of the people, in such a way, however, as that those who had loathed the manna, now received nothing but leanness. [246] Thus the prophet would seem to charge the people with what we daily observe among those who live luxuriously and are fastidious, especially when their stomach, in consequence of the fluids poured into it, being vitiated, has no relish for wholesome food. For such persons only relish that food which is pernicious; and, therefore, the more they pamper themselves with it, so much the more do they become the creatures of noxious habits; and thus in a very short time, the very food itself makes them pine away. The prophet, seems, therefore, to apply to the mind what he says about the unhealthy state of the body, and to compare the Jews to those morbid persons, whose voraciousness, instead of promoting health, injures it, because they do not derive any nourishment from their food. The reason is, that God withheld his blessing from the food which they had so immoderately longed for, in order that this their punishment for their transgression might humble them. But their perversity is seen to be very great, in that even this mode of punishing them did not overcome their stubborn hearts. It is a proverbial saying, that fools learn wisdom from the experience of evil. How insane and incorrigible must they have been, whom even compulsion itself could not reform!

Psalm 106:16-22

16. And they envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron the saint of Jehovah. **17.** The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and

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The reference here is to the quails which God granted to the people in answer to their request for flesh, but which, from the excess in which they partook of them, so far from affording nourishment, proved the cause of disease. When food of an unwholesome quality, or too much of that which is wholesome, is eaten, nature with much violence seeks to throw it off from the system by the several evacuations, upon which follows a sudden and almost incredible deprivation of strength and flesh. The Israelites, when God gave them the quails, having indulged their appetite to an immoderate degree, (Exodus 16:8; Psalm 78:25, 29,) the effect was their being seized with a sudden and wasting sickness, which is supposed by some to have been what is called cholera, a disease which produces a rapid prostration of strength and emaciation of the whole frame. This opinion seems confirmed from what is stated in Numbers 11:20, where it is threatened that the quails should "come out at their nostrils," probably indicating the violent vomitings which accompany that malady. It is indeed said, that the *Lord smote* the people with a very great plague, Numbers 11:33. But God's agency, and even his miraculous agency, admits of the subserviency of means. French and Skinner read the clause, "But sent a wasting disease among them." "The word רזה, *to attenuate, emaciate,*" says Hammond, "is used also for *destroying,* Zephaniah 2:11, when God threatens that he will *emaciate, i.e., destroy all the gods.* And then רזון, may be rendered, more generally, destruction or plague, and so R. Tanchum on Zephaniah renders it *destruction.*"

covered over the tent of Abiram. **18.** And a fire was kindled in their assembly, and the flame consumed the wicked. **19.** They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped before the molten image. **20.** And they changed their glory into the likeness of an ox that eateth grass. **21.** They forgot God their preserver, who had done great things in Egypt; **22.** And wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things at the Red Sea.

16. *And they envied* He refers here very shortly to another transgression, and that, too, in such a way as to furnish both to himself and others ample grounds for deep consideration. For, as the people, in devising from time to time new modes of sinning, displayed so much cunning in their attempts to provoke God's anger, so we ought the more to be filled with fear on that account. Moreover, when he says that they *envied Moses and Aaron,* his meaning is, that, acting under the influence of diabolic pride, they had risen up against God, and were endeavoring to throw off the yoke which he had laid upon them; according as Moses also said,

"What am I, and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against us?" (Numbers 16:11)

As it was the will of God to rule the people by means of Moses and Aaron, not to submit to their rule was virtually to set themselves obstinately to resist the authority of God himself. There is therefore great importance attached to the term, *envy,* namely, that at the very time when God was treating the children of Israel with the utmost kindness and care, they yet were discontented with their lot, and rebelled against him. Could such madness serve any other purpose than to show, that, casting off all farther dependence upon the providence of God for their support, they aspire to rise above the very heavens? In this sense Aaron is called *the saint of Jehovah,* [247] in order that we might know that both he and Moses were equally identified with God; for under the person of the one, the designation is applied to both, and in this way the prophet shows that they had been Divinely invested with that authority which they were exercising. In renouncing their authority, therefore, and, to the utmost of their power, dishonoring these saints, Dathan and Abiram were rebelling not against men, but against God.

17 *The earth opened* The heinousness of their sin may be seen in the magnitude of the punishment by which it was visited. But the design of the prophet was to accuse and reprove publicly the obstinacy of the

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"The *saint, i.e.*, a man consecrated with holy oil to the office of the priesthood, and wearing on his mitre a plate inscribed, 'Holiness to the Lord,' (Exodus 28:36)" — *Cresswell.* יהוה קדוש*, holy of the Lord.* Aaron is thus called, because he was separated from the whole congregation of Israel, and appointed to direct the public worship, and to offer the sacrifices. In reference to this, Moses said to Korah, 'The Lord will show who are His, and who is holy,' (Numbers 16:5) — *Phillips.*

people, who, so far from being bettered by their corrections, (although the vengeance of God was so terrible as almost to move the very stones,) conducted themselves the more perversely. That was surely an awfully ominous event, when *the earth swallowed up alive Dathan and Abiram,* and all their accomplices; and when fire coming down from heaven consumed [248] them, according to the saying of Moses,

"If any thing common happen to these men, then believe not that God who ruleth in heaven rules over you and me; but if this new and extraordinary thing happen, namely, that the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, then indeed believe that I am sent by God," Numbers 16:29

When the Israelites were so infatuated as to rise in rebellion against God, then did the terrible nature of their distemper appear in that it could not be cured by the stringent remedy which was applied to it. And as even hypocrites are afraid when they feel the severity of God, it was the height of folly in them to fret and quarrel with God where he was visiting their iniquities with stripes. Should any one ask why God charges the faults of a few upon the whole body of the people? the answer is obvious; for although there were only two individuals who were the principal abettors of the conspiracy, and along with them two hundred and seventy seditious persons, yet it would seem, from the murmurings and cavillings of the whole congregation, that they also were affected with the same distemper. The punishment did not extend beyond the captains [249] and ringleaders of this wicked conspiracy, it being the design of God to mitigate it, and to spare the people at large, who nevertheless had been most desirous of innovation, seeing they could not endure the authority of Moses and Aaron.

19. *They made a calf.* [250] Here he represents their rebellion as exceedingly base, in that they abandoned the true worship of God, and made to themselves a calf. For although it was their intention to worship God in this manner, yet the prophet reprehends their brutal stupidity, because *they*

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The fire consumed two hundred and fifty, and fourteen thousand and seven hundred died of the plague. — Numbers 16:35, 49.

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"Capitaines et portenseignes." — *Fr.*

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This idol seems to have been an imitation of the Egyptian God Apis, or Serapis, a word which signifies the head of an ox, the Egyptians having exalted that animal to the rank of a god whom they absurdly worshipped, and to whom they resorted as to an oracle. "The modern Jews assert, that their ancestors were in that matter misled by certain Egyptian proselytes, who had accompanied the Israelites when they were delivered from their bondage. The Psalmist, it may be remarked, does not observe the order of time in his narrative, the making of the calf being prior to the fate of Dathan and Abiram. — Comp. Exodus 32:4, 5." — *Cresswell.*

worshipped before the molten image, [251] and represented God *by the figure of an ox which eateth grass* [252] From this the prophet infers, that God had been robbed of his honor, and that all his glory had been tarnished. And surely it is so; for although the idolaters feign to serve God with great zeal, yet when, at the same time, they represent to themselves a God visible, they abandon the true God, and impiously make for themselves an idol. But he reproaches them with being guilty of still greater impiety, when he says, *after the likeness of an ox that eateth grass;* and contrasts with it *their honor or glory.* For seeing that God had clothed them with his own glory, what madness was it to substitute in place of him not only an ox, but the inanimate form of an ox, as if there were any resemblance between God who createth all kinds of food, and that stupid animal which feeds upon grass?

It is necessary, however, to observe the design of the prophet, which is to point out the blindness of men as more base and abominable, because not contenting themselves with any common form of superstition, but casting off all sham they give themselves up to the most shocking forms of worshipping God. Had the people formed for themselves a likeness of God under the likeness of a man, even that would have been impiously robbing God of his due; how much more shameful was their conduct when they assimilated God to an ox? When men preserve their life by eating and drinking, they acknowledge how frail they are, because they derive [253] from dead creatures the means of its continuation. How much greater is the dishonor done to God when he is compared to the brutal tribes? Moreover, the comparison referred to increases the enormity of their guilt. For what credit was it for a holy people to worship the inanimate likeness of an ox instead of the true God? But God had condescended to spread out the overshadowing wings of his glory upon the children of Abraham, that he might put on them the highest honor. Therefore, in denuding themselves of this honor, they had exposed their own baseness to the derision of all the nations of the earth. And hence Moses employs the phrase of *nakedness,* when he is showing that crime of idolatry:

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"More properly, 'the overlaid image;' or, more literally still, 'the metalline shell.'" — *Horsley.* "The Hebrew word," says Mant, "here, as elsewhere, rendered by our translators 'molten image,' strictly and properly means 'the metalline case' or 'covering spread over' the carved wood. It is often joined with the 'carved wooden, image' which it covered. Aaron's calf was thus made of wood, and overlaid with gold."

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"*That eateth hay* — the Egyptians, when they consulted Apis, presented a bottle of hay or of grass, and if the ox received it, they expected good success." — *Cresswell.*

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"Empruntent des creatures mortes la continuation d'icelle." — *Fr.*

"And when Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies)"
Exodus 32:25.

Should any one be disposed to say that the ark of the covenant was a representation of God, my answer is, That that symbol was given to the children of Israel, not to engross the whole of their attention, but only for the purpose of assisting and directing them in the spiritual worship of God.

21. *They forgot God* The prophet again repeats that the people had sinned not simply through ignorance, but also wilfully, inasmuch as God had already given a very palpable manifestation of his power and glory. And as he makes himself known in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, the blindness of men is totally inexcusable. But far more aggravating is the sin of the children of Israel, who, after God had made himself known to them, in the most condescending manner, cast him off altogether, and gave themselves up to the practice of brutish idolatry. And God having from heaven put forth his Almighty power for their salvation, there must surely be no little importance attached to such displays of his power as proclaim the praise and honor of his great name. Had he merely given an ordinary token of his power, even that ought to have attracted so much consideration as should have kept the people in the fear and worship of God. Now, that these miracles were so very notable, or rather terrible and rare, the people acted a very base part to shut their eyes upon them, and give themselves over to idolatry. For as the darkness is dispelled by the beamy lustre of the sun, so all inventions and perverse errors should vanish before such knowledge of God.

Psalm 106:23-27

> **23.** And he said that he would destroy them, unless that Moses his chosen had stood in the breach before his face, to turn away his wrath, that he might not destroy them. **24.** And they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his word; **25.** And they murmured in their tents, and did not listen to the voice of Jehovah. **26.** And he lifted up his hand against them, to destroy them in the desert: **27.** And to destroy their seed among the heathen, and to scatter them throughout the lands. [254]

23. *And he said* The prophet informs us, by these words, that the people had a feeling sense of their remarkable deliverance from impending destruction, by means of prayer alone, which, for a season, restrained God's vengeance from bursting forth against them. In a very short time, however, they return to their wonted disposition of mind, a striking proof of the awful perversity of their hearts. To represent how highly God was offended, the prophet says that he had purposed to destroy the transgressors: not

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that God is subject to human passions, to be very angry for a little, and then immediately afterwards, on being appeased, changes his purpose; for God, in his secret counsel, had resolved upon their forgiveness, even as he actually did pardon them. But the prophet makes mention of another purpose, by which God designed to strike the people with terror, that coming to know and acknowledge the greatness of their sin, they might be humbled on account of it. This is that repentance so frequently referred to in the Scriptures. Not that God is mutable in himself; but he speaks after the manner of *men,* that we may be affected with a more feeling sense of his wrath: like a king who had resolved to pardon an offender, yet sisted him before his judgment-seat, the more effectually to impress him with the magnitude of the kindness done to him. God, therefore, while he keeps to himself his secret purpose, declared openly to the people that they had committed a trespass which deserved to be punished with eternal death. Next he says that *Moses stood in the breach,* meaning that he had made intercession with God, lest his awful vengeance might break forth among the people. There is here an allusion to the manner in which cities are stormed; for if a breach is made in the wall by any of the various engines which are employed in war, brave soldiers will instantly throw themselves into the breach to defend it. [255] Hence Ezekiel reproaches the false prophets, who, unlike Moses, deceiving the people by their flatteries, making, as it were, a mud-wall, do not place themselves in the breach in the day of battle.

"Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord," Ezekiel 13:5.

Some expositors are of opinion that the prophet refers to the separation which the people had made among themselves in violating the covenant of God, and the sacred relation in which they stood to each other; but the meaning is the same. For in that breach which gave rise to this metaphor or similitude, God, in defending his people so faithfully, was to them in place

Some interpreters, as Mudge and Horsley, have felt great difficulty in interpreting this verse. "Nothing," says the latter critic, "was said about overthrowing the seed, at the time when the adults, which came out of Egypt, were sentenced to perish in the wilderness. On the contrary, it was promised that their little ones, *i.e.,* those who were under the age of twenty years at the time of the general muster, should be settled in the land of Canaan. — See Numbers 14." He farther adds, that "nothing was said at the time alluded to about scattering the seed, which should be settled in Canaan, in some future period, through the lands." And he concludes his note on the verse by observing, that, upon the whole, he could not explain it to his own satisfaction. But there seems in the passage to be a reference to those prophetical denunciations afterwards uttered, by which God threatened that he would punish the sins of the Israelites, not only in their own persons, but also in their posterity; — denunciations which have been fulfilled in the various dispersions of that people, and which are fulfilling at the present day. — Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:64. "It is obvious," says Dr Morison, "that those interpreters are mistaken who refer the allusions of the 27th verse to the same history as those of the 26th. The people overthrown in the wilderness were to be destroyed by pestilence; but the overthrow threatened in the 27th verse was by banishment and captivity."

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of a wall or bulwark. Having provoked him to anger anew, he was about to rush upon them for their destruction, had not Moses interposed as their intercessor.

24. *And they despised* It was an evident demonstration of the unconquerable wickedness of the Jews, that, after they had been in the jaws of destruction, and while they had scarcely escaped from danger so great and so imminent, they rose up in rebellion against God. What was the cause of this rebellion? The despising of the Holy Land, which of all things ought to have been most desired by them. The country of Canaan, which had been destined to them, as the place where they were to be brought up under God's paternal care, and as a people separated from heathen nations were to worship him only, and which, also, was more especially to them a pledge of the heavenly inheritance, — this country here, and in several other passages, is very properly called the *pleasant land* Was it not, then, the basest ingratitude to despise the holy habitation of God's chosen people? To the cause of this scorn the prophet refers, when he says, *they did not believe God's word* For had they laid hold upon God's promise with that faith which it was incumbent upon them to do, they would have been inflamed with such a strong desire for that land, that they would have surmounted all obstacles which might occur in their way to it. Meanwhile, not believing his word, they not only refuse the heritage which was offered to them, but excite a rebellion in the camp, as if they would rise up in arms against God.

26. *And he lifted up.* He describes another example of the vengeance of God, the recollection of which ought to have been deeply seated in their hearts, so that cherishing a constant fear of him, they might watch over themselves with the utmost solicitude. No good having ensued from all this, it is obvious that the madness of that people was incurable. At that time God did restrain his anger, in that he did not disperse their offspring throughout various parts of the earth; but his threatening of itself ought to have sufficed for the subduing of their pride, had they not been incorrigible. *To lift up the hand* is in this passage susceptible of two meanings. In Scripture God is frequently said to lift up his hand to inflict punishment.

The sins of the people had opened *a breach* or *gap*, for God as an enemy to enter and destroy them. But, like soldiers who stand in the breach that has been made in the walls of a beleaguered city to oppose the irruption of the enemy, Moses, by his earnest prayer, stopped this breach, Exodus 32:11-14. "Moses is here mentioned in the character of a mediator, under the figure of one standing in the breach of the wall of a city made by besiegers, to oppose any farther hostile aggressions. The figure of *a breach* is frequently employed in Scripture to denote some destruction by God. Thus in Judges 21:15, God made *a breach,*פרץ, in the tribes of Israel, *i.e.,* He destroyed one of the tribes, viz., that of Benjamin: see also 2 Samuel 6:8; Ezekiel 22:30. Hence in this passage we understand that God would have destroyed the Israelites, had not Moses stood in the breach, *i.e.,* interceded by his prayers, just at the time when the divine judgments were about to be executed. The Chaldee has paraphrased it thus, *If Moses had not stood before Him and prevailed in prayer*, *i.e.*, arrested the destruction." — *Phillips*

But as it is generally admitted that the prophet is here speaking of swearing, [256] with this opinion I most readily coincide. The practice of lifting up the hand, as if they would have called God down from heaven, was a solemn usual rite among them, accompanying an oath; and is therefore improperly applied to God, whose sublimity rises above all things, and who, as the apostle says, cannot swear by a greater than himself, (Hebrews 6:13) In employing it, therefore, it must be understood that he borrows it from the common customs which prevail among men. Had not the Holy Land been preserved to the people by the prayers of Moses, awful indeed would their dispersion have been.

Psalm 106:28-31

> **28.** And they joined themselves to Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. **29.** And they provoked God to anger by their works, [257] and the plague broke out among them. **30.** And Phinehas stood up, and executed justice: and the plague was stopped. **31.** And that deed was imputed to him for righteousness from generation to generation for ever.

28 *And they joined themselves to Baal-peor* The prophet tells us that the Jews, after they had been threatened with very awful punishment, very soon fell into a new species of apostasy. Some think, that they are indirectly accused of falling away to the superstitions of the Midianites, in consequence of having been imposed upon by female intrigue. This, it is well known, was the design of Balaam, as soon as he knew that he was forbidden by God to curse the people. His counsel to king Balak was to set the daughters of Moab before the people, to entice them by their allurements to the practice of idolatry,

"Behold, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor." Numbers 31:16

And as the idolatry here mentioned originated from carnal intrigues, some expositors are of opinion, that on this account the prophet charges the people with the commission of a twofold trespass, in their not only being inveigled by the Midianitish women, but also in binding themselves by another bond to Baal-peor, (Numbers 25) Be that as it may, the prophet exclaims against the perfidy of his own nation, because in forsaking the true worship of God,

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The passage refers to the oath which God swore against that people recorded in Numbers 14:21-23. To the same oath there is an allusion in Psalm 95:11. The Chaldee paraphrast has, "He lifted up his hand with an oath."

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In our English Bible it is "their inventions." "Rather," says Horsley, "'their frolics.'"

they had broken that holy union by which they had been betrothed to him. For we know, that as God adopts the Church as his spouse, when she gives herself up to idolatry, she no less shamefully violates her fidelity, than when a wife leaves her husband, and becomes an adulteress. It is well known, that Baal-peor was the idol of the Midianites; but it is not so well known how he received this appellation. The word בעל, *Baal,* has a signification [258] equivalent to *lord, master,* or *patron.* And since פער, *paar,* signifies *to open,* some render it *the God of opening,* and assign as a reason, which, however, I dare not affirm, their shamefully exposing themselves in his presence. Perhaps it is the name of some place, for we know that the heathens often gave to their idols the names of the countries where they were worshipped. [259] We now perceive the prophet's meaning, That the Jews had wickedly revolted from God, and defiled themselves in joining themselves to Baal-peor. In saying that they *ate the sacrifices of the dead,* [260] he points out the greater baseness of their offense. By the sacrifices of idols, he means that they ate things that were offered to idols, as they had been wont to partake of those sacrifices which bound them to the true

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"Signifie autant comme Maistre ou Patron." — *Fr.*

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Baal was a very common name of the principal male god of the nations of the East, as Ashtaroth was a common one for their chief female deity. The Moabites, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and often the Hebrews, worshipped this idol. Among the Babylonians, he was called Bel or Belus. The sun only might at first be worshipped under that name, as we know that under it the Phoenicians adored that luminary. But at length it came to be applied to many other idols, according to these words of the Apostle, "There be gods many, and *baalims,* or lords many," 1 Corinthians 8:5. As the idol Jupiter among the Romans had different names and different rites of worship, occasioned sometimes from the different benefits which he was thought to bestow upon men, as Jupiter Pluvius, because he gave rain, Jupiter Lucetius, because he gave light, Jupiter Altitonans, from thundering; and sometimes from different places — as Jupiter Olympius, from the hill Olympus, Jupiter Capitolinus, from the Capitol hill, Jupiter Latialis, from that part of Italy which is called Latium: so Baal had his distinctive titles, and different rites of worship, occasioned in the same manner. He sometimes received his name from the benefits he was supposed to confer, as Baal-tsephon, (Exodus 14:1) the latter term denoting *a watcher,* and Baalzebub, (2 Kings 1:2) which signifies *the lord of the flies.* He was worshipped under this last name by the Cyrenians, but principally by Ekronites, because, whenever they sacrificed to him, they believed that the swarms of flies, which at that time molested the country, would die. At other times he received a distinctive appellation from the places where he was worshipped, as Baal-peor, from the hill Peor, mentioned in Numbers 23:28; and his temple, whither his votaries resorted, standing on the same hill, was called *Beth-peor,* Deuteronomy 3:29. Possibly, however, the mountain might have taken its name from the god that was there worshipped. The idol named *Chemosh,* in Jeremiah 48:7, is thought to be the same as Baal-peor. "I take it," says Goodwin, "to be applied to Baal-peor, by way of contempt, as if one should say their *blind god,* according to that in the psalm, 'They have eyes, and see not;' for the first letter, *caph,* signifies *as it were,* or *like,* and מוש, *musch, to grope,* or *feel about in manner of blind men.*" *Moses and Aaron,* page 170. This idol was also called *Baal-bereth,* (Judges 8:33, and 9:4,) from his worshippers binding themselves to him by covenant.

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God, the inexhaustible fountain of life. Hence their conduct was the more detestable, when they wilfully gave themselves over to death by perpetrating such a heinous crime. And we know, that banqueting was to some extent connected with their worship. The result of this was, that, renouncing the true God, they joined themselves in marriage with the dead; and thus the prophet charges them with acting a very disgraceful part, in not only bowing the knee to Baal, and offering sacrifices to him, but also in feasting upon these sacrifices.

29. *And they provoked God to anger.* The prophet once more informs us, that they had been put upon their guard by another plague, in order that it might appear that God had always a strict regard for his own glory, in chastising the people; but as they were not bettered by these plagues, these chastisements were fruitless. Having formerly stated, that God's wrath had been appeased by the prayers of Moses, he now says, that the plague had been arrested or ceased by means of the kind interposition of Phinehas. Some render the word פלל, *pillel, to pray;* but the other rendering, to *execute justice,* is more in accordance with the context; namely, that by his zeal in executing justice upon the profligates, he turned away God's vengeance from the Israelites. *He stood up* therefore, that is, he rose up or interposed, when all others maintained a careless indifference. As the Jews were sensible that it was by the kind intervention of one man that the plague was now healed, their obstinacy was the less excusable in not even then ceasing to sin. We must not forget that all these things are addressed to us. For when God from time to time chastises us, and calls upon us to repent by setting before us the example of others, how few profit by his corrections! Moreover, it deserves to be noticed, that the plague ceased at the very time when Phinehas executed justice. From this we may learn, that the most effectual way to quench the fire of God's anger, is when the sinner willingly sits in judgment upon himself for the punishment of his own transgressions; as Paul says, 1 Corinthians 11:31,

"If we would judge ourselves, verily we would not be judged of the Lord."

And surely God confers no small honor upon us, in placing the punishment of our sins within our reach. At the same time, it must be observed, that on that occasion the plague ceased in consequence of the punishment of a single person, because the people then shrunk from the abominable wickedness to which they had been addicted.

31. *And that deed was imputed* The prophet, in thus praising one individual, heaps reproach upon the whole body of the people. For we infer from this token of approbation with which the Holy Spirit condescended to stamp the excellent action of Phinehas, how very base their conduct must

"The dead" appears to be a term of contempt applied to idols. They are so called in opposition to the true and living God. There may also be an allusion to the fact, that many of the heathen idols were men who had been deified after their death.

have been. Neither was this honor reserved for him alone, but his posterity were to enjoy it throughout their succeeding generations. In order, therefore, to cast the greater reproach upon the people, Phinehas alone is contrasted with them. Some may be disposed to inquire, how the zeal of a single individual, overstepping the boundaries [261] of his calling, taking a sword and executing justice, could be approved of God? For it would seem, as if he had ventured upon this action without due consideration. I answer, that the saints have sometimes been under peculiar and extraordinary impulses, which ought not to be estimated by the ordinary standard of actions. When Moses slew the Egyptian, (Exodus 2:12) though not yet called by God to be the deliverer of Israel, and while he was not yet invested with the power of the sword, it is certain, that he was moved by the invisible and internal impulse of God to undertake that deed. Phinehas was moved by a similar impulse. No one indeed imagined that he was armed with the sword of God, yet he was conscious to himself of being moved by a heavenly influence in this matter. And hence it is to be observed, that the common mode and order of calling which God adopts, does not prevent him, whenever it seems proper, to stir up his elect by the secret influence of the Spirit to the performance of praiseworthy deeds.

But a more difficult question still remains, How that one action could be imputed to Phinehas for righteousness? [262] Paul proves that men are justified by faith alone, because it is written,

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," Romans 4:3

In Genesis 15:6, Moses employs the same word. If the same thing may be said respecting works, the reasoning of Paul will be not only feeble, but frivolous. First of all, let us examine, whether or not Phinehas was justified on account of this deed alone. Verily the law, though it could justify, by no means promises salvation to any one work, but makes justification to consist in the perfect observance of all the commandments. It remains, therefore, that we affirm, that the work of Phinehas was imputed to him for righteousness, in the same way as God imputes the works of the faithful to

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"Lequel outre les limites de sa vocation." — *Fr.*

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And it was counted to him for righteousness. Dr Hammond properly observes, that this expression signifies something more than *justifying,* as being the opposite of *condemning*; for thus it would denote no more than *acquitting* Phinehas, who had certainly committed no offense; on the contrary, by this act an offended God was satisfied. He gives to צדקה, therefore, the sense of *reward,* in which he is supported by the Chaldee, which has לזכו, *for merit.* Mendlessohn also, in his Beor to Genesis 15:6, where this phrase occurs, assigns to צדקה the meaning of *merit* or *reward.* The reward in this case, we learn from the history, consisted in placing the priesthood in his family *for ever and ever,* as stated in the next portion of the verse. — See Numbers 25:13." — *Phillips.*

them for righteousness, not in consequence of any intrinsic merit which they possess, but of his own free and unmerited grace. And as it thus appears, that the perfect observance of the law alone (which is done no where) constitutes righteousness, all men must prostrate themselves with confusion of face before God's judgment-seat. Besides, were our works strictly examined, they would be found to be mingled with much imperfection. We have, therefore, no other source than to flee for refuge to the free unmerited mercy of God. And not only do we receive righteousness by grace through faith, but as the moon borrows her light from the sun, so does the same faith render our works righteous, because our corruptions being mortified, they are reckoned to us for righteousness. In short, faith alone, and not human merit, procures both for persons and for works the character of righteousness. I now return to Paul. And it is not from a single expression, that he argues that we are justified freely, and by faith only, but he assumes higher principles, to which I lately referred, that all men are destitute of righteousness, until God reconcile them to himself by the blood of Christ; and that faith is the means by which pardon and reconciliation are obtained, because justification by works is no where to be obtained. Hence he very properly concludes, that we are justified by faith alone. But righteousness by works is as it were subordinate (as they say) to the righteousness just mentioned, while works possess no value in themselves, excepting, and as far as, out of pure benevolence, God imputes them to us for righteousness.

Psalm 106:32-39

> **32.** And they provoked him to anger at the waters of strife [263] , and it turned out ill to Moses on their account: **33.** For they grieved his spirit, [264] so that he spake with his lips. **34.** They did not destroy the nations whom Jehovah had commanded them: **35.** But were mingled with [265] the heathen, and learned their works. **36.** And served their idols: which were the occasion of their overthrow. **37.** And sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils, **38.** And they shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was defiled with blood. **39.** And they were polluted with their own works, and went a whoring after their own inventions. [266]

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At the waters of Meribah, where "they strove with the Lord," Numbers 20:13. — See Psalm 95:8.

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"Ou, feirent rebeller." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, made his spirit to rebel."

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"'But were mingled among' rather, 'But formed alliances with.'" — *Horsley.*

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32 *And they provoked him* The prophet mentions another offense of which they were guilty, in that, they contended with God at the waters of strife, from which circumstance that place derived its name. The clamor was, it is true, raised directly against Moses, but if we examine the matter properly, we will find that they virtually murmured against God himself. And to point out the aggravation of their offense, he says that Moses was hardly dealt with on their account. From this it may be inferred that their transgression was very heinous, in that God did not spare even his own servant, whom he had chosen in preference to all others. We do not deny that Moses deserved that punishment; but if we search for the origin of the trespass, we will find that it was the sin of the people that was visited upon him. If Moses was prevented from entering the land of Canaan, because through the influence of the sin of others, and in opposition to the convictions of his own mind, he had been hurried on to the commission of iniquity, how much more inexcusable is the impiety of that people who deliberately strove with God, and by their folly and fretfulness, brought in Moses for a share of their guilt?

33. *For they grieved his spirit* The verb מרה, *marah,* properly signifies *to vex* or *irritate,* but as it is here put in what the Hebrews call the Hiphil conjugation, some are of opinion that it is to be understood passively, to denote that it was the people who were the occasion of the rebellion; which interpretation does not appear to me to be very objectionable. I cannot, however, agree with those who would have the particle את, *eth,* to be a sign of what is denominated the dative case, as if Moses might be said to have rebelled against the Spirit of God. Had he done so, then assuredly the prophet would not have spoken so severely of the sin and folly into which he had inadvertently fallen. The meaning which I have already given answers very well, That the prime movers of the rebellion must have committed a very heinous offense, seeing that Moses, who had been pushed on by the impetuosity of the people to sin, was so severely dealt with by God. But while the prophet informs us that Moses was punished on the people's account, he is not to be understood as saying that he was altogether blameless. For even admitting that his spirit was ruffled in consequence of the tumult of the people, this ought to have made him the more careful to continue steadfast in his adherence to the Law of God. He adds, that *he spoke with his lips;* and this I take to refer to Moses, there being no ground for the conjecture that it refers to the punishment which God expressly denounced against Moses. It is more likely that these words were intended by the prophet to express how greatly the spirit of Moses was agitated when he openly murmured against God. The prophet, therefore, informs us that the submissive and gentle spirit of Moses was fanned, as it were, into a breeze by the perverseness of the people, so that even he spake un-advisedly,

" — 'And went a whoring with their own inventions;' rather, — 'and play the wanton in their perverse habits.'" — *Horsley.*

saying, "Can God give you water out of the rock?" (Numbers 20:10) For such was the indignation which he felt burning within him, that he could not calmly wait for the commandment of God to smite the rock.

34. *They did not destroy the nations* It appears to me that those persons are mistaken who think that the prophet is here simply giving a relation of the punishment which was inflicted upon the Jews, as if he were imputing to them the entire blame of not exterminating the nations, in consequence of their not deserving the honor of obtaining any more victories over them. But he rather prefers another charge against them, that they had been remiss in driving out the heathen, or more probably that they had not obeyed the Divine command to root them out of the land. Now that the cup of the iniquity of the Amorites was full, it was the purpose of God that they should be exterminated, lest their society might prove injurious to the holy people. For God, having chosen that land for a habitation to himself, intended that it should be holy and purified from all defilement. In refusing, therefore, to execute the vengeance enjoined upon them, the people showed their willingness to associate with the uncircumcised inhabitants of Canaan. In manifesting such indifference about God's command respecting the driving out these nations, they gave just cause for his anger waxing hot against them. Behold, saith he, I have commanded all these nations to be cut off by the sword; and now, because ye have not obeyed my voice,

"they shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell," Numbers 33:55

The not destroying all these nations, but permitting some of them to remain, might appear to be an act of mercy; but in thus acting, the people were guilty of neglecting to execute God's righteous vengeance upon them, and of leaving the land liable to be polluted with their abominations. From these things it ought to be noticed, that there are two extremes in which men are apt to indulge, either in being unnecessarily over rigorous, or in defeating the ends of justice by too great lenity. We must, therefore, adhere strictly to God's command, if we would desire to shun both extremes. For if the Israelites are condemned for sparing some of these nations wholly, what are we to think of those judges who, from a timid and apathetic attention to the responsible duties of their office, exercise too much lenity to a few persons, thus weakening the restraints of the inlets to vice, to the great detriment of the public weal?

35 *But were mingled* He describes what was the result of this foolish humanity; namely, that they were defiled with the pollutions of the nations whom they had spared. Had they exclusively inhabited the land of Canaan, they would have more easily retained the pure worship of God. Allured by the influence of such neighbors, it is not wonderful that they soon degenerated from the footsteps of their fathers, for we are more inclined to follow the example of the bad than of the good. And now he speaks of the descendants of those who had so frequently provoked God's anger

in the wilderness, and declares, that as the same unbelief, rebellion, and ingratitude, were rampant in the succeeding race, they were no better than their fathers.

In mingling with the heathens they openly rejected the distinguishing loving-kindness of God, who adopted them as his children, under the express condition that they should be separated from these profane nations. Therefore, in associating with them indiscriminately, they render this holy covenant of no effect. When he adds, *that they learned their works,* he warns us, that nothing is more dangerous than associating with the ungodly; because, being more prone to follow vice than virtue, it cannot but be, that the more conversant we are with corruption, the more widely will it spread. In such circumstances, the utmost care and caution are requisite, lest the wicked, with whom we come into contact, infect us by their vitiated morals; and particularly where there is danger of relapsing into idolatry, to which we are all naturally prone. What, then, will be the effect produced upon us when instigated by others to commit sin, but to add sin to sin? [267] The prophet, therefore, declares that the Jews were already so much under the tuition of the heathen as to abandon themselves to the practice of their idolatrous rites. In employing the word *to serve,* he confutes the contemptible evasion of the Papists, who pretend that they do not give to images the worship that is due to God alone, but only a sort of honorary adoration. [268] But if the worshipping of images be lawful, the prophet had no sufficient cause to condemn his own nation for serving strange gods. Despicable, therefore, is the distinction, that Divine homage is to be paid to God alone, and that a kind of honorary adoration is to be given to images. He adds, that this *issued in their overthrow,* in order that their obstinate attachment to their follies, and their despising the chastisements of God, may more palpably appear.

37. *And they sacrificed* The prophet here mentions one species of superstition which demonstrates the awful blindness of the people; their not hesitating to sacrifice their sons and daughters to devils. [269] In applying such an abominable designation to the sin of the people, he means to exhibit it in more hateful colors. From this we learn that inconsiderate zeal is a flimsy pretext in favor of any act of devotion. For by how much the Jews were under the influence of burning zeal, by so much does the prophet convict them with being guilty of greater wickedness; because their madness

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"Quid igitur fief ubi oleum camino adder aliena instigatio?" — *Lat.* "Que sera-ce donc quand l'instigation d'autruy iettera (comme l'on dit) de l'huile dedans le feu?" — *Fr.*

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"Dum adoratione duliae, non latriae, se imagines colere excusant." — *Lat.* — See volume 2, page 272, note.

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carried them away to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that they did not spare even their own offspring. Were good intentions meritorious, as idolaters suppose, then indeed the laying aside of all natural affection in sacrificing their own children was a deed deserving of the highest praise. But when men act under the impulse of their own capricious humor, the more they occupy themselves with acts of external worship, the more do they increase their guilt. For what difference was there between Abraham and those persons of whom the prophet makes mention, but that the former, under the influence of faith, was ready to offer up his son, while the latter, carried away by the impulse of intemperate zeal, cast off all natural affection, and imbrued their hands in the blood of their own offspring.

38. *And they shed* He inveighs with still greater indignation against that religious phrensy which led them to sacrifice their own children, and thus to pollute the land by the shedding of innocent blood. Should any one object that Abraham is praised, because he did not withhold his only son, the answer is plain, That he did it in obedience to God's command, so that every vestige of inhumanity was effaced by means of the purity of faith. For if obedience is better than sacrifice, (1 Samuel 15:22) it is the best rule both for morality and religion. It is an awful manifestation of God's vindictive wrath, when the superstitious heathens, left to their own inventions, become hardened in deeds of horrid cruelty. As often as the martyrs put their life in jeopardy in defense of the truth, the incense of such a sacrifice is pleasing to God. But when the two Romans, by name Decii, [270] in an execrable manner devoted themselves unto death, that was an act of atrocious impiety. It is not without just cause, therefore, that the prophet enhances the guilt of the people by this consideration, that to the perverse mode of worshipping God, they had added excessive cruelty. Nor is there less cause for charging them with having polluted that land out of which God had commanded

"לשדים, *to the devils.* This word is found only here and in Deuteronomy 32:17, 'They sacrificed unto *devils,* not to God,' etc. Some persons derive it from שוד, *to lay waste.* Michaelis, from an Arabic word, signifying *to be black.* Hengstenberg, from an Arabic word, signifying *to exercise lordship.* Whatever root may be the true one, there is no doubt that שדים denotes false gods of some kind or another to which human sacrifices were offered " — *Phillips.* That the Canaanites, and their descendants, the Carthaginians, as well as other heathen nations, sacrificed men, and even their dearest children, to appease their deities, is a fact established not only from the Sacred Writings, but also from profane history; and strange as it may seem, it is no less certain, that in this they were imitated by the Israelites, who offered their sons and daughters to the same false gods. Compare 2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6. They had been expressly warned against this horrid practice, (Leviticus 18:21; 20:3; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10;) but so infatuated were they, and such is the desperate wickedness of the human heart and the power of Satan over men, that they frequently relapsed into it. Dr Adam Clarke translates the original word which Calvin renders *devils* by *demons.* "*Devil,*" says he, "is never in Scripture used in the plural; there is but one *devil,* though there are many demons."

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"Mais quand les deux Romains nommez Decii." — *Fr.*

them to expel the ancient inhabitants, in order that he might render it the peculiar scene where he was to be worshipped. The Israelites then were doubly wicked, who, by not only defiling the land with their idolatry, but also by cruelly butchering their children, robbed God of his due, and in a manner frustrated his designs.

39 *And they were polluted with their own works* He now concludes by stating generally, that the Jews, in adopting the abominable practices of the heathen, were become wholly filthy; because in all the devices of men there is nothing else than impurity. He denominates as the *works of men* all the false worship which they devise without the Divine sanction; as if he should say, that the holiness, which is truly connected with the worship of God, comes from his word, and that all human inventions and admixtures in religion are profane, and tend to corrupt the service of God. Doubtless it was the intention of the Israelites to serve God, but the Holy Spirit declares that all the fruit of their burning zeal was their becoming more abominable in God's sight by their lewd inventions. For a strict adherence to the word of God constitutes spiritual chastity.

Psalm 106:40-46

> **40.** And the wrath of Jehovah waxed hot against his people, and he abhorred his own inheritance: **41.** And he delivered them into the hands of the heathen; and their enemies ruled over them. **42.** And their adversaries subdued them, and they were afflicted under their hand. **43.** Many times he delivered them; and they provoked him with their counsel, and were oppressed by their iniquity. **44.** And he saw when they were in straits, in that he heard their cry: **45.** And he remembered his covenant towards them, and it repented him according to the greatness of his mercies. **46.** And he made them to find pity from those who had carried them away captive.

40. *And the wrath of Jehovah waxed hot.* The severity of the punishment inflicted upon the people confirms the truth of what we formerly said, that they had been guilty of no trivial offense, in presuming to corrupt the worship of God. And they themselves showed how hopeless their reformation was, in that all this as yet failed to bring them truly to repent of their sin. That the people, who were God's sacred and chosen heritage, were delivered up to the abominations of the heathen, who themselves were the slaves of the devil, was an awful manifestation of his vindictive wrath. Then, at least, ought they to have held in abhorrence their own wickedness, by which they had been precipitated into such direful calamities. In saying, *that they were subdued and afflicted by their enemies,* the prophet points out, in a still more astonishing manner, the baseness of their conduct. Reduced to a state of bondage and oppression, their folly appears the more disgraceful, in that they were not truly and heartily humbled under God's almighty hand. For prior to this, they had been warned by Moses, that they had not casually

fallen into that bondage so galling to them, neither had it happened by the valor of their enemies, but because they were given over, and, as it were, sold to it by God himself. That those who had refused to bear his yoke, should be delivered up to tyrants to harass and oppress them, and that those who would not endure to be ruled by God's paternal sway, should be subdued by their enemies, to be trodden under their feet, is a striking example of God's retributive justice.

43. *Many times.* As the wicked perversity of the people was manifested in that God's severe chastisements failed to produce their reformation, so now, on the other hand, the prophet deduces the detestable hardness of their hearts from the fact, that all the benefits which they had received from God could not bend them into obedience. They did, indeed, in the time of their afflictions, groan under the burden of them; but when God not only mitigated their punishment, but also granted them wonderful deliverances, can their subsequent backsliding be excused? It becomes us to bear in mind, that here, as in a glass, we have a picture of the nature of all mankind; for let God but adopt those very means which he employed in relation to the Israelites, in order to reclaim the majority of the sons of men, how comparatively few are there who will not be found continuing in the very same state as they were? And if he either humble us by the severity of his rod, or melt us by his kindness, the effect is only temporary; because, though he visit us with correction upon correction, and heap kindness upon kindness, yet we very soon relapse into our wonted vicious practices. As for the Jews, their insensate stupidity was insufferable, in that, notwithstanding the many and magnificent deliverances which God wrought out for them, they did not cease from their backslidings. For the Psalmist says, that they, *nevertheless, provoked God with their wicked inventions* Then he declares that they received a just recompense of reward in being oppressed by their iniquity. Moreover, he informs us, that though they were most deserving of all their afflictions, yet their groanings were heard; whence we learn, that God, in his unwearied kindness, did not cease to strive with them on account of their perverseness of spirit.

For what pity was this, to hear the cry of those who turned a deaf ear to his wise instructions, and were regardless of all his warnings and threatenings? And yet after all this forbearance and long-suffering, their exceedingly depraved hearts remained unchanged.

45. *And he remembered* God's being mindful of his covenant is here assigned as the cause of his great mercy and long-suffering. In that covenant, he not only declares that there is a gracious pardon for transgressions, but he also adverts to the perverse blindness of those who were not brought back by such remedies to the covenant, in which they were well aware that their safety was placed. But above all, he charges them with ingratitude; because, when deserving to perish, they did not acknowledge that they were indebted to the mercy of God alone for their preservation. This observation

is strengthened by the next clause of the verse, in which he says that God had spared them *according to the greatness of his mercies* For the greatness of the punishment which their sins deserved, may be inferred from the great treasures of his loving-kindness, which God had to open in order to procure their redemption. The word to *repent* expresses no change in God, but only in the mode of administering his corrections. It may seem as if God altered his purpose, when he mitigates punishment, or withdraws his hand from executing his judgments. The Scripture, however, accommodating itself to our weak and limited capacity, speaks only after the manner of men.

46. *And he made them to find pity* As he had above said, that the Jews had been delivered into the hands of their enemies, because God's anger was, as it were, arms to their adversaries to subdue them; so now he says, that the same God had softened the hearts of these very enemies, who, by terrible means, and with great cruelty, had executed his vengeance upon them. As, then, the hearts of all men are entirely under God's control, to harden or to soften them according to his sovereign pleasure, so, while his anger was kindled against his people, their enemies were at the same time also inflamed with implacable resentment towards them. But the moment his anger was appeased, the fire which issued from the furnace of his judgment was extinguished, and the cruelty of their enemies was changed into mercy. And that enemies, cruel and barbarous, should begin to love and pity those whom they formerly hated, was a change so astonishing as to be incredible, had they not, in the kind providence of God, from wolves been transformed into lambs.

Psalm 106:47-48

> **47.** Save us, O Jehovah our God! and gather us from among the heathen, to praise thy holy name, and to glory in thy praise. **48.** Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, for ever and ever; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye Jehovah. [271]

47. *Save us, Jehovah our God!* From the conclusion of the psalm, it is evident, that it was composed during the sad and calamitous dispersion of the people. And although subsequent to the times of Haggai and Malachi, no famous prophets appeared among the people, it is nevertheless probable that some of the priests were endued with the spirit of prophecy, in order that they might direct them to the source whence they might receive all

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The Hebrew for "Praise ye Jehovah," is יה-הללו, *Halelwyah,* — a word which occurs very frequently at the beginning and end of psalms. The LXX., leaving it untranslated, have Αλληλουϊα. From this solemn form of praise to God, which no doubt was far more ancient than the time of David, the ancient Greeks plainly had their similar acclamation, Αλληλουϊα, with which they both began and ended their poems or hymns in honor of Apollo. — See *Parkhurst's Lexicon on* הלל, 4. With this psalm is concluded the fourth of the books into which the Psalms have been divided by the Jews.

needful consolation. It is my opinion, that after they were dispersed by the tyranny of Antiochus, this form of prayer was adapted to the exigency of their existing circumstances, in which the people, by reflecting upon their former history, might acknowledge that their fathers had, in ways innumerable, provoked God to wrath, since the time he had delivered them. For it was needful for them to be completely humbled, to prevent them from murmuring against God's dispensations. And seeing that God had extended pardon to their fathers though undeserving of it, that was calculated to inspire them hereafter with the hope of forgiveness, provided they carefully and cordially sought to be reconciled to him; and especially is this the case, because there is here a solemn remembrance of the covenant, through the faith of which they might draw near to God, though his anger was not yet turned away. Besides, as God had chosen them to be his peculiar people, they call upon him to collect into one body the dissevered and bleeding members, according to the prediction of Moses,

"If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee," Deuteronomy 30:4

This prediction was at length accomplished, when the widely separated multitude were gathered together, and grew up in the unity of the faith. For although that people never regained their earthly kingdom and polity, yet their being grafted into the body of Christ, was a more preferable gathering together. Wherever they were, they were united to each other, and also to the Gentile converts, by the holy and spiritual bond of faith, so that they constituted but one Church, extending itself over the whole earth. They subjoin the end contemplated by their redemption from captivity, namely, that they *might celebrate the name of God,* and employ themselves continually in his praises.

48. *Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel* The prophet here regulates the prayers and desires of the people in such a way, as that, amid their grievous oppression, the dejected captives may not cease to render thanks to God; and this is a matter which must be carefully attended to, because, when borne down by adversity, there is scarcely one among a hundred, who, with composure of spirit, draws near to God; but, on the contrary, he betrays the pride of his heart by the careless and insipid manner in which he prays, or in pouring out complaints about his afflicted condition. But the only way in which we can expect God to lend a favorable ear to the voice of our supplications is, in the spirit of meekness to submit to his corrections, and patiently to bear the cross which he is pleased to lay upon us. It is with great propriety then, that the prophet exhorts the afflicted captives to bless God, even when he was chastising them with considerable severity. It is to the same purpose that it is added, *let the people say, Amen;* as if he were commanding them all to consent to the praises of God, though both privately and publicly they were overwhelmed in a sea of troubles.

Psalm 107

PSALM 107

The Psalmist teaches us, in the first place, that human affairs are not regulated by the fickle and uncertain wheel of fortune, but that we must observe the judgments of God in the different vicissitudes which occur in the world, and which men imagine happen by chance. Consequently, adversity and all the ills which mankind endure, as shipwrecks, famines, banishments, diseases, and disasters in war, are to be regarded as so many tokens of God's displeasure, by which he summons them, on account of their sins, before his judicial throne. But prosperity, and the happy issue of events, ought also to be attributed to his grace, in order that he may always receive the praise which he deserves, that of being a merciful Father, and an impartial Judge. About the close of the psalm, he inveighs against those ungodly men who will not acknowledge God's hand, amid such palpable demonstrations of his providence. [272]

Psalm 107:1-9

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1. Praise Jehovah, because he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. **2.** Let the redeemed of Jehovah say this, [273] whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the afflicted. [274] **3.** Whom he hath gathered out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. [275] **4.** They wandered from the way in

"The author of this psalm is not known; but it was probably David, although some think it better to consider it as having been written after the return from the Babylonish captivity. This psalm is of very singular construction, and was obviously intended to be sung in responses. It has a frequently recurring double burden or intercalary verse. The first burden is found in verses 6, 13, 19, 28; the second 8, 15, 21, 31; that is, after the description of a class of calamities comes the first chorus expressing the cry to the Lord for deliverance; then a single verse describes the deliverance as granted, after which follows the chorus of thanksgiving — and thus on to verse 35, where the system ends. The last two burdens are, however, separate by two verses instead of one, as before. It will also be observed, that the second chorus has sometimes annexed another reflective distich, illustrative of the sentiment, as in verses 9, 16. There are many other examples of a similar arrangement to be found in the Psalms; but in Lowth's opinion, few of them are equal, and none superior, to this." — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.* The beauties of this very interesting and highly instructive composition are many and striking, of which the least intelligent reader who peruses it with any degree of attention must be convinced. In point of poetical beauty, it may, according to the best judges, be classed with the most admired productions of Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, or Virgil. "It may undoubtedly be enumerated," remarks Lowth, "among the most elegant monuments of antiquity; and it is chiefly indebted for its elegance to the general plan and conduct of the poem. It celebrates the goodness and mercy of God towards mankind, as demonstrated in the immediate assistance and comfort which he affords, in the greatest calamities, to those who devoutly implore his aid: in the first place, to those who wander in the desert, and who encounter the horrors of famine; next, to those who are in bondage; again, to those who are afflicted with disease; and, finally, to those who are tossed about upon the ocean. The prolixity of the argument is occasionally relieved by narration; and examples are superadded of the divine severity in punishing the wicked, as well as of his benignity to the devout and virtuous." — *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,* volume 2, page 376. "Had such an Idyl," says Dr Adam Clarke, "appeared in Theocritus or Virgil, or had it been found as a scene in any of the Greek Tragedies, even in æschylus himself, it would have been praised up to the heavens, and probably been produced as their masterpiece."

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"*Let the redeemed of the Lord say,* viz., what is said in the latter part of the preceding verse, *that his mercy endureth for ever.* — See Psalm 118:1, and following verses." — *Phillips.*

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"צר-מיד, *from the hand* or *power of the enemy.* Luther has translated it, *aus Noth, from want*; in which translation he is followed by Hengstenberg, who observes, that צר, *want,* 'is here personified, and is represented as a dangerous enemy, who has Israel in his hand. In the whole psalm the discourse is not concerning enemies, but only concerning want or misery.' — See verses 6, 13. He is probably right, for it is doubtful whether צר, ever signifies an enemy, except, perhaps, in a few passages in the latter books of the Bible." — *Phillips.*

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the solitary desert, [276] they did not find a city of habitation. **5.** Both hungry and thirsty, so that their soul fainted within them. **6.** In their straits they called upon Jehovah, and he delivered them from all their afflictions. **7.** And he directed them by a right way, that they might come to a city of habitation. **8.** Let them praise the mercy of Jehovah in his prescience, and his marvelous works in the presence of the sons of men. **9.** Because he hath satisfied the longing soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with goodness.

1 *Praise Jehovah.* We have already explained this verse, for it formed the commencement of the preceding psalm. And it appears that it was not only frequently used among the Jews, but also so incorporated with other psalms, that when one part of the chorus on the one side was singing a portion of the psalm, the other part of the chorus on the opposite side in its turn, after each succeeding verse, responded, *Praise Jehovah, because he is good, etc* The penman of this psalm, whoever he was, has, instead of the ordinary preface, inserted this beautiful sentiment, in which praise and thanksgiving to God were so frequently expressed by the Israelitish Church. Immediately he proceeds to speak more particularly. And first, he exhorts those to offer up a tribute of gratitude to God; who, after having been delivered from slavery and imprisonment, and after a long and painful journey, arrived in safety at their place of abode. These he calls *the redeemed of God;* because, in wandering through the trackless desert, and howling wilderness, they many a time would have been prevented from returning home, had not God, as it were, with his outstretched hand, appeared as their guard and their guide. He does not here refer to travelers indiscriminately, but to such as either by hostile power, or by any other kind of violence, or by stern necessity, having been banished to distant regions, felt themselves to be in the midst of imminent dangers; or it may be, that he refers to those who had been made prisoners by enemies, pirates, or other robbers. He reminds them that it was by no casual occurrence that they had been driven about in that manner, and had been brought back to their native country, but that all their wanderings had been under the superintending providence of God.

The original word is ומים, "and from the sea;" to which agree all the ancient versions, and the Chaldee interprets it of the Southern Sea. ים is often put for the Mediterranean Sea; which being west of Judea, this word came to signify generally the west, when employed to express one of the cardinal points, Genesis 12:8; Exodus 10:19. But it is also used for *the Red Sea,* as in Psalm 114:3, where ים is put absolutely for סוף, which lay to the south of Judea, and hence the word might denote the south point. Hare, Secker, Kennicott, and Horsley, would read מימין, "from the south." Gesenius and Hengstenberg are of opinion, apparently without sufficient reason, that ים, both in this passage and in Isaiah 49:12, where it is also joined with צפון, *the north,* has the signification of *west.*

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"Ou, Ils se sont fourvoyez au desert tous seulets." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, they wandered solitary in the desert."

But the second verse might be conjoined with the first, as if the prophet were commanding the persons whom he was addressing to sing this celebrated ode. It may with equal propriety be read by itself thus: Let the redeemed of Jehovah, who have returned from captivity to their own land, come forth now, and take part in the celebration of God's praises, and let them publish his loving-kindness which they have experienced in their deliverance. Among the Jews, who had occasion to undertake extensive journeys, such occurrences as these were very common; because they could hardly leave their own land, without from all quarters encountering ways rugged, and difficult, and perilous; and the same observation is equally applicable to mankind in general. He reminds them how often they wandered and turned aside from the right way, and found no place of shelter; a thing by no means rare in these lonely deserts. Were a person to enter a forest without any knowledge of the proper direction, he would, in the course of his wandering, be in danger of becoming the prey of lions and wolves. He has, however, particularly in his eye those who, finding themselves unexpectedly in desert places, are also in danger of perishing for hunger and thirst. For it is certain that such persons are hourly in hazard of death, unless the Lord come to their rescue.

6 *In their straits they called upon Jehovah* The verbs are here in the past tense, and according to grammarians, represent a continued action. The meaning therefore is, that those who are wandering in desert places are often pinched with hunger and thirst in consequence of finding no place in which to lodge; and who, when all hope of deliverance fails them, then cry unto God. Doubtless, God grants deliverance to many when in straits, even though they do not present their supplications to Him for aid; and hence it was not so much the design of the prophet in this passage to extol the faith of the pious, who call upon God with all their heart, as to describe the common feelings of humanity. There may be not a few whose hope does not center on God, who, nevertheless, are constrained, by some invisible disposition of mind, to come to Him, when under the pressure of dire necessity. And this is the plan which God sometimes pursues, in order to extort from such persons the acknowledgement that deliverance is to be sought for from no other quarter than from Himself alone; and even the ungodly, who, while living voluptuously, scoff at Him, he constrains, in spite of themselves, to invoke his name. It has been customary in all ages for heathens, who look upon religion as a fable, when compelled by stern necessity, to call upon God for help. Did they do so in jest? By no means; it was by a secret natural instinct that they were led to reverence God's name, which formerly they held in derision. The Spirit of God, therefore, in my opinion, here narrates what frequently takes place, namely, that persons destitute of piety and faith, and who have no desire to have any thing to do with God, if placed in perilous circumstances, are constrained by natural instinct, and without any proper conception of what they are doing, to call on the name of God. Since

it is only in dubious and desperate cases that they betake themselves to God, this acknowledgement which they make of their helplessness is a palpable proof of their stupidity, that in the season of peace and tranquillity they neglect him, so much are they then under the intoxicating influence of their own prosperity; and notwithstanding that the germ of piety is planted in their hearts, they nevertheless never dream of learning wisdom, unless when driven by the dint of adversity; I mean, to learn the wisdom of acknowledging that there is a God in heaven who directs every event. It is unnecessary to allude here to the sarcastic retort of the ancient buffoon, who, on entering a temple, and beholding a number of tablets which several merchants had suspended there as memorials of their having escaped shipwreck, through the kind interposition of the gods, smartly and facetiously remarked, "But the deaths of those who have been drowned are not enumerated, the number of which is innumerable." Perhaps he might have some just cause for scoffing in this manner at such idols. But even if a hundredfold more were drowned in the sea than safely reach the harbour, this does not in the least degree detract from the glory of the goodness of God, who, while he is merciful, is at the same time also just, so that the dispensing of the one does not interfere with the exercise of the other. The same observation applies to travelers that stray from the path, and wander up and down in the desert. If many of them perish for hunger and thirst, if many are devoured by wild animals, if many die from cold, these are nothing else than so many tokens of the judgments of God, which he designs for our consideration. From which we infer that the same thing would happen to all men, were it not the will of God to save a portion of them; and thus interposing as a judge between them, he preserves some for the sake of showing his mercy, and pours out his judgments upon others to declare his justice. The prophet, therefore, very properly adds, that by the hand of God they were led into the *right way, where they may find a suitable place for lodging;* and consequently he exhorts them to render thanks to God for this manifestation of his goodness. And with the view of enhancing the loving-kindness of God, he connects *his wondrous works* with his mercy; as if he should say, in this kind interposition, God's grace is too manifest, either to be unperceived or unacknowledged by all; and for those who have been the subjects of such a remarkable deliverance, to remain silent regarding it, would be nothing less than an impious attempt to suppress the wonderful doings of God, an attempt equally vain with that of endeavoring to trample under their feet the light of the sun. For what else can be said of us, seeing that our natural instinct drives us to God for help, when we are in perplexity and peril; and when, after being rescued, we forthwith forget him, who will deny that his glory is, as it were, obscured by our wickedness and ingratitude?

Psalm 107:10-16

> **10.** They who dwell in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in trouble and iron; **11.** Because they rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High: **12.** When he humbled their heart with affliction; they were brought low, and there was none to help them. **13.** In their affliction they cried to Jehovah, and he delivered them from their tribulations. **14.** He rescued them from darkness and from the shadow of death, and broke off their chains. **15.** Let them praise the mercy of Jehovah in his presence, and his marvelous works in the presence of the sons of men. **16.** Because he hath broken the brazen gates, and dashed in pieces the iron bars. [277]

10. *They who dwell in darkness* The Spirit of God makes mention here of another species of danger in which God manifestly discovers his power and grace in the protecting and delivering of men. The world, as I said, calls these vicissitudes the sport of fortune; and hardly one among a hundred can be found who ascribes them to the superintending providence of God. It is a very different kind of practical wisdom which God expects at our hands; namely, that we ought to meditate on his judgments in the time of adversity, and on his goodness in delivering us from it. For surely it is not by mere chance that a person falls into the hands of enemies or robbers; neither is it by chance that he is rescued from them. But this is what we must constantly keep in view, that all afflictions are God's rod, and that therefore there is no remedy for them elsewhere than in his grace. If a person fall into the hands of robbers or pirates, and be not instantly murdered, but, giving up all hope of life, expects death every moment; surely the deliverance of such a one is a striking proof of the grace of God, which shines the more illustriously in proportion to the fewness of the number who make their escape. Thus,

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To secure the gates of cities, it is customary in the East, at the present day, to cover them with thick plates of brass and iron. Maundrell speaks of the enormous gates of the principal mosque at Damascus, formerly the Church of St John the Baptist, being plated over with brass. Pitts informs us, that Algiers has five gates, and some of these have two, some three, other gates within them; and that some of them are plated all over with thick iron, being made strong and convenient for what it is — a nest of pirates. — *Harmer's Observations,* volume 1, page 329. To such a practice, which, in all probability, obtained in ancient times, there seems to be here a reference. From this verse some have been inclined to think that the psalm was written after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. This deliverance was predicted, in precisely the same terms, in that remarkable passage, where God promises to go before Cyrus his anointed, and "break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron," (Isaiah 45:2) This phraseology appropriately expresses the superior and almost impregnable strength of Babylon. "Abydenus, quoted by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica,* says that the wall of Babylon had brazen gates. And Herodotus more particularly, — 'In the wall all around there are a hundred gates all of brass; and so, in like manner, are the sides and the lintels.' The gates likewise within the city, opening to the river from the several streets, were of brass: as were those also of the Temple of Belus." — (*Lowth* on Isaiah 45:2) But still these brazen gates could not secure the city and the empire from falling into the hands of the instrument chosen by God for the deliverance of his people.

then, should a great number perish, this circumstance ought by no means to diminish the praises of God. On this account the prophet charges all those with ingratitude, who, after they have been wonderfully preserved, very soon lose sight of the deliverance thus vouchsafed to them. And, to strengthen the charge, he brings forward, as a testimony against them, their sighs and cries. For when they are in straits, they confess in good earnest that God is their deliverer; how happens it, then, that this confession disappears when they are enjoying peace and quietness?

11. *Because they rebelled* In assigning the cause of their afflictions he corrects the false impressions of those persons who imagine that these happen by chance. Were they to reflect on the judgments of God, they would at once perceive that there was nothing like chance or fortune in the government of the world. Moreover, until men are persuaded that all their troubles come upon them by the appointment of God, it will never come into their minds to supplicate him for deliverance. Farther, when the prophet assigns the reason for their afflictions, he is not to be regarded as speaking of those persons as if they were notoriously wicked, but he is to be considered as calling upon the afflicted carefully to examine some particular parts of their life, and although no one accuse them, to look into their hearts, where they will always discover the true origin of all the miseries which overtake them. Nor does he only charge them with having merely sinned, but with having rebelled against the word of God, thus intimating that the best and only regulation for our lives consists in yielding a prompt obedience to his commandments. When, therefore, sheer necessity compels those who are in this manner convicted to cry unto God, they must be insensate indeed, if they do not acknowledge that the deliverance which, contrary to their expectation, they receive, comes immediately from God. For brazen gates and iron bars are spoken of for the purpose of enhancing the benefit; as if he said, the chains of perpetual slavery have been broken asunder.

Psalm 107:17-22

> **17.** Fools are afflicted on account of the way of their transgression, and by reason of their iniquities. **18.** Their soul loatheth all food; [278] and they approach the gates of death. **19.** Then they cry unto Jehovah in their tribulation; He saves them from their straits. **20.** He sendeth his word, and healeth them, and rescues them from all their corruptions. [279] **21.** Let them praise the mercy of Jehovah in his presence, and his marvelous works in the presence of the sons of

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"The Psalmist is speaking of sick men, to whom the most desirable food is often abhorrent." — *Phillips.*

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"Ou, fosses, ou pieges." — *Fr. marg.* "Pitfalls, or snares."

men. **22.** And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of praise, and declare his works with rejoicings.

17 *Fools are afflicted on account of the way of their transgression.* He comes to another species of chastisement. For as he observed above, that those were given over to captivity who refused to yield obedience to God, so now he teaches that others have been visited by God with disease, as the fruit of their transgressions. And when the transgressor shall find that it is God who is administering correction to him, this will pave the way for his arriving at the knowledge of his grace.

He denominates those *fools,* who, thoughtlessly giving themselves up to sensuality, bring destruction upon themselves. The sin which they commit is not the result of ignorance and error only, but of their carnal affections, which depriving them of proper understanding, cause them to devise things detrimental to themselves. The maxim, that the fear of God is wisdom, must never be lost sight of. Hence it plainly follows, that they who shake off the yoke of God, and surrender themselves to Satan and sin, are the victims of their own folly and fury. And as constituting a principal ingredient of this madness, the prophet employs the term *deletion* or *transgression;* and subsequently he adds *iniquities;* because it happens that when once a man departs from God, from that moment he loses all self-control, and falls from one sin into another. But it is not of the distempers which commonly prevail in the world to which a reference is made in this passage, but to those which are deemed fatal, and in which all hope of life is abandoned, so that the grace of God becomes the more conspicuous when deliverance from them is obtained. When a man recovers from a slight indisposition, he does not so plainly discern the effects of God's power, as when it is put forth in a wonderful and notable manner to bring back some from the gates of death, and restores them to their wonted health and rigour. He says, therefore, that they are preserved from many *corruptions,* which is equivalent to his saying, that they are delivered from as many deaths. To this purport are the following words of the prophet, in which he says, *that they approach the gates of death, and that they loathe all food* We have already adverted to their calling upon God, namely, that when men are reduced to the greatest straits, they, by thus calling upon God for aid, acknowledge that they would be undone unless he wonderfully interposed for their deliverance.

20 *He sendeth his word.* Again, in saying that they are delivered from destruction, the prophet shows that he is here alluding to those diseases which, in the opinion of men, are incurable, and from which few are delivered. Besides, he contrasts God's assistance with all the remedies which are in the power of man to apply; as if he should say, that their disease having baffled the skill of earthly physicians, their recovery has been entirely owing to the exertion of God's power. It is proper also to notice the manner in which their recovery is effected; God has but to will it, or to speak the word, and

instantly all diseases, and even death itself, are expelled. I do not regard this as exclusively referring to the faithful, as many expositors do. I own, indeed, that it is of comparatively little consequence to us to be the subjects of bodily care, if our souls still remain unsanctified by the word of God; and hence it is the intention of the prophet that we consider the mercy of God as extending to the evil and unthankful. The meaning of the passage, therefore, is, that diseases neither come upon us by chance, nor are to be ascribed to natural causes alone, but are to be viewed as God's messengers executing his commands; so that we must believe that the same person that sent them can easily remove them, and for this purpose he has only to speak the word. And since we now perceive the drift of the passage, we ought to attend to the very appropriate analogy contained in it. Corporeal maladies are not removed except by the word or command of God, much less are men's souls restored to the enjoyment of spiritual life, except this word be apprehended by faith.

And let them sacrifice This clause is subjoined by way of explanation, the more strongly to express how God is robbed of his due, if in the matter of sacrifice his providence be not recognised. Even nature itself teaches that some kind of homage and reverence is due to God; this is acknowledged by the heathens themselves, who have no other instructor than nature. We know too, that the practice of offering sacrifices has obtained among all nations; and doubtless it was by the observance of this ritual, that God designed to preserve in the human family some sense of piety and religion. To acknowledge the bounty and beneficence of God, is the most acceptable sacrifice which can be presented to him; to this subject, therefore, the prophet intends to recall the attention of the insensate and indifferent portion of men. I do not deny that there may be also an allusion to the ceremonial law; but inasmuch as in the world at large sacrifices formed part of the religious exercises, he charges those with ingratitude, who, after having escaped from some imminent peril, forget to celebrate the praises of their Great Deliverer.

Psalm 107:23-32

23. They [280] that go down to the sea in ships, trading in the great waters, **24.** See the works of Jehovah, his wonders in the deep. **25.** He speaks, and raiseth the stormy wind, and causeth the billows thereof

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This psalm is distinguished for beautiful and inimitable description. In the preceding part of it, the weary and bewildered traveler, — the forlorn and wretched captive, shut up in the dungeon and bound in fetters, — the sick and dying man, — are painted in the most striking and affecting manner. In this verse there is a transition to ships, and the dangers of mariners foundering in a storm, which is continued to the close of the 30th verse. This has often been admired as one of the sublimest descriptions of a sea-storm anywhere to be found, either in the Sacred Writings, or in profane authors.

> to mount on high. **26.** They mount up to the heavens, they descend into the deeps; their soul breaketh because of trouble. 27. They are tossed and totter like a drunken man, and all their senses are overwhelmed. [281] And they cry to Jehovah in their straits, [282] and he rescues them from their troubles. **29.** He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. **30.** And they rejoice because they are calmed; and he brings them to the coast which they desired. **31.** Let them celebrate the mercy of Jehovah in his presence, and his wonders among the sons of men; **32.** And let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. [283]

23. *They that go down to the sea in ships* Here we have another instance of God's superintending care towards mankind pointed out to us by the prophet, exemplified in the bringing of those who are shipwrecked to the harbour, and this, too, as if he had raised them from the depth and darkness of the tomb, and brought them to live in the light of day. I do not understand what is here said about those who are accustomed to navigate the ocean *seeing the wonders of God,* as referring generally to the many wonderful things with which it abounds. Such persons are well fitted to bear testimony regarding the works of God, because they there behold more vast and various wonders than are to be seen upon earth. But it appears to me preferable to connect this with the subsequent context, where the prophet is his own interpreter, and where he shows how suddenly God raises and calms the tempest.

The sum of the matter is, that the scope of the passage is to point out that the lives of those who navigate the seas are often in great jeopardy by the storms which they encounter; because, as often as the ocean heaves

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Horsley reads, "And all their skill is drowned;" "that is," says he, "their skill in the art of navigation is drowned; a metaphor taken from the particular danger which threatens them." Phillips reads, *And all their wisdom is absorbed* or *swallowed up*; which, in like manner, he explains as denoting that "their alarm is so great, that their knowledge deserts them; they lose all self-possession, and become entirely unfit for managing the ship."

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Instead of *in their straits,* Phillips reads, *from their prison-houses, places of confinement.* "By their prison-houses," says he, "we understand the ship in which they were confined; to be liberated from which, and consequently from the risk of a watery grave, they cried unto the Lord."

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"עם, *the people,* is here evidently opposed to זקנים, *elders,* and both signify the whole assembly or congregation. For, among the Jews, the doctors, rulers of the synagogue, and *elders,* had a distinct apartment from the *people,* and the service being much in *antiphona,* or response, part was spoken by them that officiated in the seat of the elders, and the rest by the multitude of common men, the ἰδιῶται, that answered *Amen* at least, at their giving of thanks." — *Hammond.*

and is agitated, and the billows rise and rage, so often does death stare them in the face. But he furnishes us with a still more vivid picture of the providence of God; for in telling us, that the sea does not of its own accord rise into a tempest, he makes use of the verb, *he speaks,* intimating that the word and providence of God make the winds blow, to agitate the sea. True, indeed, the mariners imagine from certain phenomena, that a storm is approaching, but sudden changes proceed only from the secret appointment of God. Therefore, he gives not merely a historical narrative of the manner in which squalls and storms arise, but, assuming the character of a teacher, begins with the cause itself, and then directs to the imminent danger with which the tempest is fraught; or rather, portrays, as in a picture, the image of death, in order that the goodness of God may appear the more conspicuous when the tempest happily ceases without any loss of life. They *mount up,* says he, *to the heavens, they descend into the deeps;* as if he should say, they mount up into the air, so that their life may be destroyed, and then they tumble down towards the caverns of the ocean, where they may be drowned. [284] Next, he mentions the fears which torment them, or rather which may deprive them of understanding; intimating by these words, that however skilfully mariners may steer their vessels, they may happen to be deprived of their senses; and being thus paralysed, they could not avail themselves of aid, were it even at hand. For though they collect all their tackling, cast their sounding line into the deep, and unfurl their sails to all points, yet after making every attempt, and all human skill is baffled, they give themselves up to the mercy of wind and wave. All hope of safety being cut off, no farther means are employed by them. And now that all human aid fails, they cry unto God for deliverance, which is a convincing evidence that they had been as it were dead. [285]

29. *He maketh the storm a calm* A profane author, in narrating the history of such an event, would have said, that the winds were hushed,

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"The men of the ship go up to heaven, *i.e.*, rise high in the air when the wave lifteth up the ship, and afterwards, because of the wave they descend to the deep; and from thus ascending and descending, the soul of the men of the ship melteth within them on account of the danger in which they are placed." — *Kimchi.*

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The consternation into which those at sea are thrown in a dangerous storm, and their deliverance by God in answer to prayer, is so beautifully described in the well known and admirable hymn of Addison, that we shall take the liberty to quote a part of it:

"Think, O my soul! devoutly think,
How with affrighted eyes,
Thou saw'st the wide-extended deep,
In all its horrors rise.

"Confusion dwelt on every face,
And fear in every heart;
When waves on waves, and gulfs on gulfs,
O'ercame the pilot's art.

and the raging billows were calmed; but the Spirit of God, by this change of the storm into a calm, places the providence of God as presiding over all; thereby meaning, that it was not by human agency that this violent commotion of the sea and wind, which threatened to subvert the frame of the world, was so suddenly stilled. When, therefore, the sea is agitated, and boils up in terrific fury, as if wave were contending with wave, whence is it that instantly it is calm and peaceful, but that God restrains the raging of the billows, the contention of which was so awful, and makes the bosom of the deep as smooth as a mirror? [286] Having spoken of their great terror, he proceeds next to mention *their joy,* so that their ingratitude may appear the more striking, if they forget their remarkable deliverance. For they are not in want of a monitor, having been abundantly instructed by the storm itself, and by the calm which ensued, that their lives were in the hand and under the protection of God. Moreover, he informs them that this is a species of gratitude which deserves not only to be acknowledged privately, or to be mentioned in the family, but that it should be praised and magnified in all places, even in the great assemblies. He makes specific mention of *the elders,* intimating that the more wisdom and experience a person has, the more capable is he of listening to, and being a witness of, these praises.

Psalm 107:33-41

"Yet then, from all my griefs, O Lord,
Thy mercy set me free;
Whilst in the confidence of prayer,
My soul took hold on Thee.

"For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High in the broken wave,
I knew Thou wert not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.

"The storm was laid, the winds retir'd,
Obedient to thy will;
The sea that roar'd at thy command,
At thy command was still!"

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Among the circumstances selected by the prophet in this striking description of a storm at sea, God's agency, both in raising and calming it, is not to be overlooked. He is introduced as first causing, by His omnipotent command, the tempest to sweep over the ocean, whose billows are thus made to rise in furious agitation mountains high: and, again, as hushing the winds into a calm, and allaying the agitation of the waves. The description would be utterly mutilated were the special reference to the Divine power in such phenomena omitted. "How much more comfortable, as well as rational, is the system of the Psalmist, than the Pagan scheme in Virgil, and other poets, where one deity is represented as raising a storm, and another as laying it. Were we only to consider the sublime in this piece of poetry, what can be nobler than the idea it gives us of the Supreme Being, thus raising a tumult among the elements, and recovering them out of their confusion, thus troubling and becalming nature?" — *Spectator,* Number 485.

> **33.** He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and springs of water into dryness; **34.** A fruitful land into saltness, [287] because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it. **35.** He turneth the desert into a pool of water, and the land of barrenness into springs of water. **36.** And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may build a city of habitation; **37.** And sow fields, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of the increase. **38.** And he blesses them, and they multiplied greatly; and he maketh not their cattle to decrease. **39.** Afterwards they are lessened and dejected, by reason of anguish, misery, and sorrow. **40.** He poureth contempt upon princes, and maketh them to wander in a wilderness, where there is no way; [288] **41.** And he raiseth the afflicted out of misery, and maketh him families like a flock.

33. *He turneth rivers into a wilderness* Here then is an account of changes which it would be the height of folly to attribute to chance. Fruitful lands become unfruitful, and barren lands assume the new aspect of freshness and fruitfulness. And how happens it that one district becomes sterile, and another becomes fat and fertile, contrary to what they were wont to be, but because that God pours out his wrath upon the inhabitants of the one, by taking his blessing from them, and renders the other fruitful to feed the hungry? It may be ascribed to the thinness of the population, that many parts of Asia and Greece, once exceedingly fruitful, now lie uncultivated and unproductive; but we must ascribe to the providence of God, which the prophet praises, the well authenticated fact, that in some places the earth that was fruitful has now become barren and parched, while others are beginning to be fertile.

It is, however, not sufficient merely to observe, that these wonderful revolutions of the surface of the earth are the result of God's overruling purpose, unless we also observe, in the second place, what the prophet does not omit, that the earth is cursed by him on account of the iniquity of its inhabitants, who prove themselves to be undeserving of being so amply sustained by his bountiful hand. He has put *pools and springs of water* for fields or countries where there is an abundance of water; because moisture is

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"למלחה, *into saltness,* or *barrenness.* The word has here the force of sterility. Pliny says, 'Omnislocus in quo reperitursal, sterilis est, nihilque gignit.' — Hist. Nat. Lib. 31, cap. 7. Allusion is here made to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, 'The whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning; that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath,' (Deuteronomy 29:23) The Chaldee has paraphrased the verse as follows: 'The land of Israel which bore fruit he hath laid waste as Sodom, which was overturned on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants.'" — *Phillips.*

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The words of this verse are found in Job 12:21, 24, from which they are supposed, with great probability, to have been borrowed.

required to nourish the plants by which fruit is produced. The term *saltness* is employed metaphorically, inasmuch as there is nothing more sterile than salt; hence that saying of Christ's,

"If the salt have lost its saltness, what further purpose will it serve?" Mark 9:50

not even indeed for barrenness. And, consequently, when men designed to doom any place to remain unproductive, they usually sowed it with salt. And probably it is in allusion to this ancient custom, that the prophet says that the land was covered with salt.

35. *He turneth the desert into a pool of water* This change, in contrast with the former, places the miraculous power of God in a more luminous position. Because, were the fields ceasing to be so productive as in former times, men of the world, as was common of old, would attribute this to the frequent crops which exhausted their productive power. But whence is it that parched grounds become so fruitful, that one would almost say that the atmosphere, as well as the nature of the soil, had undergone a change, unless it be that God hath there put forth a wonderful display of his power and goodness? Wherefore, the prophet very justly says, that the *deserts were turned into pools of water,* so that populous cities may rise up in waste and uncultivated places, where once there was not a single cottage. For it is as improbable that the nature of the soil is changed, as that the course of the sun and stars is changed. The clause, *the hungry are filled,* may mean, either that they themselves, after considerable privations, have got what may supply their need, or that those poor persons, living in a country where they cannot longer find daily bread, being constrained to leave it, and to seek a new place of abode, are there bountifully supplied by God. I am rather disposed to think, that this clause refers to what frequently occurs, namely, that the famishing, whose wants the world refuses to supply, and who are expatriated, are comfortably accommodated in these desert places, where God blesses them with abundance. The passage which I have translated, *fruit of the increase,* is, by not a few Hebrew expositors, considered as a repetition of two synonymous terms, and are for supplying a copulative conjunction, making it, *fruit and increase* But it was rather the intention of the prophet to refer to fruit yielded annually; as if he said, the fertility of these regions is not temporary, or only for a few years, it is perennial. For תבואות, *tebuaoth,* is the term which, in the Hebrew, denotes full-grown fruit annually produced by the earth. And when he says, that the *new settlers sow and plant,* he gives us to understand, that, prior to their arrival, cultivation was unknown in these places, and, consequently, in becoming so unusually fertile, they assumed a totally different aspect. And, in fine, he adds, that it was entirely owing to the Divine blessing that those who were once oppressed with poverty and want are now daily increasing in the good things of this life.

39. *Afterwards they are lessened* Ere I enter upon the consideration of the truths contained in this verse, I must make some brief verbal observations. Some make the word עוצר, *otser,* to signify *tyranny,* and certainly עצר, *atsar,* does signify to *bear rule.* But since it is used metaphorically for *anguish,* it appears to me that this is the meaning which is most accordant with the tenor of the passage. The last two words of the verse may be read as in the nominative case, as I have rendered them, or in the genitive, the *anguish of misery and sorrow* This lection appears to me preferable, *through the anguish of misery,* [289] *and through sorrow.*

We come now to notice shortly the main things in the passage. And as we had formerly a description of the changes which these districts underwent in relation to the nature of the soil, so now we are informed that mankind do not for ever continue in the same condition; because they both decrease in number, and lose their place and property by being reduced by wars or by civil commotions, or by other casualties. Therefore, whether they are wasted by the pestilence, or are defeated in battle, or are cut off by intestine broils, it is manifest that both their rank and condition undergo alteration. And what is the occasion of this change, but that God withdraws his grace, which hitherto formed the hidden spring from which all their prosperity issued? And as there are a thousand casualties by which cities may be ruined, the prophet brings forward one species of change of all others the most palpable and remarkable. And since God's hand is not observed in that which relates to persons living in comparative obscurity, he brings into view princes themselves, whose name and fame will not permit any memorable event which befalls them to remain in obscurity. For it seems that the world is made on their account. When God, therefore, hurls them from their lofty estate, then men, aroused as it were from their slumber, are prepared to regard his judgments. Here, too, the mode of address which is employed must be attended to; in saying, that *God poured contempt upon princes,* it is as if it was his pleasure, so long as they retained their dignity, that honor and respect should be paid to them. The words of Daniel are well known,

"O king, God hath put the fear of thee in the very fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the earth," (Daniel 2:8)

And assuredly, though princes may clothe themselves with power, yet that inward honor and majesty which God has conferred upon them, is a greater safeguard than any human arm. Nor even would a single village hold out for the space of three days, did not God, by his invisible and invincible agency, put a restraint upon the hearts of men. Hence, whenever God renders princes contemptible, their magnificent power must of necessity be subverted. This is a fact corroborated by history, that mighty potentates, who have been the terror and dread of the whole world, when once denuded

289 "Par angoisse de mal et par douleur." — *Fr.*

of their dignity and power, have become the sport even of their own dependants. And inasmuch as such a striking revolution as this should be regarded as a wonderful display of God's power, yet such is the obtuseness of our minds, that we will not acknowledge his overruling providence. As a contrast to these reverses, the prophet afterwards shows, that the poor and ignoble are exalted, and their houses increased, and that those who were held in no estimation, suddenly increase in wealth and power. In these things men would assuredly recognize the providence of God, were it not that the perversity of their minds rendered them insensate.

Psalm 107:42-43

> **42.** The righteous shall see that, and shall rejoice: and all iniquity [290] shall stop her mouth. [291] **43.** Whosoever is wise, so as to observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of Jehovah.

42 *The righteous shall see that, and shall rejoice* The prophet now draws the conclusion, that so many evident tokens of God's superintending and overruling providence could not transpire before the righteous without attracting their notice, and that their vision being illuminated by faith, these scenes are contemplated by them with unfeigned delight; while the wicked remain perplexed and mute. For he very judiciously makes a distinction between these two classes of persons. In whatever manner the wicked may be constrained to recognize God as the supreme ruler of the universe, nevertheless, in seeing they see not, and derive nothing from the sight, except that their conduct is rendered the more inexcusable. But the righteous are not only able to form a good and sound judgment of these events, they also spontaneously open their eyes to contemplate the equity, goodness, and wisdom of God, the sight and knowledge of which are refreshing to them. For the joy which they experience in this exercise is a pledge that their thus observing these things was the spontaneous effusion of their hearts. With regard to the despisers of God, it is not meant that they are so deeply impressed as truly to acknowledge that the world is under his superintending care, but that they are merely so far kept in check as not to presume to deny the existence of that providence as their natural inclination would lead them to do; or, at least, that they meet with a vigorous repulse whenever they attempt to speak in opposition to it. Although the judgments

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"*Iniquity* is here personified, and denotes the *iniquitous*; but the abstract is more poetical." — *Dr Geddes.*

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The same critic reads, "While all iniquity shall be tongue-tied." "*Tongue tied,*" says he, "literally *mouth-shut*: which perhaps might be not improperly vernacularised."

of God are before their eyes, yet is their understanding so darkened, that they cannot perceive the clear light. And this manner of speaking is more energetic than if it had been said, that the wicked themselves are become mute. In fact, they do not cease from murmuring against God's dispensations of providence; for we see with what arrogance and contempt they set themselves in opposition to our faith, and have the hardihood to pour forth horrid blasphemies against God. This does not impeach the veracity of the prophet's statement, that *the mouth of wickedness is stopped,* because, in fact, the more proudly and violently they assail God, the more notorious does their impiety appear. Besides, the joy here mentioned arises from this, that there is nothing more calculated to increase our faith, than the knowledge of the providence of God; because, without it, we would be harassed with doubts and fears, being uncertain whether or not the world was governed by chance. For this reason, it follows that those who aim at the subversion of this doctrine, depriving the children of God of true comfort, and vexing their minds by unsettling their faith, forge for themselves a hell upon earth. For what can be more awfully tormenting than to be constantly racked with doubt and anxiety? And we will never be able to arrive at a calm state of mind until we are taught to repose with implicit confidence in the providence of God. Moreover, it is declared in this verse, that God manifests his goodness to all men without exception, and yet there are comparatively few of them who benefit by it. Wherefore, when he formerly called upon all to celebrate the goodness of God, it was in order that the ingratitude of the majority of them might the more plainly appear.

43. *Whosoever is wise, so as to observe these things.* We are now informed that men begin to be wise when they turn their whole attention to the contemplation of the works of God, and that all others besides are fools. For however much they may pique themselves upon their superior acuteness and subtilty, all this is of no avail so long as they shut their eyes against the light which is presented to them. In employing this interrogatory form of address, he indirectly adverts to that false persuasion which prevails in the world, at the very time when the most daring heaven-despiser esteems himself to be the wisest of men; as if he should say, that all those who do not properly observe the providence of God, will be found to be nothing but fools. This caution is the more necessary, since we find that some of the greatest of philosophers were so mischievous as to devote their talents to obscure and conceal the providence of God, and, entirely overlooking his agency, ascribed all to secondary causes. At the head of these was Aristotle, a man of genius and learning; but being a heathen, whose heart was perverse and depraved, it was his constant aim to entangle and perplex God's overruling providence by a variety of wild speculations; so much so, that it may with too much truth be said, that he employed his naturally acute powers of mind to extinguish all light. Besides, the prophet not only condemns the insensate Epicureans, whose insensibility was of the basest character, but he also informs us that

a blindness, still greater and more detestable, was to be found among these great philosophers themselves. By the term, *observe,* he informs us, that the bare apprehension of the works of God is not enough, — they must be carefully considered in order that the knowledge of them may be deliberately and maturely digested. And, therefore, that it may be engraven upon our hearts, we must make these works the theme of our attentive and constant meditation. When the prophet says, *Whosoever is wise, even they shall understand,* the change of the singular into the plural number is beautifully appropriate. By the one he tacitly complains of the fewness of those who observe the judgments of God; as if he should say, How seldom do we meet with a person who truly and attentively considers the works of God! Then he adverts to the fact of their being so visibly before all, that it is impossible that men could overlook them, were it not that their minds are perverted by their own wickedness. And if any person be disposed to inquire how it comes to pass that the prophet, after treating of the judgments and severity of God, now makes mention of his loving-kindness, I answer, that his loving-kindness shines most conspicuously, and occupies a very prominent place in all that he does; for he is naturally prone to loving-kindness, by which also he draws us to himself.

Psalm 108

PSALM 108

Psalm 108:1-13

A Song or Psalm of David.

1. My heart is prepared, O God! my heart is prepared; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. **2.** Awake, psaltery and harp: I will arise at break of day. **3.** I will praise thee, O Jehovah! among the people; and sing unto thee among the nations: **4.** Because thy goodness is great above the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. **5.** Be thou, O God! exalted above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth: **6.** That thy chosen may be set free, save me by thy right hand, and hear me. **7.** God has spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and measure the valley of Succoth. **8.** Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is the strength of my head: Judah is my lawgiver. [292] **9.** Moab is the pot of my washing; over Edom I will cast my shoe; over Philistina I will triumph. **10.** Who will bring me into the fortified city? who will bring me even unto Edom? **11.** Wilt not thou, O God! who hadst repulsed us? and wentest not out, O God! with our armies? **12.** Lord us help out of our tribulations; because the help of man is vain. **13.** Through God we will do valiantly, and he shall trample under foot our enemies.

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"Ou, mon duc." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, my leader."

Because this psalm is composed of parts taken from the fifty-seventh and sixtieth psalms, it would be superfluous to repeat, in this place, what we have already said by way of exposition in those psalms. [293]

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"The 108th psalm is altogether made up of extracts from the others; its first part being identical (with the exceptions of a few slight variations) with the third division of the 57th; its second, with the second division of the 60th. And both these borrowed parts are discriminated, both in the 57th and 60th psalms, from the rest of the context by the word Selah. This is a remarkable fact, and illustrates strongly one of the functions of the Diapsalma. These parts were, then, to a certain degree, regarded as distinct compositions, which occasionally were disjointed from their original context; the very change of sentiment and strain, which originated the word Diapsalma, sanctioning such an occasional practice." — *Jebb's Literal Version of the Book of Psalms, with Dissertations,* volume 2, page 109.

Psalm 109

PSALM 109

This psalm consists of three parts. It begins with a complaint; next follows an enumeration of various imprecations; and then comes a prayer with an expression of true gratitude. And although David here complains of the injuries which he sustained, yet, as he was a typical character, everything that is expressed in the psalm must properly be applied to Christ, the Head of the Church, and to all the faithful, inasmuch as they are his members; so that when unjustly treated and tormented by their enemies, they may apply to God for help, to whom vengeance belongs. [294]

Psalm 109:1-5

To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David.

294

From the express application of a part of this awfully prophetic poem to Judas by the Apostle Peter, (Acts 1:20) we learn that the punishment and sufferings of that unhappy man form its subject. It has also been justly viewed as shadowing forth, not merely the fate of the wretched Iscariot, and his immediate associates, but the dreadful and justly-merited destiny of the Jewish polity and nation. "The first five verses of this psalm," says Horsley, "clearly describe the treatment which our Lord met with from the Jews. The curses that follow as clearly describe the judgments which have fallen upon that miserable people. So that the whole is a prediction of his sufferings, and of their punishment, delivered in the form of complaint and imprecation." Whatever, therefore, may be said as to the primary reference of the psalm to the lamentations and denunciations poured forth by David, in consequence of the perfidy and cruelty of some inveterate foe, Christ must be principally understood as the person who gives utterance to these lamentations and denunciations, occasioned by the injurious treatment he received from his betrayer and murderers. — See *Appendix.*

> **1.** O God of my praise! be not silent; **2.** Because the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit are opened upon me: they have spoken against me with the tongue of guile. **3.** And they have encompassed me with the words of hatred, and have contended with me without cause. **4.** On account of my love they have been opposed to me; but I gave myself to prayer. **5.** They rendered to me evil for good, and hatred for love.

1 *O God of my praise! be not silent* In these words, which may be considered as an introduction to the psalm, David declares that he neither could find nor would desire any other than God to stand forward in vindication of the integrity of his heart. For in denominating him *the God of his praise,* he intrusts to him the vindication of his innocence, in the face of the calumnies by which he was all but universally assailed. Some are of opinion that this clause is to be understood as referring to David's having actually declared that he himself was the publisher of God's praises; but the scope of the passage is opposed to such an interpretation; for we find David appealing to the judgment of God against the unjust and cruel hatred to which he was subjected in the world. There is in the words an implied contrast, because, when calumny is rampant, innocence is duly and properly estimated by none but God only. The meaning of the passage is this: Lord, although I may be regarded as the vilest of the vile, and exposed to the reproach of the world, yet thou wilt maintain the uprightness of my character, and on this account thou wilt also set forth my praise. [295] This interpretation corresponds well with that which is immediately subjoined, *be not silent* For when we are overwhelmed by the aspersions of the wicked, it would surely be improper on the part of God, who is the witness of our innocence, to remain silent. At the same time, what I formerly stated must not be forgotten, that while David mourns over the injuries which he in particular was suffering, yet, in his own person, he represented Christ, and the whole body of his Church. From this we are taught, when we are subjected to every species of indignity by men, to repose with perfect confidence under the protection of God alone. No man, however, can, with sincerity of heart, surrender himself entirely into the hand of God, except he has first formed the resolution of treating with contempt the reproaches

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The Septuagint and Vulgate attach the same meaning to the Psalmist's prayer. The reading of the former being, Ω Θεὸς τὴν αἴνεσίν μου μὴ παρασιωπήσης, and that of the latter, "Deus, laudem meam ne tacueris," *O God*! *be not silent of my praise.* The phrase, as it stands in the Hebrew text, is, however, capable of a double signification; for it may refer either to God's praising David, or to David's praising God. In the one case, it will intimate that God was the object of his praise; in which sense it is said, Deuteronomy 10:21, "He is thy praise, and He is thy God," and will mean, Be not silent to refuse, neglect not my praising of thee. In the other sense the prayer is, as our author states, Whilst others reproach me, be not silent of my praise, be thou my advocate, plead my causes, proclaim and justify my innocence.

of the world, and is also fully persuaded that he has God as the defender of his cause.

2 *Because the mouth of the wicked* David here very plainly declares, that he was the more solicitous to obtain help from God, in consequence of justice not being found among men. And though it is probable that he was rashly and furiously assailed, nevertheless, he complains that the mouth of deceit and fraud had been opened against him, and that he was surrounded with false tongues. Whence, to those who were ignorant of his real situation, there would appear to be some plausible pretext for his being loaded with reproaches, so much so indeed, that he would not be able to evade the charge of criminality.

3 *And they have encompassed me* He complains, that from all quarters he was assailed with the most hostile and abusive epithets, and that, too, most undeservedly. And, under a beautiful similitude, he shows that the tongues of his enemies were so full of deadly poison, that it was harder for him to endure their attacks than that of a great army, and the more so that he merited no such treatment at their hands. This species of warfare, to the exercise of which God very frequently summons his children, must be carefully considered by us. For though Satan may assault them with open violence, yet as he is the father of lies, he endeavors, by the amazing dexterity which he possesses in heaping calumny upon them, to tarnish their reputation, as if they were the most abandoned of mankind. Now, as that which was prefigured by David was fulfilled in Christ, so we must remember, that that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ is daily filling up in believers, Colossians 1:24; because, he having once suffered in himself, calls them to be sharers and associates with him in his sufferings.

4 *On account of my love they have been opposed to me* [296] The Psalmist had already solemnly declared, that his adversaries, unprovoked by any injury inflicted upon them by him, and without any just cause, became, through mere diabolical rage, his most implacable foes. Here he confirms the truth of that declaration by saying, that he had been their friend. For there is far more merit in showing kindness to an enemy than simply abstaining from doing that which is evil. And from this we may perceive, that the influence of Satan must be awfully powerful when he takes the hearts of men captive at his will. For nothing can be more unnatural than to hate and cruelly persecute those who love us. To *love* he also adds deeds of kindness, meaning, that it was his aim to secure their good will by outward acts of beneficence.

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"This expression," says Hengstenberg, "finds its full truth in Christ. Christ's love to man was daily manifested by his miraculous healing all the infirmities of the body, which was returned by man's hatred of Him, as displayed in his general conduct."

5 *But I gave myself to prayer* [297] Some are of opinion, that these words refer to David's pouring out a prayer for his enemies at the very moment when they were furiously assaulting him, and with this opinion corresponds that which we have stated in Psalm 35:13. But the more plain, and, to me, the preferable interpretation, is, that when he was attacked in a cruel and hostile manner, he did not betake himself to such unlawful means as the rendering of evil for evil, but committed himself into the hand of God, fully satisfied that he alone could guard him from all ill. And it is assuredly a great and desirable attainment for a man so to restrain his passions as directly and immediately to make his appeal to God's tribunal, at the very time when he is abused without a cause, and when the very injuries which he sustains are calculated to excite him to avenge them. For there are some persons who, while it is their aim to live in terms of friendship with the good, coming in contact with ill men, imagine that they are at perfect liberty to return injury for injury; and to this temptation all the godly feel that they are liable. The Holy Spirit, however, restrains us, so that though oftimes provoked by the cruelty of our enemies to seek revenge, we yet abandon all fraudulent and violent means, and betake ourselves by prayer to God alone. By this example, which David here sets before us, we are instructed that we must have recourse to the same means if we would wish to overcome our enemies through the power and protection of God. In Psalm 69:13, we have a parallel passage: "They that sit in the gate spake against me; and I was the song of those who drink strong drink. But my prayer was made to thee, O Jehovah!" In that passage, as well as in the one under review, the mode of expression is elliptical. Besides, it is the design of David in these words to inform us, that although he was aware that the whole world was opposed to him, yet he could cast all his cares upon God, and this was enough to render his mind calm and composed. And as the Holy Spirit taught David and all the godly to offer up prayers like these, it must follow, that those who, in this respect, imitate them, will be promptly helped by God when he beholds them reproachfully and vilely persecuted.

Psalm 109:6-11

6. Set [298] thou over him a wicked person; and let the adversary stand at his right hand. **7.** When he is judged, let him depart guilty, and

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In the Hebrew, the sentence is very short and imperfect, "But I prayer;" I am a man of prayer; or, I betake myself to prayer. Thus "I peace" is put for "I am for peace." — Psalm 120:7.

298

"The spirit of prophecy is blended in a high degree with all the denunciations which follow, and which have relation to the impenitent Jews, and to the traitorous apostle." — *Morison.*

let his prayer be turned into sin. [299] **8.** Let his days be few: [300] and let another receive his office. **9.** Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow: **10.** And [301] let his children wander without any settled habitation, and let them be beggars, and let them seek food out of their waste places. [302] **11.** Let the extortioner [303] seize [304] all that belongs to him, and let strangers spoil his labor.

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"When his cause shall be examined, and when sentence shall be pronounced, let him, as the original signifies, go out guilty; in other words, let him be condemned; and when he pleads for a pardon, or for a mitigation of his sentence, let his petition, instead of receiving a favorable answer, be regarded as an aggravation of his crime." — *Morison.* Horsley understands the last clause as referring to the Jewish worship, which, he affirms, is now become sin, as it contains a standing denial of our Lord. Fry admits that Horsley's exposition of this line is ingenious. "But," says he, "תפלה, [which Calvin renders *prayer*,] from its etymology, and from its usage, Job 16:17, may be understood to mean a judicial sentence, and the parallelism in this place strongly argues for such an interpretation. Let the decision on him be 'Guilty.'" Accordingly, he reads, "On his trial let him come forth condemned, and let the decision be, For sin."

300

"*His days shall be few.* Hengstenberg says this word means *few times,* as if he considered it a substantive rather than an adjective; but it is doubtless an adjective belonging to ימיו, (*his days.*) The expression denotes that the man here spoken of should not live to a full age, but should meet with a premature death, either violently by the hands of others or by his own, as was the case with Judas. An untimely death is often mentioned in the Old Testament as a punishment on men who are eminently guilty. 'Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,' Psalm 55:23. See also Proverbs 10:27. This passage is applicable not to Judas only, but also to the Jews in general, for after the crucifixion of our Lord, their days were few; they were soon dispossessed of their country, and became the outcasts of the earth." — *Phillips.* Horsley also explains this of the days of the Jewish commonwealth, which were very few after our Lord's ascension; and the subsequent clause, "let another receive his office," he understands as denoting that "the Christian Church is become the depository of revelation, which was the particular charge of the Jewish race."

301

"The 10th and 11th verses allude to the state of the Jews in their dispersion, having nowhere any settled home." — *Horsley.*

302

Horsley reads this verse as follows: —

"Let his children be mere vagabonds, and beg;
Let them be driven out from the very ruins of their dwelling."

"For ידרשו," says he, "the LXX. had יגרשו; 'let them be driven out.' This reading Houbigant and Archbishop Secker approve. The image is, vagabonds seeking a miserable shelter among the ruins of decayed and demolished buildings, and not suffered to remain even in such places undisturbed."

303

"Literally, 'the lender' or 'creditor.' But from the hard-heartedness of the Jews towards their debtors, of which we have instances in 2 Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:1-13; the word seems in latter times to have carried a bad sense; and so it is rendered in our translation, 'the extortioner.'" — *Mant.*

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6 *Set thou over him a wicked person.* [305] Hitherto he poured out his complaint against a vast number of persons; now he seems to direct it against a single individual. Probably he speaks of each of them individually. It is, however, equally probable that he refers in very marked terms to some one in particular among these wicked persons, the most notorious transgressor of any of them. Some conjecture, and not without reason, that Doeg is the person here aimed at, who, by his treason and revolt, sought to bring ruin, not only upon David, but also upon all the holy priests; and we know that this psalm is applied by Peter to Judas, (Acts 1:20) But with equal propriety, and certainly not less forcibly, may this complaint be considered as applicable to some most intimate and particular friend of the Psalmist. Respecting the imprecations contained in this psalm, it will be proper to keep in mind what I have said elsewhere, that when David forms such maledictions, or expresses his desires for them, he is not instigated by any immoderate carnal propensity, nor is he actuated by zeal without knowledge, nor is he influenced by any private personal considerations. These three

"ינקש *shall catch,* or *secure.* It seems to denote, *to catch by laying snares.* See Psalm 38:13. This sense suits very well this passage; for the usurer is accustomed to obtain the substance of men by all kinds of artifices." — *Phillips.* Horsley renders, "draw his net over all that he hath." How striking a representation of the treatment which the Jews, since the time of the last destruction of their city, and their dispersion by the Romans, have received from almost all nations among whom they have been scattered! For some time they have been permitted to live in Britain, Holland, and Germany, unmolested; but what a tale of misery does the tyrannical exactions of which they have been the prey for centuries constitute!

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Dr Geddes translates the 6th verse thus: —

"May he be tried by a wicked judge;
And at his right had be placed the accuser."

On which he has the following note: — "*May he be tried by a wicked judge.* He alludes to courts of judicature: and wishes that his enemy may have a *severe,* nay, *wicked* judge, — certainly one of the greatest curses that can befall one. — *And at his right hand be placed the accuser.* Instead of a friend or advocate to stand by him, let his only attendant be an accuser. What imagery this! But the height of the metaphor is in the next verse: —

'When he is judged, may he be found guilty:
And may his deprecation only aggravate his crime.'"

With this corresponds the interpretation of Phillips. With Hammond, he understands *to set over* as denoting *to set over as a judge* or *inspector.* "This notion of setting over," he observes, "corresponds with the next member; for there it says, *and an enemy shall stand at his right hand,* which shows that the wicked man was to be appointed to act as a judge. The man at his right hand denotes an accuser, agreeably to the custom which prevailed in a Jewish court of justice, of placing the accuser at the right hand of the accused, (see Zechariah 3:1;) and hence we understand in this verse רשע to be mentioned as acting in the capacity of a judge, and רטן in that of an accuser." Cresswell gives a similar explanation of the passage. Green, who follows Dr Sykes in thinking that the imprecations from this verse to verse 17 were pronounced not by David upon his enemies, but by David's enemies upon him, reads the verse thus: — "Set a wicked man over him, *say they, to hear his cause,* and let a false accuser stand at his right hand."

matters must be carefully weighed, for in proportion to the amount of self-esteem which a man possesses, is he so enamoured with his own interests as to rush headlong upon revenge. Hence it comes to pass, that the more a person is devoted to selfishness, he will be the more immoderately addicted to the advancement of his own individual interests. This desire for the promotion of personal interest gives birth to another species of vice. For no one wishes to be avenged upon his enemies because that such a thing would be right and equitable, but because it is the means of gratifying his own spiteful propensity. Some, indeed, make a pretext of righteousness and equity in the matter, but the spirit of malignity, by which they are inflamed, effaces every trace of justice, and blinds their minds.

When these two vices, selfishness and carnality, are corrected, there is still another thing demanding correction, the repressing the ardor of foolish zeal, in order that we may follow the Spirit of God as our guide. Should any one, under the influence of perverse zeal, produce David as an example of it, that would not be an example in point; for to such a person may be very aptly applied the answer which Christ returned to his disciples, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of," Luke 9:55. How detestable a piece of sacrilege is it on the part of the monks, and especially the Franciscan friars, to pervert this psalm by employing it to countenance the most nefarious purposes! If a man harbour malice against a neighbor, it is quite a common thing for him to engage one of these wicked wretches to curse him, which he would do by daily repeating this psalm. I know a lady in France who hired a parcel of these friars to curse her own and only son in these words.

But I return to David, who, free from all inordinate passion, breathed forth his prayers under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Then, as to the ungodly, who live as the contemners of God, and who are constantly plotting the overthrow of the unsuspecting and the good, casting off all restraint, so that neither modesty nor honesty proves a check to them, surely they are deserving of the punishment of *having a wicked person set over them* And since, by means of intrigue and perfidy, they are constantly aiming at the extermination of the good, they are most justly punished by God, who raises up against them an adversary that should never depart from their side. Only let believers be on their guard, lest they should betray too much haste in their prayers, and let them rather leave room for the grace of God to manifest itself in their behalf; because it may turn out that the man, who to-day bears towards us a deadly enmity, may by to-morrow through that grace become our friend.

7 *When he is judged, let him depart guilty* Another imprecation is, that, being summoned to judgment, he might be punished without mercy, and that, though he humbly crave forgiveness, the judge should remain inexorable. This might with propriety be understood to relate not merely to his being judged at the bar of men, but also at the tribunal of God. But as it accords very well with the decisions awarded by an earthly judge,

and as this is the commonly received interpretation, I have no wish to depart from it. There are two things which must be noticed here; that the wickedness of the wicked may be so palpable as to leave no room to escape from the execution of justice, and that all their entreaties for pardon may be disregarded. Accordingly, the Psalmist represents him as a condemned criminal leaving the presence of the judge, bearing the ignominy of the condemnation which he righteously merited, having his nefarious deeds disclosed and detected. With respect to the other interpretation which places the ungodly before God's judgment-seat, it by no means appears absurd to say that their prayers should be turned against them to sin, the more especially as we know that all their sacrifices are an abomination unto him. And by how much they themselves are filthy, by so much do all their plausible virtues become offensive and displeasing to God. But as the scope of the passage is in favor of that interpretation which applies it to earthly judges, I do not consider it necessary to insist farther upon this point.

8 *Let his days be few* Although this world is the scene of much toil and trouble, yet we know that these are pledges and proofs of God's loving-kindness, inasmuch as he frequently, and as a token of his love, promises to prolong the lives of men; not that it is absolutely necessary for us to remain long here, but that we may have an opportunity of sharing of God's fatherly love which he bears towards us, by which we may be led to cherish the hope of immortality. Now, in opposition to this, the brevity of human life is here introduced as a mark of God's disapprobation; for when he cuts off the wicked after a violent manner, he thus testifies that they did not deserve to breathe the breath of life. And the same sentiment is inculcated when, denuding them of their honor and dignity, he hurls them from the place of power and authority. The same thing may also happen to the children of God, for temporal evils are common to the good and to the bad; at the same time, these are never so mingled and blended together, but that one may perceive occasionally the judgments of God in a very manifest and marked manner. Peter, quoting this verse, Acts 1:20, says it behoved to be fulfilled in Judas, because it is written here, "let another take his bishopric." And this, he does on the assumed principle of interpretation that David here spoke in the person of Christ. To this it cannot be objected, that the Hebrew term פקודה, *pekudah,* signifies generally *superintendence,* [306] because Peter very properly applies it to the apostleship of Judas. In expounding this passage, sometimes in reference to a wife, or to the soul, (which is a precious jewel in man,) or to wealth and property, there is good reason to believe that, in doing so, the Jewish interpreters are actuated by pure malice. What purpose can it serve to pervert the sense of a word, the meaning of which is

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"Paefecturam generaliter significat." — *Lat.* "Signifie generallement Superintendence." — *Fr.*

so pointed and plain, unless that, under the influence of a malignant spirit, they endeavor so to obscure the passage, as to make it appear not to be properly quoted by Peter? From these words we learn, that there is no cause why the ungodly should be proud while their reputation is high in this world, seeing they cannot after all escape from that doom which the Holy Spirit here declares awaits them. Here too we are furnished with very valuable matter of comfort and patience, when we hear that, however elevated may be their rank and reputation now, their downfall is approaching, and that they will soon be stript of all their pomp and power. In the two succeeding verses the malediction is extended both to the wife and children; and the desire, that she may be left a widow and they become fatherless, depends upon the brevity of that life to which the prophet formerly adverted. Mention is likewise made of *beggary,* and the want of all the necessaries of life, which is a proof of the magnitude of their guilt; for assuredly the Holy Spirit would not denounce against them a punishment so grievous and heavy for a trivial offense. In delivering up his property [307] as booty to the *extortioners,* David must be understood as alluding to the poverty which was to overtake his children; for he is not speaking of a poor and mean person who at his death can leave nothing to his family, but of one who, regardless of right or wrong, has amassed wealth to enrich his children, but from whom God takes away the goods which he had unrighteously taken from others.

Psalm 109:12-16

> **12.** Let there be none prolonging mercy to him: and let there be none to pity his fatherless children. **13.** Let his posterity be cut off; in the next generation let their name be effaced. **14.** Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before Jehovah; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. **15.** Let them be before Jehovah continually, and let him cut off their memorial from the earth. [308] **16.** Because he forgot to show mercy, but persecuted the afflicted and poor man, and the sorrowful in heart, that he might slay him.

12 *Let there be none prolonging mercy to him.* To continue to show humanity and mercy is, according to the Hebrew idiom, equivalent to constant and successive acts of kindness; and it also sometimes denotes pity, or the being moved to sympathy, when, through the lapse of years, anger is appeased, and even one's calamity melts the heart of the man who bore hatred towards him. [309] Accordingly, there are some who understand

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"Quand il donne les biens en proye aux *exacteurs*." — *Fr.*

308

"Tarnovius says, the passage treats not concerning all memory, but only of an honorable one." *Phillips.*

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this clause to mean, that there will be none to show kindness to his offspring; which interpretation is in conformity with the next clause of the verse. David, however, includes also the wicked man himself along with his children; as if he should say, Though he visibly pine away under such calamities, and these descend to his children, yet let no one show pity towards them. We are aware it not unfrequently happens, that the long-continued misfortune of an enemy either excites the sympathy of men of savage dispositions, or else makes them forget all their hatred and malevolence. But in this part of the psalm, David expresses a desire that his enemy and all his posterity may be so hated and detested, that the people may never be wearied with beholding the calamities which they endure, but may become so familiarised with the spectacle, as if their hearts were of iron. At the same time, let it be remarked, that David is not rashly excited by any personal anguish to speak in this manner, but that it is as God's messenger he declares the punishment which was impending over the ungodly. And verily the law accounts it as one of the judgments of God, his hardening men's hearts, so that they who have been passionately and unmercifully cruel, should find no sympathy, Deuteronomy 2:30. It is just that the same measure which they have used towards others, should also be meted out to themselves.

13. *Let his posterity be cut off.* This is a continuation of the same subject, upon the consideration of which the prophet had just now entered, that God would visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children. And as he had to deal with the whole court of Saul, and not with any single individual, he here employs the plural number. But as in deeds of wickedness, there are always some who are the prime movers, and act as the ringleaders of others, we need not be surprised that having spoken of one person, he next addresses the many, and then returns to the same person. The more natural and simple mode of explanation is to refer it to his offspring, for the Hebrew term which signifies *posterity* is collective, implying a multitude, and not a single individual only. This is a heavier imprecation than the former. It sometimes happens, that a family, overthrown by an unexpected disaster, rises up again at a subsequent period; here, however, it is the wish of the prophet, that the wicked may be so completely ruined, as never to be able to regain their former state; for thus much is implied in *their name being effaced in the next generation,* or after the lapse of ages.

And as the destruction which he denounces against the houses and families of the wicked is so extensive, that God punishes them in the person of their posterity, so he desires that *God may remember the iniquities of their fathers and mothers,* in order that their condemnation may be complete; and this is a principle in perfect accordance with the commonly received doctrine of Scripture. God, out of regard to his covenant, which is in force to a

"Et mesmes la calamite de quelqu'un amollit le ceur de celuy qui luy portoit haine." — *Fr.*

thousand generations, extends and continues his mercy towards posterity; but he also punishes iniquity unto the third and fourth generation. In doing this he does not involve the guiltless with the wicked indiscriminately, but by withholding from the reprobate the grace and illumination of his Spirit, he prepares the vessels of wrath for destruction, even before they are born, Romans 9:21. To the common sense of mankind, the thought of such severity is horrifying: but then we must recollect, that if we attempt to measure the secret and inscrutable judgments of God by our finite minds, we do him wrong. Struck with horror at the severity of this threatening, let us improve it as the means of filling us with reverence and godly fear. In reference to the language of Ezekiel,

"The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, but the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" Ezekiel 18:20

we know that in these words he disproves the groundless complaints of the people, who, boasting that they were guiltless, imagined that they were punished wrongfully. When, however, God continues his vengeance from the father to the children, he leaves them no room for palliation or complaint, because they are all equally guilty. We have already said, that vengeance commences when God in withdrawing his Spirit, both from the children and the fathers, delivers them over to Satan. Some may inquire how it comes to pass, that the prophet, in desiring that their *sin may be continually before God's eyes,* does not likewise add, let their name be blotted out from heaven, but merely wishes them *to be cut off, and to perish in the world?* My reply is, that he spoke agreeably to the custom of the age in which he lived, when the nature of spiritual punishments was not so well understood as in our times, because the period had not yet arrived, when the revelation of God's will was to be full and complete. Besides, it is the design of David, that the vengeance of God may be so manifest, that the whole world may acquiesce in his equity as a judge.

16. *Because he forgot to show mercy* The prophet comes now to show that he had good reason for desiring such awful and direful calamities to be inflicted upon his enemies, whose thirst for cruelty was insatiable, and who were transported with rage, no less cruel than obstinate, against the afflicted and poor man, persecuting him with as little scruple as if they were attacking a dead dog. Even philosophers look upon cruelty, directed against the helpless and miserable, as an act worthy only of a cowardly and grovelling nature; for it is between equals that envy is cherished. For this reason the prophet represents the malignity of his enemies as being bitter in persecuting him when he was in *affliction and poverty.* The expression, *the sorrowful in heart,* is still more emphatic. For there are persons who, notwithstanding of their afflictions, are puffed up with pride; and as this conduct is unreasonable and unnatural, these individuals incur the displeasure of the powerful. On the other hand, it would be a sign of desperate cruelty to treat with contempt the lowly and dejected in heart. Would not this be to fight with a shadow?

This insatiable cruelty is still farther pointed out by the phrase, *forgetting to show mercy;* the meaning of which is, that the calamities, with which he beheld this guiltless and miserable man struggling, fail to excite his pity, so that, out of regard to the common lot of humanity, he should lay aside his savage disposition. In this passage, therefore, the contrast is equally balanced on the one side between such obstinate pride, and on the other, the strict and irrevocable judgment of God. And as David spoke only as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, this imprecation must be received as if God himself should thunder from his celestial throne. Thus, in the one case, by denouncing vengeance against the ungodly, he subdues and restrains our perverse inclinations, which might lead us to injure a fellow-creature; and on the other, by imparting comfort to us, he mitigates and moderates our sorrow, so that we patiently endure the ills which they inflict upon us. The wicked may for a time revel with impunity in the gratification of their lusts; but this threatening shows that it is no vain protection which God vouchsafes to the afflicted. But let the faithful conduct themselves meekly, that their humility and contrition of spirit may come up before God with acceptance. And as we cannot distinguish between the elect and the reprobate, it is our duty to pray for all who trouble us; to desire the salvation of all men; and even to be careful for the welfare of every individual. At the same time, if our hearts are pure and peaceful, this will not prevent us from freely appealing to God's judgment, that he may cut off the finally impenitent. [310]

Psalm 109:17-20

> **17.** As he loved cursing, so let it come upon him: [311] as he did not take delight in blessing, so let it be far from him. **18.** And let him be clothed with cursing as with a garment, and let it come as water into his bowels, and as oil into his bones. [312] **19.** Let it be to him as a mantle to cover him, and a girdle to gird himself with continually. **20.** Let this be the work from Jehovah of those who are hostile to me, and of those who speak evil against my soul.

17 *As he loved cursing* David still continues to enumerate the sins of his adversaries, and is thus severe in his treatment of them, in order to render it more apparent, that he is strictly conforming to the judgment of God. For as often as we draw near to the tribunal of God, we must take care

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"Ut desperatos omnes male perdat." — *Lat.* "Afin qu'il extermine tous ceux qui sont du tout desesperez." — *Fr.*

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"This curse alludes to the imprecation by which the Jews ventured to take upon themselves the guilt of our Lord's death, when Pilate pronounced him innocent. The blessing, 'on which they set not their heart,' was that which they might have obtained from our Lord." — *Horsley.*

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that the equity of our cause may be so sure and evident as to secure for it and us a favorable reception from him. Fortified by the testimony of an approving conscience, David here declares his readiness to commit the matter between him and his enemies to the judgment of God. The words, which are expressive of cursing and blessing, are in the past tense, *cursing came upon him, and blessing was far from him,* but it is necessary to translate them as expressive of a wish or desire; for David continues to pray that his enemy may be visited with the same unparalleled ills which he had inflicted upon others. A stranger to every act of kindness, and taking pleasure in doing evil, it is the wish of the Psalmist that he may now be subjected to every species of calamity. Some take *malediction* to mean *cursing and imprecation,* thereby intimating that this man was so addicted to execration, that mischief and malevolence were constantly in his heart, and proceeding from his lips. While I do not reject this opinion, I am yet disposed to take a more extended view of the passage, That by injury and abuse, he aimed at the suppression and abolition of every mark of kindness, and that he took delight in the calamities which he beheld coming upon the unsuspecting and the good.

Not a few interpreters translate the next two verses in the past form, *he clothed himself with cursing, etc.,* which would be tantamount to saying that the enemy was as fond of cursing as of costly apparel, or that he clothed himself with it as with a garment, and that, like an inveterate disease, it was deeply seated in the marrow of his bones. The other interpretation is more simple, That cursing should cleave to the wicked, that it should envelop him like a cloak, gird him about as his girdle, and should even penetrate to his bones. And that no one may rashly take for an example what David here spoke by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, let him keep in mind that the Psalmist is not pleading here in reference to any personal interest,

The Hebrew word for *garment* in this verse signifies, according to Parkhurst, "a long robe, a garment commensurate with the body." See his Lexicon מר, 3. Horsley renders it, "a garment fitted to him," which he takes to be the precise sense of מרו. The phrase in the following verse he renders, "as the close garment which wraps him." In the second clause there is probably an allusion to the water of jealousy. See Numbers 5:18. More forcible language than that of this and the subsequent verse could not be employed to convey the strength and perfection of that curse which fell on the Jewish nation; and the condition of that people, ever since their dispersion by the Romans, affords abundant evidence that the terms here made use of, strong as they are, to predict this condition, are but barely adequate to afford us a just notion of its sad reality. "The curse that lighted on the Jewish nation," observes Bishop Horne, in illustration of this and the next verse, "is resembled, for its universality and adhesion, to a 'garment' which covereth the whole man, and is 'girded' close about his loins; for its diffusive and penetrating nature to 'water,' which from the stomach passeth into the 'bowels,' and is dispersed through all the vessels of the frame; and to 'oil,' which imperceptibly insinuates itself into the very 'bones.' When that unhappy multitude, assembled before Pontius Pilate, pronounced the words, 'His blood be on us and on our children,' then did they put on the envenomed garment, which has stuck to and tormented the nation ever since; then did they eagerly swallow down that deadly draught, the effects whereof have been the infatuation and misery of 1700 years."

and that it is no ordinary character to whom he refers. Belonging to the number of the faithful, he would not omit the law of charity, in desiring the salvation of all men. But in this instance God elevated his spirit above all earthly considerations, stript him of all malice, and delivered him from the influence of turbulent passion, so that he might, with holy calmness and spiritual wisdom, doom the reprobate and castaway to destruction. Others, would have the phrase, *he loved cursing,* to mean that he purposely drew down the vengeance of God upon himself, as it were procuring destruction for himself by his open hostility to him; but this is an unnatural construction of the passage. The interpretation which I have given is preferable, That he was so addicted to mischief and wrong, that no act of justice or kindness was to be expected from him. In the meantime, let it be observed, that all the machinations of the wicked will eventually recoil upon their own heads, and that when they are raging more violently against others, then it is that the mischief, which they so eagerly desire may come upon them, falls upon themselves, even as the wind called Cecias by blowing attracts the clouds unto him.

20 *Let this be the work from Jehovah.* That is, let the gain or reward of the work be from God. In pointing out the work as proceeding immediately from God, he intends to show that, though deprived of all human aid, he yet entertained the hope that God would grant him deliverance, and avenge the injuries of his servant. From this verse we learn that David did not rashly, or unadvisedly, utter curses against his enemies, but strictly adhered to what the Spirit dictated. I acknowledge, indeed, that not a few, while they pretend a similar confidence and hope, nevertheless, recklessly rush beyond the bounds of temperance and moderation. But that which David beheld by the unclouded eye of faith, he also uttered with a zeal becoming a sound mind; for having devoted himself to the cultivation of piety, and being protected by the hand of God, he was aware that the day was approaching when his enemies would meet with merited punishment. From which we also learn, that his trust was placed in God alone, and that he did not regard the persons of men so as to direct his course according as the world smiled or frowned upon him. And, assuredly, whosoever places his dependence on men, shall find that the most trifling incident will annoy him. Therefore, should the whole world abandon us, it becomes us, in imitation of this holy man, to lift up our heads to heaven, and thence look for our defender and deliverer. If it be his intention to employ human instrumentality for our deliverance, he will soon raise up those who will accomplish his purpose. Should he, for the trial of our faith, deprive us of all earthly assistance, instead of regarding that as any reflection upon the glory of his name, we ought to wait until the proper time arrive when he will fully display that decision in which we can calmly acquiesce.

Psalm 109:21-27

> **21.** And thou, O Jehovah my Lord! undertake for me, for thy name's sake; deliver me, because thy mercy is good; **22.** Because I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. **23.** I walk about as a shadow when it declineth. [313] I am tossed as the locust. [314] **24.** My knees are become feeble through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness. **25.** But I became a reproach to them; when they see me they shake their head. **26.** Help me, O Jehovah my God! save me according to thy mercy: **27.** And they shall know that this is thy hand, and that thou, O Jehovah! hast done it.

21 *And thou, O Jehovah my Lord!* From the pouring out of complaints and imprecations against his enemies, the Psalmist passes to prayers; or rather, after having betaken himself to God as his guardian and deliverer, he appears to take occasion, from this circumstance, to encourage himself in prayer; even as all the pious reflections by which the faithful exercise and strengthen their faith, stimulate them to call upon the name of God. At the same time, he does not pique himself upon any service which he has rendered to God, as deserving of his help, nor does he rely upon his own worthiness, but he places all his confidence in the free grace and mercy of God. That integrity of which he was conscious, he placed in opposition to his enemies, for the purpose of making their iniquity more manifest; but he does not aspire after any recompense from God, because he adopts the

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Horsley translates, "I am just gone, like the shadow stretched to its utmost length." The allusion is to the state of the shadows of terrestrial objects at sun-set, lengthening every instant, and growing faint as they lengthen, and in the instant that they shoot to an immeasurable length, disappearing. *As a shadow, when it is extended* by the sun's setting, is approaching to evanescence, so, saith the speaker in this psalm, I am fast disappearing; that is, am approaching the end of mortal life.

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The Hebrew word for *locust* is in the singular number; but the Septuagint reads in the plural, and a plurality may be intended. Locusts are accustomed to fly in great numbers, and the swarms of them are sometimes so numerous in Eastern countries, that they fly in the air like a succession of clouds, forming enormous compact bodies. But when the wind blows briskly, locusts being weak and feeble creatures, these swarms are often tossed, broken into separate masses, thrown one upon another, and driven over the sea, into which they fall when no longer able to sustain their flight. — See Exodus 10:13, 19. So powerless was the speaker in this psalm before his persecuting enemies. He was driven by them from place to place, without the power to offer any resistance. Hammond, who considers the psalm as having been composed by David when forced to flee from Jerusalem by the rebellion of his son Absalom, after referring to this explanation of the metaphor, observes: "Another possible way there is of understanding the resemblance. The locust is but a large sort of grasshopper, which hath no set abiding-place or rest, but leaps to and fro, roves about the field: so we have the 'running to and fro of locusts,' Isaiah 33:4. And this uncertain, unsettled condition of those creatures, may be proper also to express David's condition in his flight, when he had not where to lay his head, but wandered from place to place uncertainly. But the former, that is founded in the bands of locusts, is fitter to express David and the company with him, his weak fugitive army, than that which is founded in the manner of the single locust or grasshopper."

nobler principle, that of owing every thing to God's voluntary choice, upon which also he acknowledges his safety depends. Were it lawful for any one to boast of his virtues and merits, certainly David was not the man who was least entitled to do so; and, moreover, he was the representative of Christ, and of the whole Church. Hence it follows, that all our prayers will vanish in smoke, unless they are grounded upon the mercy of God. The case of Christ was indeed a peculiar one, inasmuch as it was by his own righteousness that he appeased the wrath of his Father towards us. As, however, his human nature was entirely dependant on the good pleasure of God, so it was his will, by his own example, to direct us to the same source. What can we do, seeing that the most upright among us is constrained to acknowledge that he is chargeable with the commission of much sin; surely we never can make God our debtor? It follows, therefore, that God, on account of the benignity of his nature, takes us under his protection; and that, because of the goodness of his mercy, he desires his grace may shine forth in us. In coming to God, we must always remember that we must possess the testimony of a good conscience, and must beware of harbouring the thought that we have any inherent righteousness which would render God our debtor, or that we deserve any recompense at his hands. For if, in the preservation of this short and frail life, God manifests the glory of his name and of his goodness, how much more ought all confidence in good works to be laid aside, when the subject-matter referred to is life heavenly and eternal? If, in the prolonging of my life for a short time on earth, his name is thereby glorified, by manifesting of his own accord towards me his benignity and liberality; when, therefore, having delivered me from the tyranny of Satan, he adopts me into his family, washes away my impurity in the blood of Christ, regenerates me by his Holy Spirit, unites me to his Son, and conducts me to the life of heaven, — then, assuredly, the more bountifully he treats me, the less should I be disposed to arrogate to myself any portion of the praise. How different a part does David act, who, in order to procure favor for himself, publishes his own poverty and misery? And as outward affliction is of no avail, unless a man, at the same time, be humbled, and his proud and rebellious spirit be subdued, the Psalmist here repeats, that his heart was wounded within him. From which we may learn, that God will be a physician to none, except to such as in the spirit of genuine humility send up their sighs and groans to him, and do not become hardened under their afflictions.

23 *I walk about as a shadow.* These are two very appropriate similitudes: to the first of them I formerly adverted in Psalm 102:12; namely, that the afflicted person, and he who is almost lifeless, is very fitly compared to the shadow of the evening. At sunrise, or when he is shining in noon-day brightness, the constant shifting of the shadow is not so perceptible; but, towards sunset, the shadow flits before us during every moment that passes. By the other similitude, the transitory nature of all sublunary things is

pointed out. For as the locusts are constantly skipping from one place to another, so David complains of his life being ever rendered uneasy by incessant persecution, so that no space was allowed him for repose; and this is similar to what he says in Psalm 11:1, that he was compelled to flee like a sparrow, for which the fowler lays snares in all directions. In short, he mourns over his forlorn situation, that he could find no place of safety, and that, even among men, he could get no habitation. And, as in this psalm, he presents us with a picture of the whole Church, we need not be surprised if God try us, and arouse us from our lethargy, by an innumerable variety of events. Accordingly, Paul, 1 Corinthians 4:11, speaking of himself and others, says, that they have no certain dwelling-place; a description which is more or less applicable to all the children of God.

24 *My knees are become feeble.* Though David had the necessaries of life, yet he emaciated himself by voluntary abstinence, to which, as well as to prayer, he gave himself, and therefore we may regard this verse as expressive of his sorrow and sadness. We may also understand it as expressive of his having no relish for meat or drink, knowing, as we do, that persons who are in sorrow and sadness have no appetite for food; even life itself is burdensome to them. Should any one prefer restricting the interpretation to David's being in want of the necessaries of life, when he hid himself in the dens of wild beasts, to escape the fury of his enemies, and was then subjected to hunger and thirst, he may do so. It appears to me, however, that by this language he intends to point out the extreme anguish which he felt, because, with death staring him in the face, he loathed all food; and this is in accordance with the next clause, in which he says, my *flesh faileth of fatness;* because "a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones," (Proverbs 17:22) By the term, fatness, some understand delicacies; meaning that he was deprived of all that food which is pleasing to the palate. The more natural way is to consider it as denoting his becoming emaciated by reason of grief and fasting, inasmuch as the natural moisture was wasted. Another proof of his sad situation arises from this, that, according to what he states in Psalm 22:7, he was held in scorn by all. It is, indeed, a sad and bitter thing which God's children endure, when they are made to feel that the curse which he denounces against the transgressors of his law is directed against themselves; for the law says to the despisers of it,

"Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and laughing-stock," (Deuteronomy 28:37)

With this species of temptation David was assailed; and he declares that he was not only regarded as a condemned person, but also cruelly derided; God at the same time coming in for a share of it; for it is usual with the ungodly to conduct themselves with insolence and pride towards us when they see us oppressed under afflictions, and, at the same time, to rail at our faith and piety, because God renders us no help in our miseries.

26 *Help me, O Jehovah!* The prophet repeats his prayer, because the more we are assailed by the subtilty and deceit of Satan, the more necessary is it for us to strive more ardently, and display the greater boldness. We may, indeed, have the full assurance of God being propitious towards us, yet when he delays to manifest it, and when the ungodly slander us, it must be that various doubts which keep intruding themselves upon us arise in our minds. Hence, it is not without reason that David, in order that he might withstand such attacks, places himself under the protection of that God who, according to his mercy and goodness, helps his people in their time of need. He implores that deliverance may be extended to him, not by ordinary means, but by the peculiar and special display of God's power, so that his enemies may stand abashed, and not dare to open their mouths; and we know that God sometimes secretly grants succor to his servants, while, at other times, he stretches out his hand in such a visible manner, that the ungodly, though they shut their eyes, are constrained to acknowledge that there is divine agency connected with their deliverance. For as his enemies had exalted themselves against God, so it was his desire, after they shall have been subdued, to exult over them in the name of God. In cherishing this desire, he has no wish to procure for himself the renown of being valiant in war, but that God's power may be displayed, that no flesh may glory in his sight. The words may also be viewed as referring both to his deliverance from his enemies, and to his affliction; his desire being to attribute his deliverance mainly to the grace of God; because, in opposing the hand of God to fortune and to all human means of deliverance, it is plainly his intention that God should be recognised as the alone author of it. This deserves to be carefully considered by us, for however anxious we are to be delivered by the hand of God, yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who makes the manifestation of God's glory his chief end; that glory for which we ought to have a greater regard than for our own safety, because it is far more excellent. Whosoever then is desirous that the ungodly may be constrained to acknowledge the power of God, ought the more carefully to take heed to the help of God which in his own case he experiences; for it would be most absurd to point out the hand of God to others, if our minds have not recognised it.

Psalm 109:28-31

> **28.** They shall curse, but thou shalt bless: when they arise, they shall be put to shame; but thy servant shall rejoice. **29.** My adversaries shall be clothed with shame, and covered with their own confusion, as with a garment. **30.** I will praise Jehovah greatly with my mouth; and I will extol him in the midst of the great, [315] **31.** Because he standeth

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"En l'assemblee des grans." — *Fr.* "In the assembly of the great."

at the right hand of the poor, to deliver his soul from condemnations.
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28. *They shall curse.* Interpreters are divided in their opinions about the meaning of these words. One class would render them as expressive of a desire or wish: *Let them curse, provided that thou bless: let them arise, and be clothed with confusion* Another class, and with them I readily agree, adopt the future tense of the indicative mood, *They shall curse, etc.* Should any prefer to understand the passage as indicating, on the part of the Psalmist, his resolution to suffer and submit to the curses of his enemies, I do not oppose their interpretation. In my opinion, however, those who view the words as a prayer, misinterpret them; because David, having already presented his petitions to God, and being secure in his favor, seems now rather to boast that their cursing will do him no harm; for Thou, says he, wilt bless me. By this means, he proves how little and how lightly he regarded the menaces of his enemies, though they might assail him by the poison of the tongue, and the power of the sword. From the example of David, let us learn to form the resolution of engaging God on our side, who can baffle all the designs of our enemies, and inspire us with courage to set at defiance their malice, wickedness, audacity, power, and fury.

And then, indeed, it is that the loving-kindness of God appears, when it banishes from our minds the fears which we entertain of the threatenings of the world. Therefore, relying upon the grace of God, boldly setting at nought the machinations and attacks of his enemies, believing that they could not prevail against God's blessing, David raises the shout of triumph even in the midst of the battle. This truth is still more impressively inculcated in the succeeding clause of the verse: *Though they arise, yet shall they be put to shame.* By these words it is obviously his design to intimate that the ungovernable violence of his enemies is not yet subdued, but that he can endure all their fury and foam so long as the hand of God is stretched forth to maintain and defend him; and thus he animates and fortifies himself against all the pride of the world, and, at the same time, by his example emboldens all the faithful, so that they do not feel dejected even when the perverseness of their enemies seems to get the advantage over them, and to menace them with instant destruction. Cherishing such a hope, he trusts that, for the future, he shall be delivered from all his sorrows. Whence let us learn to bear patiently and meekly our trials, until the fit season and the full time, which God hath appointed, arrive for turning our weeping into joy. In the following verse he proceeds in the same strain of exultation, because, though he beholds the ungodly assuming a lofty air, yet, looking beyond the present state of things with the eye of faith, he entertains no

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"C'est, de ceux qui ont juge et condamne son ame a la mort." — *Fr. marg.* "That is, from those who have judged and condemned his soul to death."

doubt that God will frustrate all their designs, and pour contempt upon all their schemes.

30. *I will praise Jehovah greatly with my mouth* These words clearly establish the truth of the observation I formerly made, that David does not pray God to curse his enemies, but, by the holy boldness of his faith, sets them at defiance; for he prepares to offer up a tribute of gratitude to God, as if he had already realised the object of his desire. The phrase*, with my mouth,* is not, as some erroneously suppose, superfluous, but is to be considered as a public acknowledgement, on his part, of his thanksgiving to God for the deliverance vouchsafed to him; as if he should say, I will, not only when alone and when no human eye beholds me, and in the inward recesses of my heart, meditate upon the great goodness which I have received from God, but also in the appointed sacrifice of praise will I declare publicly, before men, how much I am indebted to his grace. Agreeably to this meaning, he adds, *in the assembly of great,* or of *many men;* for the term רבים, *rabbim,* is susceptible of being rendered both ways. I prefer rendering it, *great men,* because it appears to me, that David refers to an assembly of men of notable and noble rank. He declares that he will acknowledge the goodness of God, not only in some obscure corner, but also in the great assembly of the people, and among governors and those of noble rank. In the celebration of God's praises, there can be no question that these must issue from the heart ere they be uttered by the lips; at the same time, it would be an indication of great coldness, and of want of fervor, did not the tongue unite with the heart in this exercise. The reason why David makes mention of the tongue only is, that he takes it for granted that, unless there be a pouring out of the heart before God, those praises which reach no farther than the ear are vain and frivolous; and, therefore, from the very bottom of his soul, he pours forth his heart-felt gratitude in fervent strains of praise; and this he does, from the same motives which ought to influence all the faithful — the desire of mutual edification; for to act otherwise would be to rob God of the honor which belongs to him.

Moreover, he also subjoins the form in which he rendered thanks; namely, *that God stood at the right hand of the poor* By this language he intimates, that when God had apparently forsaken and abandoned him, and stood far from him, even then he was always near and ready to render him seasonable and needful help; and, assuredly, his poverty and affliction gave some reason for suspecting that he was forsaken of God, inasmuch as he then either withdrew or concealed his loving-kindness. Notwithstanding of this seeming departure, he acknowledges that, during his affliction and poverty, God never ceased to be present to render him assistance. In saying *that he was saved from the judges of his life,* he sets forth, in a still stronger light, the very trying situation in which he was placed; his having to deal with very formidable enemies, such as the king and the princes of the realm, who, proudly presuming upon their grandeur and greatness, and regarding his

recovery hopeless, treated him as if he had been a dead dog. It is my firm conviction, that in this passage he complains both of the torturing cruelty of his enemies, and also that his character had been unjustly aspersed by calumny and reproach; for we know that he was borne down by the malignity and wickedness of those who, being invested with authority, boastingly, yet falsely, pretended that they wished to act as judges and as the executors of justice, which plausible pretexts they adopt as a cloak for their iniquity.

Psalm 110

PSALM 110

In this psalm David sets forth the perpetuity of Christ's reign, and the eternity of his priesthood; and, in the *first* place, he affirms, That God conferred upon Christ supreme dominion, combined with invincible power, with which he either conquers all his enemies, or compels them to submit to him. In the *second* place, he adds, That God would extend the boundaries of this kingdom far and wide; and, in the *third* place, That Christ, having been installed into the priestly office with all the solemnity of an oath, sustains the honors of that equally with those of his regal office. *Finally,* That this shall be a new order of priesthood, whose introduction shall put an end to the Levitical priesthood, which was temporary, and that it shall be everlasting.

A Psalm of David.

Having the testimony of Christ that this psalm was penned in reference to himself, we need not apply to any other quarter for the corroboration of this statement; and, even supposing we neither had his authority, nor the testimony of the apostle, the psalm itself would admit of no other interpretation; [317] for although we should have a dispute with the Jews, the most obstinate people in the world, about the right application of it, we are able, by the most irresistible arguments, to compel them to admit that the truths here stated relate neither to David nor to any other person than the Mediator alone. It is acknowledged that the kingdom of Christ is typified in the person of David, but it cannot be asserted of him, or of any of his successors, that he should be a king whose dominion should be widely extended, and who, at the same time, was to be a priest, not according

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to the law, but according to the order of Melchizedek, and that for ever; for, at that time, no new and unusual priestly dignity could be instituted, without depriving the house of Levi of this peculiar honor. Besides, the perpetuity which is ascribed to the sacerdotal office cannot belong to any man, because, with the exception of the man Christ Jesus, this honor terminates immediately at the close of the short and uncertain course of the present life. But as these topics will be considered, more at large, in their proper place, it is sufficient that we have, at this time, briefly alluded to them.

Psalm 110:1-3

1. Jehovah said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. **2.** Jehovah shall send out of Zion the scepter of thy power: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. **3.** Thy people shall come with voluntary offerings, at the time of the assembling of thine army, [318] in beauty of holiness: [319] from the womb as from the morning dawn to thee has been the dew of thy youth.

In Matthew 22:42-45, Christ applies this portion of Scripture to himself; and this application the Pharisees, before whom it was made, so far from disputing, at once admitted, as appears from their inability to answer our Lord's question, which was founded upon it; for had the psalm been differently interpreted by any party among the Jews, the Pharisees would unquestionably have taken advantage of such diversity of opinion, to escape from the difficulty in which they were placed by the question addressed to them. The Messianic interpretation of this psalm is also supported by the testimony of the apostles. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:13) quotes the first verse, to prove Christ's superiority in dignity to angels, to whom Jehovah had never said, "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." In Acts 2:34, 35, Peter quotes the same passage, as prophetical of Christ's ascension into heaven. See also 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 7:17; Ephesians 1:20, etc. The psalm is thus beyond all controversy, a very clear prediction of the divinity, priesthood, victories, and triumph of the Messiah. We have so many Scriptural helps to its exposition, that we can be at no loss as to its meaning. Such also is the strength of the internal evidence, in support of its application to Christ, that although the Jews have taken a great deal of pains to wrest it to another sense, yet several of the Rabbins have been forced to acknowledge that it belongs to him.

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"Au temps d'assembler ton exercice." — *Fr.*

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Calvin, in pointing this verse, has very properly placed the colon after *holiness,* and not after *morning,* as in our English Bible.

1 *Jehovah said to my Lord* [320] What is here stated might to some extent be applied to the person of David, inasmuch as he neither ascended the royal throne illegally, nor did he find his way to it by nefarious artifices, nor was he raised to it by the fickle suffrages of the people, but it was by the direct authority of God that he reigned over Israel. It may be justly affirmed of all the kings of the earth, that they have been placed upon their thrones by the hand of God, for the kingdoms of this world are appointed by the decree of heaven, and "there is no power but of God," (Romans 13:1) Besides, as this kingdom was altogether peculiar, it was the design of David to make a distinction between it and all other kingdoms. God indeed invests kings with authority, but they are not consecrated as David was, that like him, in consequence of the holy anointing oil, they might be elevated to the rank of Christ's vicegerents. In the eighty-second psalm they are called gods, because by the will of God they hold their position, and in some respects are his representatives, (all power being lodged in him;) but they are not clothed with that sacred majesty by which David was honored to be a type of God's only begotten Son. Moreover, he justly observes that the kingdom was conferred upon him in a totally different manner from other earthly kings, who, while they acknowledge that it is by the grace of God they reign, yet, at the same time, do not consider that they are sustained by his power, but, on the contrary, imagine that they reign either by their own policy, by hereditary right, or by the kindness of fortune; and, therefore, in so far as it respects themselves, it must be affirmed, that they have no legitimate title to reign. And since they do not recognize the hand of God in what they derive from him, his command cannot be properly addressed to them. David, who was well aware that he was anointed by God to be king over Israel, and who maintained an obscure and retired position until summoned to assume the reins of government, shows good cause why he is not to be classed with the ordinary kings of the earth; meaning that he reigned by a Divine right. That the whole of what is stated in this verse cannot be entirely and exclusively applied to David, is very obvious from Christ's reply to the Pharisees, (Matthew 22:44) They having said that Christ was to be the son of David, he saith unto them, "How then doth David himself call him Lord?"

The objection started by the Jews, that Christ's reply was captious, is entirely frivolous, because David does not speak in his own name, but in that of the people. This objection is easily repelled. For even granting that this psalm was penned in name of the whole Church, yet as David himself

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"*The* Lord *said unto my Lord.* Heb., 'Jehovah assuredly said unto my *Adon,*' which last word is used for *lord* in every variety of rank, from the master of a family to the sovereign of an empire. In its origin, this title seems similar to the Italian *cardinal,* which means primarily a hinge, as Adon does a socket; hence figuratively applied to executive magistrates, on whom the government *rests,* and public affairs *turn.*" — *Williams.*

constituted one of the number of the godly, and was a member of the body under the same head, he could not separate himself from that class, or be dissevered from this head; what is more, he could not compose this psalm for others without, at the same time, taking part with them in it. There is besides another thing deserving of notice, the assumption of the principle or maxim then generally admitted, that David spake by the spirit of prophecy, and consequently prophesied of the future reign of Christ. This principle of interpretation being admitted, it is plainly to be inferred that he had a reference to Christ's future manifestation in the flesh, because he is the sole and supreme Head of the Church. From which it also follows, that there is something in Christ more excellent than his humanity, on account of which he is called the Lord of David his father. This view is strengthened by what is stated in the second clause of the verse. Earthly kings may indeed be said to sit at God's right hand, inasmuch as they reign by his authority; here, however, something more lofty is expressed, in that one king is chosen in a peculiar manner, and elevated to the rank of power and dignity next to God, of which dignity the twilight only appeared in David, while in Christ it shone forth in meridian splendor. And as God's right hand is elevated far above all angels, it follows that he who is seated there is exalted above all creatures. We will not maintain that angels were brought down from their high estate to be put in subjection to David. What, then, is the result, but that by the spirit of prophecy Christ's throne is exalted far above all principalities in heavenly places? The simile is borrowed from what is customary among earthly kings, that the person who is seated at his right hand is said to be next to him, and hence the Son, by whom the Father governs the world, is by this session represented as metaphorically invested with supreme dominion.

Until I make thine enemies thy footstool [321] By these words the prophet affirms that Christ would subdue all the opposition which his enemies in their tumultuous rage might employ for the subversion of his kingdom. At the same time, he intimates that the kingdom of Christ would never enjoy tranquillity until he had conquered his numerous and formidable enemies. And even should the whole world direct their machinations to the overthrow of Christ's royal throne, David here declares that it would remain unmoved and unmoveable, while all they who rise up against it shall be ruined. From this let us learn that, however numerous those enemies may be who conspire against the Son of God, and attempt the subversion of his kingdom, all will be unavailing, for they shall never prevail against God's immutable purpose, but, on the contrary, they shall, by the greatness of his power, be laid prostrate at Christ's feet. And as this prediction will not be accomplished before the last day, it must be that the kingdom of Christ will be assailed

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The expression is borrowed from the Eastern custom of conquerors putting their feet upon the necks of their enemies. See Joshua 10:24.

by many enemies from time to time until the end of the world; and thus by-and-bye it is said, *rule thou in the midst of thine enemies* The particle *until* does not refer to that which may happen after the complete carnage of the enemies of Christ. [322] Paul certainly declares that he will then deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, which he received from him, (1 Corinthians 15:24;) but we are not to take these words as denoting that he shall cease to reign, and become, as it were, a private individual; we are to regard them as describing the manner of his reign, that is, that his Divine majesty will be more conspicuous. Moreover, in this passage he is speaking solely of the reprobate who fall under Christ's feet to their own ruin and destruction. All mankind are naturally opposed to Christ, and hence it is, that ere they be brought to yield a willing obedience to him, they must be subdued and humbled. This he does with regard to some of them whom he afterwards makes partakers with him in his glory; while he casts off others, so that they may remain for ever in their lost state.

2 *Jehovah shall send out of Zion the scepter of thy power.* The Psalmist not only confirms, in different terms, what he stated above, but also adds, that Christ's kingdom shall be vastly extended, because God would make his scepter stretch far and wide. David did indeed render not a few of the surrounding nations tributaries to him, but still his kingdom, when contrasted with other monarchies, was always confined within narrow limits. There is in the words an implied contrast, as if he had said, that Christ should not reign as King upon mount Zion only, because God would cause his power to extend to the remotest regions of the earth. And for this reason it is denominated *the scepter of his power,* [323] and how astonishing was it, that though the whole world was leagued in opposition to Christ's kingdom, it yet continued to spread and prosper. In a word, David here animates the hearts of the godly against being dispirited by the foolhardy attempts on the part of those who presume to introduce discord and disorder into the kingdom of Christ; for he shows them that God will put forth his invincible

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"*Until I make, etc.* It is remarked by Genebrard, that the particle עד is to be taken emphatically, as if it were equivalent to *etiam donec,* and signifies *continuity*; not the *exception* or *exclusion* of *future times.* Jehovah is, therefore, speaking in substance as follows: — 'Reign with me even until *I make thy enemies thy footstool*; even at the time which seems opposed to thy kingdom, and when thy enemies appear to reign, that is, before I have prostrated thy enemies, and have caused them to make submission to thee. *After* this subjection of thy adversaries, it is unnecessary to say, Thou wilt continue to reign.' If this be not the force of the passage, then we must suppose that the reign of Christ will cease when he has completely subjugated the world; which is contrary to what we are taught elsewhere in Scripture. The particle is used in a similar manner in Psalm 123:3; Deuteronomy 7:24." — *Phillips.*

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"*The rod of thy strength,* or *the scepter of thy strength, i.e.,* thy powerful scepter, the scepter with which thou rulest thy powerful kingdom." — *Phillips.*

power for the maintaining of the glory of his sacred throne. What time, then, our minds are agitated by various commotions, let us learn confidently to repose on this support, that however much the world may rage against Christ, it will never be able to hurl him from the right hand of the Father. Moreover, as he does not reign on his own account, but for our salvation, we may rest assured that we will be protected and preserved from all ills under the guardianship of this invincible King. Doubtless our condition in this world is connected with many hardships; but as it is the will of God that Christ's kingdom should be encompassed with many enemies, and that too with the design of keeping us in a state of constant warfare, it becomes us to exercise patience and meekness; and assured of God's aid, boldly to set at nought the rage of the whole world. From this passage we are instructed as to the calling of the Gentiles. Because, if God had not told us in this place respecting the extension of Christ's kingdom, we would not this day have been classed among his people. But as the wall is broken down, (Ephesians 2:14) and the gospel promulgated, we have been gathered together into the body of the Church, and Christ's power is put forth to uphold and defend us.

3 *Thy people shall come* [324] In this verse the Psalmist sets forth the honors of Christ's kingdom in relation to the number of his subjects, and their prompt and cheerful obedience to his commands. The Hebrew term, which he employs, frequently denotes *voluntary oblations;* but, in the present case, it refers to the chosen people, those who are truly Christ's flock; declaring that they shall be a willing people, spontaneously and cheerfully consecrating themselves to his service. *At the time of the assembling of thine army,* that is to say, as often as there shall be a convening of solemn and lawful assemblies, or the king shall desire an account of his people; which may be expressed in French, *au jour des montres, — in the day of the review.* Others render it, *in the day of thy power;* [325] but the former is preferable, for

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"'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' *Voluntaries,* a people of voluntarinesses or of liberalities, (as Psalm 68:10;) that is, shall most freely, willingly, and liberally present themselves and their oblations to thee, as Judges 5:9; Acts 11:41 [*sic*]; Exodus 25:2; Romans 12:1; Psalm 48:10; 119:108; Song 6:11." — *Ainsworth.* "נדבות is literally *promptitudines, readinesses*; so that the term being plural and abstract, may be regarded as highly emphatic, as if the Psalmist said, *Thy people shall be very willing.* This noun also signifies *voluntary oblations.* Thus Luther has rendered it by *williglich opfern* In this sense it is found in many passages, as Exodus 35:29; 36:3; Deuteronomy 23:24, and several other places. It will be necessary, if this meaning be assigned to it here, to supply some such verb as יביא. The Psalmist, however, is evidently speaking of a battle, and, therefore, the admission of this meaning would be incongruous " — *Phillips.* "Since an army," says Rosenmüller, "is represented in this passage as called out to a warlike expedition, we cannot understand נדבות otherwise than as signifying a prompt and willing mind, in which sense we find it, Hosea 14:5, *ultro, voluntarily,* of his own accord, Psalm 51:14; Judges 5:2, 9." — *Messianic Psalms, Biblical Cabinet,* volume 32, page 271.

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when Christ shall wish to assemble his people, immediately they will yield a prompt obedience, without being forcibly constrained to it. Moreover, for the purpose of assuring us that this, in preference to all other kingdoms, was set apart by God for his peculiar services, it is added, *the beauties or honors of holiness,* thereby intimating, that all who become Christ's subjects will not approach him as they would do an earthly king, but as they would come into the presence of God himself, their sole aim being to serve God.

Out of the womb of the morning, [326] *etc.* It would not be for edification to recount all the interpretations which have been given of this clause, for when I have established its true and natural import, it would be quite superfluous to enter upon a refutation of others. There does not, indeed, appear to me any reason to doubt that, in this place, David extols the Divine favor displayed in increasing the number of Christ's people; and hence, in consequence of their extraordinary increase, he compares the youth or race which would be born to him to the dew. [327] As men are struck with astonishment at seeing the earth moistened and refreshed with dew, though its descent be imperceptible, even so, David declares that an innumerable offspring shall be born to Christ, who shall be spread over the whole earth. The youth, therefore, which, like the dew-drops, are innumerable, are here designated *the dew of childhood* or *of youth.* The Hebrew term, ילדות, *yalduth,* is used as a collective noun, that is, a noun which does not point out a single individual only, but a community or society. [328] Should any wish to attach a more definite and distinct signification to the term, he may do so in

"I have rendered the words, חילד ביום, *in the day of thy power*; and I understand that day as referring to the time when, in consequence of Peter's exhortation, three thousand persons made profession of the Christian faith." — *Dante on the Messianic Psalms, Biblical Cabinet,* volume 32, page 318. With this corresponds the interpretation of Hammond: "The Messiah, in the former verses, is set upon his throne, for the exercise of his regal power, with a sword or scepter in his hand; and, as such, he is supposed to rule in the world, to go out to conquer and subdue all before him. The army which he makes use of to this end is the college of apostles, sent out to *preach to all nations*; and the time of their thus preaching is here called חילך יום 'the day of his power' or 'forces,' or 'army.'" But Queen Elizabeth's translators understood the phrase in the same sense as Calvin, rendering it, "The people shall come willingly at the time of assembling thine army." In like manner, Rosemüller reads, "*In the day of thy army*; that is," says he, "in the day when thou assemblest and leadest forth thine army. The word חיל, *militia,* is here used as in Deuteronomy 11:4; 2 Kings 6:15, signifying military forces." — *Ibid.* volume 32, page 273.

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"*Des la matrice,* comme de, *l'estoille du matin* " — *Fr.* "*Out of the womb,* as if from *or* out of *the star of the morning.*"

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"Among the earliest Greek writers, dew seems to have been a figurative expression for the young of any animal. Thus, δροσος is used by æschylus for an unfledged bird, (*Agamemn.* 145;) and ἑρση, by Homer, for a young lamb or kid, (*Od.* 1, 222.)" — *Horsley.*

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the following manner: That an offspring, innumerable as the dew-drops of the morning, shall issue from his womb. The testimony of experience proves that there was good reason for uttering this prediction. The multitude who, in so short a time, have been gathered together and subjected to Christ's sway, is incredible; the more so, as this has been accomplished by the sound of the Gospel alone, and that, too, in spite of the formidable opposition of the whole world. Besides, it is not surprising that aged persons, who are recently converted to Christ, should be designated children newly born, because the spiritual birth, according to Peter, makes all the godly become as new-born babes, (1 Peter 2:2) To the same purpose are the words of Isaiah, (Isaiah 53:10,) that Christ "shall see a seed whose days shall be prolonged;" and under his reign the Church has the promise of enjoying a season of incalculable fertility. What has been said will serve to account for the appellation given to the Church or children of God. And, assuredly, it is matter of surprise that there should be any, though the number may be few, gathered out of a world lying in ruins, and inhabited by the children of wrath; and it is still more surprising, that such vast multitudes are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ and by the word. At the same time, we would do well to bear in mind, that to execute God's commands promptly and cheerfully, and to be guided solely by his will, is the peculiar honor and privilege of his chosen; for Christ will recognize none as his people, except those who willingly take his yoke upon them, and come into his presence at the voice of his word. And that no one may imagine that eye-service is a proper discharge of his duty, the Psalmist very properly adds, that Christ will not be satisfied with mere external ceremony, but that he must be worshipped with true reverence, such as he himself instructs us to bring into the presence of God.

Psalm 110:4

4. Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent him, [329] Thou art a priest for ever, according to the manner of Melchizedek

4 *Jehovah hath sworn* This verse is a satisfactory proof that the person here spoken of is none other than Christ. When the Jews, with the view

"Qui ne se dit pas d'une personne seule, mais de quelque multitude et compagnie." — *Fr.*

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The addition, "and will not repent," is intended to indicate the absolute character of the oath, that it cannot be annulled or suspended in consequence of any altered circumstances; that no change of counsel or of conduct in the parties concerned shall cause any change in the divine purpose, so that it may be said, *Jehovah repented,* as he is said to have repented of creating man on observing the wickedness of the human race, (Genesis 6:6.) A similar form of expression is elsewhere employed to express the immutability of what God declares or swears, (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29.)

of mystifying this prediction, render the term כוהן, *chohen, a prince,* their translation is at once feeble and frivolous. I acknowledge, indeed, that those of noble descent or of royal blood are in Hebrew denominated כהנים, *chohanim;* but would it have been saying any thing to the honor of Christ for David merely to give to him the title of a chief, which is inferior to that of royal dignity? Besides, what would be the import of saying that he was a prince for ever, and according to the manner of Melchizedek? There can be no question then, that the Holy Ghost here refers to something specific and peculiar, as distinguishing and separating this king from all other kings. This, too, is the well known title with which Melchizedek was honored by Moses, (Genesis 14:18) I grant, indeed, that anciently among heathen nations kings were wont to exercise the priestly office; but Melchizedek is called "the priest of the most high God," in consequence of his devoutly worshipping the only true God. Among his own people, however, God did not permit the blending of these offices. Hence Uzziah, David's legitimate successor, was struck with leprosy because he attempted to offer incense to God, (2 Chronicles 26:21.) The circumstances connected with the lineage of David were vastly different from those relating to Melchizedek. What these are it is not difficult to ascertain, inasmuch as in this new King the holy office of the priesthood shall be united with the crown and the throne. For assuredly the imperial majesty was not so conspicuous in such an obscure prince as Melchizedek, as on that account to warrant his being held out as an example above all others. Salem, the sole seat of his throne, and where he reigned by sufferance, was at that time a small obscure town, so that with regard to him there was nothing deserving of notice saving the conjunction of the crown and the priesthood. Ambitious of procuring greater reverence for their persons, heathen kings aspired after the honor of the sacerdotal office; but it was by divine authority that Melchizedek was invested with both these functions.

All dubiety as to this being the meaning of David ought to be banished from our minds by the authority of the Apostle. And although the Jews may maintain the contrary as obstinately as they please, yet reason manifestly declares that the *beauty of holiness,* to which I formerly adverted, is here very clearly described. To this a decisive and peculiar mark is appended, which elevates Christ above all other kings with regard to the dignity of the priesthood, and which at the same time tends to point out the difference between his priesthood and that of Levi. In connection with his sacerdotal office, mention is made of *God's oath,* who was not wont to mingle his venerable name with matters of minor importance; but, on the contrary, to teach us by his own example to swear deliberately and reverently, and never unless in weighty and important matters. Admitting, then, that God had sworn that the Messiah would be the prince and governor of his people, according as Melchizedek was, this would have been nothing else than an unbecoming profanation of his name. When, however, it is quite

apparent that something unusual and peculiar was denoted in this place, we may therefore conclude that the priesthood of Christ is invested with great importance, seeing that it is ratified by the oath of God. And, in fact, it is the very turning point upon which our salvation depends; because, but for our reliance on Christ our Mediator, we would be all debarred from entering into God's presence. In prayer, too, nothing is more needful for us than sure confidence in God, and therefore he not only invites us to come to him, but also by an oath hath appointed an advocate for the purpose of obtaining acceptance for us in his sight. As for those who shut the door against themselves, they subject themselves to the guilt of impeaching him with being a God of untruth and of perjury. It is in this way that the Apostle argues the disannulling of the Levitical priesthood; because, while that remained entire, God would not have sworn that there should be a new order of priesthood unless some change had been contemplated. What is more, when he promises a new priest, it is certain that he would be one who would be superior to all others, and would also abolish the then existing order.

Some translate the term דברתי, *diberathi, according to my word,* [330] an interpretation which I am not disposed entirely to reject, inasmuch as David would be represented as affirming that the priesthood of Melchizedek is founded upon the call and commandment of God. But as the letter י, *yod,* is frequently redundant, I, in common with the majority of interpreters, prefer translating it simply *manner.* Moreover, as not a few of the fathers have misapprehended the comparison between Christ and Melchizedek, we must learn from the Apostle what that resemblance is; from which will be readily seen the error into which they fell respecting it. For can there be any thing more absurd than to overlook all the mysteries about which the Spirit, by the mouth of the Apostle, hath spoken, and attend only to such as he has omitted? Such persons argue solely about the bread and wine, which they maintain were offered both by Melchizedek and Christ. But Melchizedek offered bread and wine, not as a sacrifice to God, but to Abraham as a repast to refresh him on his march. "In the holy Supper there is not an offering of bread and wine as they erroneously imagine, but a mutual participation of it among the faithful. As to the passage under review, the similitude refers principally to the perpetuity of his priesthood, as is obvious from the particle לעולם, *leolam,* that is to say, *for ever.* Melchizedek is described by Moses as if he were a celestial individual; and, accordingly, David, in instituting a resemblance between Christ and him, designs to point out the perpetuity of his priestly office. Whence it follows, (a point which is handled by the

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"דברתי על Secundum meam constitutionem, (*q. d.*,) Not according to the *Levitical order,* but according to *my appointment,* the true Melchizedek. See Hebrews 7." — *Goode's New Version of the Book of Psalms, with Notes.*

Apostle,) that as death did not intercept the exercise of his office, he has no successor. And this circumstance demonstrates the accursed sacrilege of the Popish mass; for, if the Popish priests will assume the prerogative of effecting a reconciliation between God and men, they must of necessity denude Christ of the peculiar and distinguishing honor which his Father has conferred upon him.

Psalm 110:5-7

> **5.** The Lord at thy right hand [331] hath broken in pieces kings in the day of his wrath. **6.** He shalt judge among the heathen, he shall fill all with ruins; he shall break the head over a great country. **7.** He shall drink of the torrent in the way, and therefore shall he elevate his head on high.

5. *The Lord at thy right hand* In these words David celebrates the dreadful nature of that power which Christ possesses for the dispersion and destruction of his enemies; and by this means he affirms, that though encompassed by bands of deadly foes, yet their malignant attempts would not prevent God from upholding the King whom he has set up. It is proper to consider the expression, *in the day of his wrath,* by which we are instructed patiently to endure the cross, if it happen that God, for a time, conceals himself during the prevalence of the cruelty and fury of enemies; for he knows well when the full and fit season arrives for executing vengeance upon them. Next, he invests Christ with power over the nations, and the people of uncircumcised lips; meaning, that he was not chosen King to reign over the inhabitants of Judea only, but also to keep under his sway distant nations, agreeably to what was predicated of him in Psalm 2:8. And because, in all

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"*The Lord at thy right hand.* In this psalm it is evident, verse 1, that יהוה is the title of God the Father, and so again, verse 4, and אדני of the Messiah God the Son, in respect of that dignity, and dominion, and regal power, to which he was to be exalted at his ascension, that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' This is expressed, verse 1, by his 'sitting at God's right hand,' for which the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 15:25, reads, 'it must be that he reign.' By this it is evident that, in this verse, 'The Lord at thy right hand,' must be understood of the Messiah instated in his regal power at the *right hand* of his father, and not of the Father as his παραστάτης, to back and help him, as Psalm 16:8, and elsewhere, the phrase is used. For of the Son thus exalted we know it is that we read John 5:22, that 'the Father has committed all judgment to the Son.' Agreeable to which it is that this 'Adonai,' or 'Lord at Jehovah's right hand here, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath;' *i.e.*, shall act revenges most severely on the opposers of his kingdom; which revenges, in the New Testament, are peculiarly attributed to Christ, and called 'the coming of the Son of Man, coming in the clouds, coming with his angels, and the approaching or coming of his kingdom.'" — *Hammond.* In this 5th verse the Psalmist makes a sudden apostrophe to Jehovah. Horsley is much inclined to indulge in a conjecture, which Dr Kennicott, too, seems to have entertained, that the word יהוה, *Jehovah,* has been lost out of the text after the original word for *at thy right hand*; and that the passage should run thus: "The Lord at thy right hand, O Jehovah!"

parts of the earth, as well as in the confines of Judea, there would be many rebellious and disobedient persons, he adverts also to their destruction; thus intimating, that all who should set themselves in opposition to Christ, must be made to fall before him, and their obstinacy be subdued.

7 *He shall drink* Not a few interpreters, in my opinion, expound this verse in a very harsh manner: that the carnage would be so great, as to cause the blood of the slain to flow in torrents, out of which Christ, the Conqueror, might drink till he was satiated.

[332] Akin to this is the exposition of those who would have it to be a figurative representation of misery and grief, and thus descriptive of the many afflictions to which Christ was liable during this transitory life. The similitude seems rather to be drawn from the conduct of brave and powerful generals, who, when in hot pursuit of the enemy, do not suffer themselves to be diverted from their purpose by attending to luxuries; but, without kneeling down, are content to quench their thirst by drinking of the stream which they are passing. It was in this way that Gideon found out the brave and warlike soldiers; regarding such as kneeled down to drink as destitute of courage, he sent them back to their homes, Judges 7:5. It therefore appears to me that David figuratively attributes military prowess to Christ, declaring that he would not take time to refresh himself, but would hastily drink of the river which might come in his way. [333] This is designed to strike his enemies with terror, intimating to them the rapid approach of impending destruction. Should any one be disposed to ask, Where then is that spirit of meekness and gentleness with which the Scripture elsewhere informs us he shall be endued? Isaiah 42:2, 3; 61:1, 2; I answer, that, as

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This opinion is held by Michaelis and Doederlein. But although a fearful carnage of God's and his people's enemies is sometimes poetically described by His arrows being made drunk with blood, Deuteronomy 32:42; and as producing a stream of blood, in which his people, victorious over them, might dip or wash their feet, as in Psalm 68:24; yet neither He nor they are said to *drink* such *blood.* There is a great difference between this latter and the two preceding metaphors; and we cannot think that the idea of drinking human blood, much less of making God drink it, would have entered the mind of any Israelite. The idea is abhorrent to human nature, and must have appeared particularly shocking to the Jews, who were strictly prohibited by the laws of Moses from eating even the blood of beasts.

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Similar is the opinion of Grotius. He regards the words as containing a description of a strenuous and active warrior, whom no obstacle can prevent from prosecuting victory with the utmost ardor; "Who," to use his own language, "when pursuing the enemy, does not seek for places of entertainment, that he may refresh himself with wine, but is contented with water, which he takes hastily in passing; and whenever he can find it, not only from a river, but from a torrent." "Schnurrer," says Rosemüller, "seems to have perceived the true meaning of the verse, which he gives in the following words: — 'Though fatigued with the slaughter of his enemies, yet will he not desist; but, having refreshed himself with water taken from the nearest stream, will exert his renovated strength in the pursuit of the routed foe.'" — *Messianic Psalms,* page 284.

a shepherd is gentle towards his flock, but fierce and formidable towards wolves and thieves; in like manner, Christ is kind and gentle towards those who commit themselves to his care, while they who wilfully and obstinately reject his yoke, shall feel with what awful and terrible power he is armed. In Psalm 2:9, we saw that he had in his hand an iron scepter, by which he will beat down all the obduracy of his enemies; and, accordingly, he is here said to assume the aspect of cruelty, with the view of taking vengeance upon them. Wherefore it becomes us carefully to refrain from provoking his wrath against us by a stiff-necked and rebellious spirit, when he is tenderly and sweetly inviting us to come to him.

Psalm 111

PSALM 111 [334]

The title to this psalm supplies the place of an argument; and, that others may be induced to engage in the praises of God, the Psalmist points out the manner of doing so by his own example. Then he gives a short

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This and the subsequent psalms, to the 119th, are supposed to have been sung by the Jews at the celebration of the Passover; and the subject-matter of them was peculiarly adapted to such a purpose. "From the 111th to the 118th psalm, inclusive," says Jebb, in his recent work on the Psalms, "we find very interesting marks of a ceremonial which, tradition asserts, was observed by the Jews at the eating of the Passover, namely, the singing of the Gospel Hallel — that hymn, in all likelihood, which our blessed Lord sang with his disciples after the Last Supper. Dr Lightfoot informs us that there is considerable discrepancy of opinion among the Jews as to what psalms constituted the Greater Hallel; the various opinions extending or contracting its range from the 113th to the 137th psalm. As usual, these traditions are uncertain and ill defined, and have more respect to the arbitrary dicta of the Rabbins than to the internal evidence of Holy Scripture. Let us now examine this evidence. In the first place, we are to remark, that all the psalms (except the 114th and 118th) which precede the 119th, have *Hallelujah* (that is, Praise ye the Lord) either prefixed or subjoined, or both, while those which are without this burden are in evident connection; the 119th as evidently beginning a new series. In the absence, then, of any consistent testimony, it seems fair to assume, that this group of psalms formed the Greater Hallel, the sentiment they contain being singularly applicable to the festival, — to the great deliverance from Egypt, which it celebrated, and to the second delivery from Babylon, which so strongly resembled it. According to Dr Lightfoot, the 113th and 114th psalms were sung at one period of the feast, at the second cup; and after the fourth cup, the other psalms, namely, the 115th to the 118th, inclusive; and here the feast ordinarily ended. They thus held the place of grace before or after meat; and this division is very consistent, the latter psalms being more evidently Eucharistical." — *Jebb's Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Dissertations,* volume 2, pages 269-271.

account of the manifold benefits which, in olden times, he conferred upon the faithful, and is daily conferring upon them. The psalm is composed in alphabetical order, each verse containing two letters. The first verse begins with a, א *aleph,* while the letter b, ב *beth,* is placed at the commencement of the next half of the verse. The last two verses only are not divided into hemistiches; but each of these has three letters. If, however, any one will closely examine the contents, he will find that this has occurred through mistake or inadvertence; for if we make these two verses into three, [335] the construction of the sentences corresponds very well one with another; and consequently, the transcribers have erred in not attending to the prophet's distinction.

Psalm 111:1-4

1. Praise ye Jehovah. [336] (א, aleph,) I will praise Jehovah with my whole heart, (ב, beth) In the congregation and assembly of the just. **2.** (ג, gimel,) The works of Jehovah are great, (ד, daleth,) Sought out of all who have a desire to them. **3.** (ה, he,) His work is beautiful and magnificent: (ו, vau,) And his justice endureth for ever. **4.** (ז, zain,) He hath caused his marvellous works to be remembered: (ח, cheth,) Jehovah is compassionate and merciful.

1 *I will praise Jehovah* The best and most efficient method of inculcating the performance of any duty is to be exemplary; and, accordingly, we find that the prophet, in the present instance, sets himself for an example, to lead others to engage in the celebration of God's praises. His resolution to praise God consists of two parts; that he would celebrate God's praises unfeignedly, with all his heart, and that he would do it publicly, in the assembly of the faithful. He very properly begins with heart-praise, because it is much better to praise in secret, and when no one is conscious of it, than to lift up our voice, and shout forth his praises with feigned lips. At the same time, the person who, in secret, pours out his heart in grateful emotions towards God, will also set forth his praises in swelling strains, otherwise God would be deprived of one half of the honor which is due to him. The prophet then

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"These two verses," says Dr Geddes, "might just as well have made three, and then the whole of both psalms would be regular." According to Jerome, this is the first psalm that is *exactly* alphabetical, the rest of this description, which precede it, being only nearly so.

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The Hebrew for *Praise ye Jehovah* is *Hallelujah.* This is probably the *title,* and no part of the psalm itself. The alphabetical construction of the poem seems to confirm this opinion. It is *acrostic,* and begins with *aleph,* and each succeeding hemistich commences with the other letters of the alphabet in order; but were *Hallelujah,* which begins with the fifth letter of the alphabet, answering to our H, the first word of the psalm, that would destroy its perfectly alphabetical character.

determines to praise God with the whole heart, that is, with an upright and honest heart; not that he engages to come up to the full measure of his duty, but he declares that he would not be like the hypocrites, who, coldly and with a double heart, or rather guilefully and perfidiously, employ their lips only in the praises of God. This is a point worthy of notice, lest any should be discouraged, in consequence of not being able to cherish the hope of attaining to that perfection of heart which is so desirable; for however defective our praises may be, they may nevertheless be acceptable to God, provided only we strive unfeignedly to render unto him this act of devotion. We come now to the other part of his resolution, in which he says he would proclaim the praises of God before men; for although the Hebrew term סוד, *sod,* denotes a private assembly, [337] yet I think that, in this passage, he employs two words of synonymous import. At the same time, should any one be inclined to take a more refined view of the passage, he may do so if he please. He says, *in the congregation of the just,* because the principal object for which holy assemblies are convened, is to afford the worshippers of God an opportunity of presenting to him sacrifices of praise, agreeably to what is stated in Psalm 65:1,

"Praise waits for thee, O Jehovah! in Zion."

2 *The works of Jehovah are great* He now proceeds to inform us that there are abundant materials for praising God, supplied by his works, to which at present he makes only a general reference, and which he, subsequently, defines more explicitly in relation to the government of the Church. The magnitude of God's works is a subject which, generally, eludes the observation of men, and, therefore, few of them are acquainted with it. This ignorance the prophet ascribes to the indifference and ingratitude of men, comparatively few of whom condescend to notice the great wisdom, goodness, justice, and power, which shine forth in these works. Expositors are divided in their sentiments about the second clause of the verse. Some translate it, *sought out for all their delights;* and, indeed, the Hebrew term חפץ, *chaphets,* signifies *good pleasure;* but as this is too harsh an interpretation of the word, it is better to understand it as an adjective, expressing the idea of *loving* or *desiring.* As to the participle, *sought out,* which, according to the Hebrew verb, דרש, *darash,* properly denotes, *to search with diligence,* we yet find that the works of Jehovah are, in this

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"Aben Ezra and others think that עדה is put in opposition to סוד, which denotes a more secret assembly; and so the verse, they say, means, in substance, as follows: 'I will praise the Lord with all my heart, both privately and publicly.' This, however, I think can scarcely be the sense: it is much more likely that סוד is here employed to express a congregation of Israelites; because the rest of the world was excluded from such assembly, and so far it partook of the character of *private* or *secret.* This is the view taken by Luther, whose paraphrase of this verse is as follows: 'I thank the Lord here in this public assembly, where we (Israelites) meet one another as in private counsel, and where no heathen nor strangers can be present.'" — *Phillips.*

place, called דרושים, *derushim,* that is, *perceived or found out.* Hence, in Isaiah 65:1, it is said, "I was found of them who sought, me not." I must, however, not lose sight of the prophet's design, namely, that in consequence of so few applying themselves to the study of the works of God, he teaches us that that is the reason why so many are blind amidst a flood of light; for, when he says that the excellency of the works of God is known to all who desire it, he means that none are ignorant of it, except such as are wilfully blind, or rather, malignantly and contemptuously quench the light which is offered to them. We must, however, attend to the means which we possess for arriving at the knowledge of these words because we know, that as long as the faithful are on earth, their understandings are dull and weak, so that they cannot penetrate the mysteries, or comprehend the height of the works of God. But, incomprehensible as is the immensity of the wisdom, equity, justice, power, and mercy of God, in his works, the faithful nevertheless acquire as much knowledge of these as qualifies them for manifesting the glory of God; only it becomes us to begin the study of his works with reverence, that we may take delight in them, contemptible though they be in the estimation of the reprobate, who treat them with impious scorn. The LXX. having rendered it, *sought out in all his wills,* Augustine has therefore taken occasion, with philosophic finesse, to ask, How can there be, or, at least, appear to be, a plurality of wills in God? And it is indeed a pleasing consideration, that though God manifest his will in his law, nevertheless there is another secret purpose by which he is guided in the wonderful management of human affairs. This doctrine, however, is, foreign to the exposition of this passage.

3 *His work is beautiful* Others render it *splendor.* The meaning of the clause is this, That every act of God is replete with glorious majesty. In the following part of the verse he specifies more clearly in what this beauty and magnificence consist, by stating that *the justice of God* is everywhere conspicuous. It is not the design of God to furnish us with such a display of his power and sovereignty in his works, as might only fill our minds with terror, but he also gives us a display of his justice in a manner so inviting as to captivate our hearts. This commendation of the works and ways of God is introduced in opposition to the clamor and calumny of the ungodly, by which they impiously endeavor, to the utmost extent of their power, to disfigure and deface the glory of the works of God. In the next verse, he more especially extols the wonderful works in which God has principally set forth his power. *To cause his marvellous works to be remembered,* is equivalent to the doing of works worthy of being remembered, or the renown of which shall continue for ever. [338] And having above called upon us to contemplate his justice, now, in like manner, and almost in like terms, he celebrates the grace and mercy of God, principally in relation to his works, because that

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justice which he displays in the preservation and protection of his people, issues from the source of his unmerited favor which he bears towards them.

> Psalm 111:5-8
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> **5.** (ט, teth,) He hath given a portion to them that fear him: (י, yod,) He will remember his covenant for ever. **6.** (כ, caph,) He hath declared to his people the power of his works, (ל, lamed,) To give the heritage of the heathen to them. **7.** (מ, mem,) The works of his hands are truth and judgment; (נ, nun,) All his statutes are true. **8.** (ס, samech,) They are established for ever, (ע, ain,) And are done in truth and righteousness.

5 *He hath given a portion to them that fear him* The Church being a mirror of the grace and justice of God, what the prophet said respecting them is here expressly applied to her; not that he designs to treat of the justice of God, in general, but only of that which he peculiarly displays towards his own people. Hence he adds, that God's care of his people is such as to lead him to make ample provision for the supply of all their wants. The word טרף, *tereph,* which we have translated *portion,* is frequently taken for *a prey:* [339] others render it *meat;* but I rather choose to render it *portion,* in which sense it is taken in Proverbs 30:8, and Proverbs 31:15; as if he should say, that God had given his people all that was needful, and that, considered as a portion, it was large and liberal; for we know that the people of Israel were enriched, not in consequence of their own industry, but by the blessing of God, who, like the father of a family, bestows upon his household every thing necessary for their subsistence. In the following clause of the verse, he assigns as the reason for his care and kindness, his desire of effectually demonstrating that his covenant was not null and void. And here it must be carefully observed, that if, in former times, and from a respect to his gracious covenant, he manifested so great kindness towards the people of Israel, in like manner, the goodness which we receive from him is the result

"עשה זכר. He hath made a memorial for himself in his wonderful works. זכר, the same as זכרון in Numbers 17:5. So the LXX., in Exodus 17:14, render זכר by ὄνομα, *name*; accordingly, עשה זכר may signify, *He hath made himself a name*; *i.e.*, His wonderful works will exist as memorials of his name." — *Phillips.*

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"*Given meat* — Heb., 'Prey;' *i.e.*, food. Some think this refers to the *manna* rained upon Israel in the wilderness; we should rather think, to the quails. See Psalm 105:40." — *Williams.* "טרף. This word is usually translated *prey,* and the passage is thought, by some, to refer to the spoiling of the Egyptians by the Israelites, mentioned in Exodus 12:36. It is, however, more probable that טרף signifies here *food,* and that allusion is made to the manna with which the children of Israel were fed in the wilderness. See Proverbs 31:15; Malachi 3:10. The first hemistich is the consequence of what is stated in the second; *i.e., because* God remembered his covenant, *therefore* he gave food to them who fear him." — *Phillips.*

of our adoption into his family; and because God is never weary in showing kindness to his people, he says that the remembrance of his covenant shall never be effaced. Moreover, as he daily and constantly loads us with his benefits, so our faith must, in some measure, correspond with it: it must not fail, but must rise above life and death.

The next verse is subjoined, by way of exposition, for the purpose of showing that God, in bestowing upon his people the heritage of the heathen, had manifested to them the power of his works. He does indeed employ the term *show,* but he means a true showing; because the possession of the Holy Land was not acquired by mere human power, but it was given to them by Divine power, and through the working of many miracles; and thus God, as it were, openly testified to the descendants of Abraham with what incomparable power he is invested. It is on this account that he sets up the people of Israel as a match for so many other nations, who would assuredly never have vanquished so many enemies, unless they had been sustained from on high.

7 *The works of his hands* In the first clause of the verse he exclaims that God is known to be faithful and upright in his works, and then he goes on to extol the same truth and rectitude as pervading the doctrine of the law; the amount of which is, that a beautiful harmony characterises all the sayings and doings of God, because every where he shows himself to be just and faithful. We have a memorable proof of this fact in the redemption of his ancient people. Yet I doubt not, that, under the term, *works,* the prophet comprehends the constant government of the Church; because God daily and unceasingly shows that he is just and true, and unweariedly pursues the same course. Among men it is reckoned to be of more importance for one to be found just in practice than in profession; yet, as the doctrine of the law was the very life and safety of the people, the prophet very properly, and in several expressions, dwells upon the sentiment contained in the second clause of the verse; saying, *all his statutes are true, they are established for ever, and are drawn up in perfect accordance with the strict law of truth and equity* And assuredly, but for God's having kept the people united to him by the sacred chain of the law, the fruit of their redemption would have been very small, and even that benefit would have soon been lost by them. We ought to observe, then, that this subject is brought prominently forward in this place; because, in attesting the eternal love of God, it became the means of imparting life.

Psalm 111:9-10

9. (פ, phe,) He sent redemption to his people; (צ, tzaddi,) he hath commanded His covenant for ever: (ק, koph,) holy and terrible is his name. **10.** (ר, resh,) The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom: (ש, schin,) good understanding have all they who do these things: (ת, tau,) his praise endureth for ever.

9 *He sent redemption to his people* What he had already stated is here repeated in different words. And as the deliverance of his people was the commencement of their salvation, it is first introduced; next is subjoined its confirmation in the law, by reason of which it comes to pass that God's adoption could never fail. For though, long prior to this, God had established his covenant with Abraham, which also was the occasion of the redemption of the people; yet what is here mentioned refers exclusively to the law, by which the covenant was ratified, never to be disannulled. The amount is, that, in the deliverance of the people, God did not act the part of a beneficial father, merely for a day, but that, in the promulgation of the law, he also establishedhis grace, that the hope of eternal life might continue for ever in the Church. Moreover, you must attend carefully to what I have elsewhere cautioned you against, and to which I shall advert more at length on Psalm 119, where the law is spoken of, That the commandments must not be taken always abstractly, for the Holy Spirit, in an especial manner, refers to the promises which are in Christ, by which God, in gathering his chosen people to himself, hath begotten them again to eternal life.

10. *The fear of Jehovah* Having treated of the kindness of God, and paid a well-merited tribute to the law, the prophet goes on to exhort the faithful to reverence God, and be zealous in the keeping of the law. In calling *the fear of God, The beginning or source of wisdom,* he charges with folly those who do not render implicit obedience unto God. As if he should say, They who fear not God, and do not regulate their lives according to his law, are brute beasts: and are ignorant of the first elements of true wisdom. To this we must carefully attend; for although mankind generally wish to be accounted wise almost all the world lightly esteem God, and take pleasure in their own wicked craftiness. And as the very worst of men are reputed to be superior to all others in point of wisdom; and, puffed up with this confidence, harden themselves against God, the prophet declares all the wisdom of the world, without the fear of God, to be vanity or an empty shadow. And, indeed, all who are ignorant of the purpose for which they live are fools and madmen. But to serve God is the purpose for which we have been born, and for which we are preserved in life. There is, therefore, no worse blindness, no insensibility so grovelling, as when we contemn God, and place our affections elsewhere. For whatever ingenuity the wicked may possess, they are destitute of the main thing, genuine piety. To the same effect are the words which immediately follow, *a good understanding have all they who keep God's commandments.* There is great emphasis upon the qualifying adjunct טוב, *tob;* because the prophet, in inveighing against the foolish opinion to which we have already adverted, tacitly condemns those who delight in their own wicked craftiness. His meaning is, I admit, that they are usually deemed wise who look well to their own interests, who can pursue a temporising policy, who have the acuteness and artifice of preserving the favorable opinion of the world, and who even practice

deception upon others. But even were I to grant that this character belongs to them, yet is their wisdom unprofitable and perverse, because true wisdom manifests itself in the observance of the law. Next he substitutes the *keeping of God's commandments* for the fear of God. For though all men, without exception, boast that they fear God, yet nothing is more common than for them to live in the neglect of his law. Hence the prophet very properly inculcates upon us the voluntary assumption of his yoke, and submission to the regulations of his word, as the most satisfactory evidence of our living in the fear of God. The term *beginning* [340] has misled some, leading them to imagine that the fear of God was denominated the entrance of wisdom, as it were the alphabet, because it prepares men for true piety. Such an opinion is scarcely deserving of notice, seeing that, in Job 28:28, it is called "wisdom." In this passage fear is not to be understood as referring to the first or elementary principles of piety, as in 1 John 4:18, but is comprehensive of all true godliness, or the worship of God. The conclusion of the psalm requires no explanation; it being the object of the prophet simply to inculcate upon the faithful, that nothing is more profitable for them, than to spend their lives in the celebration of the praises of God.

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"*The beginning,* — the word, so translated, also signifies *the prime, the chief part, the perfection*; a sense which it may very well bear in this place: comp. Deuteronomy 10:12; Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10" — *Cresswell.* "ראשית this word may signify, the first in time, and so it may denote the foundation of any thing; hence the meaning of the Psalmist here is, that the foundation of all wisdom is the fear of the Lord. But ראשית has also the sense of being *first* in *dignity,* as well as in order of time; thus חכמה ראשית*, wisdom is the chief thing,* Proverbs 4:7. Here it may be understood in the same manner; *i.e.*, the fear of the Lord is the chief wisdom." — *Phillips.*

Psalm 112

PSALM 112

As the majority of mankind expect to prosper by evil deeds, and as they generally endeavor to enrich themselves by plunder, fraud, and every species of injustice, the prophet enumerates the blessings of God which attend those who worship him in purity, in order that we may know that, in aiming at a life of piety and morality, we shall not lose our reward. [341]

Psalm 112:1-3

1. Praise ye Jehovah! Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah; he will greatly delight in his commandments. **2.** His seed shall be powerful in the earth: [342] the generation of the righteous shall be blessed. **3.** Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

1 *Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah* Although the prophet begins with an exhortation, he has, as I have already pointed out, something farther in view, than simply the calling upon the faithful to praise God. To practice wickedness, and perpetrate injustice, is, in all quarters, accounted a great

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This psalm is also acrostic or alphabetical; and the subject of it being only an enlargement upon the last verse of the preceding, as Muis and others have observed, the same author, it is not improbable, composed both.

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"*In the earth,* or rather, with Green, *in the land*: as it seems to mean *the land* of Israel, to which the promise of temporal blessings was limited." — *Dimock.*

happiness; and, although integrity may be occasionally praised, nevertheless, there is scarcely one among a hundred who pursues it, because all imagine that they will be miserable unless, by one means or another, they seize as booty every thing which comes in their way. In opposition to this, the prophet tells us that more advantage is to be expected from God's paternal regard, than from the inflicting of every species of injury, and the perpetrating of every kind of injustice in our power; and by setting before us the certain hope of reward, he calls us back to the practice of equity and beneficence. The following is the analysis which I give of the verse: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth himself in his commandments;* and thus, by the second clause of the verse, the prophet specifies in what the fear of God consists. And that the addition of this explanatory clause is called for, is quite apparent from what we remarked towards the conclusion of the preceding psalm. For, while the law is boldly contemned by mankind, yet nothing is more common than to pretend that they fear God. Such impiety is well refuted by the prophet, when he acknowledges none as belonging to the worshippers of God, but he who endeavors to keep his law. The Hebrew verb חפץ, *chaphets,* is rather emphatical, which is, as it were, to *take his pleasure,* and I have rendered *to delight himself* For the prophet makes a distinction between a willing and prompt endeavor to keep the law, and that which consists in mere servile and constrained obedience. We must, therefore, cheerfully embrace the law of God, and that, too, in such a manner, that the love of it, with all its sweetness, may overcome all the allurements of the flesh, otherwise, mere attention to it will be unavailing. Hence a man cannot be regarded as a genuine observer of the law, until he has attained to this — that the delight which he takes in the law of God renders obedience agreeable to him. I now resume the consideration of the passage at large. The prophet, in affirming that the worshippers of God *are happy,* guards us against the very dangerous deception which the ungodly practice upon themselves, in imagining that they can reap a sort of happiness, I know not what, from doing evil.

2 *His seed shall be powerful* For the purpose of confirming the statement which he advanced respecting the happiness of the man that fears Jehovah and takes delight in his commandments, the prophet enumerates the tokens of God's loving-kindness, which he is wont to bestow upon his worshippers. And, in the first place, he says that God's fatherly kindness is not confined to their own persons, it also extends to their posterity: agreeably to what is said in the law, "I am merciful to a thousand generations, towards them that love me and keep my commandments," Exodus 34:7. And in Psalm 103:8, 9, and other passages, we have formerly adverted to this doctrinal statement. As, however, not a few are disposed to pervert this doctrine, by applying it as the standard according to which God dispenses his temporal favors, it is therefore proper to bear in mind what I have said in Psalm 37:25, that these are bestowed according to the manner, and in the measure,

which God pleases. Sometimes it happens that a good man is childless; and barrenness itself is considered a curse of God. Again, many of God's servants are oppressed with poverty and want, are borne down under the weight of sickness, and harassed and perplexed with various calamities. It is therefore necessary to keep this general principle in view, That God sometimes bestows his bounty more profusely, and, at other times, more sparingly, upon his children, according as he sees it to be most for their good; and, moreover, he sometimes conceals the tokens of his kindness, apparently as if he had no regard for his people at all. Still, amid this perplexity, it constantly appears that these words were not uttered in vain, *the righteous and their offspring are blessed* God very frequently blasts the vain hopes of the ungodly, whose sole object is to bear rule in the world, and to raise their children to places of wealth and honor. On the other hand, as the faithful are satisfied with bringing up their children in the fear of God, and contented to live sparingly, God, as it were with an outstretched hand, exalts them to honor. Add to this, that anciently, under the law, the truth of this doctrine was more evident; because it was requisite for a people inexperienced and feeble, to be trained gradually, by means of temporal benefits, to entertain a better hope. And in our times, but for our vices, God's temporal kindness would shine more brightly upon us. For experience demonstrates that what is immediately subjoined does not uniformly hold true, *wealth and riches shall be in the houses of the righteous* It is no uncommon occurrence for the virtuous and holy to suffer hunger, and to be in want even of the most homely fare; and, for this reason, it would not be for their good were God to bestow more earthly benefits upon them. In afflicting circumstances, numbers of them would be incapable of behaving in a manner becoming their profession. In the meantime, we may observe, that the grace which the prophet commends appears principally in this, that the good and sincere are satisfied with their humble estate, whereas no portion, however large, even to the extent of the world itself, will content the ungodly worldling. The old adage holds true, That the covetous wants that which he has, as well as that which he has not; because he is master of nothing, and is the slave of his own wealth. In connection with this clause must also be taken that which follows, *the righteousness of good men endureth for ever* This, in fact, constitutes the true and proper difference between the godly and ungodly; because the latter may, for a time, hoard up immense wealth; yet, all that shall, according to the words of the prophet, "suddenly vanish away at the blast of the Almighty," Haggai 1:9. And we daily see that what has been acquired by violence and deceit, becomes the prey and property of others. But, to the faithful, their integrity is the best and surest preserver of God's blessings.

Psalm 112:4-8

> **4.** Light ariseth [343] in darkness to the righteous: he is gracious, merciful, and just. **5.** A good man [344] showeth pity, and lendeth: he manages his affairs uprightly. **6.** Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the just shall be held in perpetual remembrance. **7.** He shall not be afraid when he hears evil tidings: his heart is fixed, because he confides in Jehovah. **8.** His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until [345] he see his desire [346] upon his enemies.

4 *Light ariseth* The Hebrew verb זרח, *zarach,* may be taken intransitively, as I have inserted it in the text, or transitively, as in the marginal reading; in either way the signification is the same. Whichsoever of these translations you adopt, the words are susceptible of a twofold interpretation; either, that as the sun shines on one part of the earth, and all the other parts of it are enveloped in darkness, so God exempts the righteous from the common calamities of human life; or, as day succeeds night, so God, though he permit the hearts of his servants to be in heaviness for a season, will cause a time of

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"Ou, il a fait reluire la lumiere." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, he hath made light to arise *or* to shine." There is here perhaps, as Horsley supposes, an allusion to what happened in Egypt, when the Israelites had light in all their dwellings, while the land was wrapt in darkness. "The first hemistich," says Phillips, "is figurative. *Trouble* is represented by חשך, *darkness*; and *health* or *prosperity* by אור, *light.* A pious man shall be found to enjoy prosperity, even when troubles come upon the rest of the world; in such a period of general darkness there shall spring up a light to the upright; viz., Jehovah himself, who is *gracious, and merciful, and just.* The first two epithets of the second member are found, in Psalm 111:4, applied to God."

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"Ou, bien *sera* a l'homme qui." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, *it shall be* well with the man who." With this corresponds the translation of Archbishop Secker, which is, "Happy is the man who," etc. In proof that טוב signifies *happy,* he refers to Isaiah 3:10; Jeremiah 44:17; Lamentations 4:9

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"*Until.* This is not to be taken as if his freedom from fear would continue no longer, but is to be extended to all future times." *Walford.*

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"*His desire* is a supplement made in the French version, but not in the Latin; and, if it is admitted, we must be careful not to understand it as implying any thing like revenge. The good man has enemies of various kinds. Worldly and wicked men are often his enemies. But he does not desire *their* destruction; for this would be utterly inconsistent with the Christian spirit. According to Hammond, the supplement is unnecessary. His reading is, "He shall behold *or* look upon his oppressors *or* distressers;" which he explains thus, "He shall behold them securely, confidently look in their faces, as we say, as being now no longer under their power, being freed from their tyranny and pressures." In Psalm 54:7, we meet with a similar expression, which see explained, in reference to David's circumstances at that time, in volume 2, page 324, note. It is used again in Psalm 59:11, "God shall let me see *or* look on mine enemies;" in Psalm 92:11, "Mine eye hath looked on mine enemies, and mine ear hath heard of them that rise up against me," that is, hath seen and heard of their destruction; and in Psalm 118:7, "I shall look upon my haters," that is, having God for my helper, I shall without fear look upon them.

calmness and clearness to return to them. If the latter exposition is adopted, then, by *darkness,* or by the cloudy, and rainy, or stormy season, the prophet means the afflictions to which God subjects his servants for the trial of their patience. The former interpretation appears to be more appropriate, That, when the whole world is overwhelmed with troubles, God's grace shines upon the faithful, who feel comfortable and happy, because he is propitious towards them. It is thus that their condition is properly distinguished from that which forms the common lot of other men. For the ungodly, however they may exult in prosperity, are, nevertheless, blind in the midst of light, because they are strangers to God's paternal kindness; and, in adversity, they are plunged into the darkness of death; and, consequently, they never enjoy a season of calm repose. On the contrary, the godly, upon whom the favor of God constantly shines, though liable to the ills incident to humanity, are never overwhelmed with darkness, and hence the propriety of what is here stated, *light ariseth to them in darkness* If we give to the Hebrew verb an active signification, then, in one respect, the construction of the words will be preferable. For I have no doubt that the prophet intends, as applicable to God, the epithets, *gracious, merciful, and just* Therefore, if we read it as a neuter verb, *light ariseth,* then the latter clause of the verse will be the reason for the statement made in the former clause. As to the exposition, that the righteous and humane do not diffuse darkness over the world, as the unrighteous and wicked do; that they do not extract smoke from light, but light from smoke; it must be viewed as nothing else than a perversion of the prophet's language.

5 *A good man* This is the commonly received interpretation of the passage. I am disposed, however, to prefer another, That it shall be well with those who are gracious and communicative; because this is more in accordance with the purport of the prophet's language. It is his intention to show how greatly the ungodly are deceived, when they aspire after happiness by nefarious and unlawful practices; seeing that the favor of God is the source and cause of all good things. Hence it becomes necessary to supply the relative *who.* He proceeds, therefore, to put us on our guard as to the deception which those practice upon themselves, who hasten to enrich themselves by sordid parsimony and oppressive extortion; inasmuch as the faithful, by their clemency and kindness, open up a channel, through which the favor of God flows to them: for the term טוב, *tob,* though in the masculine gender, signifying *good,* is often taken as if it were neuter, to denote that which is good. He puts *lending* as if it were the fruit of mercy; for the usurer also lends, but it is that, under the false pretense of assisting the distressed, he may plunder them. It is, then, the truly liberal, who, from compassion, and not with the design of ensnaring the poor, grant relief to them, that God makes prosperous. The term דבים*, debarim,* in the end of the verse, signifies *words;* but, along with David Kimchi, the most correct

expositor among the Rabbins, I take it to mean *affairs.* *Words* is a very tame translation,

[347] not to say, that, if this had been the prophet's intention, he would have expressed himself in more simple terms. The translation which I have given is the proper one, that the righteous will manage their affairs with prudence and discernment; so that, in their domestic affairs, they will neither be too lavish nor sordidly parsimonious; but, in every thing, they will study to combine frugality with economy, without giving way to luxury. And, in all their mercantile transactions; they will always be guided by the principles of equity and morality.

6 *Surely he shall not be moved.* The Hebrew particle כי, *ki,* may here be taken in its natural or causal meaning, and thus be rendered *for,* especially if in the preceding verse we adopt the marginal reading, *It shall be well with the man.* For he refers in more explicit terms to that happiness of which he spake, that God sustains the compassionate and humane, so that amid all the vicissitudes of life they remain unmoved; that he makes their innocence appear, and protects them from unjust calumny. It is said *they are never moved* They are indeed liable to the incidents common to humanity, and even may often appear as if they were about to sink under the weight of their calamities; but their confidence remains unshaken, and by invincible patience they surmount all their adversities. With God as the defender of their righteousness, they yet do not escape from being assailed by the slanders of the ungodly, but it is enough for them that their name is blessed before God, the angels, and the whole assembly of the godly.

7. *He shall not be afraid when he hears evil tidings* This may appear to be a confirmation of the statement contained in the preceding verse, being as much as to say, That the righteous are exempted from the infamous name which the reprobate secure to themselves by their vicious conduct. I rather take the meaning to be, that the righteous, unlike unbelievers, who tremble at every even the slightest rumor, calmly and peacefully confide in God's paternal care, amid all the evil tidings which may reach them. Whence is it that unbelievers are in constant agitation, but that they imagine they are the sport of fortune on the earth, while God remains at ease in heaven? No wonder, then, that the rustling of the falling leaf troubles and alarms them. From such uneasiness the faithful are freed, because they neither give heed to rumors, nor does the fear of them prevent them from constantly invoking God. The children of God may also manifest symptoms of fear at the prospect of impending danger; for were they altogether regardless of

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It is so translated in some of the ancient versions, and by several critics. In the Syriac it is, "will support his words in judgment;" *i.e.*, will never utter any thing but what is strictly true. In like manner, Cocceius. In the Arabic, which is followed by Castalio, it is, "will moderate his words in judgment;" *i.e.*, will speak as favourably of delinquents as he can consistently with truth, contrary to the practice of the wicked. — Psalm 94:21.

calamities, such indifference would be the result, not of confidence in God, but of insensibility. But should they not be able to lay aside all fear and anxiety, yet, acknowledging God as the guardian of their life, and pursuing the tenor of their way, they intrust themselves to his preserving care, and cheerfully resign themselves to his disposal. This is that magnanimity of the righteous, under the influence of which the prophet declares they can disregard those rumors of evil which strike others with alarm. Wisely, too, do they rely upon God for support; because, encompassed on all sides with deaths innumerable, we would sink into despair were we not borne up by the confidence that we are secure under God's protection. Genuine stability, then, is that which the prophet here describes, and which *consists* in reposing with unshaken confidence in God. On the other hand, that presumptuous confidence with which the ungodly are intoxicated exposes them the more, to the indignation of God, inasmuch as they overlook the frailty of human life, and in their pride of heart madly set themselves in opposition to him. Therefore, when "they shall say, Peace and safety, then shall sudden destruction come upon them," (1 Thessalonians 5:3.) But a sense of calamities, while it alarms and disconcerts the faithful, does not make them faint-hearted, because it does not shake their faith, by which they are rendered bold and steadfast. In a word, they are not insensible to their trials, [348] but the confidence which they place in God enables them to rise above all the cares of the present life. Thus they preserve calmness and composedness of mind, and wait patiently till the fit season arrives for taking vengeance upon the reprobate.

Psalm 112:9-10

> **9.** He has distributed, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honor. **10.** The wicked shall see it, and be angry; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: [349] The desire of the wicked shall perish.

9 *He has distributed, he hath given to the poor* Once more he affirms that the righteous never lose the fruit and the reward of their liberality. And first, by *dispersing,* the prophet intimates, that they did not give sparingly and grudgingly, as some do who imagine that they discharge their duty to the poor when they dole out a small pittance to them, but that they give liberally as necessity requires and their means allow; for it may happen that a liberal

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"Neque ferrei sunt neque stipites." — *Lat.* "Ils ne sont point de fer, ne semblables a des souches." — *Fr.* "They are not of iron, nor do they resemble blocks."

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"ונמם, *And shall melt away.* Root מסס. It is said to denote the total destruction of any thing by the process of melting The verb is employed by way of figure, to express the annihilation of the wicked, in Psalm 68:3." — *Phillips.*

heart does not possess a large portion of the wealth of this world. All that the prophet means is, that they are never so parsimonious as not to be always ready to distribute according to their means. Next he adds, *they give to the poor,* meaning that they do not bestow their charity at random, but with prudence and discretion meet the wants of the necessitous. We are aware that unnecessary and superfluous expenditure for the sake of ostentation is frequently lauded by the world; and, consequently, a larger quantity of the good things of this life is squandered away in luxury and ambition than is dispensed in charity prudently bestowed. The prophet instructs us that the praise which belongs to liberality does not consist in distributing our goods without any regard to the objects upon whom they are conferred, and the purposes to which they are applied, but in relieving the wants of the really necessitous, and in the money being expended on things proper and lawful. This passage is quoted by Paul, (2 Corinthians 9:9) in which he informs us that it is an easy matter for God to bless us with plenty, so that we may exercise our bounty freely, deliberately, and impartially, and this accords best with the design of the prophet. The next clause, *his righteousness endureth for ever,* is susceptible of two interpretations. That immoderate ambition which impels the ungodly to squander away their goods merits not the name of virtue. It may, therefore, with propriety be said, that it is a uniform course of liberality which is here praised by the prophet, according to what he formerly observed, *that the righteous manage their affairs with discretion.* If any prefer to refer it to the fruit of righteousness, I have no objection. And, indeed, it appears to be a repetition of the same sentence which lately came under our notice. Then the prophet shows how God by his benefits preserves the glory of that righteousness which is due to their liberality, and does not disappoint them of their reward, in that he exalteth their horn more and more, that is, their power or their prosperous condition.

10. *The wicked shall see it.* [350] Here follows a contrast similar to that which we met with in Psalm 2:5, which renders the grace of God towards the faithful the more illustrious. His meaning is, that though the wicked may cast off all regard to piety, and banish from their minds all thoughts of human affairs being under the superintending providence of God, they shall yet be made to feel, whether they will or no, that the righteous, in compliance with God's command, do not vainly devote themselves to the cultivation of charity and mercy. Let them harden themselves as they choose, yet he declares that the honor, which God confers upon his children, shall be exhibited to them, the sight of which shall make them gnash with their teeth, and shall excite an envy that shall consume them by inches. [351] In

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"*The wicked shall see it*; *i.e.*, the exalted horn " — *Dimock*

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"Et par une envie qu'ils auront les fera mourir a petit feu." — *Fr.*

conclusion, he adds, that *the wicked shall be disappointed of their desires* They are never content, but are continually thirsting after something, and their confidence is as presumptuous as their avarice is unbounded. And hence, in their foolish expectations, they do not hesitate at grasping at the whole world. But the prophet tells them that God will snatch from them what they imagined was already in their possession, so that they shall always depart destitute and famishing.

Psalm 113

PSALM 113

In this psalm the providence of God furnishes matter for praising him, because, though his excellency is far above the heavens, nevertheless, he deigns to cast his eyes upon the earth to take notice of mankind. And as not a few are disconcerted by the vicissitudes which they behold occurring in the world, the prophet takes occasion, from these sudden and unlooked for changes, to warn us to attend expressly to God's providence, that we may entertain no doubt that all things are governed according to his will and pleasure. [352]

Psalm 113:1-4

1. Praise ye Jehovah. Praise, ye servants of Jehovah! praise the name of Jehovah. **2.** Blessed be the name of Jehovah henceforth and for ever. **3.** Jehovah's name is to be praised, from the rising of the sun unto his going down. **4.** Jehovah is high above all nations, his glory is above the heavens.

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This interesting little ode, which is alike elegant in its structure, and devotional in its sentiment, its theme being the celebration of Jehovah's power, glory, and mercy, is thought by Bishop Patrick to be the commencement of what the Hebrews called the Great Hallel or Hymns, which they recited at their tables in the new moons and other feasts, especially in the paschal night, after they had eaten the lamb. He supposes that the Great Hallel included this and the five following psalms. See page 310. "It is very uncertain who was the author of this psalm; but as the 7th and 8th verses are manifestly taken from 1 Samuel 2:8, and the 9th probably alludes to the history of Hannah, it might be composed by Samuel or David, who were so nearly interested in the signal mercies vouchsafed to her." — *Dimock.*

1 *Praise, ye servants of Jehovah!* This psalm contains abundant reasons for all men without exception to praise God. The faithful alone being endued with spiritual perception to recognize the hand of God, the prophet addresses them in particular. And if we consider how cold and callous men are in this religious exercise, we will not deem the repetition of the call to praise God superfluous. We all acknowledge that we are created to praise God's name, while, at the same time, his glory is disregarded by us. Such criminal apathy is justly condemned by the prophet, with the view of stirring us up to unwearied zeal in praising God. The repetition, then, of the exhortation to praise him, ought to be considered as referring both to perseverance and ardor in this service. If, by the *servants of God,* some would rather understand the Levites, to whom the charge of celebrating his praises under the Law was committed, I am not much opposed to it, provided they do not exclude the rest of the faithful, over whom formerly God appointed the Levites as leaders and chief musicians, that he might be praised by all his people without exception. When the Holy Spirit addresses the Levites expressly in relation to the subject of God's praises, it is designedly that, by their example, they may show the way to others, and that the whole Church may respond in one holy chorus. Now that we are all "a royal priesthood," (1 Peter 2:9) and as Zechariah testifies, (Zechariah 14:21) that under the reign of Christ, the meanest of the people shall be Levites, there is no question that, excepting unbelievers who are mute, the prophet invites us all in common to render this service unto God.

2 *Blessed be the name of Jehovah* The prophet confirms what I stated above, that the praises of God must be continued throughout the whole course of our life. If his name is to be continually praised, it ought, at least, to be our earnest endeavor, during our brief pilgrimage here, that the remembrance of it may flourish after we are dead. In the next verse, he extends the glory of God's name to all parts of the earth; wherefore our apathy will be totally inexcusable, if we do not make its praises resound among ourselves. Under the law, God could not be praised aright, excepting in Judea by his own people, to whom the knowledge of him was confined. His works, however, which are visible to all nations, are worthy of the admiration of the whole world. To the same effect is the following clause respecting the loftiness of God's glory; for can there be any thing more base, than for us to magnify it but seldom and tardily, considering it ought to fill our thoughts with enrapturing admiration? In extolling the name of God so highly, the prophet intends to show us that there is no ground for indifference; that silence would savor of impiety were we not to exert ourselves to the utmost of our ability to celebrate his praises, in order that our affections may, as it were, rise above the heavens. When he adds, that *God is high above all nations,* there is an implied reproach, by which he fastens upon the chosen people the charge of apathy in the exercise of praise. For can there be any thing more preposterous, than for those who are eye-witnesses of God's

glory, which shines forth even among the blind, to refrain from making it the theme of their praises? At the very time when God conferred upon the Jews the exclusive honor of being the depositaries of the knowledge of his heavenly doctrine, he was nevertheless, according to Paul, not without a witness, (Acts 14:17; Romans 1:20) After the promulgation of the Gospel, his exaltation above the nations was more evident, for then the whole world was placed under his sway.

Psalm 113:5-9

> **5.** Who is like unto Jehovah our God, who hath his dwelling on high, **6.** Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are done in heaven, and on earth! [353] **7.** Who raises the poor from the dust, who lifts the afflicted from the dunghill; **8.** That he may place him with princes, with the princes of his people. **9.** Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in the family, a joyful mother of children. Praise ye Jehovah. [354]

5 *Who is like unto Jehovah our God* The prophet strengthens his position for the celebration of God's praises, by contrasting the height of his glory and power with his unbounded goodness. Not that his goodness can be separated from his glory; but this distinction is made out of regard to men, who would not be able to endure his majesty, were he not kindly to humble himself, and gently and kindly draw us towards him. The amount is, that God's dwelling above the heavens, at such a distance from us, does not prevent him from showing himself to be near at hand, and plainly providing for our welfare; and, in saying that God is exalted above the heavens, he magnifies his mercy towards men, whose condition is mean and despicable, and informs us that he might righteously hold even angels in contempt, were it not that, moved by paternal regard, he condescends to take them under his care. If in regard to angels he humble himself, what is to be said in regard to men, who, grovelling upon the earth, are altogether filthy? Is it

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"Lowth translates rightly after Hare: —
'Who is like Jehovah our God?
Who dwelleth high,
Who looketh low;
In heaven and on earth.'
He refers to the same structure, Cant. 1, 5. For the first part, see Jeremiah 49:8; and for the whole, see Psalm 138:6; Isaiah 57:15." — *Archbishop Secker in Merrick's Annotations on the Psalms.* Lowth observes that the last member is to be divided, and assigned in its two divisions to the two preceding members, as if it were, "Who dwelleth high in heaven, and looketh low on earth."

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The words, *Praise ye Jehovah,* at the end of the psalm, are, in the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, and Æthiopic versions, and in a very ancient manuscript, placed at the head of next psalm, where, perhaps, they formerly stood as the title.

asked, whether or not God fills heaven and earth? The answer is obvious. The words of the prophet simply mean, that God may trample the noblest of his creatures under his feet, or rather that, by reason of their infinite distance, he may entirely disregard them. In short, we must conclude that it is not from our proximity to him, but from his own free choice, that he condescends to make us the objects of his peculiar care.

7 *Who raiseth the poor from the dust* In this passage, he speaks in terms of commendation of God's providential care in relation to those diversified changes which men are disposed to regard as accidental. He declares that it is solely by the appointment of God that things undergo changes far surpassing our anticipations. If the course of events were always uniform, men would ascribe it merely to natural causes, whereas, the vicissitudes which take place teach us that all things are regulated in accordance with the secret counsel of God. On the other hand, struck with astonishment at the events which have happened contrary to our expectation, we instantly ascribe them to chance. And as we are so apt to view things from a point the very reverse from that of recognising God's superintending care, the prophet enjoins us to admire his providence in matters of marvellous, or of unusual occurrence; for since cowherds, and men of the lowest and most abject condition, have been elevated to the summit of power, it is most reasonable that our attention should be arrested by a change so unexpected. We now perceive the prophet's design. In this passage, as well as in others, he might have set before us the structure of the heavens and the earth; but, as our minds are unaffected by the ordinary course of things, he declares that the hand of God is most apparent in his marvellous works. And in saying that men of mean and abject condition are not merely elevated to some petty sovereignty, but that they are invested with power and authority over God's holy people, he increases the greatness of the miracle — that being of far more consequence than to rule in other parts of the earth; for the state or kingdom of the Church constitutes the principal and august theater where God presents and displays the tokens of his wonderful power, wisdom, and righteousness.

9 *Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in the family* He relates another work of God, which if, apparently, not so notable, ought not, on that account, the less to engage our thoughts. Unimpressed as we are by the ordinary works of God, we are constrained to express our astonishment when a woman who has been for a long period barren, unexpectedly becomes the mother of a numerous family. The Hebrew term, הבית, *habbayith,* is to be understood, not simply of a *house,* but also of a *household, — that* is, the thing containing, for that which is contained, — just as the Greeks apply οικος, and the Latins *domus,* to a *household.* The meaning is, that the woman who was formerly barren is blessed with fruitfulness, and fills the house with children. He attributes joy to mothers, because, though the hearts of all are prone to aspire after wealth, or honor, or pleasures, or any

other advantages, yet is progeny preferred to every thing else. Wherefore, since God superintends the ordinary course of nature, alters the current of events, elevates those of abject condition and ignoble extraction, and makes the barren woman fruitful, our insensibility is very culpable, if we do not attentively contemplate the works of his hand.

Psalm 114

PSALM 114

This psalm contains a short account of that deliverance by which God, in bringing his people out of Egypt: and conducting them to the promised inheritance, gave a proof of his power and grace which ought to be held in everlasting remembrance. The design of that wonderful deliverance was, that the seed of Abraham might yield themselves wholly to God, who, receiving them by a gracious act of adoption, purposed that they should be to him a holy and peculiar people. [355]

Psalm 114:1-4

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"The exodus of Israel from Egypt, with some of its most remarkable accompanying and consequent miracles, are, in this brief psalm, commemorated in the boldest style of poetry, with personifications, indeed, of inanimate nature of the utmost daring and sublimity, in 'thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.'" — *Drake's Harp of Judah.*

1. When Israel went out from Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a barbarous people; [356] **2.** Judah was for his [357] holiness, Israel for his dominions. **3.** The sea saw, and fled: [358] Jordan was turned backward. **4.** The mountains leaped like rams, and the hills as the lambs of the flock.

1 *When Israel went out from Egypt* That exodus being a remarkable pledge and symbol of God's love for the children of Abraham, it is not surprising that it should be so frequently called to remembrance. In the beginning of the psalm, the prophet informs us that the people whom God purchased at so great a price are no more their own. The opinion of certain expositors, that at that time the tribe of Judah was consecrated to the service of God, according to what is said in Exodus 19:6, and 1 Peter 2:9, appears to me foreign to the prophet's design. All doubt about the matter is removed by what is immediately subjoined, God's taking Israel under his rule, which is simply a repetition of the same sentiment in other words. Judah being the most powerful and numerous of all the tribes, and occupying the chief place among them, here takes the precedency of the rest of the people. At the same time, it is very evident that the honor which is in a peculiar manner ascribed to them, belongs equally to the whole body of the

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The word לעז, *loez,* which Calvin renders, *a barbarous people,* is translated, in our English Bible, "a people of strange language." His version is supported by many authorities. The word is frequently found, in the sense he attaches to it, in Rabbinical works, and is so understood here by the Chaldee paraphrast, who has ברבראי, and by the LXX., who have βαρβάρου. The root of these terms, as well as the Latin word for *barbarous,* is probably the Hebrew בר, *out,* or *without,* redoubled; and so it signifies, to a Jew, any man of another nation. According to Parkhurst, the word, instead of signifying a barbarous or foreign language or pronunciation, seems rather to refer to the *violence* of the Egyptians towards the Israelites, or *the barbarity of their behavior,* which, he observes, was more to the Psalmist's purpose than the barbarity of their language, even supposing the reality of the latter in the time of Moses. — See his Lexicon on לעז. Horsley reads, "a tyrannical people."

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"There is a peculiar beauty in the conduct of this psalm, in that the author utterly conceals the presence of God in the beginning of it, and rather lets a possessive pronoun (*i.e.* His) go without a substantive, than he will so much as mention any thing of Divinity there; because, if God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap, and the sea retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, his name is not mentioned till afterwards, and then, with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced at once with all majesty " — *Spectator,* volume 6, No. 461. If, however, the last two words of the preceding psalm, יה-הללו, *Halelu-yah, Praise ye Jehovah,* are the title to this psalm, the antecedent to *his* is supplied.

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In the Hebrew there is no pronoun after *saw*; nor is any inserted in the Septuagint and Arabic versions, or in the Chaldee. In our English Bible, *it* is inserted, and *him* in the Syriac version; but the sentence is certainly much more sublime without any such supplement.

people. [359] When God is said to be sanctified, it must be understood that the prophet is speaking after the manner of men, because, in himself, God is incapable of increase or diminution. *Judah is called his holiness,* [360] *and Israel his dominion,* [361] because his holy majesty, which hitherto had been little known, secured the veneration of all who had witnessed the displays of his incredible power. In delivering his people, God erected a kingdom for himself and procured respect for his sacred name; if then they do not constantly reflect upon such a remarkable instance of his kindness, their insensibility is totally inexcusable.

3 *The sea saw, and fled* He does not enumerate in succession all the miracles which were wrought at that time, but briefly alludes to the sea, which, though a lifeless and senseless element, is yet struck with terror at the power of God. Jordan did the same, and the very mountains shook. It is in a poetical strain that the Psalmist describes the receding of the sea and of the Jordan. The description, however, does not exceed the facts of the case. The sea, in rendering such obedience to its Creator, sanctified his name; and Jordan, by its submission, put honor upon his power; and the mountains, by their quaking, proclaimed how they were overawed at the presence of his dreadful majesty. By these examples it is not meant to celebrate God's power more than the fatherly care and desire which he manifests for the preservation of the Church; and, accordingly, Israel is very properly distinguished from the sea, the Jordan, and the mountains — there being a very marked difference between the chosen people and the insensate elements.

Psalm 114:5-8

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"Judah represents here the whole people of Israel, as Joseph does, in Psalm 81:6. The reason assigned by Kimchi for this use of יהודה here is, that at the time of the departure from Egypt, Judah was considered the head or chief of the tribes; see Genesis 49:8-10. This, however, is mere conjecture. If it be necessary to assign reasons for the distinction here conferred on this tribe, I should mention as one:, that the ark was kept in the region occupied by the descendants of Judah, and, as another, that from him the Messiah was to spring." — *Phillips.*

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God's holiness being often taken for the *keeping his promise sacred* or *inviolate,* as in Psalm 102:9, when, reference being made to the immutability of his covenant, it is added, "*holy* [as in another respect, *reverend*] is his name;" some, as Hammond and Cresswell, suppose that the meaning here is, that God's dealings towards Judah — the people of the Jews, were a demonstration of his faithfulness in performing his promise made to Abraham long before.

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Hammond reads, "And Israel his power," by which he understands that Israel was an instance of his power; that God, in his acting for Israel, declared his omnipotence most signally.

5. What ailed thee, O see! that thou fleddest? and thou, Jordan, that thou turnedst back? **6.** The mountains, that ye did leap like rams; and ye hills, like lambs of the flock? **7.** At the presence of the Lord, tremble, thou earth, [362] at the presence of the God of Jacob; **8.** Who turned the rock into pools of water, [363] and the mighty rock into a fountain of waters. [364]

5 *What ailed thee, O sea!* The prophet interrogates the sea, Jordan, and the mountains, in a familiar and poetical strain, as lately he ascribed to them a sense and reverence for God's power. And, by these similitudes, he very sharply reproves the insensibility of those persons, who do not employ the intelligence which God has given them in the contemplation of his works. The appearance which he tells us the sea assumed, is more than sufficient to condemn their blindness. It could not be dried up, the river Jordan could not roll back its waters, had not God, by his invisible agency, constrained them to render obedience to his command. The words are indeed directed to the sea, the Jordan, and the mountains, but they are more immediately addressed to us, that every one of us, on self-reflection, may carefully and attentively weigh this matter. And, therefore, as often as we meet with these words, let each of us reiterate the sentiment, — "Such a change cannot be attributed to nature, and to subordinate causes, but the hand of God is manifest here." The figure drawn from the *lambs* and *rams* would appear to be inferior to the magnitude of the subject. But it was the prophet's intention to express in the homeliest way the incredible manner in which God, on these occasions, displayed his power. The stability of the earth being, as it were, founded on the mountains, what connection can they have with rams and lambs, that they should be agitated, skipping hither and thither? In speaking in this homely style, he does not mean to detract from the greatness of the miracle, but more forcibly to engrave these extraordinary tokens of God's power on the illiterate.

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Street reads, "The earth was in pain." "All the ancient versions," says he, "have the preterperfect here. The Targum alone agrees with the present reading, if, indeed, that be an imperative mood. For I do not see why חולי may not be a participle passive with an *yod* added to it, as ההפכי may be a participle active with the same addition."

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Hammond reads, "into a lake of water." "The אגם מים," he observes, "is best rendered a *lake of water,* to note the abundance of it; accordingly, the Chaldee renders it לאריתה, *into a river*: and so the Psalmist expressly describes the 'gushing out of the waters from the rock,' that 'they ran in dry places like a river,' Psalm 105:41."

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"The divine poet represents the very substance of the rock as being converted into water, not literally, but poetically — that is ornamenting his sketch of the wondrous power displayed on this occasion." — *Walford.*

7 *At the presence of the Lord* Having aroused the senses of men by interrogations, he now furnishes a reply, which many understand to be a personification of the earth; because they take י, *yod,* to be the affix of the verb חולי, *chuli;* and they represent the earth as saying, It is my duty to tremble at the presence of the Lord. This fanciful interpretation is untenable; for the term, *earth,* is immediately subjoined. Others, with more propriety, considering the י, *yod,* in this, as in many other passages, to be redundant, adopt this interpretation: It is reasonable and becoming that the earth should tremble in the presence of the Lord. Again, the term חולי, *chuli,* is by many rendered in the imperative mood; which interpretation I readily adopt, as it is most probable that the prophet again makes an appeal to the earth, that the hearts of men may be the more sensibly moved. The meaning is the same, — It must be that the earth quake at the presence of her King. And this view receives confirmation from the term אדון, *adon,* being used, which signifies *a lord* or *a master.* He then immediately introduces the name *of the God of Jacob,* for the purpose of banishing from men all notions of false gods. Their minds being prone to deceit, they are always in great danger of allowing idols to usurp the place of the true God. Another miracle is mentioned, in which God, after the passage of the people through the Red Sea, gave an additional splendid manifestation of his power in the wilderness. The glory of God, as he informs us, did not appear for one day only, on the departure of the people; it constantly shone in his other works, as when a stream suddenly issued out of the dry rock, Exodus 17:6. Waters may be found trickling out from among rocks and stony places, but to make them flow out of a dry rock, was unquestionably above the ordinary course of nature, or miraculous. I have no intention of entering into any ingenious discussion, how the stone was converted into water; all that the prophet means amounts simply to this, that water flowed in places formerly dry and hard. How absurd, then, is it for the sophists to pretend that a transubstantiation takes place in every case in which the Scripture affirms that a change has been produced? The substance of the stone was not converted into water, but God miraculously created the water, which gushed out of the dry rock.

Psalm 115

PSALM 115

It is obvious that this psalm was penned when the Church was deeply afflicted. Unworthy as they are to be heard by God, the faithful, nevertheless, offer up supplications to him for deliverance, lest his holy name might be exposed to scorn and reproach among the heathen. Then, mustering courage, they mock at the madness of all who are addicted to the worship of idols; and, with holy boasting, they magnify their own happiness, in that they have been adopted by God; and from this also they take occasion to stimulate one another to acknowledge the kindness which they have received from him.

Psalm 115:1-3

1. Not unto us, O Jehovah! not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory, on account of thy mercy, on account of thy truth. **2.** Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? **3.** Surely our God is in heaven: he hath done whatsoever pleased him.

1 *Not unto us, O Jehovah!* It is not certain by whom, or at what time, this psalm was composed. [365] We learn from the first part of it, that the faithful betake themselves to God, in circumstances of extreme distress. They do not make known their desires in plain words, but indirectly hint at the nature of their request. They openly disclaim all merit, and all hope of obtaining deliverance otherwise than God's doing it from *a sole regard to his own glory,* for these things are inseparably connected. Deserving,

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therefore, to meet with a repulse, they yet beseech God not to expose his name to the derision of the heathen. In their distress they desire to obtain consolation and support; but, finding nothing in themselves meritorious of God's favor, they call upon him to grant their requests, that his glory may be maintained. This is a point to which we ought carefully to attend, that, altogether unworthy as we are of God's regard, we may cherish the hope of being saved by him, from the respect that he has for the glory of his name, and from his having adopted us on condition of never forsaking us. It must, also be noticed, that their humility and modesty prevent them from openly complaining of their distresses, and that they do not begin with a request for their own deliverance, but for the glory of God. Suffused with shame by reason of their calamity, which, in itself, amounts to a kind of rejection, they durst not openly crave, at God's hand, what they wished, but made their appeal indirectly, that, from a regard to his own glory, he would prove a father to sinners, who had no claim upon him whatever. And, as this formulary of prayer has once been delivered to the Church, let us also, in all our approaches unto God, remember to lay aside all self-righteousness, and to place our hopes entirely on his free favor. Moreover, when we pray for help, we ought to have the glory of God in view, in the deliverance which we obtain. And it is most likely they adopted this form of prayer, being led to do so by the promise. For, during the captivity, God had said, "Not for your sake, but for mine own sake will I do this," Isaiah 48:11. When all other hopes fail, they acknowledge this to be their only refuge. The repetition of it is an evidence how conscious they were of their own demerit, so that, if their prayers should happen to be rejected a hundred times, they could not, in their own name, prefer any charge against him.

2 *Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?* They here express how God would maintain his glory in the preservation of the Church, which, if he permitted to be destroyed, would expose his name to the impious reproaches of the heathen, who would blaspheme the God of Israel, as being destitute of power, because he forsook his servants in the time of need. This

"As the former psalm ended abruptly, and this is connected with it by the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, Æthiopic, with nineteen MSS.; and as the following ejaculations so naturally arise from the consideration of the wonderful works of Jehovah just before recited, Lorinus's opinion, that it is only a continuation of the former, is not improbable. Patrick refers it to 2 Chronicles 20:2. Some suppose it to be written by Moses at the Red Sea. Others, by David in the beginning of his reign. Others, by Mordecai and Esther. Others, by the three children in the fiery furnace. Perhaps by Hezekiah, or some one in the Babylonish captivity. — See Psalm 114:1." — *Dimoch.* "There is nothing certain," observes Walford, "to be concluded respecting the author of this psalm, or the occasion on which it was written. It is conjectured, however, to belong to the time of Hezekiah, and to have been composed in celebration of the very extraordinary deliverance which was afforded to that pious prince, and to his people, from the blasphemies and arrogance of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 37:37. Whether this conjecture be agreeable to the truth, we are unable to say, though a considerable probability that it is so, arises from the language of the psalm itself."

is not done from the persuasion that God requires any such representation, but rather that the faithful may direct their thoughts back to that holy zeal contained in the words to which we have formerly adverted, "The railings of those that railed against thee have fallen upon me," Psalm 69:10. And this is the reason for not having recourse to rhetorical embellishment, to move him to put forth his power to preserve the Church; they simply protest that their anxiety for their own safety does not prevent them from valuing the glory of God, even as it is worthy of being more highly valued. They go on to show how the glory of God was connected with their deliverance, by declaring that he was the Author of the covenant, which the ungodly had boasted was abolished and disannulled; and who, consequently, had declared that the grace of God was frustrated, and that his promises were vain. This is the ground on which they remind him of his favor and faithfulness, both of which were liable to mischievous calumnies, should he disappoint the hopes of his people, to whom he was bound by an everlasting covenant; and upon whom, in the exercise of his gratuitous mercy, he had bestowed the privilege of adoption. And as God, in making us also partakers of his Gospel, has condescended to graft us into the body of his Son, we ought to make a public acknowledgement of the same.

3 *Surely our God is in heaven.* [366] The faithful, with holy boldness, encourage themselves the more to prayer. Our prayers, we know, are worthless when we are agitated with doubts. Had that blasphemy penetrated their hearts, it would have inflicted a mortal wound. And hence they very opportunely guard against it, by discontinuing the train of their supplications. By-and-bye we shall consider the second clause of this verse in its proper place, where they scoff at the idols, and lewd superstitions of the heathen. But, at present, every word in this clause demands our careful inspection. When they place God in heaven, they do not confine him to a certain locality, nor set limits to his infinite essence; but they deny the limitation of his power, its being shut up to human instrumentality only, or its being subject to fate or fortune. In short, they put the universe under his control; and, being superior to every obstruction, he does freely every thing that may seem good to him. This truth is still more plainly asserted in the subsequent clause, He *hath done whatsoever pleased him.* God, then, may be said to dwell in heaven, as the world is subject to his will, and nothing can prevent him from accomplishing his purpose.

That God can do whatsoever he pleaseth is a doctrine of great importance, provided it be truly and legitimately applied. This caution is necessary,

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"*Our God,* says he, *is in heaven,* as much as to say, that yours are not. The verse may be also regarded as a response to the question of the heathen, *Where is now their God*? Such a response was calculated to fortify the minds of the pious worshippers of Jehovah, against the ridicule which was heaped upon them by their idolatrous neighbors." — *Phillips.*

because curious and forward persons, as is usual with them, take the liberty of abusing a sound doctrine by producing it in defense of their frantic reveries. And in this matter we daily witness too much of the wildness of human ingenuity. This mystery, which ought to command our admiration and awe, is by many shamelessly and irreverently made a topic of idle talk. If we would derive advantage from this doctrine, we must attend to the import of God's doing whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and on the earth. And, first, God has all power for the preservation of his Church, and for providing for her welfare; and, secondly, all creatures are under his control, and therefore nothing can prevent him from accomplishing all his purposes. However much, then, the faithful may find themselves cut off from all means of subsistence and safety, they ought nevertheless to take courage from the fact, that God is not only superior to all impediments, but that he can render them subservient to the advancement of his own designs. This, too, must also be borne in mind, that all events are the result of God's appointment alone, and that nothing happens by chance. This much it was proper to premise respecting the use of this doctrine, that we may be prevented from forming unworthy conceptions of the glory of God, as men of wild imaginations are wont to do. Adopting this principle, we ought not to be ashamed frankly to acknowledge that God, by his eternal counsel, manages all things in such a manner, that nothing can be done but by his will and appointment.

From this passage Augustine very properly and ingeniously shows, that those events which appear to us unreasonable not only occur simply by the permission of God, but also by his will and decree. For if our God doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, why should he permit that to be done which he does not wish? Why does he not restrain the devil and all the wicked who set themselves in opposition to him? If he be regarded as occupying an intermediate position between doing and suffering, so as to tolerate what he does not wish, then, according to the fancy of the Epicureans, he will remain unconcerned in the heavens. But if we admit that God is invested with prescience, that he superintends and governs the world which he has made, and that he does not overlook any part of it, it must follow that every thing which takes place is done according to his will. Those who speak as if this would be to render God the author of evil are perverse disputants. Filthy dogs though they be, yet they will not, by their barking, be able to substantiate a charge of lying against the prophet, or to take the government of the world out of God's hand. If nothing occurs unless by the counsel and determination of God, he apparently does not disallow sin; he has, however, secret and to us unknown causes why he permits that which perverse men do, and yet this is not done because he approves of their wicked inclinations. It was the will of God that Jerusalem should be destroyed, the Chaldeans also wished the same thing, but after a different manner; and though he frequently calls the Babylonians his stipendiary soldiers, and says that they

were stirred up by him, (Isaiah 5:26;) and farther, that they were the sword of his own hand, yet we would not therefore call them his allies, inasmuch as their object was very different. In the destruction of Jerusalem God's justice would be displayed, while the Chaldeans would be justly censured for their lust, covetousness, and cruelty. Hence, whatever takes place in the world is according to the will of God, and yet it is not his will that any evil should be done. For however incomprehensible his counsel may be to us, still it is always based upon the best of reasons. Satisfied with his will alone, so as to be fully persuaded, that, notwithstanding the great depth of his judgments, (Psalm 36:6) they are characterized by the most consummate rectitude; this ignorance will be far more learned than all the acumen of those who presume to make their own capacity the standard by which to measure his works. On the other hand, it is deserving of notice, that if God does whatsoever he pleases, then it is not his pleasure to do that which is not done. The knowledge of this truth is of great importance, because it frequently happens, when God winks and holds his peace at the afflictions of the Church, that we ask why he permits her to languish, since it is in his power to render her assistance. Avarice, fraud, perfidy, cruelty, ambition, pride, sensuality, drunkenness, and, in short, every species of corruption in these times is rampant in the world, all which would instantly cease did it seem good to God to apply the remedy. Wherefore, if he at any time appears to us to be asleep, or has not the means of succoring us, let this tend to make us wait patiently, and to teach us that it is not his pleasure to act so speedily the part of our deliverer, because he knows that delay and procrastination are profitable to us; it being his will to wink at and tolerate for a while what assuredly, were it his pleasure, he could instantly rectify.

Psalm 115:4-8

4. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. **5.** They have a mouth, but they do not speak: they have eyes and see not: **6.** They have ears, and do not hear: they have noses, and smell not: **7.** They have hands, and feel not: they have feet, and walk not: they do not speak through their throat. [367] **8.** Those that make them shall be like unto them; and all those who trust to them.

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Hammond reads the last clause, "neither breathe, *or* murmur, they through their throats." "What יהגו here signifies," says he, "will be concluded by the context which immediately before had mentioned their *having mouths and not speaking.* Here, therefore, (as there the proper action of the *mouth* was *speech*,) the proper action of the *throat* or *larynx* seems to be intended, and that is *to breathe.* So when, Psalm 90:9, he saith, 'We consume our days, הגה כמו, the Targum reads, פומא הבל היך, 'as a vapor,' *i.e.,* 'breath of the mouth in winter.' If this is not the sense, then certainly it is an inarticulate sound, contradistinct from speaking. So Kimchi and Aben Ezra state it, and quote Isaiah 38:14, where the word is applied to the *murmuring* of the *dove.*"

4 *Their idols* This contrast is introduced for the purpose of confirming the faith of the godly, by which they repose upon God alone; because, excepting him, all that the minds of men imagine of divinity is the invention of folly and delusion. To know the error and the madness of the world certainly contributes in no small degree to the confirmation of true godliness; while, on the other hand, a God is presented to us, whom we know assuredly to be the maker of heaven and earth, and whom we are to worship, not without reason or at random. The more effectually to silence the arrogance of the ungodly, who proudly presume to set at nought God and his chosen people, he contemptuously ridicules their false gods, first calling them *idols,* that is to say, things of nought, and, next, showing from their being formed of inanimate materials, that they are destitute of life and feeling. For can there be anything more absurd than to expect assistance from them, since neither the materials of which they are formed, nor the form which is given to them by the hand of men, possess the smallest portion of divinity so as to command respect for them? At the same time, the prophet tacitly indicates that the value of the material does not invest the idols with more excellence so that they deserve to be more highly esteemed. Hence the passage may be translated adversatively, thus, Though they are of gold and silver, yet they are not gods, because they are the work of men's hands. Had it been his intention merely to depreciate the substance of which they were composed, he would rather have called them wood and stone, but at present he speaks only of gold and silver. In the meantime, the prophet reminds us that nothing is more unbecoming than for men to say that they can impart either essence, or form, or honor to a god, since they themselves are dependent upon another for that life which will soon disappear. From this it follows, that the heathen vainly boast of receiving help from gods of their own devising. Whence does idolatry take its origin but from the imaginations of men? Having abundance of materials supplied to their hand, they can make of their gold or silver, not only a goblet or some other kind of vessel, but also vessels for meaner purposes, but they prefer making a god. And what can be more absurd than to convert a lifeless mass into some new deity? Besides, the prophet satirically adds, that while the heathen fashion members for their idols, they cannot enable them to move or use them. It is on this account that the faithful experience their privilege to be the more valuable, in that the only true God is on their side, and because they are well assured that all the heathen vainly boast of the aid which they expect from their idols, which are nothing but shadows.

This is a doctrine, however, which ought to receive a greater latitude of meaning; for from it we learn, generally, that it is foolish to seek God under outward images, which have no resemblance or relation to his celestial glory. To this principle we must still adhere, otherwise it would be easy for the heathen to complain that they were unjustly condemned, because, though they make for themselves idols upon earth, they yet were persuaded that

God is in heaven. They did not imagine that Jupiter was either composed of stone, or of gold, or of earth, but that he was merely represented under these similitudes. Whence originated this form of address common among the ancient Romans, "To make supplication before the gods," but because they believed the images to be, as it were, the representations of the gods? [368] The Sicilians, says Cicero, have no gods before whom they can present their supplications. He would not have spoken in this barbarous style, had the notion not been prevalent, that the figures of the heavenly deities were represented to them in brass, or silver, or in marble; [369] and cherishing the notion, that in approaching these images the gods were nearer to them, the prophet justly exposes this ridiculous fancy, that they would enclose the Deity within corruptible representations, since nothing is more foreign to the nature of God than to dwell under stone, or a piece of marble, or wood, and stock of a tree, or brass, or silver. [370] For this reason, the prophet Habakkuk designates that gross mode of worshipping God, the school of falsehood. (Habakkuk 2:18.) Moreover, the scornful manner in which he speaks of their gods deserves to be noticed, *they have a mouth, but they do*

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"Car que vouloit dire ceste facon de parler dont usoyent les anciens Romains, faire oraison deuant les dieux sinon qu'ils estimoyent que les idoles estoyent comme les representations des dieux?" — *Fr.*

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But though these images might, at first, be intended merely to bring the real Deity before the senses, and thus to impress the mind the more deeply with sentiments of awe and devotion, yet in process of time they began to be considered, especially by the ignorant multitude, as being really gods.

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The heathen not only considered their *idols* or *images* as representing their gods, but believed that, when consecrated by their priests, they were thereby animated by the gods whom they represented, and hence were worshipped as such. "Augustine (*De Civitate Dei,* B. 8, c. 23) tells us of the theology of the heathen, received from Trismegistus, that statues were the bodies of their gods, which, by some magical ceremonies, or θεουργίαι, were forced to join themselves as souls, and so animate and enliven those dead organs, to assume and inhabit them. And so Proclus (*De Sacrif et Mag.*) mentions it as the common opinion of the Gentiles, that the 'gods were, by their favor and help, present in their images;' and, therefore, the Tyrians, fearing that Apollo would forsake them, bound his image with golden chains, supposing then the god could not depart from them. The like did the Athenians imagine when they clipped the wings of the image of Victory; and the Sicilians, in Cicero, (*De Divin.*) who complain that they had no gods in their island, because Verres, Praetor in Sicily, had taken away all their statues. And so we know Laban, when he had lost his Teraphim, tells Jacob, (Genesis 31:30,) 'that he had stolen his gods;' and so of the golden calf, after the feasts of consecration, proclamation is made before it, 'These be thy gods, O Israel!' But this of the animation and inspiriting of images, by their rites of consecration, being but a deception and fiction of their priests, the Psalmist here discovers it, and assures all men that they are as inanimate and senseless after the consecration as before; base silver and gold, with images of mouths and ears, etc., but without any power to use any of them, and, consequently, most unable to hear or help their votaries." — *Hammond*

not speak; for why do we betake ourselves to God, but from the conviction that we are dependent upon him for life; that our safety is in him, and that the abundance of good, and the power to help us, are with him? As these images are senseless and motionless, what can be more absurd than to ask from them that of which they themselves are destitute?

8 *They who make them shall be like unto them.* Many are of opinion that this is an imprecation, and hence translate the future tense in the optative mood, *may they become like unto them* But it will be equally appropriate to regard it as the language of ridicule, as if the prophet should affirm that the idolaters are equally stupid with the stocks and stones themselves. And he deservedly severely reprehends men naturally endued with understanding, because they divest themselves of reason and judgment, and even of common sense. For those who ask life from things which are lifeless, do they not endeavor to the utmost of their power to extinguish all the light of reason? In a word, were they possessed of a particle of common sense, they would not attribute the properties of deity to the works of their own hands, to which they could impart no sensation or motion. And surely this consideration alone should suffice to remove the plea of ignorance, their making false gods for themselves in opposition to the plain dictates of natural reason. As the legitimate effect of this, they are willfully blind, envelop themselves in darkness, and become stupid; and this renders them altogether inexcusable, so that they cannot pretend that their error is the result of pious zeal. And I have no doubt that it was the prophet's intention to remove every cause and color of ignorance, inasmuch as mankind spontaneously become stupid.

Whosoever trusteth in them. The reason why God holds images so much in abhorrence appears very plainly from this, that he cannot endure that the worship due to himself should be taken from him and given to them. That the world should acknowledge him to be the sole author of salvation, and should ask for and expect from him alone all that is needed, is an honor which peculiarly belongs to him. And, therefore, as often as confidence is reposed in any other than in himself, he is deprived of the worship which is due to him, and his majesty is, as it were, annihilated. The prophet inveighs against this profanity, even as in many passages the indignation of God is compared to jealousy, when he beholds idols and false gods receiving the homage of which he has been deprived, (Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 5:9) If a man carve an image of marble, wood, or brass, or if he cast one of gold or silver, this of itself would not be so detestable a thing; but when men attempt to attach God to their inventions, and to make him, as it were, descend from heaven, then a pure fiction is substituted in his place. It is very true that God's glory is instantly counterfeited when it is invested with a corruptible form; ("To whom hast thou likened me?" he exclaims by Isaiah 40:25, and 46:5, and the Scripture abounds with such texts;) nevertheless, he is doubly injured when his truth, and grace, and power, are imagined to be concentrated in idols. To make idols, and then to confide in them, are things

which are almost inseparable. Else whence is it that the world so strongly desires gods of stone, or of wood, or of clay, or of any earthly material, were it not that they believe that God is far from them, until they hold him fixed to them by some bond? Averse to seek God in a spiritual manner, they therefore pull him down from his throne, and place him under inanimate things. Thus it comes to pass, that they address their supplications to images, because they imagine that in them God's ears, and also his eyes and hands, are near to them. I have observed that these two vices can hardly be severed, namely, that those who, in forging idols, change the truth of God into a lie, must also ascribe something of divinity to them. When the prophet says that unbelievers put their trust in idols, his design, as I formerly noticed, was to condemn this as the chief and most detestable piece of profanity.

Psalm 115:9-15

9. O Israel! Trust [371] thou in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield. **10.** O house of Aaron! trust ye in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield. **11.** Ye that fear Jehovah! trust in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield. **12.** Jehovah has been mindful of us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. **13.** He will bless them that fear Jehovah, both the small with the great. **14.** Jehovah will add unto you, unto you and unto your children. **15.** Blessed are ye of Jehovah, who made heaven and earth.

9 *O Israel! trust thou in Jehovah* The prophet again resumes the doctrinal point, that the genuine worshippers of God have no cause to fear that he will forsake or frustrate them in the time of need; because he is as much disposed to provide for their safety as he is furnished with power to do it. He proceeds, in the first place, to exhort all the Israelites generally to place their confidence in God; and, secondly, he addresses the house of Aaron in particular; and, thirdly, he sets down all who fear God. For this arrangement there was good cause. God had adopted indiscriminately all the people, to whom also his grace was offered, so that they were bound in common to place their hope in him. In accordance with this Paul says, that the twelve tribes of Israel wait for the promised deliverance, (Acts 26:7) The prophet, therefore, with great propriety first addresses Israel at large. But having in a peculiar manner set apart the Levites for himself, and more especially the priests of the house of Aaron, to take the precedence, and to

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Many interpreters translate the verb *trust,* which occurs here and in the next two verses, in the indicative mood, "Israel trusteth in Jehovah," etc.; judging this to be more agreeable to the occasion than the imperative, which is found in the present copies of the Hebrew text. This emendation is supported by all the ancient versions.

preside over ecclesiastical matters, he demands more from them than from the common people; not that salvation was promised specially to them, but because it was proper that they who had the exclusive privilege of entering the sanctuary should point out the way to others. As if the prophet had said, Ye sons of Aaron, whom God hath chosen to be the teachers of religion to his people, be ye to others an example of faith, seeing that he hath so highly honored you in permitting you to enter his sanctuary.

11. *Ye who fear Jehovah!* He does not speak of strangers, as some erroneously suppose, as if this were a prediction respecting the calling of the Gentiles. Connecting them with the children of Israel and with the sons of Aaron, they are of opinion that he refers to the heathens and to the uncircumcised who were not yet gathered into the sheepfold. By parity of reason one might infer, that the priests are not of the seed of Abraham, because they are separately mentioned. It is more probable that there is in these words a tacit correction of what he had said before, by which he makes a distinction between the genuine worshippers of God and those hypocrites who were the degenerate sons of Abraham. Not a few of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh having departed from the faith of their father, the prophet here restricts the promise to those who, having received it by faith, were worshipping God in purity. We now perceive the reason for his first addressing *the Israelites,* next *the house of Aaron,* and then *the fearers of Jehovah* It is as if a person in our times were to point his exhortation first to the whole body of the Church, and then come more particularly to the ministers and teachers, who ought to be ensamples to others. And as many falsely pique themselves upon the mere name of being connected with the Church, and hence deserve not to be classed with God's true followers, he expressly mentions the genuine and not the counterfeit worshippers of God.

12 *Jehovah hath remembered us* Many render the term *bless* in the past tense, *he has blessed,* it being the design of the prophet, according to them, to propose the past experience of God's kindness as an encouragement to cherish good hope for the future: "We have already, from long experience, been taught how valuable the favor of our God is, because from this source alone have flowed our prosperity, our abundance, and our stability." He assumes the principle, the truth of which ought to be admitted by all, that we neither enjoy prosperity nor happiness further than it pleases God to bless us. As often as the Israelites were rescued from manifold dangers, or succored in time of need, or treated in a friendly manner, so many palpable proofs had they of the loving-kindness of God towards them. As, however, there is no just cause to urge us to change the verb from the future into the past tense, it is quite in unison with the scope of the passage, if we say that the same blessing is here promised to the faithful which they have formerly realized. Thus the meaning will be, that God, mindful of his covenant, has hitherto been attentive to us; therefore, as he has begun to favor us, he will

continue to do so for ever. In pronouncing these blessings, he observes the same order as above, assigning to the children of Aaron a superior place in God's benediction, excluding from it those among the Israelites who were hypocrites.

He says, *both the small with the great,* by which circumstance he magnifies God's paternal regard the more, showing that he does not overlook even the meanest and most despised, provided they cordially invoke his aid. Now, as there is no acceptance of persons before God, our low and abject condition ought to be no obstruction to our drawing near to him, since he so kindly invites to approach him those who appear to be held in no reputation. Moreover, the repetition of the word *bless* is intended to mark the uninterrupted stream of his loving-kindness. Should any prefer the past tense, *he has blessed,* the meaning will be, that the favor of God towards his people has continued for a long period, which ought to be a sure evidence of the perpetuity of his fatherly regard. This interpretation is strengthened by the subsequent verse, in which he says, that God would multiply the benefits which he had up to that time conferred upon them. For God's liberality is an inexhaustible fountain, which will never cease to flow so long as its progress is not impeded by the ingratitude of men. And hence it will be continued to their posterity, because God manifests the grace and the fruit of his adoption even to a thousand generations.

15. *Ye are blessed of Jehovah* In the preceding verse the prophet had given them the hope of uninterrupted happiness, arising from God's infinite resources never failing, however liberally and largely he bestows, and from his never ceasing to enrich those whom he hath admitted as sharers of his bounty. In confirmation of this doctrine, he declares that the children of Abraham were separated from other nations; so that, relying upon this privilege, they might unhesitatingly and unreservedly surrender themselves to a father so benignant and bountiful. And as the flesh, in consequence of its stupidity, cannot perceive the power of God, the understanding of which preserves us in a state of peace and security under his protection, the prophet, in designating him the maker of heaven and earth, reminds us that there is no ground to fear that he is unable to defend us; for, having created the heaven and the earth, he does not now remain unconcerned in heaven, but all creation is under his sovereign control.

Psalm 115:16-18

> **16.** The heavens, the heavens are Jehovah's: but the earth he hath given to the children of men. **17.** O God! the dead shall not praise thee, nor those who go down to silence. **18.** But we will bless God from this time, and for ever. Praise ye Jehovah.

16 *The heavens, the heavens are Jehovah's* In this passage the prophet extols the bounty of God, and his paternal regard for the human race, in

that, though he stood in need of nothing himself, he yet created the world, with all its fullness, for their use. How comes it to pass that the earth is every where covered with such a great variety of good things, meeting our eye in all directions, unless that God, as a provident father of a family, had designed to make provision for our wants? In proportion, therefore, to the comforts which we here enjoy, are the tokens of his fatherly care. This is the prophet's meaning, which I am astonished is so little attended to by the most of interpreters. The amount is, that God, satisfied with his own glory, has enriched the earth with abundance of good things, that mankind may not lack any thing. At the same time he demonstrates, that, as God has his dwelling-place in the heavens, he must be independent of all worldly riches; for, assuredly, neither wine, nor corn, nor any thing requisite for the support of the present life is produced there. Consequently, God has every resource in himself. To this circumstance the repetition of the, term *heavens* refers, *The heavens, the heavens are enough for God;* and as he is superior to all aid, he is to himself instead of a hundred worlds. It remains, therefore, as another consequence from this, that all the riches with which the world abounds proclaim aloud what a beneficent father God is to mankind. It is indeed surprising that there should be no relish for this doctrine, considering that the Holy Spirit spoke of the inestimable goodness of God. Under the papacy, they chanted this psalm in their churches, and they continue the practice still; but is there one among a hundred of them who reflects that God, in bestowing all good things upon us, reserves nothing for himself, except a grateful acknowledgment of them? And not only in this matter does the ingratitude of the world appear, but the wicked wretches have conducted themselves most vilely, in open and infamous blasphemy; perverting this verse, and making a jest of it, saying that God remains unconcerned in heaven, and pays no regard to the affairs of men. The prophet here expressly declares that the world is employed by God, for the sole purpose of testifying his paternal solicitude towards mankind; and yet these swine and dogs have made these words a laughing-stock, as if God, by reason of his vast distance from men, totally disregarded them. And here I am induced to relate a memorable story. While we were supping in a certain inn, and speaking of the hope of the heavenly life, a profane despiser of God happening to be present, treated our discourse with derision, and now and then mockingly exclaimed, "The heaven of heavens is the Lord's." Instantly afterwards he was seized with dreadful pain, and began to vociferate, "O God! O God!" and, having a powerful voice, he filled the whole apartment with his cries. Then I, who had felt indignant at his conduct, proceeded, in my own way, to tell him warmly, that now at least he perceived that they who mocked God were not permitted to escape with impunity. One of the guests, an honest and pious man, yet alive, but withal facetious, employed the occasion thus, "Do you invoke God? Have you forgotten your philosophy? Why do you not permit him to remain at ease in his own heaven?" And as often as the

one bawled out, "O God!" the other, mocking him, retorted, "Where is now thy *Coelum coeli Domino?*" At that time his pain indeed was mitigated; nevertheless, the remainder of his life was spent in impunity.

17 *O God! the dead shall not praise thee* In these words the prophet goes on to beseech God to show himself propitious towards his Church, were there no other object to be gained than the preventing mankind from being utterly cut off, and the preserving a people, not only to enjoy his kindness, but also to invoke and praise his name. After celebrating God's peculiar favor towards the Israelites, and the beneficence which he displayed towards mankind at large, he has recourse to the mercy of God for the pardoning of the sins of his people. And he proceeds on this footing, that though the heathen nations revel amidst the profuseness of God's bounty, yet the seed of Abraham alone are set apart to celebrate his praises. "Lord, if thou shouldst allow us to perish, what would be the result, but that thy name would become extinct, and would be entombed with us?" From his appearing to deprive the dead of all sensibility, a question occurs: If souls, after they have departed from their corporeal prison, still survive? It is certain that they are then more vigorous and active, and; therefore, it must inevitably follow that God is also praised by the dead. Moreover, in appointing mankind their abode upon earth, he so disconnects them with God, that he leaves them a life such as they enjoy in common with the brutal tribes. For the earth was not given exclusively to men, but also to oxen, swine, dogs, lions, and bears, and what is more, to every sort of reptile and insect. For there is not a fly, nor a creeping thing, however mean, which the earth does not supply with an abode. [372] The solution of the first question is easy. Men were so situated on the earth that they might, as it were, with one voice celebrate the praises of God. And it was to this concord that the prophet in this place referred, as does also the Scripture in many other passages.

"I shall not die, but live, and declare the words of the Lord,"
(Psalm 118: 17).

The good king Hezekiah also, said,

"The living, the living, he shall praise thee," (Isaiah 38:19).

Jonah, too, when cast out of the belly of the fish, said,

"I will offer sacrifices, and I will pay my vows unto the Lord," (Jonah 2:10.) [373]

In short, the prophet very justly excludes the dead from taking any part in the celebration of God's praises; for among them there is no communion and fellowship qualifying them for mutually sounding forth his praises: the proclaiming of his glory on the earth being the very end of our existence. The reply to the second inquiry is this: The prophet says that the earth was

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"Nulla enim musca est, nullus pediculus cui domicilium non praebeat terra." — *Lat.*

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given to mankind, that they might employ themselves in God's service, until they be put in possession of everlasting felicity. True, indeed, the abundance of the earth belongs also to the brutal tribes; but the Holy Spirit declares that all things were created principally for the use of men, that they might thereby recognize God as their father. In fine, the prophet concludes that the whole course of nature would be subverted, unless God saved his Church. The creation of the world would serve no good purpose, if there were no people to call upon God. Hence he infers that there will always be some left alive upon the earth. And he not only promises that the Church shall be preserved, but also calls upon all who are thus preserved to offer a tribute of gratitude to their deliverer; and, moreover, he engages in their name to set forth the praises of God. He does not speak merely of the persons who belong to one age, but of the whole body of the Church which God upholds from one generation after another, that he may never leave himself without some to testify and declare his justice, goodness, and mercy.

Thus the present text of Scripture, and others of a similar kind, as Psalm 6:6; 30:10; 88:11; and Isaiah 38:18, 19, are not to be understood as implying that the Hebrews of those times had no idea of a future state of existence beyond death and the grave. Such an interpretation would be at variance with many passages of the Old Testament, as Psalm 16:10; 49:15; 73:24; Proverbs 14:32; Ecclesiastes 8:11-13; 11:9; 12:14; with the most explicit declarations of the New, as to the possession of this knowledge by the ancient Hebrews, Hebrews 11; Luke 20:37; and with what might reasonably be supposed of persons who were favored with a supernatural revelation, and who enjoyed special intercourse with God, but who, had they been ignorant of a future state, knew less on this subject than Pagan writers, many of whom anticipated such a state in which virtue would receive its appropriate reward. In such passages the sensible appearances occasioned by death, and these alone, are represented. As to the eye of sense, nothing appears in the victim of death but inactivity, silence, decay, and corruption, the sacred writers seize upon these concomitants of that solemn and affecting event to add to the force of the argument which they are prosecuting.

Psalm 116

PSALM 116

David, being delivered out of very great dangers, relates what cruel torment and anguish of mind he endured, and then how remarkably he was preserved by God. The desperate state of matters with him tended to make the power of God in his preservation more conspicuous; for had not God interposed for his deliverance, all hope would have failed. In this way he stirs himself up to gratitude, and acknowledges that he can make no other return to him for his innumerable benefits. [374]

Psalm 116:1-4

1. I have loved, because Jehovah shall hear the voice of my supplication. **2.** Because he hath inclined his ear to me, and during my days

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This psalm is without a title in the Hebrew, although the LXX. Have prefixed to it *Hallelujah,* with which Psalm 115 ends. There have been various conjectures among interpreters as to its author. Some ascribe it to Hezekiah, and suppose it to relate to his recovery from the dangerous sickness recorded in Isaiah 38. Others think that it was composed by David upon his deliverance from the rebellion excited by his son Absalom, after which he immediately had liberty to return to the sanctuary and public assembly at Jerusalem, verses 14, 18, and 19. This opinion is confirmed from verse 11, in which he speaks of having for a time, under the sad experience of human treachery and deception, pronounced all men to be liars; a state of feeling more applicable to David's distressed circumstances during the rebellion of his son, than to Hezekiah on his recovery from sickness.

I will call upon him. **3.** The snares [375] of death compassed me, [376] and the sorrows of the grave found me: [377] I found tribulation and grief. **4.** And I will call upon the name of Jehovah; I beseech thee, O Jehovah! deliver my soul.

1 *I have loved, because Jehovah will hear the voice of my supplication.* At the very commencement of this psalm David avows that he was attracted with the sweetness of God's goodness, to place his hope and confidence in him alone. This abrupt mode of speaking, *I have loved,* is the more emphatic, intimating that he could receive joy and repose nowhere but in God. We know that our hearts will be always wandering after fruitless pleasures, and harassed with care, until God knit them to himself. This distemper David affirms was removed from him, because he felt that God was indeed propitious towards him. And, having found by experience that, in general, they who call upon God are happy, he declares that no allurements shall draw him away from God. When, therefore, he says, *I have loved,* it imports that, without God, nothing would be pleasant or agreeable to him. From this we are instructed that those who have been heard by God, but do not place themselves entirely under his guidance and guardianship, have derived little advantage from the experience of his grace.

The second verse also refers to the same subject, excepting that the latter clause admits of a very appropriate meaning, which expositors overlook.

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The root of the Hebrew word חבלי, *cheblei,* here rendered *snares,* "is חבל, which signifies *to bind,* and in Piel conj., *to pain,* or *torment.* Geseius, in his Thesaurus, under חבל, says: — 'Pi. i. q. Kal, No. 1, *torsit,* inde *cum tormentis* et doloribus *enixa est* ' חבל consequently signifies *pain,* or *cable.* It would seem from the verb to which it is a subject, that the latter is the more suitable sense, whilst the parallelism is in favor of the former. The former, however, is here contained in the latter, for the expression חבלי מות alludes to the custom of binding the victims for slaughter, or malefactors when taken to the place of execution; which binding was productive of great pain." — *Phillips.* See volume 1, page 264. Cresswell reads, "*The straits of the grave,* that is, the terrors of instant death, *had found me.*"

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" — 'compassed me.' The original word אפף expresses the repetition of the encircling of the toils. They surrounded him again and again." — *Horsley.*

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Fry's translation of this clause is: —

"The nets of Hades had caught hold upon me;"

on which he has the following note: — "Or, according to the usual meaning of צור and צרר, 'the pangs or pains of hell.' It is not impossible, indeed, that it should be derived from נצר; we might then render, 'The purveyors of Hades had found me:' and the imagery, at any rate, seems to be taken from the toils of the hunter. Michaelis would read מצודי, 'nets,' instead of מצורי, *pangs*; but it is very probable that, without any change, מצורי signifies some part of the apparatus of hunting. 'מצר *a strait, distress, angustia* ' Psalm 118:5; 116:3; Lamentations 1:3. In which last text, Mr Lowth says that 'there is a metaphor from those that hunt a prey, which they drive into some *strait* and narrow passage, from whence there is no making an escape.'"

The phrase, *during my days I will call upon him,* is uniformly understood by them to mean, I, who hitherto have been so successful in addressing God, will pursue the same course all my life long. But it should be considered whether it may not be equally appropriate *that the days of David* be regarded as denoting a fit season of asking assistance, the season when he was hard pressed by necessity. I am not prevented from adopting this signification, because it may be said that the prophet employs the future tense of the verb אקרא, *ekra.* In the first verse also, the term, *he shall hear,* is to be understood in the past tense, *he has heard,* in which case the copulative conjunction would require to be taken as an adverb of time, *when,* a circumstance this by no means unusual among the Hebrews. The scope of the passage will run very well thus: Because he has bowed his ear to me when I called upon him in the time of my adversity, and even at the season, too, when I was reduced to the greatest straits. If any are disposed to prefer the former exposition, I will not dispute the matter with them. The subsequent context, however, appears to countenance the latter meaning, in which David commences energetically to point out what those days were. And, with the design of magnifying God's glory according to its desert, he says that there was no way of his escaping from death, for he was like one among enemies, bound with fetters and chains, from whom all hope of deliverance was cut off. He acknowledges, therefore, that he was subjected to death, that he was overtaken and seized, so that escape was impossible. And as he declares that he was *bound by the cords of death,* so he, at the same the adds, that *he fell into tribulation and sorrow* And here he confirms what he said formerly, that when he seemed to be most forsaken of God, that was truly the proper time, and the right season for him to give himself to prayer.

Psalm 116:5-9

> **5.** Jehovah is gracious and just; our God is merciful. **6.** Jehovah guards the simple; I was brought low, and he saved me. **7.** Return, O my soul! into thy rest; for Jehovah hath recompensed unto thee. **8.** Because thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. **9.** I will walk in the presence of Jehovah in the land of the living.

5 *Jehovah is gracious.* He comes now to point out the fruits of that love of which he spoke, setting before him God's titles, in order that they might serve to preserve his faith in him. First, he denominates him *gracious,* because he is so ready graciously to render assistance. From this source springs that *justice* which he displays for the protection of his own people. To this is subjoined *mercy,* without which we would not deserve God's aid. And as the afflictions which overtake us frequently appear to preclude the exercise of his justice, hence it follows that there is nothing better than

to repose upon him alone; so that his fatherly kindness may engross our thoughts, and that no voluptuous pleasure may steal them away to any thing else. He then accommodates the experience of God's benignity and equity to the preserving of the simple, that is, of such as, being undesigning, do not possess the requisite prudence for managing their own affairs. The term, rendered *simple,* is often understood in a bad sense, denoting persons inconsiderate and foolish, who will not follow wholesome advice. But, in this place, it is applied to those who are exposed to the abuse of the wicked, who are not sufficiently subtle and circumspect to elude the snares which are laid for them, — in short, to those who are easily overreached; while, on the contrary, the children of this world are full of ingenuity, and have every means at their command for maintaining and protecting themselves. David, therefore, acknowledges himself to be as a child, unable to consult his own safety, and totally unfit to ward off the dangers to which he was exposed. Hence the LXX. have not improperly translated the Hebrew term by the Greek, τὰ νήπια, *little children.* [378] The amount is, that when those who are liable to suffering have neither the prudence nor the means of effecting their deliverance, God manifests his wisdom towards them, and interposes the secret protection of his providence between them and all the dangers by which their safety may be assailed. In fine, David holds forth himself as a personal example of this fact, in that, after being reduced to the greatest straits, he had, by the grace of God, been restored to his former state.

7 *Return, O my soul! unto thy rest.* He now exhorts himself to be of good courage; or rather, addressing his soul, tells it to be tranquil, because God was propitious towards him. By the term *rest,* some commentators understand God himself, but this is an unnatural interpretation. It is rather to be regarded as expressive of a calm and composed state of mind. For it is to be noticed, that David confesses himself to have been sorely agitated and perplexed amid an accumulation of ills, in the same way as each of us is conscious of his own inquietude, when the terrors of death encompass us. Although, therefore, David possessed unusual fortitude, he was yet distressed by reason of the conflict of grief, and an inward tremor so distracted his mind, that he justly complains of being deprived of his peace. He declares, however, that the grace of God was adequate to quiet all these troubles.

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This rendering of the LXX. also suggests the idea of *weakness,* which Fry has adopted, who reads, "Jehovah preserveth the weak." "The usual meaning of פתאים," says he, "is *simplices, fatui, persuasu faciles*; but I believe the Septuagint has preserved the true meaning of the passage, Φυλάσσων τὰ νήπια ὁ κυριος. The leading idea of פתה is *laxity* or *yielding,* and may as well apply to the weakness of the body, or of the faculties of the mind, under the pressure of grief and pain, as to the relaxing of the powers of the understanding, in yielding to the seductions of folly or vice."

It may be asked, whether the experience of the grace of God alone can allay the fear and trepidation of our minds; since David declares, that, having experienced relief from Divine aid, he would, for the future, be at rest? If the faithful regain their peace of mind only when God manifests himself as their deliverer, what room is there for the exercise of faith, and what power will the promises possess? For, assuredly, to wait calmly and silently for those indications of God's favor, which he conceals from us, is the undoubted evidence of faith. And strong faith quiets the conscience, and composes the spirit; so that, according to Paul, "the peace of God, which passeth all understandings" reigns supremely there, Philippians 4:7. And hence the godly remain unmoved, though the whole world were about to go to ruin. What is the import of this *returning unto rest?* I answer, that however much the children of God may be driven hither and thither, yet they constantly derive support from the word of God, so that they cannot totally and finally fall away. Confiding in his promises, they throw themselves upon his providence; and still they are sorely distressed by disquieting fears, and sadly buffeted by the storms of temptation. No sooner does God come to their assistance, than not only inward peace takes possession of their minds, but, from the manifestation of his grace, they are supplied with grounds for joy and gladness. Of this latter kind of quietness David here treats — declaring that, notwithstanding of all the prevalence of agitation of mind, it was now time for him to delight himself calmly in God. The term גמל, *gamal,* is improperly rendered *to reward;* because, in Hebrew, it usually signifies to confer a favor, as well as to give a recompense; which is confirmed by him in the following verse, in which he says that *his soul was delivered from death.* This, then, properly speaking, is the recompense; namely, that God, in delivering him from death, had wiped away the tears from his eyes. The arrangement of the words is transposed; for, according to our idiom, we would rather have said, *he hath delivered my feet from falling; and mine eyes from tears,* and then *he hath delivered my soul from death;* for we are wont to follow that arrangement, by which the most important circumstance comes to be mentioned last. Among the Hebrews such a collocation of the words, as in this passage, is by no means improper. This is their import: God has not only rescued me from present death, but also treated me with farther kindness, in chasing away sorrow, and stretching out his hand to prevent me from stumbling. The grace of God is enhanced, in that he restored to life one who had been almost dead.

9 *I will walk in the presence of Jehovah. To walk in the presence of God is,* in my opinion, equivalent to living under his charge. And thus David expects to enjoy his safety continually. For nothing is more desirable than that God should be upon the watch for us, that our life may be surrounded by his protecting care. The wicked, indeed, regard themselves as secure, the farther they are from God; but the godly consider themselves happy in this one thing, that he directs the whole tenor of their life. God adding, *in the*

land of the living, he means to point out to us the course that we are expected to pursue; and that, almost every moment of time, fresh destructions press upon us, if he overlook us.

Psalm 116:10-11

10. I have believed, therefore I will speak; [379] I am afflicted very sore.
11. I said in my fear, Every man is a liar. [380]

10. *I have believed* That his wonderful deliverance may appear the more conspicuous, he again relates the imminent danger in which he had been placed. He begins by declaring that he spake in the true sincerity of his heart, and that nothing proceeded from his lips but what was the fruit of long reflection, and mature deliberation. Such is the import of the clause, *I have believed, therefore I will speak;* words which proceed from the full affection of the heart. In 2 Corinthians 4:13, Paul, quoting this passage, follows the Greek version, "I believed, therefore I have spoken." I have elsewhere remarked that it was not the design of the apostles to repeat every word and syllable; it is enough for us that the words of David are appropriately applied in their proper and natural sense to the subject to which Paul there refers. Having referred indirectly to the Corinthians, who were exalting themselves above the clouds, as if they had been exempted from the common lot of mankind, "I believed" says he, "and therefore I have spoken, that he who hath once raised Christ from the dead, will also extend Christ's life to us;" that is, I believe, and therefore I speak. Thus he charges the Corinthians with being inflated with foolish pride, because they do not humbly submit to the cross of Christ; especially as they ought to speak in the exercise of the same spirit of faith with himself. The particle כי, *ki,* which we translate *therefore,* is by some Hebrew interpreters understood as a disjunctive particle; but the more correct meaning, and which is supported by the best scholars, is, I will speak nothing but the sentiments of my heart. The drift of the passage, too, requires this; namely, that the external professions of the lips correspond with the internal feelings of the heart: for many talk inconsiderately, and utter what never entered into their hearts.

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"'I believed, therefore have I spoken;' I firmly believe what I say, therefore I make no scruple of saying it. This should be connected with the preceding verse, and the full stop should be placed at 'spoken.'" — *Horsley.*

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Horsley's version of this verse is as follows: "'In an ecstasy of despair, I said, the whole race of man is a delusion.' 'A delusion,' *a lie, a cheat, a thing of nothing, made to no purpose.* So Mudge understands this latter part. He judiciously observes, that the prefixed ה necessarily determines the phrase, האדם כל, to the collective sense of the whole race. *Every man,* or *all men,* should be אדם כל, without ה." Fry similarly translates, "The entire of the manhood is a lie; or," he observes, "(as the word we render *lie* signifies,) a thing *failing* and disappointing the hopes built upon it."

"Let no person imagine that I employ unmeaning or exaggerated terms; what I speak, the same I have truly believed." From this we learn the useful doctrine, that faith cannot remain inoperative in the heart, but that it must, of necessity, manifest itself. Here the Holy Spirit unites, with a sacred bond, the faith of the heart with outward confession; and "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Those dissemblers, therefore, who spontaneously envelop their faith in obscurity, treacherously corrupt the whole Word of God. We must remember, however, that the order which David here observes is demanded of all God's children, their believing, before they make any professions with their lips. But, as I said, he speaks of his imminent danger, that he may the more enhance the safety and deliverance which God had vouchsafed to him.

11. *I said in my fear* Some take the word חפז, *chaphaz,* to denote haste or flight, and consider it as expressive of what David said when he fled in great haste from the face of Saul. But, as it figuratively signifies *fear,* I have no doubt that David here declares that he felt astonished and dejected in spirit, as if he were upon the brink of a precipice, ready to tumble into the abyss. He acknowledges that, when he was so dreadfully harassed in mind, his heart had almost sunk within him. Annotators are not agreed about the meaning of the second member of the verse. One class holding that David declares that he doubted the promise of the kingdom made to him by the prophet Samuel. That Samuel was a competent witness, admits of no question; but when David saw himself banished from his native country, and constantly exposed to death in various forms, he might be overtaken by the temptation that he had been vainly and ineffectually anointed by Samuel. According to them, the meaning is — I had almost perished in my flight, and the promise given me fled away; and, moreover, I had been deceived by delusive hope. Another class, putting an opposite interpretation upon this passage, assert that David surmounted the temptation; so that, when Satan by his wiles wished to make him despair, he instantly recovered himself; and removed all occasion of unbelief in the following manner: "What art thou doing, miserable man that thou art, and whither art thou hastening? Darest thou, even indirectly, impute falsehood to God? Nay, rather let him be true, and let vanity, and falsehood, and perfidy, lie at thine own door." My own opinion is, that this doctrine is to be understood more generally, that David did not intend this prediction directly for himself; but, his mind being perplexed, he inadvertently entangled himself in the snares of Satan, and was unable to place his confidence any where. The faithful often stagger, and Satan bringing them into a state of deep darkness, the word of God almost forsakes them; still they do not abandon their confidence, nor deliberately charge God with falsehood, but rather keep their evil thoughts under restraint. The verb *to say,* among the Hebrews, is expressive of firm persuasion, as we say in French, *J'ay conclu, ou resolu,* "I have concluded, or resolved;" and, therefore, we are to understand that this temptation could

not enter David's heart, without his instantly withstanding it. Consequently, the view which I have given of the passage is the proper one, That David did not see God during this season of mental darkness. The faithful do not deliberately speak against God, or ask whether he be true or not, nor does this horrid blasphemy completely engross their thoughts; but, on the contrary, as often as it arises, they banish it from them, and hold it in abhorrence. Nevertheless, it occasionally happens that they are so troubled, that they behold nothing except vanity and falsehood. Such was David's experience during this fear and trouble; he felt as if a dense fog obstructed his vision. "There is no certainty, no security. What shall I think? In what shall I confide? To what shall I have recourse?" Frequently do the faithful thus reason with themselves, there is no trust to be reposed in men. A veil is spread over their eyes, which, preventing them from seeing the light of God, causes them to grovel upon the earth, till, being elevated above the heavens, they begin anew to discern the truth of God.

The design of David, as I formerly observed, is in all respects to magnify the grace of God; and for this purpose, in speaking of his trials, he acknowledges that he did not deserve divine help and comfort; for he ought to have recollected, that, depending on the prophecy, he would have risen superior to all unbelief. This, he says, he did not do, because, owing to the perturbation of his mind, he could see nothing but vanity. If his faith was shaken in this violent manner, what will we do if God do not support and sustain us? This is not meant to keep the faithful in suspense between doubt and uncertainty, but rather to make them call more earnestly upon God. We ought to consider this trial attentively, for we can form no conception of these assaults until we actually experience them. Let us at the same time remember, that David's attack was only temporary, continuing while he was perplexed with doubt, in consequence of the prophecy having escaped from his recollection.

Psalm 116:12-14

12. What shall I render unto Jehovah? all his benefits are upon me. **13.** I will take the cup of salvation, [381] and call upon the name of Jehovah. **14.** I will pay my vows to Jehovah now in the presence of all his people.

12. *What shall I render unto Jehovah?* He now exclaims with devout admiration, that the multitude of God's benefits was greater than he could find language to give expression to the grateful emotions of his heart. The question is emphatic, *What shall I render?* and imports, that it was not the desire, but the means, of which he was destitute, to enable him to render

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"C'est, des deliverances." — *Fr. marg.* "That is, of deliverances."

thanks to God. Acknowledging his inability, he adopts the only means in his power, by extolling the grace of God as highly as he could. "I am exceedingly wishful to discharge my duty, but when I look around me, I find nothing which will prove an adequate recompense." Some understand the phrase, *upon me,* to intimate, that David had the recollection of all the benefits which God bestowed on him deeply engraven upon his mind. Others, along with the LXX., supply the particle *for, What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits towards me?* But it is much better to make the first clause of the verse a complete sentence, by putting a period after *Jehovah.* Because, after confessing his incompetency, or rather his having nothing to offer to God as a sufficient compensation for his benefits, he at the same time adds in confirmation of it, that he was laid under such obligations, not by one series of benefits only, but by a variety of innumerable benefits. "There is no benefit on account of which God has not made me a debtor to him, how should I have means of repaying him for them?" All recompense failing him, he has recourse to an expression of thanksgiving as the only return which he knows will be acceptable to God. David's example in this instance teaches us not to treat God's benefits lightly or carelessly, for if we estimate them according to their value, the very thought of them ought to fill us with admiration. There is not one of us who has not God's benefits heaped upon us. But our pride, which carries us away into extravagant theories, causes us to forget this very doctrine, which ought nevertheless to engage our unremitting attention. And God's bounty towards us merits the more praise, that he expects no recompense from us, nor can receive any, for he stands in need of nothing, and we are poor and destitute of all things.

13. *The cup of salvation* He refers to a custom which was prevalent under the Law. For when they rendered solemn thanks to God, a feast was also appointed, at which, in token of their gladness, there was an holy libation. This being a symbol of their deliverance from Egyptian thraldom, is for that reason here called the *cup of salvation* [382] The term to *call upon,* signifies to celebrate the name of God; and this he expresses more plainly, subsequently, by saying that he would *pay his vows in the assembly of the faithful,* the sanctuary alone being the place where sacrifices could be offered. The amount is, that the faithful need not be greatly perplexed about the way of performing their duties, God not demanding from them a return which he knows they are unable to give, but being satisfied with a bare and simple acknowledgment. The proper return is to own our obligation to him for every thing. If God deal so kindly and mercifully with us, and we fail in giving to him the tribute of praise for our deliverance which he claims, then our supineness becomes the more base. And certainly they are unworthy of the enjoyment, I say not of the riches of the world, but of the light of the sun and the air by which we breathe and live, who would rob the Author of them of the small return which so legitimately belongs to him. The Mosaic

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ritual has indeed been abrogated, and along with it the external libation referred to by David, yet the spiritual service, as we found in Psalm 50:23, "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me," is still in force. Let us, however, bear in mind, that God is lawfully praised by us, when we offer in sacrifice not only our tongues, but also ourselves, and all that we possess. And this not because God derives any profit from it, but because it is reasonable that our gratitude should manifest itself in this way.

14 *I will pay my vows unto Jehovah* The steadfastness of his piety shines forth in this, that, in the midst of his dangers, he had vowed unto God. And now he proves that he by no means forgot these engagements, as most men do, who, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them, implore his help for a short time, but soon bury in oblivion the deliverance which they have received. The Holy Spirit, speaking of the true worship of God, very properly connects, by an indissoluble bond, these two parts of worship, "Call upon me in the day of trouble;" and, "after thy deliverance glorify me," Psalm 50:15. If any regard it as an absurdity for the faithful to enter into covenant with God by making vows to him, to procure his approbation, my reply is, that they do not promise the sacrifice of praise, to soothe him by their flatteries, as if he were a mortal like themselves, or to bind him to them by proposing some reward, for David had previously protested that he would not offer any recompense. The design, then, and the use of vows is, first, That the children of God may have their hearts strengthened with the confidence of

That there is here an allusion to the cup of wine drunk in the offering of eucharistical sacrifices is very generally admitted by commentators. During the feast that followed these sacrifices, the master of the family took a cup of wine into his hands, and after solemnly giving thanks to God for the mercies experienced, first drank of it himself, and then delivered it to all present to be partaken of in rotation. "The cup here spoken of by the Psalmist," says Cresswell, "was probably used by the master of a Hebrew family at an entertainment in his own house, at which the remainder of the victims was eaten, after he had offered (Leviticus 7:11, etc.) the sacrifice of a peace-offering for a thanksgiving; when, lifting up the cup of wine in his hand, he called upon the name of the Lord, giving him thanks. The modern Jews are said to use a similar ceremony every year in commemoration of the deliverance of their ancestors from the bondage of Egypt." Some, indeed, deny that there is any allusion to such eucharistical sacrifices, as Hengstenberg, who observes, that this communion cup is *a mere fiction.* In the institution of the festival offerings, nothing is indeed said of the cup; but we know from Matthew 26:29, 30, that in the feast of the Passover, for instance, the drinking of a cup of wine and the singing of a hymn were parts of the observance. From Jewish tradition we also learn that such was the ancient practice. See Lightfoot's Horae Hebraicae on Matthew 26. Our Lord, apparently in imitation of the Jewish custom, as the head of the family, at the feast of the Passover, "took the cup, and gave thanks," (Luke 22:17.) In allusion to this custom, Paul calls the communion cup in the Lord's Supper "the cup of blessing," (1 Corinthians 10:16.) The Psalmist, then, here intimates his intention of publicly yielding thanks to God for the mercies bestowed upon him.

There was a libation of wine enjoined by the Mosaic law to be made in the temple every morning and evening for a drink-offering, (Numbers 28:7,) to which some suppose there is here a reference, observing, that the three last verses seem to intimate, that the Psalmist was now at the temple, offering the meat-offering, drink-offering, and sacrifices, to the Lord.

obtaining whatever they ask; and, secondly, That they may be stimulated the more to offer up their tribute of gratitude to God for his mercies. To aid the children of God in their infirmity, the privilege of vowing may surely be conceded to them, for by this means their most merciful Father condescends to allow them to enter into familiar converse with him, provided they make their vows for the object I have stated. Happen what may, nothing must be attempted without his permission. And hence the Papists appear the more ridiculous, who, under pretext of what is advanced in this place, defend all sorts of vows, however foolish and absurd and rashly made; as if drunkenness were lawful, because God permits us to eat.

Psalm 116:15-19

> **15.** Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of his meek ones. **16.** Come, O Jehovah! because I am thy servant; I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid: thou hast broken my fetters. **17.** I will sacrifice the sacrifices of praise to thee, and call upon the name of Jehovah. [383] **18.** I will pay my vows now in the presence of all his people, **19.** In the courts of the house of Jehovah, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem! Praise ye Jehovah.

15. *Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of his meek ones.* He goes on now to the general doctrine of God's providential care for the godly, in that he renders them assistance in time of need; their lives being precious in his sight. With this shield he desires to defend himself from the terrors of death, which often pressed upon him, by which he imagined he would instantly be swallowed up. When we are in danger and God apparently overlooks us, we then consider ourselves to be contemned as poor slaves, and that our life is regarded as a thing of nought. And we are aware that when the wicked perceive that we have no protection, they wax the more bold against us, as if God took no notice either of our life or death. In opposition to their erroneous doctrine, David introduces this sentiment, that God does not hold his servants in so little estimation as to expose them to death casually. [384] We may indeed for a time be subjected to all the vicissitudes

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"This seems to mean the sacrifice prescribed, Leviticus 7:12, because the courts of the Lord's house are mentioned. Psalm 50:23, and 56:12, perhaps mean only thanksgiving, as Psalm 69:30, certainly doth. See verse 31." — *Archbishop Secker.*

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"For their death to be precious is, in effect, no more than that it is, so considered, rated at so high a price by God, as that he will not easily grant it to any one that most desires it of him. Absalom here hostilely pursued David and desired his death, he would have been highly gratified with it, taking it for the greatest boon that could have befallen him: but God would not thus gratify him; nor will he grant this desire easily to the enemies of godly men, especially of those that commit themselves to his keeping, as David here did." — *Hammond.*

of fortune and of the world; we will nevertheless always have this consolation, that God will, eventually, openly manifest how dear our souls are to him. In these times, when innocent blood is shed, and the wicked contemners of God furiously exalt themselves, as if exulting over a vanquished God, let us hold fast by this doctrine, that the death of the faithful, which is so worthless, nay, even ignominious in the sight of men, is so valuable in God's sight, that, even after their death, he stretches out his hand towards them, and by dreadful examples demonstrates how he holds in abhorrence the cruelty of those who unjustly persecute the good and simple. If he put their tears in a bottle, how will he permit their blood to perish? Psalm 56:8 At his own time he will accomplish the prediction of Isaiah, "that the earth shall disclose her blood," Isaiah 26:21. To leave room for the grace of God, let us put on the spirit of meekness, even as the prophet, in designating the faithful *meek ones,* calls upon them to submit their necks quietly to bear the burden of the cross, that in their patience they may possess their souls, Luke 21:19

16 *Come, O Jehovah! because I am thy servant.* As, in the former verse, he gloried that in him God had given an example of the paternal regard which he has for the faithful, so here he applies, in an especial manner, to himself the general doctrine, by declaring that his *fetters had been broken,* in consequence of his being included among the number of God's servants. He employs the term *fetters,* as if one, with hands and feet bound, were dragged by the executioner. In assigning, as the reason of his deliverance, that he was God's servant, he by no means vaunts of his services, but rather refers to God's unconditional election; for we cannot make ourselves his servants, that being an honor conferred upon us solely by his adoption. Hence David affirms, that he was not God's servant merely, but the *son of his handmaid.* "From the womb of my mother, even before I was born, was this honor conferred upon me." He therefore presents himself as a common example to all who shall dedicate themselves to the service of God, and place themselves under his protection, that they may be under no apprehension for their safety while they have him for their defense.

17. *I will sacrifice the sacrifices of praise to thee.* He once more repeats what he had said about gratitude, and that publicly; for we must manifest our piety, not only by our secret affection before God, but also by an open profession in the sight of men. David, along with the people, observed the rites of the law, knowing that these, at that time, were not unmeaning services; but while he did this, he had a particular reference to the purpose for which they were appointed, and offered principally the sacrifices of praise and the calves of his lips. He speaks of the *courts of God's house,* because at that time there was but one altar from which it was unlawful to depart, and it was the will of God that the holy assemblies should be held there, that the faithful might mutually stimulate one another to the cultivation of godliness.

Psalm 117

PSALM 117

Psalm 117:1-2

1. Praise Jehovah, all ye nations; magnify him:, all ye peoples. [385] **2.** Because his mercy is strengthened [386] towards us: and the truth of Jehovah remains for ever. Praise ye Jehovah.

1 *Praise Jehovah, all ye nations.* The Holy Spirit having, by the mouth of the prophet, exhorted all nations to celebrate the praises of God's mercy and faithfulness, Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, very justly considers this as a prediction respecting the calling of the whole world, (Romans 15:11.) How can unbelievers be qualified for praising God, who, though not

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"That *all the nations* here, and in the next word *all peoples,* signify, in the greatest latitude, all the nations, all people of the Gentile world, even πᾶσαν κτίσιν, 'the whole creation,' and κόσμον ἅπαντα, 'the whole world,' Mark 16:15, appears both by Matthew 28:19, where, parallel to those phrases in St Mark, is no more than πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 'all the nations,' as here; but especially by Romans 15, where, for a proof of God's purpose that the Gentiles should be received into the Church, and join with the believing Jews in one concert of Christian love and faith, and *praise* God together in the same congregation, the proof is brought, as from several other texts, so from these words in this psalm. And this not only by expressly citing, verse 1, 'And again praise the Lord, all ye nations, and laud him, all ye people;' but also in the front of the testimonies, by the phrases, 'for the truth of God,' verse 8, 'for the mercy *or* pity of God,' verse 9, both which are here mentioned, verse 2." — *Hammond.*

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"Ou, multipliee." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, multiplied."

entirely destitute of his mercy, yet are insensible of it, and are ignorant of his truth? It would therefore serve no purpose for the prophet to address the heathen nations, unless they were to be gathered together in the unity of the faith with the children of Abraham. There is no ground for the censorious attempting, by their sophistical arguments, to refute the reasoning of Paul. I grant that the Holy Spirit elsewhere calls upon the mountains, rivers, trees, rain, winds, and thunder, to resound the praises of God, because all creation silently proclaims him to be its Maker. It is in a different manner that he is praised by his rational creatures. The reason assigned is, that *God's mercy and truth* furnish materials for celebrating his praises. Besides, the prophet does not mean that God shall be praised everywhere by the Gentiles, because the knowledge of his character is confined to a small portion of the land of Judea, but because it was to be spread over the whole world. First, he enjoins God to be praised, *because his goodness is increased,* or *strengthened,* for the Hebrew term admits of both meanings. Secondly, *because his truth remains steadfast for ever* How, then, are those qualified to celebrate his praises, who, with brutal insensibility, pass over his goodness, and shut their ears against his heavenly doctrine?

The *truth* of God, in this passage, is properly introduced as an attestation of his grace. For he can be true even when he menaces the whole world with perdition and ruin. The prophet, however, has placed his *mercy* first in order that his faithfulness and truth, comprising an assurance of his paternal kindness, might encourage the hearts of the godly. His power and justice are equally praiseworthy; but as men will never cordially praise God until they are drawn by a foretaste of his goodness, the prophet very justly selects God's mercy and truth, which alone open the mouths of those who are mute to engage in this exercise. When his truth is said to be *everlasting,* it is not set in opposition to his mercy, as if it, after flourishing for a season, then instantly passed away. The same reason would go to prove, that it was small compared with his mercy, which is said to be abundant. The meaning is, that God's mercy is rich towards us, flowing in a perennial stream, because united to his eternal truth. If we read, *his mercy is confirmed,* all difficulty will be removed, for then both constancy and stability will alike adorn his mercy and his truth.

Psalm 118

PSALM 118

At the time when this psalm was penned, whenever that was, David having attained to the possession of royal power, and aware that he reigned for the common safety of the Church, calls upon all the children of Abraham to ponder attentively this grace. He also recounts his dangers, the magnitude and variety of which would have slain him a hundred times, had not God wonderfully succored him. From this it is obvious that he came to the throne of the kingdom, neither by his own policy, nor by the favor of men, nor by any human means. At the same time, he informs us that he did not rashly or by wicked intrigues rush forward and take forcible possession of the kingdom of Saul, but that he was appointed and established king by God himself. Let us remember that it was the design of the Spirit, under the figure of this temporal kingdom, to describe the eternal and spiritual kingdom of God's Son, even as David represented his person. [387]

Psalm 118:1-4

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1. Praise ye Jehovah; because he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. **2.** Let Israel now [388] say, that his mercy endureth for ever. **3.** Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. **4.** Let those who fear Jehovah now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.

1 *Praise ye Jehovah* In this passage we see that David does not merely in a private capacity render thanks to God, but that he loudly summons the people to engage in the common exercises of piety. This he does, not simply from his having been divinely appointed to be the captain and teacher of others; but, God having invested him with royal power, had manifested his sympathy with his distressed Church. Hence he exhorts the Israelites to magnify the grace of God, under whose kind protection he appears to re-establish them in safety. In the beginning of the psalm he alludes generally

Calvin ascribes this psalm to David; but, as it is without any title, it is uncertain who was its author. On this point, and the occasion of its composition, various opinions prevail among commentators. According to Hengstenberg, it celebrates the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and the laying the foundation of the second temple; in support of which he refers to Ezra 3:11. Phillips thinks it "probable that it was written for the occasion when David was to be anointed at Hebron king over the tribes of Israel, (2 Samuel 5;) for, previously to his inauguration, he was subjected to many dangers, both from avowed foes, as well as from Saul and his party. He was exposed to the hostility of the Philistines (1 Samuel 29,) and the Amalekites, (1 Samuel 30;) from the former he escaped in safety, and the latter he overcame in battle. Again, although he had been long chosen king of Israel by God, for a considerable period he was exposed to a severe persecution; he was obliged to flee for safety from his country, and it was not till after the death of Saul that his troubles ceased, and he ascended the throne, which had long been his by Divine appointment. To David, therefore, at Hebron, this psalm will apply; for he could then say, 'All nations compassed me about. The Lord hath chastised me, but he hath not given me over unto death. The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.'" Some assign it to the time of Hezekiah; and others to that period of Israel's history, which is adorned by the illustrious achievements of the Maccabees. "I shall not presume," says Walford, "to decide which of these opinions is the most agreeable to truth. It will be more to our purpose to observe, that the psalm was read on occasion of a solemn procession that was formed by the king or chief magistrate, whoever he might be, the priests and the people at large, of all ranks, in order to perform public sacrifices of thanksgiving at the temple."

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Horsley very properly translates the Hebrew word נא, *na,* in this and the two following verses, by *O*, instead of *now*: — "*O,* Let Israel say — *O*, Let the house of Aaron say — *O*, Let them that fear Jehovah say." "The word *now,*" he observes, "in our language is a particle of entreaty, and is therefore used by our translators to express the supplicatory particle of the Hebrew language, נא. But though *now,* in our language, is indeed a particle of entreaty, it is only when the verb is in the imperative mood, and in the second person; as, 'Do, now, grant me this favor;' or, at least, in speaking to the person of whom the thing is asked. When נא is joined to a verb in the third person, or when the person who is to grant the petition, or perform the thing advised, is not immediately addressed, it should be rendered by some other word or phrase. 'By all means,' or 'of all things,' are equivalent phrases, in respect of the sense, but not sufficiently dignified to suit the style of sacred poetry. *O* is perhaps the best particle, in these cases, that our language furnishes."

to the goodness and mercy of God, but he shortly instances himself as an evidence of his goodness, as will be seen in its proper place. It becomes us at present to recall to mind what I mentioned in the preceding psalm, that a reason for praising God is given to us on account of his mercy, in preference to his power or justice; because, though his glory shine forth in them also, yet will we never promptly and heartily sound forth his praises, until he win us by the sweetness of his goodness. Accordingly, in Psalm 51:17, we found that the lips of the faithful were opened to praise God, when they perceived that he was truly their deliverer. In restricting his address to Israel, and to the children of Aaron, he is guided by a regard to his own times, because, up to that period, the adoption did not extend beyond that one nation. He again resumes the order which he observed in Psalm 116:1; for, after exhorting the children of Abraham, who had been separated from the Gentiles by the election of God, and also the sons of Aaron, who, by virtue of the priesthood, ought to take the precedence in conducting the psalmody, he directs his discourse to the other worshippers of God; because there were many hypocrites among the Israelites, who, occupying a place in the Church, were yet strangers to it. This is not inconsistent with David's here speaking by the spirit of prophecy, respecting the future kingdom of Christ. That kingdom, no doubt, extended to the Gentiles, but its commencement and first-fruits were among God's chosen people.

Psalm 118:5-9

> **5.** I called upon God in my distress, and God heard me, by setting me at large. **6.** Jehovah is with me: I will not fear what man may do unto me. **7.** Jehovah is with me among those who help me, and I shall see my desire upon mine enemies. **8.** It is better to hope in Jehovah than to confide in man: **9.** It is better to hope in Jehovah than to confide in princes.

5 *I called upon God in my distress.* We have here a particular application of the doctrine we formerly mentioned, to the person of David; with which also is conjoined the rejoicing of the whole Church, for whose public welfare God made provision by upholding him. By his own example he establishes the faithful, showing them that they ought not to faint in the day of adversity. He seems designedly to anticipate an objection, which is apt to arise in the minds of men the moment that the goodness of God is proclaimed, "Why does he permit his servants to be so sore oppressed and afflicted?" David therefore reminds them, notwithstanding, that God's mercy never fails, for we have in prayer, consolation and an antidote for all our ills. The season, too, in which he says that he made supplication, by means of which he obtained deliverance, was that of distress, which touches us, that the time of sad adversity is most proper for abounding in prayer.

6 *Jehovah is with me among those who help me* Confiding solely in God's help, he sets at defiance not a few enemies merely, but the whole

world. "Defended by God's hand, I may boldly and safely set at nought all the machinations of men." When all the power of the universe is deemed as nothing, in comparison of God, then, indeed, is due honor attributed to him. Thus he tacitly reproves the unbelief of almost all men, who spontaneously alarm themselves with groundless fears. All, indeed, desire peace of mind; but, in consequence of robbing God of the praise due to his power, their own ingratitude does not permit them to realize this blessing. Were they, as is fitting, to submit in all things to the good pleasure and power of God, they would be always ready boldly to surmount all those difficulties, the dread of which from time to time annoys them. But paying more regard to the mischievous attempts of men, than to the help which God can give them, they deserve to tremble at the rustling of the falling leaf. It is the wish of David, by his own example, to correct such perversity; and, with this view, he affirms that, in the enjoyment of God's favor, he would fear no man, being fully persuaded that he could rescue him from all the nefarious plots which were laid for him. Or if he composed this psalm after his deliverance, we see how much he had profited by the experience of the grace of God. Therefore, as frequently as God shall succor us, let our confidence in him for the future be increased, and let us not be unmindful of his goodness and power, which we experienced in our extremity. Possibly, he relates the meditations which occurred to him in the midst of his distresses; the former conjecture appears more probable, that, after he obtained deliverance, he gloried, for the future, in God's continued assistance. Some refer the clause, *those who are helpers with me,* to the small troop which David had drawn to him; but this, in my opinion, is too refined; for it would tend little to the honor of God to class him among the six hundred whom David commanded, as if he were one of the troop. My interpretation is more simple, that he calls God his helper. "It is enough for me that God is on my side." Were he deprived of all human aid, still he would have no hesitation in opposing God against all his enemies.

8 *It is better to trust in Jehovah* He appears to state nothing but what is common-place, it being unanimously admitted, that when God and men come into comparison, he must be viewed as infinitely exalted above them, and therefore it is best to trust in him for the aid which he has promised to his own people. All make this acknowledgment, and yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who is fully persuaded that God alone can afford him sufficient help. That man has attained a high rank among the faithful, who, resting satisfied in God, never ceases to entertain a lively hope, even when he finds no help upon earth. The comparison, however, is improper, inasmuch as we are not allowed to transfer to men even the smallest portion of our confidence, which must be placed in God alone. The meaning is by no means ambiguous; the Psalmist is ridiculing the illusory hopes of men by which they are tossed hither and thither; and declares, that when the world smiles upon them they wax proud, and either forsake God or despise him.

Some are of opinion that David bitterly reproaches his enemies with their being deceived in depending upon the favor of Saul. This appears to me to be too limited a view of the passage; and I question not that David here proposes himself as an example to all the faithful; in that he had reaped the full fruit of his hope, when, depending solely upon God, he had patiently borne the loss of all earthly succor. In the 9th verse, in which he substitutes *princes* for *men,* there is an extension of the idea. "Not only those who put their confidence in men of low degree act foolishly, but also, those who confide even in the greatest potentates; for the trust that is put in flesh shall at last be accursed, but the enjoyment of God's favor will convert even death itself into life."

Psalm 118:10-14

10. All nations compassed me: but in the name of Jehovah I will surely cut them off. **11.** They compassed me; yea, they compassed me: in Jehovah's name I will surely cut them off. **12.** They compassed me as bees: they are quenched [389] as a fire of thorns: in Jehovah's name I will surely cut them off. **13.** Thrusting, thou hast thrust at

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The verb דעכו, *doachu,* here used has ordinarily the signification of *to quench.* But in this text it is rendered in all the old versions in the sense of *to burn.* "This makes it probable," says Hammond, "that as many other words in the Hebrew language are used in contrary senses, so דעך, which signifies in other places passively *to be consumed,* or *extinguished,* may signify here as an ἐναντιόσημον *to flame,* or in an active sense, as in Arabic it is used, *violently to break in* or *set upon,* as in war or contention when men violently rush one on another." And this seems most suitable to the connection in which it stands. At first sight one would think it strange to say that the adversaries of David *were quenched* (*i.e.*, destroyed) *as the fire of thorns*; and for the Psalmist afterwards to state, *In the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off.* If the verb is here interpreted in the sense of *to burn,* the main object of the metaphor must be to express, by a figure frequently employed in Scripture, the impotence and quick termination of the rage of those men, however fierce and apparently formidable. It would soon expend itself, and their power of doing injury be lost like a fire of thorns, which, although for a moment it makes a great crackling, and rages violently as if it would quickly consume every thing near, soon ceases, and nothing remains but the ashes. If the verb is understood in the sense of *to quench,* the language is very elliptical, and in the true genius of Hebrew poetry, which frequently couches in a few words such images as in the hands of Homer would be materials for an enlarged and dignified description, while it leaves unexpressed more than half of what is intended to be understood. The sudden quenching of the hostile army, like the extinction of a fire of thorns, implies the previous comparison of such array to a fire. "It is remarkable that, in a similar connection, Homer has such a comparison of an hostile army to fire, in which he *expresses* what David left to be understood, and omits (for he had no occasion to introduce) what David expresses, namely, the sudden quenching of the fire: —

'As when devouring flames some forest seize
On the high mountains, splendid from afar
The blaze appears, so, moving in the plain,
The steel-clad host innum'rous flash'd to heav'n.'
Iliad *2, 516.* Cowper."

— *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.*

me, that I might fall: [390] but Jehovah helped me. **14.** God is my strength and song, and he hath saved me.

10. *All nations compassed me* In these verses he relates the wonderful deliverance which he had received, that all might know that it was not of human but divine origin. Once and again he declares, that he was compassed not by a few persons, but by a vast multitude. The people, being all inflamed with anger and fury against him, compassed him so that there were no means for his escape, and he could procure help from no quarter but from heaven. Some consider his complaint, that all nations were adverse to him, as referring to the neighboring nations, by whom we know David was surrounded with danger. His meaning, in my opinion, is, that the whole world was adverse to him; because he places God's help alone in opposition to the deadly and furious hatred both of his own countrymen and of the neighboring nations towards him, so that there was not a spot upon the earth where he could be safe. There was, it is true, no army, collected from several nations, besieging him; still he had no peaceable retreat except among the haunts of wild beasts, from which also he was driven by terror. And in proportion to the number of persons he encountered were the snares laid to entrap him. It is, therefore, not wonderful that he said he was compassed by all nations. Besides, this elliptical mode of speaking is more forcible than if he had merely said that he trusted in God, by reason of which he had become victorious. By publicly mentioning *the name of God* alone, he maintains that no other means of deliverance were within his reach, and that but for his interposition he must have perished. It appears to me preferable to translate the particle כי, *ki,* affirmatively. [391] "Besieged as I am on all sides by the world, yet if the power of God help me, that will be more than adequate for the extermination of all mine enemies." Their obstinate and implacable hatred is pointed out by him in the repetition of the phrase *compassed about,* and their outrageous fury is set forth in comparing them to *bees,* which, though not possessed of much strength, are very fierce, and when in their insensate fury they attack a person, they occasion no little fear. He shortly adds, *they are quenched as a fire of thorns,* which at first

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Hammond reads, "Thou hast thrust sore at me to ruin *or* filling." "The full import of לנפל," says he, "is best expressed gerundially, *ad cadendum, to falling,* not only to express their desire who thus pressed and thrust at him, *that* he might fall, for that is supposed in the violence of their impulsion, expressed by repetition of the verb דחיתני דחה, *thou hast by thrusting thrust me,* but to signify the event or success of it, that I *was falling,* or *ready to fall.* Του πεσεῖν, say the LXX. in the infinitive mood gerundially, and so the Chaldee and the Syriac; and so the Jewish Arab, 'It is a long while that thou hast driven *or* thrust me to falling.' And this expresses the greatness and seasonableness of the deliverance, that when he was falling, God helped him."

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"I take כי to be an affirmative adverb, surely, and not a conjunction." — *Lowth.*

makes a great crackling, and throws out a greater flame than a fire of wood, but soon passes away. The amount is, that David's enemies had furiously assailed him, but that their fury soon subsided. Hence he again repeats, that sustained by the power of God, whatever opposition might rise against him would soon pass away.

13. *Thou hast sorely thrust at me.* He either now changes the person, or directs his discourse to Saul, his principal enemy. In the person of one, he sets at defiance all his enemies together. In saying that he *had been thrust at,* he admits that he did not withstand the onset by his own bravery, as those who are powerful enough to encounter opposition, sustain the assaults of their enemies without flinching. The power of God is more illustriously displayed in raising him up even from ruin itself.

In the subsequent verse he draws the conclusion that God is *his strength and song.* By the former adjunct he candidly acknowledges his weakness, and ascribes his safety exclusively to God. And having admitted that his strength was in God alone, because he was sustained by his power, immediately he adds, that God is *his praise* or *his song,* which must be understood passively. "In myself there was no ground for boasting, to God belongs entirely all the praise of my safety." The last clause of the verse, in which he says that *God was his salvation,* refers to the same subject.

Psalm 118:15-21

15. The voice of shouting and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just: the right hand of Jehovah hath done valiantly. **16.** The right hand of Jehovah is exalted, the right hand of Jehovah hath done valiantly. **17.** I shall not die, yea, I shall live, and speak of the works of God. **18.** God chastising has chastised me; but he did not deliver me unto death. **19.** Open to me the gates of righteousness; and having entered into them, I will praise God. **20.** This is the gate of Jehovah, the just shall enter into it. **21.** I will praise thee, because thou hast heard me, and hast been my salvation.

15. *The voice of shouting and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just.* He affirms that the kindness which God had conferred upon him was so extensive, that it would not do to render thanks to him privately. In the benefits which he had received, God's power appeared both remarkable and memorable, and the fruit of it also was extended to the whole Church. Therefore, as David's deliverance was wonderful and advantageous generally to all the godly, he promises that he would make a public thanksgiving; and invites them to join him in this holy exercise. By this circumstance, he chiefly aims at magnifying the grace of God, and also by its effects to demonstrate, that not merely his individual preservation, but that of the whole Church, in his person, was accomplished. Intercommunion among believers does, indeed, bind them alternately to render thanks to God for each other; in David's case, there was the specific reason which I have

mentioned, his wonderful preservation from many deaths, and his having assigned to him the sovereignty of God's chosen people. It is worthy of notice, that he combines the voice of joy and gladness with the praise of God, by which he shows that believers ought to mingle with their mirth a sense of the grace of God. *To do valiantly,* is tantamount to a magnificent display of his power, so that there may be a bright manifestation of its effulgence. God ofttimes secretly, and when apparently feeble, grants deliverance to his faithful people, that they may be sensible that it comes from him; but this is not so well known to others. Here, however, David asserts that the operation of God was so plainly developed, no one could doubt whence his safety came. The other phrase, *that the right hand of God was exalted,* refers to the same subject, because, by working powerfully and unwontedly, God had exalted his hand.

17. *I shall not die* David speaks like one emerging from the sepulcher. The very same person who says, *I shall not die,* acknowledges that he was rescued from death, to which he was near as one condemned to it. For a series of years his life was in imminent danger, exposed every moment to a thousand deaths, and no sooner was he delivered from one than he entered into another. Thus he declares that *he would not die,* because he regained life, all hope of which he had entirely abandoned. We, whose life is hid with Christ in God, ought to mediate upon this song all our days, Colossians 3:3. If we occasionally enjoy some relaxation, we are bound to unite with David in saying, that we who were surrounded with death are risen to newness of life. In the meantime, we must constantly persevere through the midst of darkness: as our safety lies in hope, it is impossible that it can be very visible to us. In the second member of the verse, he points out the proper use of life. God does not prolong the lives of his people, that they may pamper themselves with meat and drink, sleep as much as they please, and enjoy every temporal blessing, but to magnify him for his benefits which he is daily heaping upon them. Of this subject we have spoken on Psalm 115

18. *In chastising God has chastised me.* In these words David owns that his enemies assailed him unjustly, that they were employed by God to correct him, that this was fatherly chastisement, God not inflicting a deadly wound, but correcting him in measure and in mercy. He seems to anticipate the perverse decisions of perverse men which grievously pressed upon him, as if all the ills which he had endured were so many evidences of his being cast off by God. These calumnies which the reprobate cast upon him he applies very differently, by declaring that his correction was mild and paternal. The main thing in adversity is to know that we are laid low by the hand of God, and that this is the way which he takes to prove our allegiance, to arouse us from our torpidity, to crucify our old man, to purge us from our filthiness, to bring us into submission and subjection to God, and to excite us to meditate on the heavenly life.

If these things were recollected by us, there is not one of us who would not shudder at the thought of fretting against God, but would much rather yield submission to him with a mild and meek spirit. Our champing the bit, and rushing forward impatiently, certainly proceeds from the majority of men not looking upon their afflictions as God's rods, and from others not participating in his paternal care. The last clause of the verse, therefore, merits particular attention, That God always deals mercifully with his own people, so that his correction proves their cure. Not that his paternal regard is always visible, but that in the end it will be shown that his chastisements, so far from being deadly, serve the purpose of a medicine, which, though it produce a temporary debility, rids us of our malady, and renders us healthy and vigorous.

19 *Open unto me the gates of righteousness* [392] Under the influence of ardent zeal, David here sets himself to testify his gratitude, commanding the temple to be opened to him, as if the oblations were all already prepared. He now confirms what he said formerly, That he would render thanks to God publicly in the properly constituted assembly of the faithful. It was the practice of the priests to open the doors of the temple to the people; it appears, however, that David here alludes to his long exile, which supposition is corroborated by the following verse. Having been for a long period prevented from having access to the sanctuary, and even from coming within sight of it, he now rejoices and exults at being again admitted to offer sacrifice unto God. And he declares that he will not approach as the hypocrites were wont to do, whom God, by the prophet Isaiah, reproaches with treading his courts in vain, but that he will come with the sacrifice of praise, (Isaiah 1:12) Fully persuaded that he drew near in the spirit of genuine devotion, he says it is proper that the doors of the temple, which lately he durst not enter, should be opened to him and such as he. *It is,* says he, *the gate of Jehovah,* and, therefore, he will open it for the just. The meaning is, that banished as David had been from the temple and from his country, now that the kingdom is in a better condition, both he and all the true worshippers of God regained their right to approach his sanctuary. Thus he indirectly mourns over the profanation of the temple, in that, while under the tyranny of Saul, it was occupied by the profane contemners of God, as if it had been a kennel for dogs and other unclean animals. This abomination, the temple being for a long time a den of thieves, is here inveighed against; but now that it is patent to the righteous, he declares it to be God's holy house. What occurred in the days of Saul is visible in these days, God's bitter enemies most wickedly and shamefully occupying his

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The gates of the temple, or doors of the tabernacle, are supposed to have been called *the gates of righteousness,* because they were intended for the reception of those only who were righteous.

sanctuary. The Pope would not be Antichrist if he did not sit in the temple of God, (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Having, by his vile pollutions, converted all temples into brothels, let us endeavor as much as we can to purge them, and prepare them for the pure worship of God. And as it has pleased Him to choose his holy habitation among us, let us exert ourselves to remove all the defilements and abominations which disfigure the purity of the Church. David then relates briefly the reason of his offering the sacrifice of praise to God, namely, that he had been preserved by his grace.

Psalm 118:22-26

> **22.** The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. [393] **23.** This was done by Jehovah; it is marvelous in our eyes. **24.** This is the day which Jehovah made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. **25.** I beseech thee, O Jehovah! save me; I beseech thee, I beseech thee, O Jehovah! give prosperity, I beseech thee. **26.** Blessed is he who cometh in the name of Jehovah: we bless you out of the house of Jehovah.

22 *The stone which the builders rejected* In these words David boldly pours contempt on the calumnies with which he was unjustly and undeservedly assailed. As there was something ominous in his being condemned by the entire assemblage of the nobles, and all those who were invested with authority, and as the opinion was prevalent, that he was a wicked and

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The learned Michaelis understands this literally. "It appears," says he, "that, probably at the building of Solomon's temple, one of those stones, which David had taken care to get provided and made ready for use, was found faith with by the builders, and declared to be useless, and that God, for altogether different reasons, commanded by a prophet that this stone should be made the corner-stone. The Orientals regard the corner-stone as the one peculiarly holy stone in a temple, and that it confers sanctity upon the whole edifice. It is, therefore, the more probable that, either by the Urim and Thummim, (the sacred lot of the Jews,) or by a prophet, God was consulted which stone he would direct to be taken for the corner-stone. The answer was, that which they have perseveringly rejected, and declared to be quite unserviceable. Certainly it must have been for a very important reason, that God positively appointed this stone to be the corner-stone. But the New Testament declares it to us in Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; and 1 Peter 2:7. The Jewish nation would conduct themselves towards the Messiah precisely as the builders did towards this stone, and would reject him; but God would select him to be the corner-stone, which should support and sanctify the whole Church." — Quoted in Dr Pye Smith *on the Priesthood of Christ,* page 150. Michaelis' opinion, that the words literally relate to a stone which the builders at first rejected, but which they were subsequently induced to place in the most important part of the building, is, however, mere conjecture. The prophetic sense in which this verse is applicable to the Messiah, who was rejected by the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees of his time, and who is now the foundation of an ample and constantly increasing Church, rests on more solid grounds; being sanctioned both by Christ himself and his apostles.

The head stone of the corner does not mean the top stone, but the chief stone of the foundation, answering to what we call the first stone. — See Ephesians 2:20, 21; 1 Peter 2:4, 5.

rejected man; this error he deliberately refutes, and vindicates his innocence in the face of the principal men among them. "It is of little importance to me that I am abandoned by the chief men, seeing I have been visibly chosen by the judgment of God to be king over Israel." The similitude which he employs is appropriate, comparing himself to *a stone,* and the principal rulers of the Church to *master-builders* It might, indeed, appear most irrational on his part to assert that the heads of the realm, to whom the government of the Church was intrusted, should be deprived of the Spirit of God, and divested of a sound judgment. Hence, in opposition to their perverse and erroneous judgment, he places the grace of God, declaring that he was placed by the purpose and power of God to sustain the whole building. In a word, he shows that splendid titles and high rank, in which his enemies glory, are no obstruction to him, because, relying upon the call of God, he possesses a glory superior to the verdict of the whole world. It being a difficult matter to persuade them of the truth of this, he magnifies and enlarges upon the grace of God, in order that its authority might suppress all evil speaking and clamorous surmises.

This, says he, *is the doing of Jehovah* "Go and quarrel with God, all ye that strenuously endeavor to eject me from my throne, to which I have not been elevated accidentally, or by human policy, but by the manifest power of God." This he confirms by all being constrained to wonder at what had occurred as a thing incredible. Now, when God doeth marvellously, and in a manner that surpasses our comprehension, his power cannot fail to be so much the more apparent unto us. Should any prefer to interpret it thus:-Although this work may fill men with astonishment, yet that is no reason for rejecting it; he may do so. To me, however, it certainly appears more probable that David employs the term *wonderful,* that the haughtiness of man may submit to God, and that none may presume to breathe a whisper against him. The fitness of these things being applied to Christ will be more properly discussed when I come to consider the twenty-fifth verse.

24. *This is the day which Jehovah made* He now speaks of that as a happy and pleasant day, on which he was at last established king over Israel, and the anointing of him by Samuel ratified by this event. Doubtless, all days were created alike by God, nevertheless David, by way of eminence, calls that *the day of God* which, after a long period of darkness, had dawned for the weal of the Church, because it was signalized by a notable event, deserving of being remembered by succeeding generations; and because the Church had thus emerged from a state of deep obscurity, he exhorts the faithful to mirth and joy, and that, too, by reason of the ignorance which many still displayed of the grace of God, or of their treating it with contempt, and of others being so lettered by their perverse attachment to Saul, that they could scarcely be brought to yield allegiance to David.

25 *I beseech thee, O Jehovah! save me* As the term נא, *na,* in Hebrew is frequently used as an adverb of time, not a few render it, in this place,

now: Save, I beseech thee, now. It is also often used in the form of asking, and this is the meaning I attach to it, and which accords very well with this passage; for I am persuaded that the Holy Spirit, in repeating the same phrase, designed, by the mouth of the prophet, to stir up and stimulate the faithful to great earnestness and ardor in prayer. If any prefer a different interpretation, it will not be difficult to prevail on me to agree to it. One thing is plain, that there is here a form of prayer prescribed to the chosen people, to seek for prosperity to the kingdom of David, upon which the common safety of all depended. In these words, too, he protested that he held his kingdom by Divine legation, and, therefore, they who would not agree to wish prosperity to his reign were unworthy of occupying a place in the Church.

In the verse following, a particular request is subjoined, which the faithful must entertain; namely, that as God had thus appointed David to be the minister of his grace, so he would *also bless him* Those are said *to come in the name of the Lord,* whom God employs for the welfare of his Church — such as prophets and teachers, whom he raises up to gather together his Church; and generals and governors, whom he instructs by his Spirit. But as David was a type of Christ, his case was peculiar; it being the will of God that his people should dwell under him and his successors till the advent of Christ. The clause*, blessed is he that cometh,* may be viewed as a form of congratulation; but seeing that the benediction of the priests is immediately annexed, I am disposed rather to believe that the people wished for David God's grace and favor. To induce them to present this petition with more alacrity, and thus be encouraged to receive the king whom God appointed them, this promise is added in the person of the priests, *We bless you out of the house of the Lord.*

They speak in this manner agreeably with the nature of their office, which enjoined on them the duty of blessing the people, as appears from several passages in the books of Moses, and particularly from Numbers 6:23. It is not without reason that they connect the welfare of the Church with the prosperity of the kingdom, it being their desire to throw out the suggestion, and to represent that the safety of the people would remain as long as that kingdom continued to flourish, and that they would all share in the blessings which would be conferred upon their king, because of the indissoluble connection which exists between the head and members. Knowing, as we now do, that when David was constituted king, the foundation of that everlasting kingdom, which was eventually manifested in the advent of Christ, was then laid, and that the temporal throne upon which the descendants of David were placed was a type of the eternal kingdom given to Christ by God his Father, in consequence of which he obtained all power, both in heaven and on earth, there can be no question that the prophet calls upon the faithful to pray fervently and constantly for the prosperity and progress of this spiritual kingdom; for it was incumbent on those who

lived during the shadowy dispensation to pray for David and his successors; but after all the grandeur of that kingdom was overthrown, it behooved them to entreat the more ardently that God, in fulfillment of his promise, would re-establish it. In short, all that is here stated properly relates to the person of Christ; and that which was dimly adumbrated in David was brightly represented and fulfilled in Christ. The election of David was secret; and after he was anointed by Samuel to be king, he was rejected by Saul, and by all the heads of the people, and all abhorred him as if he had been a person deserving of a hundred deaths. Thus disfigured and dishonored, he did not appear to be a fit stone for occupying a place in the building. Similar to this was the beginning of the kingdom of Christ, who, being sent by his Father for the redemption of the Church, not only was despised by the world, but also hated and execrated, both by the common people and the dignitaries of the Church.

But it may be asked, how the prophet designates those master-builders who, so far from wishing the protection of the Church, aim at nothing so much as the demolition of the entire structure? We know, for instance, with what vehemence the scribes and priests, in Christ's time, labored to subvert all true piety. The reply is not difficult. David refers solely to the office which they held, and not to the inclinations by which they were actuated. Saul and all his counsellors were subverters of the Church, and yet, in relation to their office, they were chief-builders. To the ungodly the Holy Ghost is wont to concede the honorable titles which belong to their office, until that God remove them from it. How abandoned, oftentimes, were the priests among the ancient people of God, and yet they retained the dignity and honor which belonged to their office, until they were denuded of it. Hence the words of Isaiah,

"Who is blind, but my servant; and who is foolish., but he whom I have sent?" Isaiah 42:19

Now, though their intention was to undermine the whole constitution of the Church, yet, as they were divinely called for a different object, he calls them the servants and the sent of God. In our day, also, the Pope and his filthy clergy, who usurp the title of the priesthood, nevertheless continue the professed enemies of Christ; from which it follows, that they are any thing rather than God's legitimate servants, -and occupying the position of pastors — while they scatter the flock, their condemnation will be the greater. Between them and the Levitical priests there is assuredly a wide difference. As, however, they are invested with the usual authority, there can be no harm in conceding the title to them, provided they do not use it as a cloak to conceal their vile tyranny; for if the mere title was sufficient to procure for them personal reverence, then Christ must, of necessity, have been silenced, seeing that the priests rejected his doctrine. This passage rather informs us, that those who are intrusted with the office of ruling the Church, sometime, prove the worst workmen. David, speaking by the

Spirit, denominates chief-builders those who attempted to destroy the Son of God and the salvation of mankind, and by whom the worship of God was adulterated, religion wholly corrupted, and the temple of God profaned. If, therefore, all who are clothed with the ordinary authority must be listened to without exception, as legally appointed pastors, then must Christ not speak, because it very frequently occurs, that his bitterest enemies are concealed under the garb of pastors.

Here we behold with how strong and impregnable a shield the Holy Ghost furnishes us against the empty vauntings of the Papal clergy. Be it so, that they possess the name, "chief-builders;" but if they disown Christ, does it necessarily follow that we must disown him also? Let us rather contemn and trample under our feet all their decrees, and let us reverence this precious stone upon which our salvation rests. By the expression, *is become the head of the corner,* we are to understand the real foundation of the Church, which sustains the whole weight of the edifice; it being requisite that the corners should form the main strength of buildings. I do not approve of the ingenious opinion of Augustine, who makes Christ the corner-stone, because he united both Jews and Gentiles, thus making the corner the middle stone between the two different walls.

David then proceeds to repeat, at some length, as I have observed, that it is erroneous to estimate the kingdom of Christ by the sentiments and opinions of men, because, in spite of the opposition of the world, it is erected in an astonishing manner by the invisible power of God. In the meantime, we ought to remember, that all that was accomplished in the person of Christ extends to the gradual development of his kingdom, even until the end of the world. When Christ dwelt on the earth, he was despised by the chief priests; and now, those who call themselves the successors of Peter and Paul, but who are truly Ananiases and Caiaphases, giant-like wage war against the Gospel and the Holy Ghost. Not that this furious rebellion ought to give us any uneasiness: let us rather humbly adore that wonderful power of God which reverses the perverse decisions of the world. If our limited understandings could comprehend the course which God follows for the protection and preservation of his Church, there would be no mention made of a miracle. From this we conclude, that his mode of working is incomprehensible, baffling the understandings of men.

Was it necessary, it may be asked, that Christ should be reproached by the master-builders? It would certainly indicate a sad state of the Church, if she never had any pastors except those who were deadly enemies to her welfare. When Paul styles himself "a master-builder," he informs us that this office was common to all the apostles, (1 Corinthians 3:10). My answer therefore is, that all who bear rule in the Church are not charged with perpetual blindness; but that the Holy Spirit meets with this stumblingblock, which, in other respects, is wont to prove a hindrance to many when they witness the name of Christ enveloped with worldly splendor. When God, for the

purpose of making his glory shine forth more brightly, looseth Satan's rein, so that those who are invested with power and authority reject Christ, then it is that the Holy Spirit bids us be of good courage, and setting at nought all these perverse decisions, receive with all respect the King whom God has placed over us. From the first, we know that the master-builders have endeavored to subvert the kingdom of Christ. The same thing is taking place in our times, in those who are intrusted with the superintendence of the Church having made every attempt to overturn that kingdom, by directing against it all the machinery which they can devise. But if we call to mind this prophecy, our faith will not fail, but will be more and more confirmed; because, from these things it will the better appear that the kingdom of Christ does not depend upon the favor of men, and that it does not derive its strength from earthly supports, even as he has not attained it by the suffrages of men. If, however, the master-builders build well, the perverseness of those who will not permit themselves to be appropriated to the sacred edifice will be so much the less excusable. Moreover, as often as we shall, by this species of temptation, be put to the trial, let us not forget that it is unreasonable to expect that the Church must be governed according to our understanding of matters, but that we are ignorant of the government of it, inasmuch as that which is miraculous surpasses our comprehension.

The next clause, *this is the day that God hath made,* reminds us that there will be nothing but the reign of moral darkness, until Christ the Sun of Righteousness illumine us by his gospel. We are also reminded that this work is to be ascribed to God, and that mankind must not arrogate to themselves any merit on account of their own endeavors. The call to the exercise of gratitude, which immediately follows, is intended to warn us against yielding to the madness of our enemies, however furiously they rage against us, in order to deprive us of the joy which Christ has brought to us. From him all our happiness is derived, and, consequently, there is no cause for surprise that all the ungodly fume with vexation, and feel indignant, that we should be elevated to such a pitch of joy as to suppress all the sorrows and soothe all the asperity of the trials we have to endure. Prior to the advent of Christ, the prayer that follows was familiar to the people, and even to the children, for the Evangelists declare that Christ was received with this form of salutation. And certainly it was the will of God to ratify, at that time, the prediction which he had spoken by the mouth of David; or rather that exclamation clearly demonstrates that the interpretation, against which the Jews now raise a clamor, was unanimously admitted; and this renders their obstinacy and malice the more inexcusable. I blame them not for their stupidity, seeing that they purposely spread around them the mists of ignorance to blind themselves and others. And as the Jews never ceased to put up this prayer during that sad desolation, and those hideous devastations, their perseverance ought to inspire us with new vigor in these days. At that

time they had not the honor of a kingdom, no royal throne, no name but with God; and yet amid this deplorable and ruinous state of things, they adhered to the form of prayer formerly prescribed to them by the Holy Spirit. Instructed by their example, let us not fail to pray ardently for the restoration of the Church, which, in our day, is involved in sad desolation. Besides, in these words, we are also informed that Christ's kingdom is not upheld and advanced by the policy of men, but that this is the work of God alone, for in his blessing solely the faithful are taught to confide. Moreover, the very repetition of the words which, as we have observed, renders them more forcible, ought to arouse us from our lethargy, and render us more intensely ardent in breathing forth this prayer. God can, indeed, of himself, and independently of the prayer of any one, erect and protect the kingdom of his Son; but it is not without good cause that he has laid this obligation on us, as there is no duty more becoming the faithful than that of earnestly seeking for the advancement of his glory.

Psalm 118:27-29

> **27.** Jehovah is God, and has given light to us: bind ye the lamb with cords, even to the horns of the altar. [394] **28.** Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: my God, I will exalt thee. **29.** Praise ye Jehovah; because he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.

27. *Jehovah is God* Here the prophet establishes what he said formerly, that God, out of compassion to his Church, dissipated the darkness, and introduced the light of his grace, when David mounted the throne, for that was the harbinger of the redemption which was anticipated to be effected in due time by Christ. He also asserts that God was the author of that deliverance, so wonderful and unlooked for, and he declares that, by the result, he plainly showed himself to be truly God. These words, *Jehovah himself is a strong God, because he has restored the light of life to us,* are tacitly emphatical. For as the faithful, in consequence of the confused state of the Church, were reduced almost to the brink of despair; the ungodly imagined that all this had happened regarding the children of Abraham, by reason of God himself having, as it were, forsaken them. Wherefore he returns to offer up anew his thankful acknowledgments for the divine grace. He commands the faithful to *bind the victim to the horns of the altar,* because, according to the legal institute, they could not render solemn

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"*Yea even unto the horns of the altar* — before these words must be understood *lead it*: for the victims were bound to rings fixed in the floor. *The horns* were architectural ornaments, a kind of capitals, made of iron or of brass, somewhat in the form of the carved horns of an animal, projecting from the four angles of the altar. The officiating priest, when he prayed, placed his hands on them, and sometimes sprinkled them with the blood of the sacrifice: comp. Exodus 30:3; Leviticus 4:7, 18. At the end of this verse, the word *saying* must be supplied." — *Cresswell.*

thanks unto God without sacrifices. As David was a strict observer of the Law, he would not omit the ceremonial observances which God had enjoined. He would, however, always keep his attention steadily fixed on their grand design, and would have recourse to them only as helps to assist him in presenting a spiritual service unto God. Now that the shadowy dispensation has passed away, it remains that we offer unto God our thanksgivings through Christ, who sanctifies them by his own immaculate offering, lest we should be debarred from this exercise of godliness, by the corruptions of our flesh. And that David turned his attention to the praises of God, is abundantly manifest from the following verse, in which he promises that he *would celebrate the name of God,* because he was his God, and he knew it; that is, he felt from experience that from his hand he might calculate on receiving sure and immediate assistance.

Psalm 119

PSALM 119

As this psalm treats of various matters, it is difficult to give an epitome of its contents. There are, however, two things which the prophet mainly aims at; the exhorting of the children of God to follow godliness and a holy life; and the prescribing of the rule, and pointing out the form of the true worship of God, so that the faithful may devote themselves wholly to the study of the Law. Along with these he frequently blends promises for the purpose of animating the worshippers of God to live more justly and piously; and, at the same time, he introduces complaints respecting the impious contempt of the Law, lest they should become tainted by bad examples. In short, he frequently passes from one topic to another, and prosecutes no one particular subject continuously; [395] and therefore it will be best to discuss each subject in its proper place.

Psalm 119:1-8

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א 1. Blessed are they who are upright, [396] in their way, walking in the law of Jehovah. **א 2.** Blessed are they who, keeping his testimonies, seek him with all their heart. **א 3.** Surely they do not work iniquity, who walk in his ways. **א 4.** Thou hast commanded that thy statutes should be observed carefully [397] **א 5.** I wish that my ways may be directed to the observing of thy statutes! **א 6.** Then I shall not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy precepts. **א 7.** I will praise thee in the uprightness of my heart, when I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness. **א 8.** I will observe thy statutes: do not forsake me very far. [398]

Some call this the octonary psalm, because that, through every successive eight verses, the initial words of each line begin with the same letter in

It is, however, a mistake to suppose, that no connection of thought is observed throughout this lengthened composition, as has sometimes been asserted even by writers of note. "It has been too commonly assumed," says Jebb, that the 119th psalm is a collection of unconnected thoughts. To this opinion, even that most profound religious philosopher, Dr Barrow, inclines, (Sermon 48, on Psalm 119:60;) and his eloquent words must, in this instance, be received with no small caution. 'this psalm,' he says, 'no less excellent in virtue than large in bulk, containeth manifold reflections on the nature, the properties, the adjuncts, and effects of God's law; many sprightly ejaculations about it, conceived in different forms of speech; some in way of petition, some of thanksgiving, some of resolution, some of assertion or aphorism; many useful directions many zealous exhortations to the observance of it; the which are not ranged in any strict order, but, like a variety of wholesome herbs in a fair field, do, with a grateful confusion, lie dispersed, as they freely did spring in the heart, or were suggested by the devout spirit of him who indicted this psalm; where no coherence of sentences being designed, we may consider any one of them absolutely or singly by itself.' The fine imagination of this eminent writer justly recognizes the beautiful variety, the variegations of thought, the πολυποίκιλος σοφία exhibited in this psalm; but too much seems to be conceded to the prevalent opinion of a want of connection. I willingly allow, that the sentiments are not limited and enthralled by any exact or Procrustean rule; that there are no measures of intellectual geometry adhered to, reducing this divine poem to a rigid didactic system: that the mind of the prophet is free, and flowing, and discursive. Still this very flow of thought implies connection and association, and forbids the frigid idea that the psalm is a mere canto of reflections, like Lord Bacon's collection of aphorisms, or the maxims of Isocrates. I do not intend to maintain what could not be proved, that a consecutive order can be traced throughout; but instances can, undoubtedly, be drawn of passages which maintan a beautiful sequence and connection between their several members." — *Jebb's Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms*, *with Dissertations*, volume 2, pages 274-276.

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"Vel, perfecti." — *Lat. marg.* "Or, perfect."

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מאד, *meod*, superlatively, — to the uttermost.

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Hammond reads, "O forsake me not to any great degree;" and adds, "The Hebrew מאד-עד, *ad meod*, here, and in verse 43, is literally *unto very much.* So the LXX. render it, ἕως σφόδρα, *i e.*, *to any high degree*, the Chaldee, 'unto all at once,' but the Syriac, *for ever*, both referring it to the *time*, whereas the Hebrew seems rather to the *degree*, from the noun that signifies *multitude*, *plenty*, *abundance*."

alphabetical order. That this was done to aid the memory, may be gathered from each part containing a doctrine, which ought to form a theme of constant meditation among the children of God. For the purpose, therefore, of rendering it less irksome to the reader, the prophet has distinguished every successive eight verses by their beginning each with the corresponding letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and thus all excuses, on the score of ignorance, are removed, even from the callous and slothful. This help does not extend to those who read it in other languages; but the principle must not be overlooked, that the doctrine exhibited in this psalm should be carefully studied by all the children of God, and treasured up in their hearts, to render them the more conversant with it. Touching the author, I assert nothing, because it cannot be ascertained, even by probable conjecture, who he was; and expositors are agreed that no satisfactory conclusion can be arrived at in the matter. As David surpassed all others in point of poetical and devotional talent, I will not scruple occasionally to insert his name. [399]

It may be proper to take notice of certain terms which frequently occur in the psalm. Of the term תורה, *torah,* I say nothing, which, having its derivation from a word which signifies to *instruct,* is yet uniformly taken for *law.* Some of the Rabbis affirm that חוקים, *chukim,* signifies statutes, or divinely appointed rites, the, reason of which is very obvious. They say that פקדים, *phikudim,* denotes those precepts which relate to natural justice. It is certain that משפטים, *mishpatim,* signifies commandments, because this is proved by the etymology of the word. As to עדות, *edoth,*

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Some consider this psalm, as well as all the other alphabetic psalms, to be much more modern compositions than the time of David, and refer it to the time of the captivity in Babylon. But many others, as Venema, Michaelis, etc., ascribe it to David, and suppose it to have been written before his elevation to the throne. Its contents, certainly, favor this latter opinion, seeming to accord so well with the long and harassing persecution to which he was subjected by the malice and revenge of Saul. If David was its author, it is the most artificial and operose in its composition of all his psalms, and he has exhibited in the treatment of his subject — which is the celebration of the perfection of God's law, and the happiness of those who obey it — an extraordinary fecundity of expression, as if one of his intentions had been to show in how many various shapes, and with what copiousness of words, he could enunciate and illustrate a few and the same topics. The aspirations for instruction, consolation, and protection, with which almost every portion of this psalm is mingled, have a soothing and delightful effect, whilst the language throughout is rendered impressive by its peculiar strength and concinnity. It may, however, be doubtful, whether it be just to elevate it, as has been done by some, above all the other psalms. Dr Adam Clarke justly remarks, "Like all other portions of divine revelation, it is elegant, important, and useful; and while I admire the fecundity of the Psalmist's genius, the unabating flow of his poetic vein, his numerous synonymes, and his *copia verborum*, by which he is enabled to expound, diversify, and illustrate the same idea: presenting it to his reader in all possible points of view, so as to render it pleasing, instructive, and impressive; I cannot rob the rest of the book of its just praise by setting this, as many have done, above all the pieces it contains. It is by far the longest, the most artificial, and most diversified, yet, in proportion to its length, it contains the fewest ideas of any in the book."

the Hebrews understand it of the doctrine of the law, but with the certain indication, pointing out to us that it is comprehensive of the manner in which God enters into covenant with his people. The precepts of the law are denominated judgments and righteousness, to inform us that God enjoins nothing except what is right and just, and that mankind ought to seek for no other rule for the perfecting of holiness, but what consists in regulating their life by rendering obedience to the law. The meaning is almost synonymous when they are called *the ways of the Lord,* intimating that those who do not depart from the direction of the law, may safely conclude that they are in no danger of going astray. The ordinances of God, and the edicts offerings, have the term חוקים, *chukim,* applied to them indiscriminately, and,פקודים , *phikudim,* refers to different kinds of justice, as is manifest from many parts of Scripture which demonstrates that there is no foundation for the subtle distinction and difference formerly noticed. And in this psalm almost all these terms are synonym as the context will show. [400] To procure greater respect for the law, the prophet adorns it with a variety of titles, taking care constantly to enjoin upon us the same doctrine. I now proceed to the consideration of the contents of the psalm.

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Others deny that these and other similar terms, which frequently occur in this psalm, are mere synonymes; and they have endeavoured to show from etymological investigation, that, although all of them designate the law, yet they present it under a different aspect. Jebb has attempted, at some length, to point out the specific differences between these words. The following is an abstract of his remarks: — "The next peculiarity to be observed in this psalm is, the regular recurrence of nine characteristic words, at least one or other of which is found in each distich, with one solitary exception, the second distich of the 12th division. These words are *law*, *testimonies*, *precepts*, *statutes*, *commandments*, *judgments*, *word*, *saying*; and a word which only twice occurs as a characteristic, — *way.*

"These are, doubtless, all designations of the Divine Law; but it were doing a deep injury to the cause of revealed truth to affirm that they are mere synonyms; in other words, that the sentiments of this compendium of heavenly wisdom are little better than a string of tautologies. The fact is, as some critics, both Jewish and Christian, have observed, that each of these terms designates the same law of God, but each under a different aspect, signifying the different modes of its promulgation, and of its reception. Each of these words will now be examined in order, and an attempt will be made to discriminate them.

"1. *Law.* This word is formed from a verb which means to direct, to guide, to aim, to shoot forwards. Its etymological meaning, then, would be a rule of conduct, a κανών σαφὴς. It means God's law in general, whether it be that universal rule called the law of nature, or that which was revealed to his Church by Moses, and perfected by Christ. In strictness, the law means a plain rule of conduct, rather placed clearly in man's sight, than enforced by any command; that is to say, this word does not necessarily include its sanctions.

"2. *Testimonies* are derived from a word which signifies to bear witness, to testify. The ark of the tabernacle is so called, as are the two tables of stone, and the tabernacle: the earnests and witnesses of God's inhabitation among his people. Testimonies are more particularly God's revealed law: the witnesses and confirmation of his promises made to his people, and earnests of his future salvation.

"3. *Precepts*, from a word which means *to place in trust*, mean something intrusted to man, 'that which is committed to thee:' appointments of God, which consequently have to do with the conscience, for which man is responsible, as an intelligent being.

1 *Blessed are they who are upright* In these words the prophet sets forth the same paradox which we met with at the commencement of the Book of Psalms. All men naturally aspire after happiness, but instead of searching for it in the right path, they designedly prefer wandering up and down through endless by-paths, to their ruin and destruction. The Holy Spirit deservedly condemns this apathy and blindness. And but for man's cupidity, which, with brutish impetuosity, hurries him in the opposite direction, the meaning of the words would appear quite plain to him. And the further a man wanders from God, the happier does he imagine himself to be; and hence all treat, as a fable, what the Holy Spirit declares about true piety and the service of God. This is a doctrine which scarcely one among a hundred receives.

The term *way,* is here put for the manner, or course and way of life: and hence he calls those upright in their way, whose sincere and uniform desire it is to practice righteousness, and to devote their life to this purpose. In the next clause of the verse, he specifics more clearly, that a godly and righteous life consists *in walking in the law of God* If a person follow his own humor and caprice, he is certain to go astray; and even should he enjoy the applause of the whole world, he will only weary himself with very

"4. *Statutes.* The verb from which this word is formed means to engrave or inscribe. The word means a definite prescribed written law. The term is applied to Joseph's law about the portion of the priests in Egypt, to the law about the Passover, etc. But in this psalm it has a more internal meaning; — that moral law of God, which is engraved on the fleshy tables of the heart; the inmost and spiritual apprehension of his will: not so obvious as the law and testimonies, and a matter of more direct spiritual communication than his precepts: the latter being more elaborated by the efforts of the mind itself, divinely guided indeed, but perhaps more instrumentally, and less passively, employed.

"5. *Commandments*, derived from a verb signifying to command or ordain. Such was God's command to Adam about the tree; to Noah about constructing the ark.

"6. *Judgments*, derived from a word signifying to govern, to judge or determine, mean judicial ordinances and decisions: legal sanctions.

"7. *Word.* There are two terms, quite distinct in the Hebrew, but both rendered *word*, in each of our authorized versions. The latter of these is rendered *saying* in the former volume of this work. They are closely connected; since out of twenty-two passages in which *word* occurs, in fourteen it is parallel to, or in connection with, *saying.* From this very circumstance it is evident they are not synonymous.

"The term here rendered *word* means the Λόγος, or Word of God, in its most divine sense; the announcement of God's revealed will; his command; his oracle; at times, the special communication to the prophets. The ten commandments are called by this term in Exodus: and דביר is the oracle in the temple. In this psalm it may be considered as, — 1. God's revealed commandments in general. 2. As a revealed promise of certain blessings to the righteous. 3. As a thing committed to him as the minister of God. 4. As a rule of conduct; a channel of illumination.

"8. As to the remaining word *way*, that occurs but twice as a characteristic word, and the places in which it occurs must rather be considered as exceptions to the general rule: so that I am not disposed to consider it as intended to be a cognate expression with the above. At all events, its meaning is so direct and simple as to require no explanation: a plain rule of conduct; in its higher sense, the assisting grace of God through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life." — *Jebb's Literal Translation of the book of Psalms, with Dissertations*, volume 2, pages 279-293.

vanity. But it may be asked, whether the prophet excludes from the hope of happiness all who do not worship God perfectly? Were this his meaning, it would follow that none except angels alone would be happy, seeing that the perfect observance of the law is to be found in no part, of the earth. The answer is easy: When uprightness is demanded of the children of God, they do not lose the gracious remission of their sins, in which their salvation alone consists. While, then, the servants of God are happy, they still need to take refuge in his mercy, because their uprightness is not complete. In this manner are they who faithfully observe the law of God said to be truly happy; and thus is fulfilled that which is declared in Psalm 32:2, "Blessed are they to whom God imputeth not sins." In the second verse, the same doctrine is confirmed more fully, by pronouncing blessed, not. such as are wise in their own conceit, or assume a sort of fantastical holiness, but those who dedicate themselves to the covenant of God, and yield obedience to the dictates of hits law. Farther, by these words, he tells us that God is by no means satisfied with mere external service, for he demands the sincere and honest affection of the heart. And assuredly, if God be the sole judge and disposer of our life:, the truth must occupy the principal place in our heart, because it is not sufficient to have our hands and feet only enlisted in his service.

3. *Surely they do not work iniquity* The statement, that they who follow God as their guide do not work iniquity, may seem to be a mere commonplace, and universally admitted truth. The prophet has two reasons for making it; first, to teach us that our life must be entirely under the direction of God; and, secondly, that we may more diligently and carefully attend to his doctrine. It is acknowledged by every one, that those who render obedience to God are in no danger of going astray, and yet every one is found turning aside to his own ways. Does not such licentiousness or presumption palpably demonstrate that they have a greater regard for their own devices than for the unerring law of God? And after all, as often as a man happens to fall, is not the plea of inadvertence instantly alleged, as if none ever sinned knowingly and voluntarily; or as if the law of God, which is an antidote to all delinquencies, because it keeps all our vicious propensities in check, did not furnish us with sufficient wisdom to put us upon our guard? The prophet, therefore, very justly declares, that those who are instructed in the law of God, cannot set up the plea of ignorance when they fall into sin, seeing they are willfully blind. Were they to attend carefully to God's voice, they would be well fortified against all the snares of Satan. To strike them with terror, he informs them in the fourth verse, that God demands a rigid observance of the law; from which it may be gathered, that he will not suffer the contemners of it to escape with impunity. Besides, by speaking to God in the second person, he places him before our eyes as a Judge.

5 *I wish that my ways may be directed* The original word כּוֹן, *kun,* is sometimes rendered to *establish,* and, accordingly, it may seem as if the

prophet were soliciting for himself the virtue of perseverance. I am rather inclined to understand it as signifying to *direct;* for, although God's plainly instructing us in his law, the obtuseness of our understanding, and the perversity of our hearts, constantly need the direction of his Spirit. Our main desire, therefore, ought to be for an understanding wisely regulated by the law of God, and also for a docile and obedient heart. Next, he adds, if a man carefully observe the law of God, he need be under no apprehension that he will ever regret what he has done or undertaken to do. The word *respect* intimates, that we must not be influenced by our own designs, nor decide, according to Carnal reason, what we are to do, but must at once come to the determination, that they who turn not aside, either to the right hand or the left, from the observance of God's commandments, are indeed in the right path. They who reverently respect his law, may not escape the censure of the great bulk of mankind, yet the prophet declares, that *They shall not be ashamed,* because they have a good conscience in the presence of God and the angels, and, with the approval of this celestial assembly, they are well satisfied and contented; for if they depended upon the opinion of the world, their courage would presently fail. He says, *all thy precepts,* intimating, that among the snares of Satan, amid such thick darkness and so great insensibility as ours, the utmost vigilance and caution are necessary, if we would aim at being entirely exempted from blame. Wherefore, in all that we do, we must endeavor to have the law before us, to keep us from falling.

7. *I will praise thee* He affirms it to be a singular instance of the loving-kindness of God, if a person has made considerable proficiency in his law. As a token and testimony of this, he here puts the giving of thanks to God; as if he should say, Lord, thou wilt confer upon me an inestimable blessing, if thou instruct me in thy law. It follows, therefore, that nothing in this life is more to be desired than this; and my fervent prayer is, that we may be fairly and fully convinced of the truth of it. For while searching carefully after such things as we deem advantageous to us, we do not overlook any earthly convenience, and yet we neglect that which is of most importance. The phrase, the *judgments of thy righteousness,* is the same with the commandments, in which perfect righteousness is comprehended; and thus the prophet commends God's law on account of the thorough perfection of the doctrine contained in it. From this verse we learn, that none will praise God unfeignedly and cordially but he who has made such proficiency in his school as to mold his life into subjection to him. It is vain to make a pretense of praising God with the mouth and the tongue if we dishonor him by our life. Hence the prophet very justly here makes the fruit of genuine piety to consist in celebrating the praises of God without hypocrisy.

8 *I will observe thy statutes* In these words he avers it to be his intention to observe the law of God, but, conscious of his own weakness, he utters a

prayer that God would not deprive him of his grace. The term *forsake* is susceptible of two interpretations, either that God withdraws his Spirit, or that he permits his people to be brought low by adversity, as if he had forsaken them. The latter interpretation agrees best with the context, and is most in accordance with the phrase immediately subjoined, *very far* The prophet is not altogether averse to the trial of his faith, only he is apprehensive lest it might fail were the trial to be too long protracted, and therefore he desires to be treated with tenderness in his infirmity.,' O God! thou sees my frame of mind, and, as I am but a man, do not conceal too long from me the tokens of thy favor, or defer helping me longer than is proper for me, lest, imagining myself to be forsaken of thee, I turn aside from the direct pursuit of godliness."

Psalm 119:9-16

> **ב 9.** Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to thy word. **ב 10.** I have sought thee with my whole heart; do not permit me to wander from thy commandments. **ב 11.** I have hid thy word in my heart, [401] that I might not sin against thee. **ב 12.** Blessed art thou, O Jehovah! teach me thy statutes. **ב 13.** With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. **ב 14.** I have taken pleasure in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. **ב 15.** I will meditate upon thy precepts, and will take heed to thy paths. **ב 16.** I will delight, myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy words.

9. *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?* In this place he repeats, in different words, the same truth which he formerly advanced, That, however much men may pique themselves upon their own works, there is nothing pure in their life until they have made a complete surrender of themselves to the word of the Lord. The more effectually to excite them to this, he produces, in an especial manner, the example of children or youths. In mentioning these, he by no means gives an unbridled license to those who have arrived at mature years, or who are aged, as if they were competent to regulate their own life, and as if their own prudence served as a law to them; but because youth puts men where two ways meet, and renders it imperative for them to select the course of life which they mean to follow, he declares that, when a person sets about the regulation of his life, no advice will prove of any advantage, unless he adopts the law of God as his rule and guide. In this way the prophet stimulates men to an early and seasonable regulation of their manners, and not to delay doing so

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I have hid thy word in my heart, *i.e.*, I have laid it up there, as men deposit their most precious possessions in a secure place known only to themselves. Comp. Proverbs 11:1; and see 2 Kings 20:13, etc., for an instance of the contrary practice.

any longer, agreeably to the words of Solomon, "Remember thy Creator in thy youth, ere the days of trouble come, and the years which shall be grief unto thee," Ecclesiastes 12:1 [402] They who defer from time to time become hardened in their vicious practices, and arrive at mature years, when it is too late to attempt a reformation. There is another reason, arising from the fact, of the carnal propensities being very powerful in youth, requiring a dortble restraint; and the more they are inclined to excess, the greater is the necessity for curbing their licentiousness. The prophet, therefore, not without reason, exhorts them particularly to attend to the observance of the law. We may reason from the greater to the less; for if the law of God possesses the power of restraining the impetuosity of youth, so as to preserve pure and upright all who take it for their guide, then, assuredly, when they come to maturity, and their irregular desires are considerably abated, it will prove the best antidote for correcting their vices. The reason, therefore, of so much evil prevailing in the world, arises from men wallowing in their own impurity, and being disposed to yield more to their own inclination than to heavenly instruction. The only sure protection is, to regulate ourselves according to God's word. Some, wise in their own conceit, throw themselves into the snares of Satan, others, from listlessness and languor, live a vile and wicked life.

10. *With my whole heart* Conscious of the integrity of his heart, the prophet still implores the help of God, that he might not stumble by reason of his infirmity. He makes no boast of self-preparation, as if he had spontaneously begun to inquire after God, but in praising the grace which he had experienced, he at the same time aspires after steadfastness to persevere in walking in his ways. It is folly on the part of the Papists to seize upon this and similar passages, as if the saints, of their own free will, anticipated the grace of the Holy Spirit, and afterwards were favored with his aid. The prophet does not make a division between God and himself, but rather prays God to continue his work till it is completed, agreeably with what we are generally taught, to keep God mindful of his benefits until he accomplish them.

In the meantime, there is good cause for presenting our supplication to God, to stretch out his hand towards us when he sees our minds so settled, that we are solicitous of nothing so much as acting uprightly. And as he elevates us with confidence to ask the gift of perseverance, when he inspires our hearts with proper affection towards him, so also does he entreat us for the future not to sink into a careless and languid state like soldiers who have been discharged, but seek to be constantly directed by the spirit of wisdom, and to be sustained by the principles of fortitude and virtue. David here, from his own example, points out to us a rule, that by how much a man

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— "Et les ans qui se seront en fascherie." — Fr.

finds himself succored by God, by so much ought he to be induced the more carefully and earnestly to implore the continuance of his aid; for unless he restrain us, we will instantly wander and go astray. This sentiment is more explicitly stated in the original word תשגני, *tashqeni,* which is in the passive voice, and signifies, *to be led astray* [403] From the import of the term, I do not mean to establish the doctrine that God secretly incites us to commit sin, but only to let my readers know, that such is our liability to err, that we immediately relapse into sin the instant he leaves us to ourselves. This passage also admonishes us that the man who swerves but a little from God's commandments is guilty of going astray.

11. *I have hid thy word in my heart.* This psalm not being composed for the personal and peculiar use of the author only, we may therefore understand, that as frequently as David sets before us his own example, under this model he points out the course we ought to pursue. Here we are informed that we are well fortified against the stratagems of Satan when God's law is deeply seated in our hearts. For unless it have a fast and firm hold there, we will readily fall into sin. Among scholars, those whose knowledge is confined to books, if they have not the book always before them, readily discover their ignorance; in like manner, if we do not imbibe the doctrine of God, and are well acquainted with it, Satan will easily surprise and entangle us in his meshes. Our true safeguard, then, lies not in a slender knowledge of his law, or in a careless perusal of it, but in hiding it deeply in our hearts. Here we are reminded, that however men may be convinced of their own wisdom, they are yet destitute of all right judgment, except as far as they have God as their teacher.

12. *Blessed art thou, O Jehovah!* Such had been the prophet's proficiency, that he was not only one of 'God's disciples, but also a public teacher of the Church. Nevertheless, acknowledging himself and all the upright to be only one their journey till they arrive at the close of life, he fails not to ask for the spirit of understanding. This passage informs us generally, that if God do not enlighten us with the spirit of discernment, we are not competent to behold the light which shines forth from his law, though it be constantly before us. And thus it happens, that not a few are blind even when surrounded with the clear revelation of this doctrine, because, confident in their own perspicacity, they contemn the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit. Farther, let us learn from this passage, that none are possessed of such superiority of intellect as not to admit of constant increase. If the prophet, upon whom God had conferred so honorable an office as a teacher of the Church, confesses himself to be only a disciple or scholar, what

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"The Hebrew תשגני is here in the conjugation Hiphil, from שגה, *to be ignorant* or *err*. Now of that conjugation the Hebrews observe, that as it signifies sometimes no more than *to permit*, so it sometimes notes *to cause*, sometimes *to occasion*, that which the verb imports." — *Hammond*

madness is it for those who are, greatly behind him in point of attainments not to strain every nerve to rise to higher excellence? Nor does he depend upon his own merits for obtaining his requests; he beseeches God to grant them from a regard to his own glory. This appears from the phraseology by which he introduces his request, *Blessed art thou, O Jehovah!* intimating, that his confidence of success originated in God's being fully entitled to all praise on account of his unbounded goodness, justice, and mercy.

13. *With my lips* In this verse he declares that the law of God was not only deeply engraven on his own heart, but that it was his earnest and strenuous endeavor to gain over many of his fellow-disciples into subjection to God. It is indeed a heartless matter to speak of the law of God abstractly, as we see hypocrites do, who talk very fluently about the whole doctrine of godliness, to which they are entire strangers. What the prophet noticed above, respecting the affection of the heart for God's law, he now likewise applies to the lips. And, immediately afterwards, he again establishes the truth of what he had asserted about his cordial and unfeigned endeavors to instruct others; by saying, that he derived no less pleasure from the doctrine of God than from all the riches of the world. He indirectly contrasts his holy love for the law, with which he was inflamed, with the unholy avarice which has taken possession of almost all the world. "As wealth attracts to itself the hearts of mankind, so I have taken more exquisite delight in the progress which I make in the doctrine of godliness, than if I abounded in all manner of riches."

15. *In thy precepts* That to which I formerly adverted must not be forgotten — the prophet's not making a boast of his own acquirements, but setting before others an example for their imitation. We are aware that the majority of mankind are so much involved in the cares of the world, as to leave no time or leisure for meditating upon the doctrine of God. To meet this callous indifference, he very seasonably commends diligence and attention. And even were we not so ensnared by the world, we know how readily we lose sight of the law of God, in the daily temptations which suddenly overtake us. It is not therefore without reason that the prophet exhorts us to constant exercise, and enjoins us to direct all our energies to the subject of meditation on God's precepts. And as the life of men is unstable, being continually distracted by the carnality of their minds, he declares that he will consider attentively the *ways of God.* Subsequently, he repeats the exquisite pleasure he took in this pursuit. For our proficiency in the law of God will be small, until we cheerfully and heartily set our minds upon it. And, in fact, the commencement of a good life consists in God's law attracting us to him by its sweetness. By the same means the lusts of the flesh, too, are subdued or mitigated. In our natural state, what is more agreeable to us than that which is sinful? This will be the constant tendency of our minds, unless the delight which we feel in the law carry us in the opposite direction.

Psalm 119:17-24

> **ג 17.** Do good to thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word. **ג 18.** Open my eyes, and I shall see the marvelous things of thy law. **ג 19.** I am a stranger on the earth: do not conceal from me thy commandments. **ג 20.** My soul is rent with the desire it hath at all times unto thy judgments. **ג 21.** Thou hast destroyed the proud, they are accursed that wander from thy commandments. **ג 22.** Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies. **ג 23.** Princes also did sit, they spoke against me: thy servant meditated on thy statutes. **ג 24.** Also thy testimonies are my delights, the men of my counsel.

17. *Do good to thy servant* The term גמל *gamal,* which some render *to requite,* does not, among the Hebrews, import mutual recompense, but frequently signifies *to confer a benefit,* as in Psalm 116:7, and many other passages. Here it must be viewed as expressive of free favor. The words, however, may admit of two senses. They may be read as a separate clause, in this manner: O God! display thy goodness to thy servant, and thus I shall live, or then I shall esteem myself happy. Or the verse may form one connected statement: O God! grant to thy servant the favor that, while I live, I may keep thy commandments. If the former lection is adopted, then, by these words, the prophet declares that, without the favor of God, he is like a dead man; that though he might abound in every thing else, yet he could not subsist without feeling that God was propitious towards him. The latter interpretation is preferable, That the prophet asks as a principal favor, that, while he lives, he may devote himself entirely to God; being fully persuaded that the grand object of his existence consists in his exercising himself in his service, an object which he firmly resolves to pursue. For this reason these two clauses are connected together, *that I may live, and keep thy word. "I* desire no other mode of living than that of approving myself to be a true and faithful servant of God." All wish God to grant them a prolongation of their life; a wish after which the whole world ardently aspire, and yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who reflects upon the purpose for which he ought to live. To withdraw us from cherishing such irrational propensities, the prophet here describes the main object of our existence. He declares it to be owing to the peculiar grace of the Holy Spirit, that any person keeps the law of God. Had he imagined that the preparing oneself for the observance of his law depended on his own free will, then this prayer would have been nothing else than downright hypocrisy.

Very similar is the doctrine contained in the next verse. Having acknowledged, that power to keep the law is imparted to men by God, he, at the same time, adds, that every man is blind, until he also enlighten the eyes of his understanding. Admitting that God gives light to us by his word, the prophet here means that we are blind amid the clearest light, until he

remove the veil from our eyes. When he confesses that his eyes are veiled and shut, rendering him unable to discern the light of the heavenly doctrine, until God, by the invisible grace of his Spirit, open them, he speaks as if he were deploring his own blindness, and that of the whole human race. But, while God claims this power for himself, he tells us that the remedy is at hand, provided we do not, by trusting to our own wisdom, reject the gracious illumination offered to us. Let us learn, too, that we do not receive the illumination of the Spirit of God to make us contemn the external word, and take pleasure only in secret inspirations, like many fanatics, who do not regard themselves spiritual, except they reject the word of God, and substitute in its place their own wild speculations. Very different is the prophet's aim, which is to inform us that our illumination is to enable us to discern the light of life, that God manifests by his word. He designates the doctrine of the law, *marvelous things,* [404] to humble us, to contemplate with admiration its height; and to convince us the more of our need of the grace of God, to comprehend the mysteries, which surpass our limited capacity. From which we infer, that not only the ten commandments are included in the term la but also the covenant of eternal salvation, with all its provisions, which God has made. And knowing, as we do, that Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom," "is the end of the law," we need not be surprised at the prophet commending it, in consequence of the sublime mysteries which it contains, Colossians 2:3; Romans 10:4

19. *I am a stranger on the earth.* It is proper to inquire into the reason for his calling himself a sojourner and stranger in the world. The great concern of the unholy and worldly is to spend their life here easily and quietly; but those who know that they have their journey to pursue, and have their inheritance reserved for them in heaven, are not engrossed nor entangled with these perishable things, but aspire after that place to which they are invited. The meaning may be thus summed up: "Lord, since I must pass quickly through the earth, what will become of me if I am deprived of the doctrine of thy law?" We learn from these words from what point we must commence our journey, if we would go on our way cheerfully unto God.

Besides, God is said *to conceal his commandments* from those whose eyes he does not open, because, not being endued with spiritual vision, in seeing they see not, so that what is before their eyes is hid from them. And, to demonstrate that he does not present his request in a careless manner, the prophet adds, that his affection for the law is most intense; for it is no common ardor which is expressed by him in the following language, *My soul*

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Marvelous things "means things which are difficult and wonderful. The reference here is to the figures and adumbration's of the law, which so veiled and concealed the substances to which they related, that the mass of readers quite lost sight of them. The Psalmist therefore prays for Divine illumination, to enable him to solve, at least in some decree, the enigmas in which future things were enveloped." — *Walford*

is rent with the desire it hath at all times unto thy judgments. As the man who may concentrate all his thoughts on one point with such intensity as almost to deprive him of the power of perception, may be said to be the victim of his intemperate zeal, so the prophet declares the energy of his mind to be paralyzed and exhausted by his ardent love for the law. [405] The clause, *at all times,* is meant to express his perseverance; for it may occasionally happen that a man may apply himself with great ardor to the study of the heavenly doctrine; but it is only temporary-his zeal soon vanishes away. Steadfastness is therefore necessary, lest, through weariness, we become faint in our minds.

21. *Thou hast destroyed the proud.* Others render it:, *Thou hast rebuked the proud;* a translation of which the Hebrew term גער*, gaar,* admits when the letter ב*, beth,* is joined with it in construction; but this being awaiting, it is better to render it *destroy* [406] It makes, however, little difference to the main drift of the passage, there being no doubt that the intention of the prophet is, to inform us that God's judgments instructed him to apply his mind to the study of the law; and certainly this is an exercise which we ought on no account to defer till God visit us with chastisement.. But when we behold him taking vengeance upon the wicked, and the despisers of his word, we must be stupid, indeed, if his rod do not teach us wisdom; and, doubtless, it is an instance of special kindness on God's part, to spare us, and only to terrify us from afar, that he may bring us to himself without injuring or chastising us at all.

It is not without reason that he denominates all unbelievers *proud,* because it is true faith alone which humbles us, and all rebellion is the offspring of pride. From this we learn how profitable it is to consider carefully and attentively the judgments of God, by which he overthrows such haughtiness. When the weak in faith see the wicked rise in furious. opposition against God, arrogantly casting off all restraint, and holding all religion in derision with impunity, they begin to question whether there be a God who sits as judge in heaven. God may, for a time, wink at this: by-and-bye, we witness him setting forth some indication of his judgment, to convince us that he hath not in vain uttered threatening against the

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"Every intense exertion of mind has an influence, if it be long continued, to exhaust and impair the faculties in some degree. Such an effect is here alluded to; the close and assiduous attention which the Psalmist had paid, and the exertion of strong desire which he had exercised, produced the feeling which he here speaks of. He is also to be regarded as using the language of poetry, which admits of stronger colouring than prosaic description." — *Walford.*

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"Maintenant veu qu'elle n'y est point adjoustee, le mot de Destruire y conviendra mieux." — *Fr.*

violators of his law; and we ought to bear in mind that all who depart from him are reprobate.

Let it be carefully observed that, *by wandering from his commandments,* is not meant all kinds of transgression indiscriminately, but that unbridled licentiousness which proceeds from impious contempt of God. It is, indeed, given as a general sentence, that

"*every* one is cursed who continueth not in all
things which are written," Deuteronomy 27:26

But as God in his paternal kindness, bears with those who fail through infirmity of the flesh, so here we must understand these judgments to be expressly executed upon the wicked and reprobate; and their end, as Isaiah declares, is,

"that the inhabitants of the earth may learn righteousness,"
(Isaiah 26:9)

22. *Remove from me reproach* This verse may admit of two senses: Let the children of God walk as circumspectly as it is possible for them to do, they will not escape being liable to many slanders, and therefore they have good reason to petition God to protect the unfeigned godliness which they practice against poisonous tongues. The following meaning may not inappropriately be given to the passage: O Lord, since I am conscious to myself, and thou art a witness of my unfeigned integrity, do not permit the unrighteous to sully my reputation, by laying unfounded accusations to my charge. But the meaning will be more complete if we read it as forming one continued sentence: O God, permit not the ungodly to mock me for endeavoring to keep thy law. For this impiety has been rampant in the world even from the beginning, that the sincerity of God's worshippers has been matter of reproach and derision; even as, at this day, the same reproaches are still cast upon God's children, as if not satisfied with the common mode of living, they aspired being wiser than others. That which was spoken by Isaiah must now be accomplished, "Behold I and my children, whom thou hast given me to be for a sign;" so that God's children, with Christ their head, are, among the profane, as persons to be wondered at. Accordingly, Peter testifies that they charge us with madness for not following their ways, (1 Peter 4:4;) and as this reproach — the becoming the subjects of ridicule on account of their unfeigned affection for God's law — tends to the dishonor of his name, the prophet very justly demands the suppression of all these taunts; and Isaiah also, by his own example, directs us to flee to this refuge, because, although the wicked may arrogantly pour out their blasphemies on the earth, yet God sitteth in heaven as our judge.

In the following verse, he states more plainly that it was not in vain he besought God to vindicate him from such calumnies; for he was held in derision, not only by the common people, and by the most abandoned of mankind, but also by the chief men, who sat as judges. The term, *to sit,* imports that they had spoken injuriously and unjustly of him, not merely in

their houses and at their tables, but publicly and on the very judgment-seat, where it behooved them to execute justice, and render to every one his due. The particle גם, *gam,* which he employs, and which signifies *also* or *even,* contains an implied contrast between the secret whisperings of the common people, and the imperious decisions of these imperious men, enhancing still more the baseness of their conduct. Nevertheless, in the midst of all this he steadfastly persevered in following after godliness. Satan was assailing him with this device in order to drive him to despair, but he tells us that he sought a remedy from it in meditation on the law of God. We are here taught, that it is not unusual for earthly judges to oppress God's servants, and make a mock of their piety. If David could not escape this reproach, why should we, in these times, expect to do so? Let us further learn, that there is nothing more perverse than to place dependence upon the judgments of men, because, in doing so, we must, of necessity, constantly be in a state of vacillation. Let us therefore rest satisfied with the approbation of God, though men causelessly defame us — not only men of low degree, but also the very judges themselves, from whom the utmost impartiality might be expected.

24. *Also thy testimonies are my delight* The particle גם, *gam,* connects this with the preceding verse. To adhere unflinchingly to our purpose, when the world takes up an unjust opinion of us, and, at the same time, constantly to mediate on God's law, is an example of Christian fortitude seldom to be met with. The prophet now informs us how he overcame this temptation. *Thy testimonies,* says he, *are my delight:* "Although the cruel injustice of men, in charging me falsely, grieves and annoys me, yet the pleasurable delight which I take in thy law is a sufficient recompense for it all." He adds, that God's testimonies *are his counselors,* by which we are to understand he did not rely on his own judgment simply, but took counsel from the word of God. This point ought to be carefully considered, inasmuch as we see how blind affection predominates in directing the lives of men. Whence does the avaricious man ask council, but from the erroneous principle which he has assumed, that riches are superior to every thing? Why does the ambitious man aspire after nothing so much as power, but because he regards nothing equal to the holding of honorable rank in the world? It is not surprising, therefore, that men are so grievously misled, seeing they give themselves up to the direction of such evil counselors. Guided by the word of God, and prudently yielding obedience to its dictates, there will then be no inlet to the deceits of our flesh, and to the delusions of the world, and we will stand invincible against all the assaults of temptation.

Psalm 119:25-32

ד **25.** My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken me according to thy word. ד **26.** I have declared my ways, and thou didst answer me: teach me thy statutes. ד **27.** Make me to understand the way of thy

precepts: and I will meditate on thy wonderful works. ד **28.** My soul, droppeth [407] away for grief: [408] raise me up according to thy word. ד **29.** Take away from me the way of falsehood: and grant to me the favor of thy law. ד **30.** I have chosen the way of truth: and I have set thy judgments before me. ד **31.** I have cleaved to thy testimonies: O Jehovah! let me, not be ashamed. ד **32.** I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt have enlarged my heart.

25. *My soul cleaveth to the dust* [409] He means that he had no more hope of life than if he had been shut up in the tomb; and this must be carefully attended to, that we my not become impatient and grieved, whenever it may please God to make us endure various kinds of death. And, by his own example, he instructs us, when death stares us in the face, and all hope of escape fails, to present our petitions to God, in whose hand, as we have elsewhere seen, are the issues of death, and whose peculiar prerogative it is to restore life to those that are dead, (Psalm 68:21) As the combat is hard, he betakes himself to the promises of God, and invites others to do the same. The expression, *according to thy word,* [410] is an acknowledgment, that should he depart from God's word, no hope would be left for him; but as God has affirmed that the life of the faithful is in his hand, and under his protection, shut up as he was in the grave, he yet comforted himself with the expectation of life.

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My soul may here be considered equivalent to *I myself.* In Jeremiah 51:14, *by my soul* is rendered, in our English translation, *by myself.*

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"Mon ame s'escoule goutte a goutte." — *Fr.* "Floweth drop by drop." Walford, who translates "is bowed down," considers Calvin's translation objectionable, as it does not correspond with the prayer in the succeeding sentence, *Raise me up according to thy word.* "The Vulgar translation of this clause," says he, "'my soul melteth,' or, as other interpreters think, 'my soul is dissolved into tears,' appears to be inadmissible, chiefly on account of the next clause. Dathe, following Driessenius, Knapp, and Seiler, explains it, as is here done, by 'is bowed down,' a sense which the word דלף has in the Arabic use of it, and which certainly agrees with the connection much better than that of weeping or dissolving."

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The original word for *my soul* might here, as in verse 28, be translated *I myself*, or *my life*, and then, cleaving to the dust may imply an apprehension of approaching death; and this agrees best with the petition. "By dust is here probably meant the sepulchre or grave, as in Psalm 22:15, 29, so that the Psalmist is to be understood to say, 'The dangers which surround me are such as threaten my death;' and he immediately adds, 'Revive me according to thy word,' *i.e.*, Make me glad by delivering me from these perils, in agreement with the promises which thou hast given me." — *Walford*

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Arnobins and Augustine interpret *thy word* as signifying, in this place, *thy promise.* See verse 28, and Psalm 44:25.

26. *I have declared my ways.* In the first part of this verse he affirms he had prayed sincerely, and had not imitated the proud, who, trusting to their own wisdom, fortitude, and opulence, make not God their refuge. That man is said *to declare his ways to God,* who presumes neither to attempt nor undertake any thing unless with His assistance, and, depending wholly on His providence, commits all his plans to His sovereign pleasure, and centers all his affections in Him; doing all this honestly, and not as the hypocrites, who profess one thing with their lips, and conceal another within their hearts. He adds, that *he was heard,* which was of great importance in making him cherish good hope for the future.

In the second part of the verse he solemnly declares, that he holds nothing more dear than the acquiring of a true understanding of the law. There are not a few who make known their desires unto God, but then they would that he would yield to their extravagant passions. And, therefore, the prophet affirms that he desires nothing more than to *be well instructed in God's statutes.* This statement is strengthened by the next verse, in which he once more asks the knowledge of these to be communicated to him. In both passages it must be carefully observed, that with the law of God set before us, we will reap little benefit from merely perusing it, if we have not his Spirit as our internal teacher.

Some expositors will have the word which I have translated, *I will meditate,* to be, *I will entreat or argue,* and thus the Hebrew term שוח, *shuach,* is referred both to the words and thoughts. The latter meaning is most in accordance with the scope of the passage. I take the import of the prophet's words to be this: — That I may meditate upon thy wondrous works, make me to understand thy commandments. We will have no relish for the law of God until he sanctify our minds, and render them susceptible of tasting heavenly wisdom. And from this disrelish springs indifference, so that it is a grievous thing for the world to give a respectful attention to the law of God, having no savor for the admirable wisdom contained in it. With great propriety, therefore, does the prophet pray that this way may be opened to him by the gift of knowledge. From these words we are instructed, that in proportion to the spirit of knowledge given to us, our regard for the law of God, and our delight in meditating on it, ought to increase.

28. *My soul droppeth away for grief* As a little before he said that his soul cleaved to the dust, so now, almost in the same manner, he complains that it melted away with grief. Some are of opinion that he alludes to tears, as if he had said that his soul was dissolved in tears. But the simpler meaning is, that his strength was poured out like water. The verb is in the future tense, yet it denotes a continued action. The prophet assures himself of a remedy for this his extreme sorrow, provided God stretch out his hand towards him. Formerly, when almost lifeless, he entertained the expectation of a revival through the grace of God; now also, by the same means, he cherishes the hope of being restored to renovated and complete vigor, notwithstanding

he was nearly consumed. He repeats the expression, *according to thy word,* because, apart from his word, God's power would afford us little comfort. But when he comes to our aid, even should our courage and strength fail, his promise is abundantly efficacious to fortify us.

29. *Take away from me the way of falsehood.* Knowing how prone the nature of man is to vanity and falsehood, he first asks the sanctification of his thoughts, lest, being entangled by the snares of Satan, he fall into error. Next, that he may be kept from falsehood, he prays to be fortified with the doctrine of the law. The second clause of the verse is interpreted variously. Some render it, *make thy law pleasant to me.* And as the law is disagreeable to the flesh, which it subdues and keeps under, there is good cause why God should be asked to render it acceptable and pleasant to us. Some expound it, *have mercy upon me according to thy law* as if the prophet should draw pity from the fountain-head itself, because God in his law promised it to the faithful. Both of these meanings appear to me forced; and, therefore, I am more disposed to adopt another, freely *grant to me thy law.* The original term, חנני *channeni,* cannot be translated otherwise in Latin than, *gratify thou me;* an uncouth and barbarous expression I admit, yet that will give me: little concern, provided my readers comprehend the prophet's meaning. [411] The amount is, that being full of blindness, nothing is more easy than for us to be greatly deceived by error. And, therefor unless God teach us by the Spirit of wisdom, we will presently be hurried away into various errors. The means of our being preserved from error are stated to consist in his instructing us in his law. He makes use of the term *to gratify.* "It is indeed an incomparable kindness that men are directed by thy law, but in consequence of thy kindness being unmerited, I have no hesitation in asking of thee to admit me as a participator of this thy kindness." If the prophet, who for some time previous served God, in now aspiring after farther attainments, does not ask for a larger measure of grace to be communicated to him meritoriously, but confesses it to be the free gift of God, then that impious tenet, which obtains in the papacy, that an increase of grace is awarded to merit as deserving of it, must fall to the ground.

30. *I have chosen the way of truth.* In this and the following verse he affirms that he was so disposed as to desire nothing more than to follow righteousness and truth. It is, therefore, with great propriety he employs the term *to choose.* The old adage, that man's life is as it were at the point where two ways meet, refers not simply to the general tenor of human life, but to *every* particular action of it. For no sooner do we undertake any thing, no matter how small, than we are grievously perplexed, and as

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"On pourroit dire en francois, Donne moy gratuitement." — *Fr.* "One can say in French, Give me gratuitously."

if hurried off by a tempest, are confounded by conflicting counsels. Hence the prophet declares, that in order constantly to pursue the right path, he had resolved and fully determined not to relinquish the truth. And thus he intimates that he was not entirely exempted from temptations, yet that he had surmounted them by giving himself up to the conscientious observance of the law.

The last clause of the verse, *I have set thy judgments before me,* relates to the same subject. There would be no fixed choice on the part of the faithful, unless they steadily contemplate the law, and did not suffer their eyes to wander to and fro. In the subsequent verse he not only asserts his entertaining this holy affection for the law, but also combines it with prayer, that he might not become ashamed and enfeebled under the derision of the ungodly, while he gave himself wholly to the law of God. Here he employs the same term as formerly, when he said his soul cleaved to the dust, and, in doing so, affirms he had so firmly taken hold of God's law, that he cannot be separated from it. From his expressing a fear lest he might be put to shame or overwhelmed with reproach, we learn that the more sincerely a man surrenders himself to God, the more will he be assailed by the tongues of the vile and the venomous.

32 *I will run the way of thy commandments.* The meaning of the prophet is, that when God shall inspire him with love for his la he will be vigorous and ready, nay, even steady, so as not to faint in the middle of his course. His words contain an implied admission of the supineness inability of men to make any advancement in well-doing until God enlarge their hearts. No sooner does God expand their hearts, than they are fitted not only for walking, but also for running in the way of his commandments. He reminds us that the proper observance of the law consists not merely in external works, — that it demands willing obedience, so that the heart must, to some extent, and in some way, enlarge itself. Not that it has the self-determining power of doing this, but when once its hardness and obstinacy are subdued, it moves freely without being any longer contracted by its own narrowness. Finally, this passage tells us, when God has once enlarged our hearts, there will be no lack of power, because, along with proper affection, he will furnish ability, so that our feet will be ready to run.

Psalm 119:33-40

ה **33.** Teach me, O Jehovah! the way of thy statutes; and I will keep it unto the end. ה **34.** Make me to understand, and I will observe thy law; and keep it with my whole heart. ה **35.** Direct me in the way of thy statutes; for in it does my heart take pleasure. ה **36.** Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness. ה **37.** Turn away mine eyes from seeing vanity; in thy way quicken me. ה **38.** Confirm thy word to thy servant, who ‘.is devoted to thy ear. ה **39.** Remove from me the reproach of which I am afraid: for thy judgments are

good. ה **40.** Lo! I have a desire to thy commandments: quicken me in thy righteousness.

33. *Teach me, O Jehovah/the way of thy statutes.* He again presents the same prayer which he has already frequently done in this psalm, it being of the last importance for us to know that the main thing in our life consists in having God for our governor. The majority of mankind think of anything rather than this, as that which they ought to ask from God. The Holy Spirit, therefore, often inculcates this desire, and we ought always to keep it in mind, that not only the inexperienced and unlearned, but those who have made great progress, may not cease to aspire after farther advancement. And as the Spirit of understanding comes from above, they should seek to be guided by his invisible agency to the proper knowledge of the law.

In the second clause of the verse the prophet points out the particular kind of doctrine of which he treats, that which virtually and effectually tends to renovate the heart of man. Interpreters explain the word עקב, *ekeb,* two ways. Some would have it to denote wages or reward, and then the Psalmist's meaning would be: After I have been well instructed, then shall I know that those who apply themselves to the observance of thy law will not labor in vain; and, therefore, for the sake of the reward, I will keep thy commandments, persuaded that thou wilt never disappoint thy servants. Others render it, *until the end,* because those whom God teaches he teaches successfully, and, at the same time, strengthens them for prosecuting their journey without feeling lassitude or languor by the way, and enables them to persevere with constancy until they arrive at the termination of their course. I am far from supposing that he has no reference to the grace of perseverance. Let my readers, however, consider whether this verse may not be taken simply as the words stand in the original. The preposition *until* is not expressed by the prophet, who merely says, *I will keep the end.* "Lord, I have need of constant teaching, that I may not fall short of, but keep my eye continually upon my mark; for thou commandest me to run in thy course, on condition that death alone should be the goal. Unless thou teach me daily, this perseverance will not be found in me. But if thou guide me, I will be constantly upon the watch, and will never turn away my eyes from my end, or aim." In my version I have inserted the commonly received reading.

34. *Make me to understand* We are here informed that true wisdom consists in being wise according to the law of God, that it may preserve us in fear and obedience to him. In asking God to confer this wisdom upon him, he owns that men, in consequence of their natural blindness, aim at anything rather than this. And, indeed, it is quite foreign to the notions usually prevalent among mankind to strain every nerve to keep God's law. The world esteems as wise those only who look well to their own interests, are acute and politic in temporal matters, and who even excel in the art of beguiling the simple. In opposition to such a sentiment, the prophet

pronounces men to be void of true understanding as long as the fear of God does not predominate among them. For himself he asks no other prudence than the surrendering of himself entirely to God's direction. At the same time, he acknowledges this to be the special gift of God, which none can procure by his own power or policy; for were each adequate to be his own teacher in this matter, then this petition would be superfluous.

Moreover, as the observance of the law is no common occurrence, he employs two terms in reference to it. "Lord, it is a high and hard thing to keep thy law strictly as it ought, which demands from us purity beyond what we are able to attain; yet, depending on the heavenly illumination of thy Spirit, I will not cease my endeavors to keep it." The following, however, renders the meaning more clear: "Give me understanding to keep and observe thy law with my whole heart." Mention is made of *the whole heart,* to tell us how far they are from the righteousness of the law who obey it only in the letter, doing nothing deserving of blame in the sight of men. God puts a restraint principally on the heart, that genuine uprightness may flourish there, whose fruits may afterwards appear in the life. This spiritual observance of the law is a most convincing evidence of the necessity of being divinely prepared and formed for it.

35. *Direct me in the path* The frequent repetition of this phraseology by the prophet is not to be considered as redundant. Seeing that the end of man's existence ought to consist in profiting in God's school, we nevertheless perceive how the world distracts him by its allurements, and how he also forms for himself a thousand avocations calculated to withdraw his thoughts from the main business of his life. The next clause of the verse, *in it I take pleasure,* must be carefully attended to. For it is an indication of rare excellence when a person so arranges his sentiments and affections as to renounce all the enticements pleasant to the flesh, and take delight in nothing so much as in the service of God. The prophet had already attained to this virtue but he still perceives that he is not yet perfect. Therefore, that his desire may be fully accomplished, he solicits fresh assistance from God, according to the saying of Paul,

"It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasures" Philippians 2:13.

Let it be remembered, that he does not boast of the inherent working of his nature, but sets forth the grace he has received, that God may complete the work he has begun. "Lord, thou hast given me courage, grant me also strength." Hence in the term *pleasure* there is an implied opposition to the lusts of the flesh, which keep the hearts of mankind lettered by their enticements.

36. *Incline my heart* In this verse he confesses the human heart to be so far from yielding to the justice of God, that it is more inclined to follow an opposite course. Were we naturally and spontaneously inclined to the righteousness of the law, there would be no occasion for the petition of the

Psalmist, *Incline my heart* It remains, therefore, that our hearts are full of sinful thoughts, and wholly rebellious, until God by his grace change them. This confession on the part of the prophet must not be overlooked, That the natural corruption of man is so great, that he seeks for any thing rather than what is right, until he be turned by the power of God to new obedience, and thus begin to be inclined to that which is good.

In the second clause of the verse the prophet points to those impediments which prevent mankind from attaining to the desire of righteousness; their being inclined to covetousness. By a figure of speech, [412] in which a part is put for the whole, the species is put for the genus. The Hebrew term, בצע *batsang,* signifies *to use violence,* or *to covet,* or *to defraud;* but covetousness is most in accordance with the spirit of the passage, provided we admit the prophet to have selected this species, "the root of all evils," to demonstrate that nothing is more opposed to the righteousness of God, (1 Timothy 6:10). We are here instructed generally, that we are so much under the influence of perverse and vicious affections, our hearts abhor the study of God's law, until God inspire us with the desire for that which is good.

37. *Turn away mine eyes.* By these words we are taught that all our senses are so filled with vanity, that, until refined and rectified, their alienation from the pursuit of righteousness is no matter of surprise. In the former verse he informed us of the reigning of that depravity in the hearts of men, which he now says reaches also to the outward senses. *"The* disease of covetousness not only lurks in our hearts, but spreads over every part, so that neither eyes, ears, feet, nor hands, have escaped its baneful influence; in a word, nothing is exempted from corruption." And we know, assuredly, that the guilt of original sin is not confined to one faculty of man only; it pervades his whole constitution. If our eyes must be turned away from vanity by the special grace of God, it follows, that, as soon as they are opened, they are eagerly set on the impostures of Satan, by which they are beset on all sides. If Satan only laid snares for us, and were we possessed of sufficient prudence to guard against his deceits, it could not, with propriety, be said that God turned away our eyes from vanity; but, as they are naturally set upon sinful allurements, there is need for their being withdrawn from them. As often, then, as we open our eyes, we must not forget that two gates are opened for the devil to enter our hearts, unless God guard us by his Holy Spirit. The remarks which he makes, in reference to the eyes, are equally applicable to the other senses, inasmuch as he again employs that figure of speech, by which a part is taken for the whole.

The other clause of the verse corresponds well with the meaning here given. Others may propose different interpretations; I think, however, the following is the most natural: Lord, as the whole life of mankind is accursed,

412 Per Synecdochen.

so long as they employ their powers in committing sin, grant that the power which I possess may aspire after nothing except the righteousness which thou appointest us. The better to manifest this, we must lay it down as a first principle, that seeing, hearing, walking, and feeling, are God's precious gifts; that our understandings and will, with which we are furnished, are a still more valuable gift; and, after all, there is no look of the eyes, no motion of the senses, no thought of the mind, unmingled with vice and depravity. Such being the case, the prophet, with good reason, surrenders himself entirely to God, for the mortification of the flesh, that he might begin to live anew.

38. *Confirm thy word unto thy servant.* Here we have briefly set forth the sole end and legitimate use of prayer, which is, that we may reap the fruits of God's promises. Whence it comes to pass, that they commit sin who utter vague and incoherent desires. For we perceive the prophet allows not himself to petition or wish any thing but what God hath condescended to promise. And certainly their presumption is great, who rush into the presence of God without any call from his word; as if they would make him subservient to their humor and caprice. The argument by which the Psalmist enforces his plea deserves to be noticed*; because I am devoted to thy fear.* The relative אשר *asher,* in this place bears the signification of the causal conjunction, *because* or *for.* The prophet intimates that he does not content himself with mere temporal enjoyments, as worldly men do; and that he did not make a preposterous abuse of God's promises, to secure the delights of the flesh, but that he made his fear and reverence his aim. And truly the best assurance which we can have of obtaining our requests is when these and God's service harmonize, and our sole desire is that he may reign in and over us.

39. *Take away my reproach.* It is not certain to what reproach he alludes. Knowing that many calumniators were on the watch to find occasion for reviling him, should they happen to detect him in any offense, it is not without reason he dreaded lest he might fall into such disgrace, and that by his own fault. Probably he might be apprehensive of some other reproach, aware that wicked men shamefully and injuriously slander the good generally, and, by their calumnies, distort and pervert their good actions. The concluding clause, *Because the judgments of God are good,* is the reason why God should put to silence the mischievous tongues, which pour out the venom of their malice without shame against the innocent, who are reverently observing his law. If any be inclined to view the word *reproach* as directed against God himself, such an interpretation is by no means objectionable, That the prophet, whose aim it was to stand approved as to his life in God's sight, merely desired, when he appeared before his tribunal, not to be judged as a reprobate man; just as if, with great zeal and magnanimity, he would despise all the empty talk of the men of the world, provided he stood upright in God's sight. Above all, it becomes holy men to dread the reproach of being suffused with shame at God's judgment-seat.

40. *Behold, I have a desire to thy precepts* This is a repetition of what he declared a little before, with regard to his pious affection, and his love of righteousness; and that nothing was wanting but God to complete the work which he had commenced. If this interpretation be admitted, then, *to be quickened in the righteousness of God,* will be tantamount to being quickened in the way. The term *righteousness* is often put in this psalm for the law of God, or the rule of a righteous life. This view tends to make the two parts of the verse accord with one another. "Lord, this is now a remarkable kindness thou hast done me, in having inspired me with a holy desire to keep thy law; one thing is still necessary, that this same virtue pervade my whole life." But as the word *righteousness* is ambiguous, my readers may, if they choose, understand it thus: Restore, defend, and maintain me for the sake of thy goodness, which thou art wont to show to all thy people. I have already pointed out the exposition which I prefer.

Psalm 119:41-48

ו 41. And let thy mercies come to me, O Jehovah! and thy salvation, according to thy word. **ו 42.** And I will answer a word to him who reproacheth me, because I have trusted in thy word. **ו 43.** And take not the word of truth too long out, of my mouth, because I hope for thy judgments. **ו 44.** And I will keep thy law always, even for ever and ever. **ו 45.** And I will walk at ease; [413] because I have sought thy statutes. **ו 46**. And I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed. **ו 47.** And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. **ו 48.** And I will lift up my hands to thy statutes, which I have loved, and will meditate on thy precepts.

41. *Let thy mercies come to me* There can be no doubt, that, in mentioning the *mercy of God* first, and afterwards *his salvation,* the Psalmist, according to the natural order, puts the cause before the effect. By adopting this arrangement, he acknowledges that there is no salvation for him but in the pure mercy of God. And while he desires a gracious salvation, he, at the same time, relies on the promise, as we have already elsewhere seen.

In the second verse he boasts that he is furnished with the best defense against the calumnies of his enemies, arising from his trust in the word of God. We may resolve the future tense into the optative mood, as many do: O Lord, since *I have trusted in thy word,* grant that my mouth with all boldness may repel the slanders which they utter against me, and suffer me not to be silent when they load me with unmerited reproach." Whichever of these meanings we adopt, we are taught that there will always be evil-speakers, who will not cease to defame the children of God, though they

413 "Au large." — *Fr.*

be entirely undeserving of such treatment. It is somewhat dubious to what particular kind of reproach he refers; for the ungodly not only cover the children of God with ignominy, but also make their faith the subject of ridicule. I prefer the following interpretation, because it agrees best with the context, and David is here placing his trust in God in opposition to their derision. "I shall have something to reply to the base mockery of the enemies who injure me without cause, in that God never disappoints those who place their confidence in him." If any one be inclined to consider the passage as embracing both meanings, I offer no objection to it. Besides, he does not simply say, that he trusted in God, but that he also trusted in his word, which is the ground of his trust. We must carefully attend to the correspondence and mutual relation between the term *word,* in the first part of the verse, and that in the other. Were not God, by his Word, to furnish us with another word for our defense, we would instantly be overwhelmed with the insolence of our enemies. If, then, we wish to be proof against the attacks of the world, the commencement and foundation of our magnanimity is here pointed out to us, — our trusting in God's word, guarded by which, the Spirit of God calls upon us boldly to contemn the virulent blasphemies of the ungodly. And to qualify us for repelling such blasphemies, he connects the word of hope with the word of confession.

43. *Take not the word of truth too long out of my mouth* [414] It may be asked, why he demands rather to have his tongue filled with, than his heart fortified by, the *word of truth;* inasmuch as the latter takes the precedence, both in point of order and of excellence. What will it profit us to be fluent and eloquent in speech, if our hearts are destitute of faith? On the other hand, wherever there is firm faith, there to speech will flow ultroneously. My reply is, that David was not so concerned about outward confession as not to give the preference to the faith of the heart; but considering that he is making his address to God, there is nothing strange in his making mention only of the former, under which, however, he includes also the latter. "Lord, support not only my heart by faith, lest I be overwhelmed with temptation, but grant me also freedom of speech, that I may fearlessly sound forth thy praises among men." We observe, when he asks to be endued with boldness of speech, that he begins with the heart.

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"*O take not, etc.* This verse seems to admit of either of the two following interpretations: 'Suffer me not to desist utterly from making an open profession of true religion; for I wait for thy promises:' or, 'Suffer me not to be reproached with falsehood, (for having asserted that thou wouldest take vengeance on the wicked,) because I have looked for thy judgments,' *i.e.*, thy penal judgments. Calvin favors the former interpretation, the latter is Le Clerc's." — *Cresswell.* Walford, by *word*, understands the answer that the Psalmist had to make to the accusations of his enemies: and observes, "This answer, which asserted his innocence of the crimes with which they charged him, he declares to be altogether true; and he entreats that God, as a judge, would not suffer him to be deprived of the benefit of that answer, but pronounce a righteous sentence between them."

It may be farther inquired here, why he says *too long,* just as if he were not afraid of being deprived of the word of truth for a short time. Such a supposition were most absurd, seeing we must watch every moment lest we be overtaken by the enemy, when we are unarmed and powerless. The solution of this difficulty must be drawn from our own experience; for in this, the infirmity of our flesh, it is almost impossible but that, occasionally, even the stoutest heart will quail under the violent assaults of Satan. And although their faith fails not, yet it shakes, and they do not find such presence of mind, as that there is constantly a uniform train of speech, and a prompt reply to the derision's of the ungodly; but, on the contrary, they rather begin to stagger and quake for a short time. Conscious of this weakness, which is perceptible in all mankind, he accommodates his prayer in the following manner: "Though I am not always prepared with that boldness of speech which is desirable, suffer me not to continue long silent." By this language the prophet tacitly admits, that he had not been so steadfast and bold as was requisite, but that he was, as it were, struck speechless by reason of fear. Whence we may learn, that the faculty of speaking freely is no more in our power than are the affections. of the heart. As far, then, as God directs our tongues, they are prepared for ready utterance; but no sooner does he withdraw the spirit of magnanimity, than not only our hearts faint, or rather fail, but also our tongues become mute. The cause of this is subjoined in these words, *for I have waited for thy judgments* for so he literally expresses himself. From which we conclude, that *judgments* refer not merely to the precepts of the law, but also to the promises, which constitute the true foundation of our confidence. Some render it, *I was afraid of thy. judgments,* deriving the word here employed from the root חול *chul;* which translation I am unable to say whether it be suitable or not. But of this I am certain, that to understand *judgments* as equivalent to *punishments,* is quite foreign to the design of the prophet.

44. *I will keep thy law continually* He resolves to devote himself to the study of the law, not for a short time only, but even to the termination of his life. The employing of three synonymous words, תמיד, *tamid,* עולם, *olam,* עד, *ed,* so far from being viewed as a superfluous accumulation of terms, contains an implied indication, that, unless the faithful make a strenuous and steady opposition, the fear of God may be gradually effaced from their minds by various temptations, and they will lose the affection which they bear for the law. In order, therefore, that he may be the better prepared for meeting these trials, he alludes to the difficulty and danger connected with them.

The next verse may be read as expressing a desire that he might walk. Be this as it may, we retain the commonly received reading, That David exults at the thought of his path becoming plain and easy, in consequence of his seeking diligently after God's precepts; that is, *to walk at ease* The ways of men are frequently rugged and obstructed, because they

themselves lay various stumblingblocks in them, or entangle themselves in many inextricable windings. Hence it comes to pass, that while none will submit to the word of God as their rule, every man endures the punishment legitimately due to such arrogance. On all sides God lays snares for us, puts pitfalls in our way, causes us to fall in with paths broken and rugged, and at last shuts us up in a bottomless pit: and by how much the more politic a mart is, by so much the more will he meet with obstructions in his path.

This verse teaches us that, if any man yield implicit obedience to God, he will receive this as his reward, that he shall walk with a calm and composed mind; and should he meet with difficulties, he will find the means of surmounting them. The faithful, however readily and submissively they give themselves up to God, may happen to find themselves involved in perplexity; nevertheless, the end contemplated by Paul is accomplished, that though they be in trouble and toil, yet they do not continue in irremediable distress, because it is the duty (so to speak) of God to point out a way for them where there seems to be no way, (2 Corinthians 4:8.) Moreover, when grievously oppressed, even then they walk at ease, for they commit the doubtful issue of events to God in such a manner, that, having him for their guide, they have no doubt they will come out boldly from the depths of distress.

46. *And I will steal, of thy testimonies before kings* [415] In these words he seems to believe that he is in possession of that which he formerly prayed for. Having said, "Take not away the word out of my mouths" and now, as if he had obtained what he requested, he rises up, and maintains he will not be dumb, even were he called upon to speak in the presence of kings. There can be no question that he affirms he would willingly stand forward in vindication of the glory of God in the face of the whole world. He selects kings, who are generally more to be dreaded than other men, and haughtily shut the mouths of God's witnesses. Sometimes, indeed, it happens we will not hold out even in the presence of men in the humblest ranks of life. The moment a man sets himself in opposition to the word of God, we instinctively shrink back from fear; and that boldness of speech, of which we boasted at first, instantly disappears: but our want of courage is most palpable when we are summoned before the thrones of kings. And this is the reason why David asserts, that he will not only hold out against enemies among the meanest of men, but also will remain firm and fearless before kings. These words inform us that we have profited well and truly by God's word, when

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"Dr Delaney supposes that this is spoken in reference to Achish, king of Gath, whom David had instructed in the Jewish religion: but we have already seen that it is most likely that the psalm was compiled under the Babylonish captivity. But the words may, with more propriety, be referred to the case of Daniel, and other bold and faithful Israelites, who spoke courageously before Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. See the Books of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah." — *Dr Adam Clarke.*

our hearts are so completely fortified against the fear of man, that we do not dread the presence of kings, even though all the world attempts; to fill us with dejection and dismay. It is most unbecoming that God's glory should be obscured by their empty splendor.

47. *And I will delight myself* The sentiment contained in this verse is similar to that which he had previously mentioned. The amount is, he held the commandments of God in such high esteem, that he experienced nothing more pleasant to him than the making of them his constant theme of meditation. By the term *delight,* he expresses the intensity of his love. The phrase *I will lift up my hands,* refers, to the same thing. It is a sure indication that we eagerly desire a thing when we stretch out the hands to grasp and enjoy it. This simile, therefor denotes the ardor of his desire. [416] If a man, by his mien and gait pretend any such affection for the law of God, and yet pay no regard to it in the affairs of life, he would be justly chargeable with the basest hypocrisy. Again, he affirms, that that affection, so earnest and so ardent, springs from the sweetness of the law of God having knit our hearts to it. Finally, he says, he *would meditate on God's testimonies.* Along with the majority of commentators, I have no doubt that the word שוח *shuach,* denotes that silent and secret musing in which the children of God exercise themselves.

Psalm 119:49-56

ז **49.** Remember thy word to thy servant, I, which thee hast made him hope. ז **50.** This is my consolation in my affliction, because thy word revives me. ז **51.** The proud have greatly scorched me: I have not turned aside from thy law. ז **52.** I called to mind thy judgments of old, O Jehovah! and comforted myself. ז **53.** Terror seized me, for' the wicked who forsake thy law. ז **54.** Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. ז **55**. By night I remembered thy name, O Jehovah! and I kept, thy law. ז **56.** This is done to me, because I have kept thy statutes.

49. *Remember thy word. He* prays that God would really perform what he promised; for the event proves that he does not forget his word. That he is speaking of the promises we infer from the end of the verse, in which he declares, that cause was given him to hope, for which there would be no

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"*The lifting up of the hands* is used in Scripture to denote, first, *praying*, (Psalm 28:2; Lamentations 2:19; 1 Timothy 2:8;) secondly, *blessing*, (Leviticus 19:22; Psalm 22:4;) thirdly, *swearing*, (Genesis 14:22; Deuteronomy 32:40; Psalm 106:26; Ezekiel 36:7; Revelation 10:5;) fourthly, *setting about any undertaking*, (Genesis 41:44; Psalm 10:13; Hebrews 12:12) Aben Ezra, however, explains, (and perhaps rightly,) that the metaphor, in this place, is taken from the action of those who receive any one whom they were glad or proud to see with uplifted hands." — *Cresswell.* Merrick explains the phrase thus: "I will reach out my hands with eagerness, in order to receive thy commandments."

place unless grace had been presented to him. In the second verse he asserts, that though God still kept him in suspense, yet he reposed with confidence in his word. At the same time he informs us, that during his troubles and anxieties, he did not search after vain consolation as the world is wont to do who look around them in all quarters to find something to mitigate their miseries; and if any allurements tickle their fancy, they make use of these as a remedy for alleviating their sorrows. On the contrary, the prophet says he was satisfied with the word of God itself; and that when all other refuges failed him, there he found life full and perfect; nevertheless, he covertly confesses, that if he do not acquire courage from the word of God, he will become like a dead man. The ungodly may sometimes experience elevation of spirit during their miseries, but they are totally destitute of this inward strength of mind. The prophet, then, had good reason for stating, that in the time of affliction the faithful experience animation and rigor solely from the *word of God inspiring them with life,*. Hence, if we meditate carefully on his word, we shall live even in the midst of death, nor will we meet with any sorrow so heavy for which it will not furnish us with a remedy. And if we are bereft of consolation and succor in our adversities, the blame must rest with ourselves; because, despising or overlooking the word of God, we purposely deceive ourselves with vain consolation.

51. *The proud have greatly scorned me* This example is eminently useful, as it serves to inform us, that though our honesty may render us obnoxious to the insults of the ungodly, we ought, by our unflinching constancy, to repel their pride, lest we should take a dislike to the law of God. Many who, in other respects, would be disposed to fear God, yield to this temptation. The earth has always been filled with the impious contemners of God, and at this day it is almost overrun with them. Wherefore, if we do not disregard their reviling, there will be no stability in our faith. In calling unbelievers *proud,* he applies to them a very appropriate designation: for their wisdom consists in despising God, lightly esteeming his judgments, trampling all piety under foot, and, in short, pouring contempt upon the celestial kingdom. Were they not blinded with pride, they would not follow such a headlong course. We must interpret the words in this manner: Though the proud have treated me with scorn, I have not turned aside from thy law. We must not overlook the„ particle *very much,* or greatly, which imports, that he was harassed, not merely occasionally or for a short time, by the ungodly, but that the attack was continued from day to day. Let us learn from these words, that the wicked, in consequence of their forming the great majority of mankind, arrogate to themselves the greater liberty. The number of the godly who worship God reverently is always small. Hence we must hold out against a large troop and rabble of the impious if we would maintain our integrity.

52. *I called to mind thy judgments of old, O Jehovah!* In this psalm, *the judgments of God* are generally taken for his statutes and decrees, that is,

his *righteousness.* [417] In this place, in consequence of the qualifying phrase, *of old,* it is more probable that they refer to the examples by which God has made himself known as the righteous Judge of the world. Why does he say that the law of God has been from everlasting? This may to some extent be accounted for from the righteousness here mentioned not being of recent growth, but truly everlasting, because the written law is just an attestation of the law of nature, through means of which God recalls to our memory that which he has previously engraved on our hearts.

I am rather inclined to adopt another interpretation, That David remembered the judgments of God, by which he testified that he had established his law perpetually in the world, Such a settlement is very necessary for us; because, when God does not make bare his arm, his word frequently produces little impression. But when he takes vengeance upon the ungodly, he confirms what he had spoken; and this is the reason why in civil law penalties are called confirmations. The term accords better with God's judgments, by which he establishes the authority of his law, as if a true demonstration accompanied his words. And seeing he declares that he called to mind the most ancient of God's judgments, it becomes us to learn, that if his judgments are not displayed as frequently as we would desire, for the strengthening of our faith, this is owing to our ingratitude and apathy; for in no past age have there been wanting clear demonstrations for this very purpose; and thus it may with truth be affirmed, that God's judgments have flowed in one continued manner from age to age, and that the reason why we have not perceived them is, our not deigning to open our eyes to behold them. If any one object, that it is contrary to the nature of his judgments to afford consolation to because they are calculated rather to strike us with terror, the answer is at handy — that the faithful are made to tremble for fear of God's judgments, as far as is requisite for the mortification of their flesh. On the other hand, these supply them with a large source of consolation, from the fact of their learning from them, that God exercises his superintending providence over the human race. Farther, they learn, that after the wicked have reveled in licentiousness for a season, they shall at length be sisted before the judgment-seat of God; but that they themselves, after having patiently combated under such a Guardian of their welfare, can be in no doubt about their preservation.

53. *Terror seized me* [418] This verse may be understood in two senses; either that the prophet was grievously afflicted when he saw God's law violated by the wicked, or that he was horror-struck at the thought of their perdition. Some would render it *ardor,* which does not so properly agree

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"The Scriptures, like a true mirror, display the justice of God, in the punishment of sinners, and his goodness, in rendering righteousness." — *Dimock.*

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with the nature of the passage; I therefore abide by the term *fear,* by which I think his ardent zeal is pointed out, in that he was not only deeply grieved at the transgressions of the law, but held in the utmost detestation the impious boldness of those who lightly esteemed the law of God. At the same time, it is worthy of notice, that it is no new ground of offense to the faithful, if numbers throw off God's yoke, and set up the standard of rebellion against him. This, I repeat, must be attended to, because many derive flimsy and frivolous pretexts for it, from the degeneracy of the age, as if they must needs howl while they live among wolves. In the days of David, we see there were many who apostatized from the faith, and yet, so far was he from being discouraged or dismayed by these things, that the fear of God rather kindled a holy indignation in his bosom. What is to be done, then, when surrounded by bad examples, but that we should vie with each other in holding them up to detestation? And here a contrast, if not directly stated, is implied, between the flattering unction which we apply to ourselves, believing that all is lawful which is common, and the horror with which the prophet tells us he was seized. If the wicked, haughtily and without restraint, set themselves in opposition to God, in consequence of our not being alive to his judgments, we convert that into an occasion of perverse confidence and insensibility. On the contrary, the prophet asserts that he was seized with horror, because, though he considered the long-suffering of God, on the one hand, yet, on the other, he was fully persuaded that he must, sooner or later, call for condign punishment.

54. *Thy statutes have been my songs.* [419] He repeats in different words what he had formerly mentioned, that the law of God was his sole or special delight during all his life. Singing is an indication of joy. The saints are pilgrims in this world, and must be regarded as God's children and heirs of heaven, from the fact that they are sojourners on earth. By the *house of their pilgrimage,* then, may be understood their journey through life. One circumstance merits particular notice, that David, during his exile from his native country, ceased not to draw consolation, amid all his hardships, from the law of God, or rather a joy which rose above all the sadness which

The Hebrew word here used for *terror* is זלעפה, *zalaphah*, and is supposed to refer to the blasting or scorching wind, called the Simoom, well known to the Eastern nations. Accordingly, Michaelis reads, "A deadly East wind seizes me." Cocceius reads, "Horror, as a tempest, has seized upon me." "The sacred writer," says he, "represents the vehement commotion of his mind as resembling a violent commotion in the air." According to Dimock, זלעפה denotes, in this place, *the burning fever* which the pestilential winds in the East occasioned. The word occurs only three times in Scripture; here, in Psalm 11:7, and in Lamentations 5:10. Our translators have rendered it, in Psalm 11:7, by *storm*, and in Lamentations 5:10, in the margin, plurally by *terrors* or *storms.* See volume 1, page 168, note.

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"In the early ages, it was customary to versify the laws, that the people might learn them by heart, and sing them." — *Williams.*

his banishment occasioned to him. It was a noble specimen of rare virtue, that when he was denied a sight of the temple, could not draw near to the sacrifices, and was deprived of the ordinances of religion, he yet never departed from his God. The phrase, the *house of his pilgrimage,* is employed, therefore, to enhance the conduct of David, who, when banished from his country, still retained the law of God deeply engraved on his heart, and who, amid the severity of that exile, which was calculated to deject his spirits, cheered himself by meditating upon the law of God.

55. *By night I remembered thy name, O Jehovah!* As the second clause of the verse depends on the first, I consider the whole verse as setting forth one and the same truth; and, therefore, the prophet means that he was induced, by the remembrance he had of God, to keep the law. Contempt of the law originates in this, that few have any regard for God; and hence, the Scripture, in condemning the impiety of men, declares that they *have forgotten* God, (Psalm 50:22*;* 78:11; 106:21). To rectify this, David exhorts that the remembrance of God is the only remedy for preserving us hi his fear, and in the observance of his law; and assuredly, as often as his majesty occurs to our minds, it will tend to humble us, and the very thought of it will provoke us to the cultivation of godliness. The word *night* is not intended by him to mean the remembering of God merely for, short time, but a perpetual remembrance of him; he, however, refers to that season in particular, because then almost all our senses are overpowered with sleep. "When other men are sleeping, God occurs to my thoughts during my sleep." He has another reason for alluding to the night-season, That we may be apprised, that though there was none to observe him, and none to put him in remembrance of it, — yea, though he was shrouded in darkness, — yet he was as solicitous to cherish the remembrance of God, as if' he occupied the most public and conspicuous place.

56. *This was done to me.* I doubt not that the prophet, under the term זאת, *zoth,* comprehends all God's benefits; but as he comes before God in relation to blessings then being enjoyed by him, he speaks as if he were pointing to them. Hence, under this term is included an acknowledgment of all the benefits with which he had been crowned; or, at all events, he declares that God had borne testimony, by some signal deliverance, to the integrity of his conduct. He does not boast of meriting any thing, as the Pharisees in our day do, who, when they meet with any such matter in Scripture, pervert it to prove the merit of works. But the prophet had no other design, than to set himself in diametrical opposition to the despisers of God, who either impute all their prosperity to their own industry, or ascribe it to chance, and malignantly overlook or conceal God's superintending providence. He therefore calls upon himself to return to God, and invites others to follow his example, and exhorts them, that as God is an impartial judge, he will always reserve a recompense for piety. Probably, too, by this holy boasting

he repels the base slanders of the ungodly, by which we lately saw he was grievously assailed.

Psalm 119:57-64

ח **57.** Thou art my portion, O Jehovah! I have said I will keep thy words. ח **58.** I have earnestly besought thy face with my whole heart; have mercy upon me according to thy word. ח **59.** I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. ח **60.** I made haste, and did not delay to keep thy commandments. ח **61.** The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me; [420] but I did not forget thy law. ח **62.** I will rise at midnight to praise thee for thy righteous judgments. ח **63.** I am a companion to all those who fear thee, and who keep thy precepts. ח **64.** O Jehovah! the earth is full of thy mercy; teach me thy statutes.

57. *Thou art my portion, O Jehovah!* The meaning of this clause is doubtful, because the term *Jehovah* may be rendered either in the nominative or vocative case, and the phrase, *I have said,* may relate either to the former or latter part of the verse. One lection then is, *Jehovah is my portion,* and, therefore, *I have resolved to observe thy law.* Another is, *O God! who art my portion, I have resolved to observe thy law.* A third is, *I have said, or have resolved, that God is my portion, in order to observe* his *law.* A fourth is, *I have said, or have resolved, O Lord! that my portion is to observe thy law;* and this is the reading of which I approve. The following interpretation is quite applicable, That God being our portion, ought to animate and encourage us to observe his law. We have already noticed in several other passages, that God is denominated the heritage of the faithful, because he alone is sufficient for their full and entire happiness. And seeing he has chosen us for his peculiar possession, it is only reasonable on our part, that we should rest satisfied with him alone; and if we do this, our hearts will also be disposed to keep his law and, renouncing all the lusts of the flesh, our supreme delight, and firm resolution, will be to continue in the same.

I have already said, that this exposition is not inconsistent with the scope of the passage, and that it furnishes a very useful doctrine. But the last and fourth reading, of which I remarked I approved, is more simple, — I am fully persuaded that my best portion consists in keeping God's law; — and this accords with the saying of Paul, "Godliness is the best gain," (1 Timothy 6:6). David here draws a comparison between the keeping of the law, and the imaginary good which captivates the ambition of mankind. "Let every one covet what seems to him good, and revel in his own pleasures; I have

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"Ou, les assemblees des meschans m'ont despouille', ou pille." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, the assemblies of the wicked have robbed me."

no ground to envy them, provided I retain this as my portion, the complete surrender of myself to the word of God."

58. *I have earnestly besought thy face.* In this verse David asserts, that he still persevered in the exercise of prayer; for without prayer faith would become languid and lifeless. The manner in which he expresses himself, which, in other languages, might be unpolished, among the Hebrews, expresses that familiar communication to which God admits, and even invites his servants when they come into his presence. The substance of his prayers, and the sum of his desires, he comprehends in a single sentence; namely, that he implored the mercy of God, the sure hope of which he had formed from his word. Let us observe, then, in the first place, we are aroused from our supineness, that we may exercise our faith by prayer. In the second place, the principal thing for which we ought to pray is, that God, out of his free grace, may be favorable to us, look on our affection, and grant us relief. God does, indeed, aid us in a variety of ways, and our necessities also are innumerable; still the thing which we must principally and particularly request is, that he: will have mercy upon us, which is the source of every other blessing. And, in the last place, that we may not present prayers that have no meaning, let us learn that God, in all his promises, is set before us as if he were our willing debtor.

59. *I thought upon my ways* [421] The amount is, that after the prophet had paid due regard to his manner of life, his only aim then was to follow the teaching of the law. In these words he intimates indirectly, that if it be inquired why men go astray, and are miserably distracted amidst conflicting impulses, the reason is, their thoughtlessly indulging themselves in the gratification of their passions. Every man watches most carefully, and applies all his energy to whatever his inclination may lead him, but all are blind in choosing the object which they ought to pursue; or rather, as if their eyes were sealed, they are either hurried away inconsiderately, or else, through carelessness, wander imperceptibly from one object to another. One thing is certain, that there is no one who carefully considers his ways; and, therefore, it is not without reason the prophet exhorts us, that the commencement of a godly life consists in men awaking from their lethargy, examining their ways, and, at last, wisely considering what it is to regulate their conduct properly. He next instructs us, that when a person is inclined in good earnest to frame the course of his life well, there is nothing better

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"*I thought on my ways* חשבתי, *chashabti*, I deeply pondered them; I turned them upside down: I viewed my conduct on all sides. The word as used here is a metaphor taken from *embroidering*, where the *figure* must appear the *same* on the *one side* as it does on the *other*: therefore the cloth must be turned on each side every time the needle is set in, to see that the stitch be fairly set. Thus narrowly and scrupulously did the Psalmist examine his conduct; and the result was, a deep conviction that he had departed from the way of God and truth." — *Dr Adam Clarke*

than for him to follow the direction which the Lord points out. In fact, were not men infatuated, they would universally and unanimously make choice of God to be the guide of their life.

60. *I made haste* Though the words are in the past tense, they denote a continued act. The prophet declares with what promptitude he dedicated himself to the service of God. Diligence and dispatch demonstrate the favor of his zeal. Next, in saying that he *delayed not,* [422] this, according to the Hebrew idiom, gives intensity to the idea conveyed by the phrase, *I made haste* As among the Hebrews, *to speak and not to keep silence* is equivalent to speaking freely, unreservedly, and without dissimulation, as the occasion demands, so to *make haste and not delay* is to run quickly without doubt or delay. If we reflect on our own listlessness, and on the snares which Satan never fails to put in our way, we will at once perceive that these words are not added in vain. For let a man be ever so desirous of applying himself truly and heartily to the righteousness of God, yet, according to Paul, we know that "he does not the thing that he would," (Romans 7:15, 18, 19). Although no outward obstacle may stand in our way, yet we are so retarded by impediments within, that nothing is more difficult than to make haste to keep the law of God. At the same time we must remember, that the prophet is here speaking comparatively in reference to those who are chargeable with procrastination during the greater part of their life, and who draw near to God, not only hesitatingly and tardily, but also purposely loiter in their course, or else prevent themselves from coming by their tortuous ways. The prophet did not manifest more alacrity in serving God than Paul; all he intends, therefore, is, that having surmounted all obstacles which lay in his way, he prosecuted his journey with rapidity. And by his example he teaches us, that the pleas which we offer in extenuation of our indolence, either arising from the impediments presented by the world or our own infirmity, are vain and frivolous.

61. *The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me.* Those who translate חבלי, *cheblei,* by *sorrows,* bring out no natural meaning, and perplex themselves as well as wrest the passage. Two readings then remain, either of which may be admitted: *The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me,* or *The companies of the wicked have robbed me.* [423] Whether we adopt the one or the other of these readings, what the prophet intends to declare is, that when Satan assailed the principles of piety in his soul, by

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"The original word, which we translate *delayed not*, is amazingly emphatical. ולא התמהמהתי *velo hethmahmaheti*, I did not stand *what*, *what*, *whating*; or, as we used to express the same sentiment, *shilly-shallying* with myself; I was *determined*, and so set out. The *Hebrew* word, as well as the *English*, strongly marks indecision of mind, positive action being suspended, because the mind is so unfixed as not to be able to make a choice." — *Dr Adam Clarke*

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grievous temptations, he continued with undeviating steadfastness in the love and practice of God's law. *Cords* may, however, be understood in two ways; either, first, as denoting the deceptive allurements by which the wicked endeavored to get him entangled in their society; or, secondly, the frauds which they practiced to effect his ruin. If the first sense is preferred, David intimates that he had manifested a rare virtue, in continuing in the observance of God's law, even when the wicked seemed to have involved him in their nets; but as it is more generally agreed that the verb עוד, *ived,* signifies *to despoil* or *rob,* let us adopt this interpretation — that the prophet being assailed by troops of the ungodly, and afterwards robbed and rifled at their pleasure, never deserted his ground. This was a proof of singular fortitude; for when we are exposed to dangers and wrongs of a more than ordinary kind, if God does not succour us we immediately begin to doubt of his providence: it seems to be of no advantage for a man to be godly; we imagine also that we may lawfully take revenge; and amidst these waves, the remembrance of the Divine law is easily lost, and, as it were, submerged. But the prophet assures us:, that to continue to love the law, and to practice righteousness, when we are exposed as a prey to the ungodly, and perceive no help from God, is an evidence of genuine piety.

62 *I will rise at midnight to praise thee* In this verse he shows not only that he approved and embraced with his whole heart whatever the Divine law contains, but that he also gave evidence of his gratitude to God for having made him partaker of so great a blessing. It seems to be quite a common thing professedly to assent to God when he teaches us by his law; for who would dare to lift up his voice against Him? But still the world is very far from acknowledging that the truth which he has revealed is in all respects reasonable. In the first place, such is the rebellion of our corrupt nature, that every man would have somewhat either altered or taken away. Again, if men had their choice, they would rather be governed by their own will than by the word of God. In short, human reason, as well as human passions, is widely at variance with the Divine law. He then has profited not little, who both obediently embraces revealed truth, and, taking sweet delight in it, gives thanks to God for it. The prophet, however, does not simply declare that he magnifies God's righteous judgments; he also affirms that *he rose at midnight* to do so, by which he expresses the earnestness of his desire; for the studies and cares which break our sleep necessarily

"*The congregation of the ungodly have robbed me.* — *Common Prayer Book.* Rather *the cords* of the wicked have unfolded me; *i.e.*, their machinations have been directed against me, and not without effect. A cord, however, from its being composed of many strings twisted together, was used *metaphorically* by the Hebrews, as, the word *band* is by us, to denote a collection of men: and it is accordingly, in 1 Samuel 10:5, 10, rendered in our English Bible by *company*, in which sense it is here taken in the version of our Book of Common Prayer, after the Chaldee: the Septuagint gives the *literal* translation of the word." — *Cresswell.*

imply great earnestness of soul. He also, at the same time, intimates, that in bearing his testimony in behalf of the Divine law, he was far from being influenced by ostentation, since in his secret retirement, when no human eye was upon him, he pronounced the highest encomiums on God's righteous judgments.

63. *I am a companion to all those who fear thee* He does not simply speak of the brotherly love and concord which true believers cultivate among themselves, but intimates that, whenever he met with any individual who feared God, he gave him his hand in token of fellowship, and that he was not only one of the number of God's servants, but also their helper. Such concord is undoubtedly required in all the godly, that they may contribute to each other's advancement in the fear of God. There seems to be a tacit comparison between this holy combination, by which the faithful mutually keep up and foster among themselves the worship of God and true godliness, and the impious associations which prevail every where in the world. We see how worldly men array their troops against God, and assist one another in their attempts to overthrow his worship. The more then is it necessary for the children of God to be stirred up to the maintenance of a holy unity. The Psalmist commends the faithful, first, for their fearing God, and, secondly, for their observing the law. The fear of God is the root or origin of all righteousness, and by dedicating our life to His service, we manifest that His fear dwells in our hearts.

64. *O Jehovah! the earth is full of thy mercy* Here the prophet beseeches God, in the exercise of his infinite goodness, which is reflected in every part of the world, graciously to make him a partaker of the treasure of heavenly wisdom — a manner of prayer which is very emphatic. When, therefore, he says *that the earth is full of God's mercy,* it is a kind of earnest entreaty. He not only magnifies the goodness of God, in general, (as he does in other places,) in leaving no part of the world devoid of the proofs of his liberality, and in exercising it not only towards mankind, but also towards the brute creation. What does he then? He desires that the mercy of God, which is extended to all creatures, may be manifested towards him in one thing, and that is, by enabling him to make progress in the knowledge of the Divine law. Whence we gather, that he accounted the gift of understanding as an inestimable treasure. Now if to be endued with the spirit of understanding is a chief token of God's favor, our want of this, proceeding from our own unbelief, is an indication of our alienation from him. It behooves us to remember what we have stated elsewhere, that it is an evidence that we have given ourselves up to the most shameful sloth, when, contented with a superficial knowledge of Divine truth, we are, in a great measure, indifferent about making further progress, seeing so renowned a teacher of the Church labored with the greatest ardor to become more and more acquainted with God's statutes. Besides, it is certain that he does not here treat of external teaching, but of the inward illumination of the mind, which is the gift of

the Holy Spirit. The law was exhibited to all without distinction; but the prophet, well aware that unless he were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, it would be of little advantage to him, prays that he may be taught effectually by supernatural influence.

Psalm 119: 65-72

ט **65.** O Jehovah! thou hast done good to thud servant, according to thy word. ט **66.** Teach, thee goodness of taste and knowledge: for I have believed the commandments. ט **67.** Before I was brought low I went astray: but now I keep thy word. ט **68.** Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes. ט **69.** The proud have weaved lies against me: but I will keel, thy statutes with my whole heart. ט **70.** Their heart is fat as grease: but I delight in thy law. ט **71.** It has been good for me that I was affected; that I might learn thy statutes. ט **72.** The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.

65. *O Jehovah! thou hast done good to thy servant.* Some understand this generally, as if the prophet protested that, in whatever way God dealt with him, he took it in good part, convinced that it would ultimately issue in his welfare; but as express mention is made of the Divine word or promise, the prophet, I have no doubt, celebrates the faithfulness of God in performing the grace which he had promised. I have really experienced (as if he had said) that Thou art true, and dost not delude thy servants with empty words. Special reference is therefore here made to God's promises, because thence all his benefits flow to us, not, indeed, as from the original fountain-head, but, as it were, by conduit pipes. Although his free goodness is the only cause which induces him to deal bountifully with us, yet we can hope for nothing at his hand until he first bring himself under obligation to us by his word.

66. *Teach me goodness of taste and acknowledge* After having confessed that he had found, by experience, the faithfulness of God to his promises, David here adds a request similar to what is contained in the 64th verse, namely, that he may grow in right understanding; although the phraseology is somewhat different; for instead of *thy statutes,* as in that verse, he here uses *goodness of taste and knowledge.* As the verb טעם *taam,* signifies *to taste,* the noun which is derived from it properly denotes *taste* It is, however, applied to the mind. David, there is no doubt, prays that knowledge, accompanied with sound discretion and judgment, might. be imparted to him. Those who read, disjunctively, *goodness and taste,* mar the whole sentence. It is, however, necessary, in order to our arriving at the full meaning, that the latter clause should be added. He asserts that he *believed God's commandments,* in other words, that he cheerfully embraced whatever is prescribed in the law; and thus he describes himself as docile and obedient. As it was by the guidance of the Holy Spirit that he became thus inclined

to obedience, he pleads that another gift may be bestowed upon him — the gift of a sound taste and good understanding. Whence we learn, that these two things, right affection and good understanding, are indispensably necessary to the due regulation of the life. The prophet already believed God's commandments; but his veneration for the law, proceeding from a holly zeal, led him to desire conformity to it, and made him afraid, and not without cause, of inconsiderately going astray. Let us then learn, that after God has framed our hearts to the obedience of his law, we must, at the same time, ask wisdom from him by which to regulate our zeal.

67. *Before I was brought low I went astray* As the verb ענה *anah,* sometimes signifies *to speak,* or *to testify,* some adopt this rendering, *Before I meditated upon thy statutes I went astray;* but this seems too forced. Others go still farther from the meaning, in supposing it to be, that when the prophet went astray, he had nothing to say in answer to God. I will not stop to refute these conceits, there being no ambiguity in the words. David in his own person describes either that wantonness or rebellion, common to all mankind, which is displayed in this, that we never yield obedience to God until we are compelled by his chastisements. It is indeed a monstrous thing obstinately to refuse to submit ourselves to Him; and yet experience demonstrates, that so long as he deals gently with us, we are always breaking forth into insolence. Since even a prophet of God required to have his rebellion corrected by forcible means, this kind of discipline is assuredly most needful for us. The first step in obedience being the mortifying of the flesh, to which all men are naturally disinclined, it is not surprising if God bring us to a sense of our duty by manifold afflictions. Yea, rather as the flesh is from time to time obstreperous, even when it seems to be tamed, it is no wonder to find him repeatedly subjecting us anew to the rod. This is done in different ways. He humbles some by poverty, some by shame, some by diseases, some by domestic distresses, some by hard and painful labors; and thus, according to the diversity of vices to which we are prone, he applies to each its appropriate remedy. It is now obvious how profitable a truth this confession contains. The prophet speaks of himself even as Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 31:18,) in like manner, says of himself, that he was *"as* a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke;*"* but still he sets before us an image of the rebellion which is natural to us all. We are very ungrateful, indeed, if this fruit which we reap from chastisements do not assuage or mitigate their bitterness. So long as we are rebellious against God, we are, in a state of the deepest wretchedness: now, the only means by which He bends and tames us to obedience, is his instructing us by his chastisements. The prophet, at the same time, teaches us by his own example, that since God gives evidence of his willingness that we should become his disciples, by the pains he takes to subdue our hardness, we should at least endeavor to become gentle, and, laying aside all stubbornness, willingly bear the yoke which he imposes upon us.

The next verse needs no explanation, being nearly of the same import as the last verse of the former eight. He beseeches God to exercise his goodness towards him, not by causing him to increase in riches and honors, or to abound in pleasures, but by enabling him to make progress in the knowledge of the law. It is usual for almost all mankind to implore the exercise of God's goodness towards them, and to desire that he would deal bountifully with them, in the way of gratifying the diversity of the desires into which they are severally hurried by the inclinations of the flesh; but David protests that he would be completely satisfied, provided he experienced God to be liberal towards him in this one particular, which almost all men pass over with disdain.

69. *The proud have weaved* [424] *lies against me* He declares that, notwithstanding the malignant interpretation which the wicked put upon all that he did, and their attempts, by this artifice, to turn him aside from following after and loving uprightness, the state of his mind remained unaltered. It is a severe temptation, when, although innocent, we are loaded with reproach and infamy, and are not only assailed by injurious words, but also held up to the odium of the world by wicked persons, under some specious pretense or other. We see many who otherwise are good people, and inclined to live uprightly, either become discouraged, or are greatly shaken, when they find themselves so unworthily rewarded. On this account the prophet's example is the more to be attended t that we may not be appalled by the malignity of men; that we may not cease to nourish within us the fear of God, even when they may have succeeded in destroying our reputation in the sight of our fellow-creatures; and that we may be contented to have our piety shining at the judgment-scat of God, although it may be defaced by the calumnies of men. So long as we depend upon the judgment of men, we will always be in a state of fluctuation, as has been already observed. Farther, let our works be never so splendid, we know that they will be of no account in the sight of God, if, in performing them, our object is to gain the favor of the world. Let us therefore learn to cast our eyes to that heavenly stage, and to despise all the malicious reports which men may spread against us. Let us leave the children of this world to, enjoy their reward, since our crown is laid up for us in heaven, and not on the earth. Let us disentangle ourselves from the snares with which Satan endeavors to obstruct us, by patiently bearing infamy for a season. The verb טפל, *taphal,* which otherwise signifies *to join together,* is here, by an elegant metaphor, taken for *to weave,* or *to trim;* intimating that the enemies of the prophet not only loaded him with coarse reproaches, but also invented crimes against him, and did so with great cunning and color of truth, that he might seem to be the blackest of characters. But though they ceased not to weave for him this web, he was

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Archbishop Secker reads, "made up." "It signifies," says he, "fastening things together."

enabled to break through it by his invincible constancy; and, exercising a strict control over his heart, he continued faithfully to observe the law of God. He applies to them the appellation of *proud;* and the reason of this, it may be conjectured, is, that the persons of whom he speaks were not the common people, but great men, who inflated with confidence in their honors and riches, rose up against him with so much the more audacity. He evidently intimates that they trampled him under their feet by their proud disdain, just as if he had been a dead dog.

With this corresponds the statement in the subsequent verse (70th) that *their heart is fat as grease,* [425] — *a* vice too common among the despisers of God. Whence is it that wicked men, whom their own conscience gnaws within, vaunt themselves so insolently against the most eminent servants of God, but because a certain grossness overgrows their hearts, so that they are stupefied, and even frenzied by their own obstinacy? But wonderful and worthy of the highest praise is the magnanimity of the prophet, who found all his delight in the law of God: it is as if he declared that this was the food on which he fed, and with which he was refreshed in the highest degree; which could not have been the case had not his heart been freed, and thoroughly cleansed from all unhallowed pleasures.

71. *It has been good for me that I was afflicted.* He here confirms the sentiment which we have previously considered — that it was profitable to him to be subdued by God's chastisements, that he might more and more be brought back and softened to obedience. By these words he confesses that he was not exempt from the perverse obstinacy with which all mankind are infected; for, had it been otherwise with him, the profit of which he speaks, when he says that his docility was owing to his being brought low, would have been merely pretended; even as none of us willingly submits his neck to God, until He soften our natural hardness by the strokes of a hammer. It is good for us to taste continually the fruit which comes to us from God's corrections, that they may become sweet to us; and that, in this way, we, who are so rebellious and wayward, may suffer ourselves to be brought into subjection.

The last verse also requires no exposition, as it contains a sentiment of very frequent occurrence in this psalm, and, in itself, sufficiently plain, — That he preferred God's law to all the riches of the world, the immoderate desire of which so deplorably infatuates the great bulk of mankind. He does not compare the law of God with the riches he himself possessed; but he affirms, that it was more precious in his estimation than a vast inheritance.

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The fat of the human body, as physiologists inform us, is absolutely insensible; the lean membranous parts being those only which are sensitive. Accordingly, *fatness of heart* is used, with much propriety, to express the insensibility, stupidity, or sensuality of those feelings or affections of which the heart is considered the seat.

Psalm 119:73-80

' 73. Thy hands have made and fashioned me: make me to understand, that I may learn thy commandments. **' 74.** They who fear thee shall see me and be glad; because I have hoped in thy word. **' 75.** I have known, O Jehovah! That thy judgments are justice; and thou hast humbled me in truth. **' 76.** I beseech thee let thy goodness be for my consolation, according to thy word to thy servant. **' 77.** Let thy compassion's come unto me, and let me live: for thy law is my delight. **' 78.** Let the proud be put to shame; for they have falsely endeavored to pervert me: I will meditate on thy precepts. **' 79.** Let such as fear thee turn unto me, and those who have known thy testimonies. **' 80.** Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I may not be put to shame.

73. *Thy hands have made and fashioned me.* The avowal of the prophet, that he had been created by the hand of God, greatly contributed to inspire him with the hope of obtaining the favor which he supplicates. As we are the creatures and the workmanship of God, and as he has not only bestowed upon us vital motion, in common with the lower animals, but has, in addition thereto, given us the light of understanding and reasons — this encourages us to pray that he would direct us to the obedience of his law. And yet the prophet does not call upon God, as if He were under any obligations to him; but, knowing that God never forsakes the work which he has begun, he simply asks for new grace, by which God may carry on to perfection what he has commenced. We have need of the assistance of the *law,* since all that is sound in our understandings is corrupted; so that we cannot perceive what is right, unless we are taught from some other source. But our blindness and stupidity are still more strikingly manifest, from the fact that teaching will avail us nothing, until our souls are renewed by Divine grace. What I have previously said must be borne in mind.. That whenever the prophet prays for understanding being imparted to him, in order to his learning the Divine commandments, he condemns both himself and all mankind as in a state of blindness; for which the only remedy is the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

74. *They who fear thee shall see me and be glad.* This verse is either connected with the preceding, or it includes other benefits of God, besides the blessing mentioned in that verse. Whether the Psalmist adverts only to one particular species of blessing, or speaks generally, he by these words highly extols the benefits with which God had honored him, that all genuine saints in common might experience joy on that account. He does not mean to say that this joy proceeds solely from the trust which he reposed in God, but that it also proceeds from this, — that, having been preserved by him in a remarkable way, and loaded with many benefits, his hope had received an ample reward. As God invites all his servants in common to trust in him, it follows, that, whenever he exhibits a token of his grace towards any one

of them, he testifies to all that he is faithful to his promises, and that they have no reason to be afraid of his disappointing those who trust in him.

75 *I have known, O Jehovah / that thy judgments are justice.* By *judgments,* in this psalm, we are to understand the precepts of the law; but as the prophet immediately adds, that he was justly chastised, he seems to use the word in this verse, for the punishments by which God stirs up men to repentance. These two words, צדק, *tsedek, justice,* in the first clause, and אמונה *emunah truth,* in the last, have here nearly the same signification. In the first clause, the prophet confesses in general that God so regulates his judgments, as to shut the mouths of the ungodly, should any of them complain of his cruelty or rigor; and that such equity shines forth in them, as to extort from us the confession that nothing is better for men than in this way to be called back to the consideration of themselves. He next exhibits an example of this in his own person. Even hypocrites sometimes yield God the praise of justice when he chastises others, and they never condemn his severity, so long as they themselves are spared. But it is the property of true piety to be less austere and rigid censors of the faults of others than of our own. The *knowledge* of which the prophet speaks, is a sure evidence of his having made a strict and earnest examination of himself; for, had he not well weighed his own guilt, he could not by assured experience have learned the righteousness of God in his afflictions. If it is considered preferable to take the word *judgments* in its usual acceptation, the meaning of the text will be: Lord, I know that thy law is holy and just, and severely as thou hast afflicted me, I still retain the persuasion of this truth; for even in my afflictions I discern the righteousness, which corresponds with the character of thy word.

76 *I beseech thee let thy goodness be for my consolation.* Although he has acknowledged that he had been justly humbled, yet he desires that his sorrow may be alleviated by some consolation. He implores God's mercy, as what was essentially necessary to relieve and cure his miseries. He thus shows that nothing can remove sorrow from the faithful, until they feel that God is reconciled to them. In the Word in which God offers his mercy, there is to be found no small comfort for healing all the grief to which men are liable. But the Psalmist is now speaking of *actual* mercy, if I may use that term, when God by the very deed declares the favor which he has promised. Confiding in the Divine promise, he already cherished in his heart a joy, proceeding from the hope of receiving the communications of Divine grace. But as all our hope would end in mere disappointment, did not God at length appear as our deliverer, he requests the performance of that which God had promised him. Lord, as if he had said, since thou hast graciously promised to be ready to succor me, be pleased to make good thy word in effect. The observation which I have previously made ought to be remembered, That it is not in vain to remind God of his promise. It would be presumption for men to come into His presence, did he not, of his own mere good pleasure,

open up the way for them. When the Psalmist says, *to thy servant,* he does not claim God's mercy exclusively to himself, as if it had. been promised to him alone by some special oracle; but he applies to himself what God has promised to the whole Church, which it is the peculiar province of faith to do; for unless I believe that I am one of those to whom God addresses himself in his word, so that his promises belong to me in common with others, I will never have the confidence to call upon him.

77. *Let thy companions come unto me.* In this verse, the Psalmist repeats and confirms almost the same request as in the preceding verse, although in phraseology somewhat different. As he had just now said, that his sorrow could not be removed, nor his joy restored, in any other way than by God's mercy being exercised towards him; so now he affirms that he cannot have without being reconciled to God. He thus distinguishes himself from worldly men, who are very little affected with a concern about having God reconciled to them; or, rather, who do not cease securely to enjoy themselves, although God is angry with them. He distinctly affirms, that, until he know that God is reconciled to him, he is a dead man even while living; but that, on the other hand, whenever God shall cause his mercy to shine upon him, he will be restored from death to life. By the way, he intimates that he was deprived for a time of the tokens of God's fatherly favor; for it would have been needless for him to have wished that *it might come to him,* had it not been removed from him. As an argument for obtaining what he supplicates, he asserts that *the law of God was his delight;* nor could he otherwise hope that God would be merciful to him. Besides, no man truly feels what virtue is in the Divine favor, but he who, placing his chief happiness in that alone, is convinced that all who dissever themselves from God are miserable and accursed; a truth which the prophet had learned from the law.

78. *Let the proud be put to shame.* We have already often had occasion to remark, that, in the Hebrew language, the future tense is frequently used in the sense of the optative mood, as here, — They *shall be put to shame,* for, *Let them be put to shame.* Still it would not be unsuitable to explain the meaning thus' As the proud have dealt mischievously with me, and molested me without a cause, the Lord will give them their reward. But as almost all interpreters are agreed that this is a prayer, in the translation of the verse I am unwilling to depart from the generally received explanation, especially as the language is expressly addressed to God himself. It is important to attend to the reason why the Psalmist hopes that God will be an enemy to *his* enemies; namely, because they wickedly and maliciously assaulted him. The word שקר*, sheker,* which I have rendered *falsely,* is by some translated, *without a cause;* but they seem only to hit upon the one half of the prophet's meaning; for this word, in my opinion, is to be referred to the stratagems and artifices by which the wicked endeavored to destroy David. Whence we gather, that whenever we are wrongfully persecuted by wicked men, we are invited to have recourse directly to God for protection. At the same time,

we are taught that we have no reason to be abashed at their insolence; for, whatever power they may arrogate to themselves, He will beat down their loftiness, and lay it low, to their shame; so that, being confounded, they will serve as an example, to teach others that nothing is more ridiculous than to sing the song of triumph before the victory is gained. The verb אשיח, *asiach,* in the second clause of the verse, may be rendered, *I will speak of,* as well as *I will meditate upon;* implying, that, when he had obtained the victory, he would proclaim the goodness of God, which he had experienced. *To speak of God's statutes,* is equivalent to declaring out of the law, how faithfully he guards his saints, how securely he delivers them, and how righteously he avenges their wrongs.

79. *Let such as fear thee turn unto me.* In this verse, which is connected with the preceding, the Psalmist affirms, that the deliverance which he obtained would afford common instruction to all the godly. My condition, as if he had said, may, for a time, have disheartened the righteous, as well as increased the insolence of my enemies; but now, taking courage, they will turn their eyes to this joyful spectacle. Moreover, let us learn from the two marks, by which he distinguishes true believers, what is the nature of genuine godliness. He puts *the fear,* or *the reverence of God,* in the first, place; but he immediately joins to it *the knowledge of Divine truth,* to teach us that these two things are inseparably connected. The superstitious, indeed, exhibit a fear of God of a certain kind, but it is a mere show, which quickly vanishes. Besides, they weary themselves in their own inventions to no purpose; for God will take no account of any other services, but those which are performed in obedience to his commandments. True religion, then, and the worship of God, have their origin in faith — in the faith of what he has enjoined; so that no person can serve God aright, but he who has been taught in His school.

80. *Let my heart be sound in thy statutes* Having, a little before, desired to be endued with a sound understanding, he now prays, in a similar manner, for sincere affection of heart. The understanding and affections, as is well known, are the two principal faculties of the human soul, both of which he clearly shows to be depraved and perverse, when he requests that his understanding may be illuminated, and, at the same time, that his heart may be framed to the obedience of the law. This plainly refutes all that the Papists babble about free will. The prophet not only here prays that God would help him, because his will was weak; but he testifies, without qualification, that uprightness of heart is. the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are, moreover, taught by these words, in what the true keeping of the law consists. A great part of mankind, after having carelessly framed their life according to the Divine law, by outward obedience, think that they want nothing. But the Holy Spirit here declares that no service is acceptable to God, except that which proceeds from integrity of heart. As to the word, תמים, *thamim,* rendered *sound,* we have elsewhere said, that *a sound heart*

is set in opposition to a double or deceitful heart. It is as if the prophet had said, that those who are without dissimulation, and who offer to God a pure heart, yield themselves truly to Him. When it is added, *that I may not be put to shame,* it is intimated, that such shall be the undoubted issue as to all the proud, who, disdaining the grace of God, lean upon their own strength; and as to all hypocrites, who, for a time, parade themselves in gay colors. The amount, then, is, that unless God govern us by his Spirit, and keep us in the performance of our duty, so that our hearts may be sound in his statutes, although our shame may be hidden for a time, yea, although all men should praise us, and hold us in admiration, yet we cannot avoid falling, at length, into dishonor and ignominy.

Psalm 119:81-88

כ **81.** My soul hath fainted for thy salvation: I hope in thy word. כ **82.** My eyes have waxed dim in looking for thy promise, and I say, When wilt thou comfort me? כ **83.** For I have been as a bottle in the smoke; and yet I have not forgotten thy statutes. כ **84.** How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on my persecutors? כ **85.** The proud have digged pits for me, which thing is not according to thy law. כ **86.** All thy commandments are truth; they persecute we deceitfully; therefore help thou me. כ **87.** They have almost consumed me upon the earth; yet I have not forsaken thy statutes. כ **88.** Quicken me according to thy goodness; and I will keep the testimony of thy mouth.

81. *My soul hath fainted for thy salvation.* The Psalmist intimates that, although worn out with continual grief, and perceiving no issue to his calamities, yet trouble and weariness had not produced such a discouraging effect upon his mind, as to prevent him from always reposing with confidence in God. To bring out the meaning the more distinctly, we must begin at the second clause, which is obviously added by way of exposition. There he affirms that he trusts in God; and this is the foundation of all. But, intending to express the invincible constancy of his trust, he tells us that he patiently endured all the distresses, under which others succumb. We see some embracing with great eagerness the promises of God; but their ardor, within a short time, vanishes; or, at least, is quenched by adversity. It was far otherwise with David. The verb כלה, *kalah,* which signifies to *faint,* or to *be consumed,* seems, indeed, at first sight, to convey a different meaning. But the prophet, in this passage, as in other places, by *fainting* means that *patience,* which those who are deprived of all strength, and who seem to be already dead, continue to cherish, and which inspires their hearts with secret groanings, and such as cannot be uttered. This fainting, then, is opposed to the delicacy of those who cannot suffer a long delay.

82 *My eyes have waxed dim in looking for thy word* This verse is very similar to the preceding, — transforming to the eyes what had been said

before concerning the soul. The only difference is, that, instead of *longing after salvation* or *help,* the expression, *longing after God's word compromise,* is here used; for *salvation* is an act, as it is termed; that is to say, it consists in effect, whereas *a promise* keeps us suspended in expectation. God may not, all at once, openly perform what he has promised; and, in this case, it being only in his word that he promises us help, there is no other way by which we can hope for help, than by our reposing on his word. As, then, the word precedes, in order, the help which God affords, or, rather, as it is the manner in which it is represented to our view, the prophet, when sighing after salvation, very properly declares that he kept his eyes fixed on the Divine word, until his sight failed him. Here we have presented to us the wonderful and incredible power of patience, under the infirmity of the flesh, when, being faint and deprived of all rigor, we have recourse to God for help, even while it is hidden from us. In short, the prophet, to prevent it from being supposed that he was too effeminate and faint-hearted, intimates that his fainting was not without cause. In asking God, *When wilt thou comfort me?* he shows, with sufficient plainness, that he was for a long time, as it were, cast off and forsaken.

83. *For I have been as a bottle in the smoke.* [426] The particle כי, *ki,* translated *for,* might also, not improperly, be resolved into the adverb of time, *when;* so that we might read the verse in one connected sentence, thus' *When I was like a dried bottle, I, nevertheless, did not forget thy law.* The obvious design of the Psalmist is to teach us, that, although he had been proved by severe trials, and wounded to the quick, he yet had not been withdrawn from the fear of God. In comparing himself to a *bottle* or *bladder,* he intimates that he was, as it were, parched by the continual heat of adversities. Whence we learn, that that sorrow must have been intense which reduced him to such a state of wretchedness and emaciation, that like a shriveled bottle he was almost dried up. It, however, appears that he intends to point cut, not only the severity of his affliction, but also its lingering nature that he was tormented, as it were, at a slow fire; [427] even as the smoke which proceeds from heat dries bladders by slow degrees. The prophet experienced a long series of grief's, which might have consumed him a hundred times, and that, by their protracted and lingering nature, had he not been sustained by the word of God. In short, it is a genuine evidence of

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Bottles, among the Jews and other nations of the East, were made of goats' or kids' skins, as is the custom among the Eastern nations at this day. When the animal was killed, they cut off its feet and head, and drew it, in that manner, out of the skin without opening the belly. They afterwards sewed up the places where the legs were cut off, and the tail, and when it was filled, they tied it about the neck. In these bottles, not only water, milk, and other liquids were put, but every thing intended to be carried to a distance, whether dry or liquid. To these goat-skin vessels a reference is here undoubtedly made. The peasantry of Asia are in the habit of suspending them from the roof, or hanging them against the walls of their tents or humble dwellings: here they soon become quite black with smoke; for, as in their dwellings there are seldom any chimneys, and the smoke can only escape through an aperture in the roof, or by the door, whenever a fire is lighted the apartment is instantly filled with dense smoke. Accordingly, some suppose that the allusion here chiefly is to the blackness which a bottle contracts by hanging in the smoke; and the translators of our English Bible, by referring in the margin to Job 30:30, as parallel to this, seem to have supposed that the Psalmist refers to the *blackness* his face contracted by sorrow. "But," says Harmer, "this can hardly be supposed to be the whole of his thought. In such a case, would he not rather have spoken of the *blackness of a pot*, as it is supposed the prophet Joel does, (Joel 2:6,) rather than to that of a *leather bottle*?" — *Harmer's Observations*, volume 1, page 218. When such bottles are suspended in the smoky tent of an Arab, if they do not contain liquids, or are not quite filled by the solids which they hold, they become dry, shrunk, and shriveled; and to this, as well as to their blackness, the Psalmist may allude. Long-continued bodily affliction and mental trouble produce a similar change on the human frame, destroying its beauty and strength by drying up the natural moisture. It has also been thought that there is a contrast between such mean bottles and the rich vessels of gold and silver which were used in the palaces of kings. "My appearance in the state of my exile is as different from what it was when I dwelt at court, as are the gold and silver vessels of a palace from the smoky skin bottles of a poor Arab's tent, where I am now compelled to reside." — *Ibid.* and *Paxton's Illustrations*, volume 2, pages 409, 410.

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"Comme a petit feu." — *Fr.*

true godliness, when, although plunged into the deepest afflictions, we yet cease not to submit ourselves to God.

84. *How many are the days of thy servant? etc.* Some read these two clauses apart, as if the first were a general complaint of the brevity of human life, such as is to be met with in other psalms, and more frequently in the book of Job; and next, in their opinion, there follows a special prayer of the Psalmist, that God would take vengeance upon his enemies. But I rather prefer joining the two clauses together, and limit both to David's afflictions; as if it had been said, Lord, how long hast thou determined to abandon thy servant to the will of the ungodly? when wilt thou set thyself in opposition to their cruelty and outrage, in order to take vengeance upon them? The Scriptures often use the word *days* in this sense; as, for example, "the days of Egypt," Ezekiel 30:9; "the days of Babylon," and "the days of Jerusalem," Psalm 137:7; a word which, in other places, is called "the day of visitation," Isaiah 10:3. By the use of the plural number, is denoted a certain determinate portion of time, which, in other places, is compared to the "days of an hireling," Job 14:6; Isaiah 16:14. The Psalmist does not, then, bewail in general the transitory life of man, but he complains that the time of his state of warfare in this world had been too long protracted; and, therefore, he naturally desires that it might be brought to a termination. In expostulating with God about his trouble, he does not do so obstinately, or with a murmuring spirit; but still, in asking how long it will be necessary for him to suffer, he humbly prays that God would not delay to succor him. As to the point of his stirring him up by prayer to execute vengeance, we have elsewhere seen in what sense it was lawful for him to make such a request; namely, because the vengeance which he desired to see was such as is properly suitable to God. It is certain that he had divested himself of all the corrupt affections of the flesh, that he might, with a pure and undisturbed zeal, desire God's judgment. He, however, in this passage, only wishes in general to be delivered by the hand of God from the wrongs which were inflicted upon him, without adjudging to perdition his adversaries; for he was quite contented, provided God appeared to defend him.

85 *The proud* [428] *have digged pits for me.* He complains that he had been circumvented by the frauds and artifices of his enemies; as if he had said, They have not only endeavored to injure me by open force and the violence

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"זדים, *the proud*. The proud here, as well as in many other parts of Scripture, stands for *lawless*, *wicked men*. So the rendering of the LXX. Is παράνομοι; Vulg. *Iniqui*. The relative, אשר, is referred to שיחות, *pits*, by many persons, as Amyraldus, who thus paraphrases the latter part of the verse: 'At retia illa, cum lege tua directe pugnant.' Others make זדיש the antecedent, of whom they consider the second hemistich as descriptive. *The proud, who have not acted according to thy Law, have dug pits for me*. The sense is more obvious, according to this latter exposition; for one does not see the force of the phrase, 'digging pits,' which *are not according* to God's Law, as if pits might be dug which *are according* to it." — *Phillips*

of the sword, but have also maliciously sought to destroy me by snares and secret arts. The additional clause, *which thing is not according to thy Law,* is introduced as an argument, to excite God to exercise his mercy; for he is the more inclined to succor his servants, when he sees that the attempts made upon their welfare involve the violation of his own Law. At the same time, the Psalmist furnishes a proof of his own innocence, intimating that he had deserved no such treatment at their hands, and that whatever they practiced, he, notwithstanding, patiently kept himself under restraint; not attempting any thing which he knew to be contrary to the Divine Law.

86. *All thy commandments are truth.* In this verse he again confirms the statement, That, in whatever ways he was afflicted, his mind had not been distracted by various devices, because, trusting in the word of God, he never doubted of his assistance. In the first place, he tells us, that the consideration, by which he was armed for repelling all assaults, was this, That the faithful, under the conduct of God, engage in a prosperous warfare, the salvation which they hope for from his word being absolutely certain. For this reason he declares, that *the commandments of God are true;* by which encomium he teaches us, that those who rely upon the word of God are out of all danger; and he lays down this truth, that such a support may always sustain our courage. In the second place, he complains of the treachery of his enemies, as he declared before. Here the word שקר, *sheker,* is repeated, by which he means, that they had no regard to equity. From this consideration also he was led to entertain the hope of deliverance; for it is the peculiar office of God to succor the poor and afflicted who are wrongfully oppressed.

87. *They have almost consumed me upon the earth.* He repeats, in somewhat different words, what he had spoken a little before, that, although he had been sorely tempted, he had nevertheless kept his footing, because he had not given up with true religion. A single declaration of this fact would have been enough for those who are perfect; but if we call to mind our own weakness, we will readily confess that it was not unworthy of being repeatedly stated. We not only forget the law of God when we are shaken by extreme conflicts, but the greater part lose their courage even before they engage in the conflict. On which account this wonderful strength of the prophet is worthy of more special notice, who, although almost reduced to death, yet never ceased to revive his courage by continual meditation on the law. Nor is it in vain that he adds, that it was *upon the earth* that his enemies had almost consumed him, conveying the idea, that, when the fears of death presented themselves to him on all sides in this world, he elevated his mind above the world. If faith reach to heaven, it will be an easy matter to emerge from despair.

88. *Quicken me according to thy goodness* This verse contains nothing new. In the beginning of it David represents his life as depending on God's mercy, not only because he was conscious of human frailty, but because he

saw himself daily exposed to death in multiplied forms, or rather because he was convinced, that were God's power withdrawn from him, he would be laid prostrate as if he were dead. He next promises, that when he shall be again restored to life, he will not be ungrateful, but will duly acknowledge this as a blessing from God, and that not only with the tongue, but also in his whole life. As the various instances in which God succors us and delivers us from dangers are so many new lives, it is reasonable that we should dedicate to his service whatever additional time is allotted to us in this world. When the law is called *the testimony of God's mouth,* by this eulogium its authority is very plainly asserted.

Psalm 119:89-96

ל 89. Thy word, O Jehovah! endureth for ever in heaven. **ל 90.** Thy truth is from generation to generation: thou hast, established the earth, and it abideth. **ל 91.** By thy judgments they continue to this day; for all are thy servants. **ל 92.** Had not thy law been my delight, I had then perished in my affliction. **ל 93.** I will never forget thy statutes, for thou hast quickened me in them. **ל 94.** I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy statutes. **ל 95.** The wicked wait for me to destroy me: but I consider thy testimonies. **ל 96.** In all perfection I have see, the end: thy commandment is exceeding broad.

89 *Thy word, O Jehovah I endure for ever.* Many explain this verse as if David adduced the stability of the heavens as a proof of God's truth. According to them the meaning is, that God is proved to be true because the heavens continually remain in the same state. [429] Others offer a still more forced interpretation, That God's truth is more sure than the state of the heavens. But it appears to me that the prophet intended to convey a very different idea. As we see nothing constant or of long continuance upon earth, he elevates our minds to heaven, that they may fix their anchor there. David, no doubt, might have said, as he has done in many other places, that

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This is the explanation given by Walford. His translation is —

"O Jehovah! for ever
Is thy word established in the heavens."

Upon which he observes: "The design of these words is by no means obvious, and the interpreters vary greatly in their explications. I have not met with any explanation that is altogether satisfactory, and shall therefore give what appears to me to be the true meaning. The design, in general, of the Psalmist is, to celebrate the immutability of the word of God: whatever He speaks is sure. To illustrate this position, he refers to the creation of the heavens and of the earth; they were alike formed by the word of God, — 'He spake, and it was done.' By virtue of that word these vast productions abide through all ages, so that the word of God is established and displayed in heaven and upon earth. As the same word uttered all the precepts and institutions of the law, and all the promises of the covenant of mercy, the unchangeableness of these precepts and promises is verified and manifested by the perpetual conservation of all these instances of physical power and energy."

the whole order of the world bears testimony to the steadfastness of God's word — that word which is most true. But as there is reason to fear that the minds of the godly would hang in uncertainty if they rested the proof of God's truth upon the state of the world, in which such manifold disorders prevail; by placing God's truth in the heavens, he allots to it a habitation subject to no changes. That no person then may estimate God's word from the various vicissitudes which meet his eye in this world, heaven is tacitly set in opposition to the earth. Our salvation, as if it had been said, being shut up in God's word, is not subject to change, as all earthly things are, but is anchored in a safe and peaceful haven. The same truth the Prophet Isaiah teaches in somewhat different words:

"All flesh is grass, and all the godliness thereof is as the flower of the field," (Isaiah 40:6.)

He means, according to the Apostle Peter's exposition, (1 Peter 1:24) that the certainty of salvation is to be sought in the word, and, therefor that they do wrong who settle their minds upon the world; for the steadfastness of God's word far transcends the stability of the world.

90. *Thy truth is from generation to generation* In this verse the Psalmist repeats and confirms the same sentiment. He expressly teaches, that although the faithful live for a short time as strangers upon earth, and soon pass away, yet their life is not perishable, since they are begotten again of an incorruptible seed. He, however, proceeds still farther. He had before enjoined us to pierce by faith into heaven, because we will find nothing in the world on which we can assuredly rest; and now he again teaches us, by experience, that though the world is subject to revolutions, yet in it bright and signal testimonies to the truth of God shine forth, so that the steadfastness of his word is not exclusively confined to heaven, but comes down even to us who dwell upon the earth. For this reason, it is added, that the earth continues steadfast, even as it was established by God at the beginning. Lord, as if it had been said, even in the earth we see thy truth reflected as it were in a mirror; for though it is suspended in the midst of the sea, yet it continues to remain in the same state. These two things, then, are quite consistent; first, that the steadfastness of God's word is not to be judged of according to the condition of the world, which is always fluctuating, and fades away as a shadow; and, secondly, that yet men are ungrateful if they do not acknowledge the constancy which in many respects marks the frame. work of the world; for the earth, which otherwise could not occupy the position it does for a single moment, abides notwithstanding steadfast, because God's word is the foundation on which it rests. Farther, no person has any ground for objecting, that it is a hard thing to go beyond this world in quest of the evidences of God's truth, since, in that case, it would be too remote from the apprehension of men. The prophet meets the objection by affirming, that although it dwells in heaven, yet we may see at our very feet conspicuous proofs of it, which may gradually advance us

to as perfect knowledge of it as our limited capacity will permit. Thus the prophet, on the one hand, exhorts us to rise above the whole world by faith, so that the word of God may be found by experience to be adequate, as it really is adequate, to sustain our faith; and, on the other hand, he warns us that we have no excuse, if, by the very sight of the earth, we do not discover the truth of God, since legible traces of it are to be found at our feet. In the first clause, men are called back from the vanity of their own understanding; and, in the other; their weakness is relieved, that they may have a foretaste upon earth of what is to be found more fully in heaven.

91. *By thy judgments they continue to this day.* The word, היום, *hayom,* which, following other interpreters, I have translated *to this days might* not improperly *rendered daily, or every day.* In that case, however, the sense would be substantially the same; for the prophet means, that the whole order of nature depends solely upon the commandment or decree of God. In using the term *judgments,* he makes an allusion to the law, intimating, that the same regard to rectitude which is exhibited in the law is brightly displayed in every part; of God's procedure. From this it follows, that men are very perverse, when, by their unbelief, they do what they can to shake and impair the faithfulness of God, upon which all creatures repose; and, moreover, when by their rebellion they impeach his righteousness, and deny the authority of his commands, upon which the stability of the whole world depends. It is a harsh manner of expression to say, that *all the elements are God's servants;* but it expresses more than if it had been said, that all things are ready to yield obedience to him. How can we account for it, that the air, which is so thin, does not consume itself by blowing incessantly? How can we account for it, that the waters do not waste away by flowing, but on the principle that these elements obey the secret command of God? By faith, it is true, we perceive that the continued existence of the world is owing to the fiat of God; but all who have the smallest pretensions to understanding are led to the same conclusion, from the manifest and undoubted proofs of this truth, which every where meet their eye. Let it then be thoroughly impressed upon our minds, that all things are so governed and maintained by the secret operation of God, as that their continuing in the same state is owing to their obeying his commandment or word. We must always remember the point which the prophet aims at; which is, that God's faithfulness, which shines forth in his external works, may gradually conduct us higher, until we attain such a persuasion of the truth of heavenly doctrine as is entirely free from doubt.

92. *Had not thy law been my delight* The prophet continues to prosecute almost the same theme; affirming, that he would have been undone, had he not in his calamities sought consolation from the law of God. The adverb, אז *az,* signifies *then;* but as it is sometimes used for *a long time,* it is equivalent here to *long ago;* unless some may prefer to consider it as a significant and emphatic pointing to the thing, as if he were still in the state which he

describes. He confirms from his own experience what he had previously said, to make it manifest that he did not speak of things with which he was unacquainted, but that he asserts what he had really experienced, — namely, that there is no other solace, and no other remedy for adversity, but our reposing upon the word of God, and our embracing the grace and the assurance of our salvation which are offered in it. He here unquestionably commends the very same word, which he had but now said dwelt in heaven. Though it resound on earth, enter into our ears, and settle in our hearts, yet it still retains its celestial nature; for it descends to us in such a manner, as that it is not subject to the changes of the world. The prophet declares that he was grievously oppressed by a weight of afflictions enough to overwhelm him; but that the consolation which he derived from the Divine Law in such desperate circumstances, was as life to him.

93. *I will never forget thy statutes.* This verse contains a thanksgiving. As the law of the Lord had preserved him, he engages that he will never forget it. Yet he, at the same time, admonishes himself and others how necessary it is to cherish in the heart the remembrance of the Divine Law; for though we have found from experience its life-giving power, yet we easily allow it to pass from our memories, and on this account God afterwards justly punishes us, by leaving us for a long time to languish in our sadness.

94. *I am thine, save me.* In the first place, he takes encouragement to pray from the consideration, that he is one of God's own stamp and coinage, as we speak. In the second place, he proves that he is God's from the fact of his keeping his commandments. This ought not, however, to be understood as if he boasted of any merit which he possessed; as, in dealing with men, it is customary to adduce something meritorious which we have done as an argument for obtaining what we desire: — I have always loved and esteemed you, I have always studied to promote your honor and advantage; my service has always been ready at your command. But David rather brings forward the unmerited grace of God, and that alone; for no man, by any efforts of his own, acquires the high honor of being under the protection of God — an honor which proceeds solely from his free adoption. The blessing which God had conferred upon him is therefore here adduced as an argument why he should not forsake the work which he had commenced. When he affirms, that he was earnestly intent upon the Divine commandments, that also depended upon the Divine calling; for he did not begin to apply his mind to God's commandments before he was called and received into his household. As he desires, in this verse, that the Lord would save him, so, in the next verse, he expresses the need he had of being saved, saying, *that the wicked sought for him to destroy him;* by which he, at the same time, declares the constancy of his godliness, inasmuch as he then set his mind upon the law of God — a point worthy of special notice. Those who, at other times, would the forward and willing to follow God, know not to what side to turn themselves when they are assailed by the wicked, and, in that case, are very prone to

follow unhallowed counsel. It is therefore a great virtue to do God the honor of resting contented with his promises alone, when the wicked conspire for our destruction, and when, to all human appearance, our life is in jeopardy. *To consider God's testimonies* is, in this place, equivalent to applying our minds to the word of God, which sustains us against all assaults, effectually allays all fears, and restrains us from following any perverse counsels.

96. *In all perfection, I have seen the end.* [430] The prophet again, using other words, commends the same truth which he had taught in the first verse of this part — that the word of God is not subject to change, because it is elevated far above the perishable elements of this world. He here asserts, that there is nothing under heaven so perfect and stable, or so complete, in all respects, as not to have an end; and that the Divine word alone possesses such amplitude as to surpass all bounds and limits. Since the verb כלה *kalah,* signifies *to consume and finish,* as well as *to make perfect,* some take the noun תכלה *tichelah,* for *measure* or *end* But it is necessary to translate it *perfection,* that the comparison may be the more apparent, and the better to amplify the faithfulness of the Divine word; the idea which the prophet intended to convey being, that, after he had considered all things, especially those which are distinguished by the greatest perfection, he found that they were nothing when compared with God's word, inasmuch as all other things will soon come to an end, whereas the word of God stands ever firm in its own eternity. [431] Whence it follows, that we have no ground for apprehending that it will forsake us in the midst of our course.. It is termed *broad,* to denote that, though a man may mount above the heavens, or descend into the lowest depths, or traverse the whole space from the right to the left hand, yet he will not reach farther than the truth of God conducts us. It remains that our minds should embrace this vast extent; and such will be the case when they shall have ceased to enclose and shut themselves up within the narrow limits of this world.

Psalm 119:97-104

מ 97. O how have I loved thy law! it is my meditation all the day. **מ 98.** Thou hast made me wiser than my adversaries by thy

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"The literal translation is, *to the whole of perfection I perceive a limit.* The Hebrew word, however, which is rendered by *perfection*, occurs only in this place. It seems clearly to have for its root a verb signifying *to complete*, *to finish*: the meaning is, 'to every created thing, however perfect, I see a boundary;' that is, it is limited as to its capability, as well as to its duration." — *Cresswell.*

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"All human things, however full, perfect, and admirable, are necessarily deficient and mutable; but the law of God, like the nature of him from whom it proceeds, endureth for ever, and is in all respects complete and unalterable. We are to understand by the law here, the whole revealed will of God, comprehensive of promise as well as precept." — *Walford.*

> commandments: for they are ever with me. מ **99.** Thou hast made me to know more than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. מ **100.** I excelled the aged in understanding; for I have kept thy statutes. מ **101.** I have restrained my feet from every evil path, that it may keep thy word. מ **102.** I have not declined from thy judgments; for thou hast taught me. מ **103.** O how sweet/save been thy words to my palate! sweeter than honey to my mouth! מ **104.** By thy statutes I have acquired understanding; therefore I have hated every false way.

97. *O how have I loved thy law!* Not contented with a simple affirmation, the prophet exclaims, by way of interrogation, that he was inflamed with incredible love to the law of God; and, in proof of this, he adds, that he was continually engaged in meditating upon it. If any person boasts that he loves the Divine Law, and yet neglects the study of it, and applies his mind to other things, he betrays the grossest hypocrisy; for the love of the law, and especially such an ardent love of it as the prophet here expresses, always produces continual meditation upon it. And, assuredly, unless God's law inflame and ravish our hearts with the love of it, many allurements will quickly steal upon us, and lead us away to vanity. The prophet, then, here commends such a love of the law, as, possessing all our senses, effectually excludes all the deceits and corruption's to which we are otherwise too much inclined.

98. *Thou hast made me wiser than my adversaries* He here declares, that he was more learned than his adversaries, his instructors, and the aged, because he was a scholar of God's law. It is in a different sense that he describes himself as endued with understanding above his adversaries, from that in which he describes himself as wiser than his teachers. He surpassed his enemies, because their cunning and artifices availed them nothing when they employed these to the utmost to effect his destruction. The malice of the wicked is always goading them to do mischief; and as they are often artful and deceitful, we are afraid lest our simplicity should be imposed upon by their deceits, unless we use the same crafts and underhand dealings which they practice. Accordingly, the prophet glories, that he found in God's law enough to enable him to escape all their snares. When he claims the credit of being superior in knowledge to his instructors, he does not mean to deny that they also had learned from the word of God what was useful to be known. But he gives God thanks for enabling him to surpass, in proficiency, those from whom he had learned the first elements of knowledge. [432] Nor is it any new thing for the scholar to excel his master, according as God

[432] "As he had entered into the spiritual nature of the law of God, and saw into the exceeding breadth of the commandment, he soon became wiser than any of the *priests*, or even *prophets* who instructed him." — *Dr. Adam Clarke*

distributes to each man the measure of understanding. The faithful, it is true, are instructed by the pains and labor of men, but it is in such a way, as that God is still to be regarded as enlightening them. And it is owing to this that the scholar surpasses the master; for God means to show as it were, with the finger, that he uses the service of men in such a way as that he himself continues still the chief teacher. Let us therefore learn to commit ourselves to his tuition, that we may glory with David, that by his guidance we have proceeded farther than man's instruction could lead us. He adds the same thing respecting *the aged,* for the more abundant confirmation of his statement. Age is of great avail in polishing, by long experience and practice, men who, by nature, are dull and rude. Now the prophet asserts, that he had acquired, by the Divine Law, more discretion than belongs to aged men. [433] In short, he means to affirm, that whoever yields himself with docility to God, keeps his thoughts in subjection to his word, and exercises himself diligently in meditating upon the Law, will thence derive wisdom sufficient for enabling him to consult his own safety in opposition to the stratagems of his enemies, to exercise circumspection requisite for escaping their deceits; and, finally, to match with the most eminent masters through the whole course of his life. David, however, does not adduce his wisdom, that he may boast of it before the world; but, by his own example, he warns us, that nothing is better for us than to learn at God's mouth, since those only are perfectly wise who are taught in his school. At the same time, sobriety is here enjoined upon the faithful, that they may not seek for wisdom elsewhere than from God's word, and that ambition or curiosity may not incite them to vain boasting. In short, all are here recommended to behave themselves with modesty and humility, that no man may claim to himself such knowledge as elevates him above the Divine Law; but that all men, however intelligent, may willingly yield themselves to the lessons of heavenly wisdom revealed in the Divine Word. When he says, that *he kept God's statutes,* he teaches us what kind of meditation it is of which we have spoken, to let us know that he did not coldly philosophies upon God's precepts, but devoted himself to them with earnest affection.

101. *I have restrained my feet from every evil path* He intimates that he proclaimed war against every vice, that he might wholly devote himself to the service of God. From this we learn the profitable lesson, that in order to our keeping God's Law, we must, from the commencement, beware lest our feet should step aside into crooked by-paths; for with a nature so corrupted as ours is, amidst so many allurements, and with minds so fickle,

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"*I understand more than the ancients.* God had revealed to him more of that hidden wisdom, which was in his law, than he had done to any of his predecessors. And this was most literally true of David, who spoke more fully about Christ than any who had gone before him; or, indeed, followed after him. His compositions are, I had almost said, a *sublime gospel.*" — *Ibid.*

we are in the greatest danger of being led astray; yea, it is a rare miracle if any man hold on in his life in a right course, without turning aside in one direction or another. The faithful, therefore, have need to exercise the greatest circumspection, in order to keep their feet from going astray.

In the next verse, David commends his own constancy in observing the Law. He declares that ever since he had learned from God the right manner of living, he had pursued the right course. As the way is so slippery, and our feet so feeble, and our whole disposition so prone to go astray after innumerable errors, no small exertions are requisite on our part, in order to avoid declining from God's judgments. But we must attend to the manner of teaching to which the Psalmist refers; for though all, without exception, to whom God's word is preached, are taught, yet scarce one in ten so much as tastes it; yea, scarce one in a hundred profits to the extent of being enabled, thereby, to proceed in a right course to the end. A peculiar manner of teaching is, therefore, here pointed out — that which consists in God's drawing his chosen people to himself. I have been brought, as if the Psalmist had said, into the way of salvation, and preserved in it by the secret influence of the Holy Spirit.

103. *O how sweet have been thy words to my palate!* He again repeats what he had previously stated in different words, that he was so powerfully attracted by the sweetness of the Divine Law, as to have no desire after any other delight. It is possible that a man may be affected with reverence towards the Law of God; but no one will cheerfully follow it, save he who has tasted this sweetness. God requires from us no slavish service: he will have us to come to him cheerfully, and this is the very reason why the prophet commends the sweetness of God's word so often in this psalm. If it is demanded in what sense he declares that he took such sweet delight in God's Law, which, according to the testimony of Paul, (1 Corinthians 3:9,) does nothing else but strike fear into men, the solution is easy: The prophet does not speak of the dead letter which kills those who read it, but he comprehends the whole doctrine of the Law, the chief part of which is the free covenant of salvation. When Paul contrasts the Law with the Gospel, he speaks only of the commandments and threatening. Now if God were only to command, and to denounce the curse, the whole of his communication would, undoubtedly, be deadly. But the prophet is not here opposing the Law to the Gospel; and, therefore, he could affirm that the grace of adoption, which is offered in the Law, was sweeter to him than honey; that is to say, that no delight was to him equal to this. What I have previously said must be remembered, that the Law of God will be unsavory to us, or, at least, that it will never be so sweet to us, as to withdraw us from the pleasures of the flesh, until we have struggled manfully against our own nature, in order to subdue the carnal affections which prevail within us.

104 *By thy statutes I have acquired understanding* The prophet seems here to invert the order he has just now laid down. He observed that he had

kept his feet from going astray, that he might observe God's Law, and now he institutes a contrary order, beginning with the observance of the Law; for he declares that he had been taught by the word of God before he amended his faults. Yet these two things are not inconsistent, — that the faithful should withdraw themselves from their wanderings, in order to frame their life according to the rule of God's word, and that when they are already advanced a considerable way in a holy life, the fear of God being then more vigorous in them, they should regard all vices with more intense hatred. The beginning of a good life, unquestionably, is when a man endeavors to purge himself from vices; and the more a man has made progress in a good life, he will burn with a, proportionate zeal in his detestation of vices and in shunning them. Moreover, we are taught by the words of the prophet, that the reason why men are so involved in falsehoods, and entangled in perverse errors, is, because they have not learned wisdom from the word of God. As the whole world are given to folly, those who wander astray plead in excuse, that it is difficult for them to guard against the allurements of vice. But the remedy will be near at hand, if we follow the counsel of the prophet; that is to say, if, instead of leaning on our own wisdom, we seek understanding from the word of God, in which he not only shows what is right:. but also fortifies our minds, and puts us on our guard against all the deceits of Satan, and all the impostures of the world. Would to God that, at the present day, this were thoroughly impressed on the minds of all who boast themselves of being Christians; for then they would not be continually driven about, as the greater part of them are, with such inconstancy, according to the conflicting impulses of prevailing opinions. As Satan is so sedulously exerting himself to spread abroad the mists of error, let us apply ourselves with the greater earnestness to the acquisition of this wisdom.

Psalm 119:105-112

נ 105. Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. **נ 106.** I have sworn, and will conform, to keep thy righteous judgments. **נ 107.** I am greatly afflicted, O Jehovah! quicken me according to thy word. **נ 108.** O Jehovah! I beseech thee let the free-will-offerings of my mouth be acceptable to thee, and teach me thy judgments. **נ 109.** My soul is continually in my hand; and I have not forgotten thy law. **נ 110.** The wicked have laid a snare for me; and, have not erred from thy statutes. **נ 111.** I have thy testimonies as an inheritance forever; for they are the joy of my heart. **נ 112.** I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes forever, to the end.

105. *Thy word is a lamp to my feet.* In this verse the Psalmist testifies that the Divine Law was his schoolmaster and guide in leading a holy life. He thus, by his own example, prescribes the same rule to us all; and it is highly necessary to observe this rule; for while each of us follows what seems good in his own estimation, we become entangled in inextricable and

frightful mazes. The more distinctly to understand his intention, it is to be noted, that the word of God is set in opposition to all human counsels. What the world judges right is often crooked and perverse in the judgment of God, who approves of no other manner of living, than that which is framed according to the rule of his law. It is also to be observed, that David could not have been guided by God's word, unless he had first renounced the wisdom of the flesh, for it is only when we are brought to do this, that we begin to be of a teachable disposition. But the metaphor which he uses implies something more; namely, that unless the word of God enlighten men's path, the whole of their life is enveloped in darkness and obscurity, so that they cannot do anything else than miserably wander from the right way; and again, that when we submit ourselves with docility to the teaching of God's law, we are in no danger of going astray. Were there such obscurity in God's word, as the Papists foolishly talk about, the commendation with which the prophet here honors the law would be altogether undeserved. Let us, then, be assured that an unerring light is to be found there, provided we open our eyes to behold it. The Apostle Peter (2 Peter 1:19) has more plainly expressed the same sentiment, when he commends the faithful for taking heed to the word of prophecy, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

106. *I have sworn, and will perform* Here the Psalmist speaks of his own constancy. He had declared a little before, that during the whole course of his life, he had not declined from God's law, and now he speaks of the purpose of his mind. By the word *swear,* he intimates that he had solemnly pledged himself to God not to alter his determination. The true manner of keeping God's law is to receive and embrace what he commands heartily, and, at the same time, uniformly, that our ardor may not forthwith abate, as is often the case. This also is the proper rule of vowing, that we may offer ourselves to God, and dedicate our life to him. It may, however, be asked, whether the prophet's oath may not be condemned as rash, inasmuch as he presumed to engage to do far more than man's ability is equal to; for who is able to keep the law? The man, then, it may be alleged, vows rashly, who promises to God a thing which it is beyond his power to accomplish. The answer is obvious: Whenever the faithful vow to Him, they do not look to what they are able to do of themselves, but they depend upon the grace of God, to whom it belongs to perform what he requires from them, in the way of supplying them with strength by his Holy Spirit. When the question is in reference to service to be rendered to God, they cannot vow anything without the Holy Spirit; for, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:5,

"Not that are sufficient of ourselves to think anything
as of ourselves."

But when God stretches forth his hand to us, he bids us be of good courage, and promises that he will never fail us; and this is the source from which the boldness to swear, here spoken of, proceeds. Nor is it any rashness

at all, when, confiding in his promises, by which he anticipates us, we, on our part, offer ourselves to his service. The question, however, still remains unsolved; for although the children of God ultimately prove victorious over all temptations by the grace of the Holy Spirit, yet there is always some infirmity about them. But it is to be observed, that the faithful, in making vows and promises, have a respect not only to that article of the covenant, by which God has promised that he will cause us to walk in his commandments, but also to that other article which is, at the same time, added concerning the free forgiveness of their sins, Ezekiel 11:20; 36:27; Psalm 103:13. David, therefore, according to the measure of grace given him, bound himself by oath to keep God's la encouraged by these words of the prophet,

"I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," Malachi 3:17.

107. *I am greatly afflicted, O Jehovah!* This verse teaches, that God did not cherish the fathers under the law in his bosom so delicately as not to exercise them with grievous temptations; for the Psalmist declares that he was not afflicted lightly, or in an ordinary degree, but above measure. His prayer *to be quickened* implies that he was at the point of death. He, however, at the same time, shows, that though he was besieged by death, he yet fainted not, because he leaned upon God — a point worthy of special notice; for though, at the beginning, we may call upon God with much alacrity, yet when the trial increases in severity, our hearts quail, and, in the extremity of fear, our confidence is extinguished. Yet the prophet implores God for grace, not in order to his life being preserved in safety, but in order to his recovering the life he had lost, which indicates both the low condition to which he was reduced, and his continued confidence in God. We must also observe attentively the last part of the clause*, according to thy word* We will pray coldly, or rather we will not pray at all, if God's promise does not inspire us with courage in our sorrow and distress. In short, as we have said elsewhere, it is indispensably necessary that we should have this key at hand, in order to our having free access to the throne of grace.

108. *O Jehovah! I beseech thee, let the flee-will-offerings of my mouth.* This verse may be read in one connected sentence, as well as divided into two members. According to the former view, the sense will be, Receive, e Lord, my sacrifices, to this end, that thou mayest teach me thy commandments. If we prefer dividing the verse into two clauses, then it will consist of two separate prayers; first, a prayer that God would accept the prophet's sacrifices; and, secondly, a prayer that he would instruct him in the doctrine of the law. I am rather inclined to follow the first opinion. The prophet affirms, as we have seen elsewhere, that nothing was more precious to him than to understand the doctrine of the law. Lord, as if he had said, do thou, according to thy good pleasure, accept the sacrifices which I offer thee; and as my chief desire is, to be instructed aright in thy law, grant that I may be a partaker of this blessing, which I am so anxious to obtain. We should

mark all the places in which the knowledge of divine truth is preferred to all the other benefits bestowed upon mankind; and doubtless, since it contains in it the pledge of everlasting salvation, there is good reason why it should be esteemed as an inestimable treasure. Yet the prophet begins at a point remote from this, praying that God would vouchsafe to approve of and accept his services. By the word נדבות, *nidboth,* I have no doubt he denotes the sacrifices which were called *free-will-offerings.* I indeed grant that he speaks properly of vows and prayers; but as the chosen people to propitiate God, were wont to offer sacrifices, according as every man had ability, he alludes to that custom which prevailed under the law; even as Hosea (Hosea 14:2) designates the praises of God "the calves of the lips." It was the design of God, by that ceremony, to testify to the fathers that no prayers were acceptable to him, but those which were joined with sacrifice, that they might always turn their minds to the Mediator. In the first place, he acknowledges that he was unworthy of obtaining any thing by his prayers, and that, if God heard him, it proceeded from his free and unmerited grace. In the second place, he desires that God would be favorable to him in the way of enabling him to profit aright in the doctrine of the law. The verb, רצה *ratsah,* which he uses: signifies *to favor of mere good will.* Whence it follows, that there is nothing meritorious in our prayers, and that, whenever God hears them, it is in the exercise of his free goodness.

109. *My soul is continually in my hand.* He declares, that no calamities, afflictions, or dangers, which he had experienced: had withdrawn him from the service of God, and the observance of his law. *To bear his soul in his hand,* is equivalent to his being in danger of his life, so that the soul was, as it were abandoned to the wind. Thus Job, (Job 13:14,) when he pines in his miseries: and is looking for death every moment, and dreading it, complains that his soul was in his hand; as if he had said, It is plucked from its own dwelling-place: and is under the dominion of death. [434] This form of expression is therefore unhappily wrested to an absurd meaning by ignorant people, who understand the prophet as intimating, that it was in his own power to govern his life as he pleased. So far from intending to convey such an idea, by this circumstance he commends his own piety, declaring, that although he was tossed among shipwrecks, and death in a hundred forms hovered before his eyes, so that he could not rest in security for a single moment, yet he had not cast from him the love and study of the Divine law. Here, again, it is well to notice the severe and arduous conflicts by which the fathers, under the law, were tried, that dangers and fears may not frighten us, or, by the weariness they produce, deprive us of courage, and thus prevent the remembrance of the Divine law from remaining impressed on our hearts.

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me* The meaning of this verse is similar to that of the preceding. The prophet shows more definitely in what

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respect he carried his life in his hand; namely, because, being hemmed in on all sides by the snares of the wicked, he saw scarcely any hope of life. We have previously observed how difficult it is to avoid wandering from the ways of the Lord, when our enemies, by their subtle arts, endeavor to effect our destruction. The depraved desire of our fallen nature incites us to retaliate, nor do we see any way of preserving our life, unless we employ the same arts by which they assail us; and we persuade ourselves that it is lawful for us to howl among wolves. Such being the ease, we ought, with the more attention, to meditate upon this doctrine, That, when the wicked environ and besiege us by their wiles, the best thing we can do is to follow whither God calls us, and to attempt nothing but what is agreeable to his will.

111. *I have thy testimonies as an inheritance for ever.* He again confirms the sentiment, which cannot be too often repeated, That the law of God was more precious to him than all the pleasures, riches, and possessions, of the world. I have said, that it is not in vain that these things are so often repeated; for we see how violently the men of the world boil to gratify their unruly lusts, with what multiplied anxieties they are agitated, while they are unceasingly coveting innumerable objects; and, in the meantime, scarcely one in a hundred is, in a moderate degree, aiming to apply his mind to the study of the Divine law. The prophet, then, to stir us up by his own example, asserts, that he took such pleasure in God's, testimonies as to esteem nothing more precious. It is love only which leads us to set a value on any object; and, therefore, it is requisite, in order to our observing the Divine law with the reverence due to it, that we begin with this delight in it. It is not wonderful, if God's testimonies convey to our minds *a joy,* which, causing us to reject and despise all other things, holds our affections

This proverbial expression occurs in several other places of Scripture, in all of which it undoubtedly signifies, that the life of the person who employs it is in danger; as in Judges 12:3, "And when I saw that ye delivered me not, *I put my life in my hands*, and passed over against the children of Ammon;" 1 Samuel 19:5, "*He put his life in his hand*, and slew the Philistines;" and 1 Samuel 28:21, "And the woman came unto Saul, and said, *I have put my life in my hand*." Phillips thus explains the figure: "We are accustomed to say, that an affair is in a person's hands when the management and issue of it rest entirely with him, and so we speak when that affair is the life or death of an individual. Hence, similarly, when the Hebrews spoke of a person's life being in his own hands, they might mean, that the preservation of his life was entirely with him, that he was destitute of all external assistance, and that consequently his life was in danger. This is particularly the case with military men, who, as they fight bravely, or otherwise, may preserve or lose their lives: so Jephthah, as appears from the passages above cited." The figure may, however, be taken from the circumstance, that what a man carries openly in his hand is in danger of taking, or of being snatched away by violence. "The LXX. have changed the person of the pronoun, ἐν ταῖς χερσι σου; *in thy hands*; as also the Syriac. It is probable that these ancient interpreters did not understand the phrase, and so expressed it according to what they thought might be the original reading, thus affording a very obvious sense. Augustine says, that many MSS. in his time had the second person. However, no such MSS. are known now, and there is no doubt whatever of the correctness of the present text. The Psalmist states that, though his life was in danger, yet he did not forget God's law." — *Ibid*

fast bound to them. What can be sweeter than to have heaven opened to us, that we may come freely into the presence of God, when, adopting us to be his children, he pardons our sins? What can be more desirable than to hear that he is so pacified towards us, as to take upon himself the care of our life? This I have thought good to observe briefly, that we might not think it strange to find David rejoicing so greatly in God's law. The similitude of *inheritance* is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures; and we apply the designation of *inheritance* to that which we hold in the highest estimation, so that we are contented to be deprived of all other things, provided we retain the safe and full possession of that one thing. Accordingly, the prophet intimates, that whatever good things he had obtained he accounted them as adventitious, and that the truths revealed in God's word alone were to him as an inheritance. Without the Divine word all other things were in his estimation as nothing; so that he could willingly leave to others, riches, honors, comforts, and pleasures, provided he possessed this incomparable treasure. It is not meant to say that he; altogether despised the temporal benefits which God bestows, but his mind was not bound fast to them.

112. *I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes.* In this verse he describes the right observance of the law, which consists in Our cheerfully and heartily preparing ourselves for doing what the law commands. Slavish and constrained obedience differs little from rebellion. The prophet, therefore, in order briefly to define what it is to serve God, asserts, that he applied not only his hands, eyes, or feet, to the keeping of the law, but that he began with the affection of the heart. Instead of the verb *incline,* the verb *extend* might with propriety be employed; but I am inclined to rest in the more generally received interpretation, which is, that he devoted himself with sincere affection of heart to the observance of the law. This inclination of the heart is oppose to the wandering lusts which rise up against God, and drag us any where rather than incline us to a virtuous life. The attempt of the Papists to defend from this passage their doctrine of free will is mere trifling. They infer from the words of the prophet, that it is in the power of man to bend his own heart in whatever way he pleases. But the answer is easy. The prophet does not here boast of what he had done by his own strength, for he now repeats the very same word which he had employed before, when he said, *Incline my heart to these testimonies.* If that prayer was not feigned, he doubtless acknowledged by it that it was the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit to incline and frame our hearts to God. But it is no new thing for that to be ascribed to us which God works in us: Paul's statement to this effect is very plain,

"It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasures" (Philippians 2:13.)

When the prophet says of himself that *he inclined his heart,* he does not separate his own endeavor from the grace of the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration he has previously declared that the whole was done. At the

same time, he distinguishes the constancy of his pious affection from the transient favor of others. Thus, that he might not fail in the midst of his course, or even go backward, he affirms that he had resolved to continue in the same course during the whole of his life. The word עקב, *ekeb, to the end,* in my opinion, is added to the word לעולם, *leolam, for ever,* by way of exposition; and to show us that he struggled manfully against all obstacles and difficulties, that they might not break his constancy; for no man perseveres in the service of God without arduous exertions. Some take the word as denoting *a reward;* [435] but this seems too foreign to the design of the passage.

Psalm 119:113-120

ס **113.** I have hated crooked thoughts, and loved thy law. ס **114.** Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I have trusted in thy word. ס **115.** Depart from me, ye wicked! and I will keep the commandments of my God. ס **116.** Sustain me by thy word, and I shall live: and make me not ashamed of my expectation. ס **117.** Establish me, and I shall be safe: and I will consider thy statutes continually. ס **118.** Thou hast trodden under foot all those who wander from thy statutes; for their deceit is falsehood. ס **119**. Thou hast made all the wicked of the earth to cease as dross; therefore I have loved thy testimonies. ס **120.** My flesh trembled for fear of thee, and I was afraid of thy judgments.

113. *I have hated crooked thoughts.* Those who are of opinion that the word סעפים *seaphim,* the first in the verse, and which is rendered *crooked thoughts,* is an appellate noun, translate it, *those who think evil;* [436] but it is more correct to understand it of the thoughts themselves, [437] and this interpretation is very generally adopted. The noun סעף, *saeph,* properly signifies *a branch,* but it is applied metaphorically to the *thoughts,* which,

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Thus, in the Arabic, it is, "on account of an eternal reward;" that is, the reward of grace promised to all the faithful. According to this view, the Psalmist would have a respect to the end and reward of faith and holy obedience. See Hebrews 11:26; 1 Peter 1:8, 9. As, however, the Psalmist, like all true believers, did not embrace and obey the law of God, only or chiefly from the hope of reward, but was chiefly attracted to obedience by love to God, and the intrinsic excellence of the law, others prefer reading "the reward *is* eternal."

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In the Chaldee, it is "vain thinkers;" and thus the meaning would be, "I hate men that think evil, that devise wicked devices, or that have false and evil opinions, opposite to God's law, or tending to seduce men from it."

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It signifies *thoughts* in Job 4:14, and 20:2; and *opinions* in 1 Kings 18:21: and these may be either good or evil, their character being determined by the context of the passage in which the word occurs.

growing out of the heart, as branches from the trunk of a tree, spread themselves in every direction. As there is no doubt that in this passage the term is taken in a bad sense, I have added the epithet, *crooked,* which the etymology of the word requires. [438] As the branches of a tree shoot out transversely, entangled and intertwined, so the thoughts of the human mind are, in like manner, confusedly mingled together, turning and twisting about in all directions. Some Jewish interpreters understand it of the laws of the heathen, which, they say, were cut off from the law of God, as branches from a tree; but although this is ingenious, it has no solidity. I therefore keep by the more simple explanation, That the crooked inventions of the human heart, and whatever the wicked devise, according to their own perverse understandings, are set in opposition to the law of God, which alone is right. And, assuredly, whoever would truly embrace the law of God, must, necessarily, as his first business, divest himself of all unhallowed and sinful thoughts, or rather go out of his own nature. Such is the meaning, unless, perhaps, preferring another metaphor, we understand סעפום, *seaphim,* to signify *high thoughts,* since the verb סעף, *saaph,* is taken for *to lift up.* Now we know that no sacrifice is more acceptable to God than obedience, when we entertain low thoughts of ourselves; and thus our docility begins with humility. But as this exposition may seem also far-fetched, I pass from it. Let what I have: said suffice us, That since God acknowledges as the disciples of his law those only who are well purified from all contrary imaginations, which corrupt our understanding, the prophet here protests that he is an enemy to all crooked thoughts, which are wont to draw men hither and thither.

114. *Thou art my hiding place and my shield.* The meaning is, that the prophet, persuaded that the only way in which he could be safe, was by lying hid under the wings of God, confided in his promises, and, therefore, feared nothing. And, assuredly, the first point is, that the faithful should hold it as a settled principle, that amidst the many dangers to which they are exposed, the preservation of their life is entirely owing to the protection of God; in order that they may be excited to flee to him, and leaning upon his word, may confidently wait for the deliverance which he has promised.

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The sense of the text also requires that the word for *thoughts* should here be taken in a bad sense, for the Psalmist affirms that he hates them, and sets God's law in opposition to them. Various epithets have been supplied to describe the character of these thoughts, such as "crooked," by Calvin, "vain," by our English version, and "high minded," by Luther. Ainsworth supplies *wavering,* observing, that the original term denotes the top branches of trees, which are figuratively applied to the thoughts or opinions of the mind, to denote that they are wavering and uncertain, as 1 Kings 18:21; or to persons distracted with their own cogitations. Poole remarks, agreeably to Calvin's interpretation, that the thoughts, or opinions, or devices of men differing from, or opposite to God's law, may be intended, since, in the next clause, God's law is opposed to them, and as some, both Jewish and Christian, expositors understand the Hebrew word.

This confidence, *That God is our refuge and our shield,* is, no doubt, derived from the word; but we must remember that there is here a mutual relation — that, when we have learned from the word of God that we have in him a safe hiding-place, this truth is to be cherished and confirmed in our hearts, under a consciousness of our absolute need of the divine protection. Besides, although his power ought abundantly to suffice in inspiring us with the hope of salvation, yet we should always set the word before us, that our faith may not fail when his aid is slow in coming.

115. *Depart from me, ye wicked!* Some explain this verse as if David declared that he would devote himself with more alacrity and greater earnestness to the keeping of the law, when the wicked should have desisted from assaulting him. And, unquestionably, when we feel that God has delivered us, we are more than stupid if this experience does not stir up within us an earnest desire to serve him. If godliness does not increase in us in proportion to the sense and experience we have of God's grace, we betray base ingratitude. This, then, is a true and useful doctrine; but the prophet meant to convey a different sentiment in this place. As he saw how great a hindrance the ungodly are to us, he banishes them to a distance from him; or rather, he testifies that he will beware of entangling himself in their society. Nor has he said this so much for his own sake as to teach us by his example, that if we would hold on in the way of the Lord without stumbling, we must endeavor, above all things, to keep at the greatest possible distance from worldly and wicked men, not in regard to distance of place, but in respect of intercourse and conversation. Provided we contract an intimate acquaintance with them, it is scarcely possible for us to avoid being speedily corrupted by the contagion of their example. The dangerous influence of fellowship with wicked men is but too evident from observation; and to this it is owing, that few continue in their integrity to the close of life, the world being fraught with corruption's. From the extreme infirmity of our nature, it is the easiest thing in the world to catch infection, and to contract pollution even from the slightest touch. The prophet, then, with good reason, bids the wicked depart from him, that he may advance in the fear of God without obstruction. Whoever entangles himself in their companionship will, in process of time, proceed the length of abandoning himself to a contempt, of God, and of leading a dissolute life. With this statement agrees the admonition of Paul, in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It was, indeed, beyond the prophet's power to chase the wicked to a distance from him; but by these words he intimates, that from henceforth he will have no intercourse with them. He emphatically designates God as *his God,* to testify that he makes more account of him alone than of all mankind. Finding extreme wickedness universally prevailing on the earth, he separated himself from men, that he might join himself wholly to God. At the present day, that bad examples

may not carry us away to evil, it greatly concerns us to put God on our side, and to abide constantly in him, because he is ours.

116. *Sustain me by thy word, and I shall live.* Many read, *According to thy word,* so that the letter ב, *beth,* which signifies in, is taken for the letter כ, *caph,* which signifies *as;* and thus the sense would be, Sustain me according to the promise which thou hast made to me, or, as thou hast promised to me. And, undoubtedly, whenever God stretches out his hand to us to raise us up when we are fallen, or supports us with his hand, he fulfills his promises. The prophet, however, seems to pray, that constancy of faith may be given him, to enable him to continue steadfast in the divine word. We are said to fall from God's word when we fall from the faith of it; and in like manner, so long as we repose upon the truth and certainty of it, he is our sustainer. But, as the prophet well knew that there is not strength in man adequate to this, he asks from God ability to persevere as the singular gift of the Holy Spirit. It follows, then, that true stability is to be found no where else but in the word of God; and that no man can steadfastly lean upon it but he who is strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must therefore always beseech God, who alone is the author and finisher of faith, to maintain in us this grace. Farther, when the Psalmist places life in faith, he teaches, that all that men promise themselves without the word is mere falsehood. It is therefore the Lord alone who quickens us by his word, even as it is said in Habakkuk, (Habakkuk 2:4,) "The just shall live by faith." Both passages have the same meaning. After Habakkuk has derided the foolish confidence of the flesh, with which men are generally inflated, and as manifested in their raising themselves on high that they may fall with the greater violence, he shows, that the faithful alone, whom the word of God sustains, stand upon safe and sure ground.

If the first interpretation is adopted, the second clause, *make me not ashamed of my expectation,* will be added by way of exposition; for these two things — the prayer that the prophet maybe preserved by God's grace according to his word, and the prayer that he may reap the fruit of his hope — would amount to nearly the same thing. Yet, after having beseeched God to grant him constancy to persevere, he seems now to proceed farther, praying that God would, in very deed, show the thing which he had promised. Every man's own infirmity bears witness to the many doubts which intrude into our minds, when, after long endurance, the issue is not answerable to our expectation; for God, in that case:. seems to disappoint us.

To the same effect is the next verse, except that no express mention is made of the word; and *safety* is put for *life.* The prophet means to say, that whenever God withdrew his word, it would be all over with his safety; but that, if he were established by the Divine power, there was nothing of which he would have reason to be afraid. The verb שעה *shaah,* which we have translated *I will consider,* is rendered by many, *I will delight,* and this sense is not unsuitable; for although God may give a very desirable taste

of his goodness in his bare word, yet the savor of it is not a little increased when to the word the effect is added, provided we do not perversely separate God's benefits from his promises. It is the true wisdom of faith to consider all his benefits as the result or fruit of his promises, of which, if we make no account, the enjoyment of all his good things will be of little advantage to us, or rather will often prove hurtful and deadly. Yet it appears to me preferable to render the verb by *consider;* for the more experience any man has of God's help, the more ought he to awaken himself to consider heavenly doctrine. The Psalmist adds, that he will continue to persevere in this meditation during the whole of his life.

118. *Thou hast trodden under foot all those who wander from thy statutes.* By *treading under foot* he means, that God overthrows all the despisers of his law, and casts them down from that loftiness which they assume to themselves. The phrase is directed against the foolish, or rather frantic, confidence with which the wicked are inflated, when they recklessly deride the judgments of God; and, what is more, scruple not to magnify themselves against him, as if they were not subject to his power. The last clause is to be particularly noticed: *for their deceit is falsehood* [439] By these words the prophet teaches, that the wicked gain nothing by their wiles, but that they are rather entangled in them, or at length discover that they were mere sleight of hand. Those ignorantly mar the sense who interpose the copula *and,* as if it had been said, that *deceit and falsehood were in them* The word רמוה, *remyah,* signifies *a subtle and crafty device.* Interpreters, indeed, often translate it *thought;* but this term does not sufficiently express the propriety and force of the Hebrew word. The prophet means, that, however well pleased the wicked are with their own cunning, they yet do nothing else than deceive themselves with falsehood. And it was needful to add this clause; for we see how the great bulk of mankind are fatally intoxicated with their own vain imaginations, and how difficult it is to believe what is here asserted, — that the more shrewd they are in their own estimation, the more do they deceive themselves.

119. *Thou hast made all the wicked of the earth to cease as dross.* The meaning of this verse is similar to that of the preceding. By the similitude employed, there is described a sudden and an unexpected change, when their imaginative glory and happiness become dissipated in smoke. It is to be observed, that the vengeance of God against the wicked is not all at once manifested, so that they completely perish, or are exterminated from the earth; but as God, in rooting them out one after another, shows himself to be the judge of the world, and that he is purging the earth of them, it

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Dimock thinks that, by this expression, the Psalmist; probably alludes to the *Lex Talionis* amongst the Jews, and that the Apostle might refer to this passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:11; where he says, "that God should send them strong *delusion*, that they should believe a *lie*."

is not wonderful to find the prophet speaking of their destruction in this manner; for the Hebrew verbs often denote a continued act. As God, then, executes his judgments by little and little, and often suspends punishment until he see that the wicked abuse his long-suffering; it becomes us, on our part, to continue patiently waiting until, as a heathen writer observes, he compensate the delay of the punishment, by its severity when inflicted. It is abundantly evident, that the particle of similitude, *as,* is to be supplied before the word *dross* [440] Nor do I reject the opinion of those who assert, that the wicked are compared to dross, because, so long as they are mingled among the faithful as dregs, they infect and contaminate them; but when they are removed as scum, the purity of the godly shines forth with improved lustre. In the second place, the prophet adds, that the judgments of God were not without fruit in him, since they led him to love the doctrine of the law the more. Those who are not induced to commit themselves to the protection of God, whenever, by lifting up his hand, he shows that the world is governed by his power, must certainly be very perverse; but when, of his own good pleasure, he offers himself to us by his word, those who do not make haste to embrace so great a boon are stupid indeed. On the other hand, when he connives for a long time at the wickedness of men, devout affection, which should ravish us with the love of God's word, languishes.

120. *My flesh hath trembled for fear of thee.* [441] At first sight the prophet seems to contradict himself. He had just now said, that, by God's severity, he was gently drawn to love his testimonies; now he declares, that he was seized with terror. But although these two effects differ widely from each other, yet, if we consider by what kind of discipline God forms us to reverence his law, we will perceive that they entirely harmonize. We require to be subdued by fear that we may desire and seek after the favor of God. Since fear, then, is the beginning of love, the prophet testifies, that he was awakened by a heart-felt fear of God to look well to himself. Nor is the mortification of the flesh so easy a matter, as that every one should consent to enter upon it, without the constraint of violent means; and, therefore, it is not wonderful if God struck his servant with terror, that, in this way, he

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"Before the noun סגים, rendered *dross*, the particle כ, of similitude, is understood, so that the Psalmist says, 'Thou hast entirely removed (made to cease) all the wicked of the earth as dross,' which is removed from metals by fusion, or from corn by winnowing. The society of men is as a mass of metal in which the wicked are as rust and dross. The judgments of God, which are searching, will cause a separation of the dross from the metal, and thus He will destroy the one and preserve the other." — *Phillips*

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The verb סמר, *samar*, rendered hath trembled, denotes being seized with horror, so that the hair stands on end. It occurs in Piel in Job 4:15. This state of horror was produced on the mind of the Psalmist by a contemplation of the divine judgments executed on the wicked, who are rejected like dross; and he was thus brought to fear God.

might bend his mind to a holy fear of him. It is an evidence of no common wisdom to tremble before God when he executes his judgments, of which the majority of mankind take no notice. We are then taught by these words of the prophet, that we ought to consider attentively the judgments of God, that they may not only gently instruct us, but that they may also strike us with such terror as will lead us to true repentance.

Psalm 119:121-176

Psalm 119:121-128

121. ע I have done judgment and righteousness: give me not up to my oppressors. **122.** ע Become surety for thy servant for good, that the proud may not oppress me. **123.** ע My eyes have failed for thy salvation, and for thy righteous word. [443] **124.** ע Deal with thy servant according to thy goodness, and teach me thy statutes. **125.** ע I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may learn thy testimonies. **126.** ע It is time for thee, O Jehovah! to be doing for they have destroyed thy law. **127.** ע And therefore I have loved thy statutes above gold, [444] yea even above the most fine gold [445] **128.** ע Therefore I have esteemed all thy commandments to be altogether right, and have hated every way of lying.

121. *I have done judgment and righteousness.* The Prophet implores the help of God against the wicked who troubled him, and he does so in

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Literally, "for the word of thy righteousness." Calvin understands it of the divine promises. Phillips translates "for the word of thy justice," "that is," says he, "for the sentence of justice on my oppressors, as the first part of the verse teaches; for the passing this sentence will be equivalent to the granting the salvation which the Psalmist so ardently desired."

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"*Above gold.* מזהב, *mizahab,* more than *resplendent gold;* gold without any stain or rust." — Dr. *Adam Clarke*

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"Ou, marguerites." — Fr. *marg.* "Or, pearls." "ומפז, *umipaz, above solid gold;* gold separated from the dross, perfectly refined." — *Dr. Adam Clarke.*

such a manner as at the same time to testify that the harassing treatment he received from them was on his part altogether undeserved. If we would have God to come down to succor us, it becomes us to see to it that we meet him with the testimony of a good conscience. As He everywhere promises his aid to the afflicted who are unrighteously oppressed, it is no superfluous protestation which the Prophet makes, that he had not provoked his enemies, but had restrained himself from all injury and wrong-doing, and had not even attempted to requite evil for evil. In asserting that he had at all times *done judgment,* he means that whatever rite wicked practiced, he steadfastly persevered in following after integrity, and never turned aside from what was just and right in any of his public or private transactions.

122. *Become surety for thy servant for good.* This prayer is almost similar to that of the preceding verse; for I prefer translating the Hebrew verb ערוב, *arob,* by *Become surety for,* to rendering, as others do, *Delight thy servant in good,* or *Make thy servant to delight in good* According to this second version, the words are a prayer that God would rejoice his servant with his benefits. There is a third translation, by which they become a prayer that God would inspire his heart with the love and desire of rectitude; for true perfection consists in our taking pleasure in justice and uprightness. But as from the last clause of the verse it is obvious that David here desires succor against his enemies, the verb *Become surety* is the more appropriate rendering [446] Lord, as if he had said, since the proud cruelly rush upon me to destroy me, interpose thyself between us, as if thou wert my surety. The letter ל, *lamed,* which signifies *for,* is not indeed prefixed to the noun, but this is no valid objection to our translation, as that letter is often understood. It is a form of expression full of comfort, to represent God as performing the office of a surety in order to effect our deliverance. He is said metaphorically to become surety for us, just as if, on finding us indebted in a large sum of money, he discharged us of the obligation, by paying down the money to our creditor. The prayer is to this effect, That God would not suffer the wicked to exercise their cruelty against us at their pleasure, but that he would interpose as a defender to save us. By these words the Prophet intimates, that he was in extreme danger, and that he had nothing else left him in which to hope but the help of God.

123. *My eyes have failed for thy salvation.* [447] In the first place he testifies, that he had been afflicted with severe troubles, and that not for a

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ערב This verb signifies *to be pleasant, acceptable.* So Bucer has translated the first part of the verse, *oblecta servum tuum bono;* and indeed the Chaldee has given the same sense to the verb, for it is rendered by בסים, *make merry.* But the other meaning which it has, viz. *to become surety,* is evidently more suitable; for the expression *Be surety for thy servant for good,* corresponds very well with the previous and subsequent petitions, which are for deliverance from the hands of the enemy." — *Phillips.*

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short time only, but for a period so protracted as might have exhausted his patience and occasioned despondency. But so far was this from being the effect they produced, that he declares that in all these long and wearisome conflicts his heart had never sunk into despair. We have before explained *failing for salvation* as denoting that although there was no prospect of an end to his calamities, and although despair presented itself on every side, yet he strove against temptation even to the fainting of his soul. Should we understand the past tense of the verb as put for the present, in which sense it seems to be employed, the Prophet in that case intimates, that his eyes fail him not because they become fatigued, but because through earnest looking they contract as it were a dimness, and that yet he does not cease to wait continually for the salvation of God. In short, the failing of his eyes indicates perseverance combined with severe and arduous effort, and it is opposed to the momentary ardor of those who immediately faint, if God does not grant their requests. This expression also denotes a painful earnestness, which almost consumes all the senses. As to the term *salvation,* he does not limit it to one kind of help, but comprehends under it the continual course of God's grace, until he put his believing people in the possession of *complete* salvation. He expresses the manner in which he waited for salvation, which was by depending upon God's word in which two things are to be attended to, first, that we can only be said to wait for salvation from God, when, confiding in his promises, we actually betake ourselves to him for protection; and secondly, that we then only yield to God the praise of salvation, when we continue to keep our hope firmly fixed on his word. This is the way in which He is to be sought; and although he may conceal from our view the working of his hand, we ought to repose in his bare promises. This is the reason why David calls God's word *righteous.* He would hereby confirm his faith in the truth of the divine promises for God in promising liberally does not cherish in his people delusive expectations.

124. *Deal with thy servant according to thy goodness.* The two clauses of this verse must be read correctly; for he does not first separately desire God to deal well with him, and next desire him to be his master and teacher. He rather beseeches him in the exercise of that goodness and mercy, which he is wont to display towards all his people, to instruct him in his law. The object of the Prophet's request then is, that God would teach him in his statutes. But he begins with the divine mercy, employing it as an argument to prevail with God to grant him what he desires. This prayer then must

"In times of great sorrow, when the heart is oppressed with care, and when danger threatens on every side, the human eye expresses with amazing accuracy the distressing and anguished emotions of the soul. The posture here described is that of an individual who perceives himself surrounded with enemies of the most formidable character, who feels his own weakness and insufficiency to enter into conflict with them, but who is eagerly looking for the arrival of a devoted and powerful friend, who has promised to succor him in the hour of his calamity." — *Dr. Morison.*

be resolved thus: Lord, deal gently with me, and manifest thy goodness towards me by instructing me in thy commandments. Our whole happiness undoubtedly consists in our having that true wisdom which is to be derived from the word of God; and our only hope of obtaining this wisdom lies in God's being pleased to display his mercy and goodness towards us. The Prophet, therefore, magnifies the greatness and excellence of the benefit of being instructed in the divine law, when he requests that it may be bestowed upon him as a free gift.

125. *I am thy servant, give me understanding.* Here the prayer of the preceding verse is repeated. The repetition shows how ardently he wished the blessing prayed for, and how earnest and importunate he was in pleading with God for it. By the words he expresses still more plainly in what way it is that God teaches his own people — that he does so by illuminating with sound knowledge their understandings, which otherwise would be blind. It would profit us little to have the divine law sounding in our ears, or to have it exhibited in writing before our eyes, and to have it expounded by the voice of man, did not God correct our slowness of apprehension, and render us docile by the secret influence of his Spirit. We are not to suppose that David advances any meritorious claims before God when he boasts of being his servant. Men, indeed, commonly imagine that when we are previously well prepared, God then adds new grace, which they term *subsequent grace.* But the Prophet, so far from boasting of his own worth, rather declares how deep the obligations were under which he lay to God. It is not in the power of any man to make himself a servant of the Most High, nor can any man bring anything of his own as a price with which to purchase so great an honor. Of this the Prophet was well aware. He knew that there is not one of the whole human family who is worthy of being enrolled among that order; and therefore he does nothing more than adduce the grace he had obtained, as an argument that God according to his usual way would perfect what he had begun. In a similar manner he speaks in Psalm 116:6,

"I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid:"

in which place it is abundantly manifest that he does not boast of his services, but only declares that he is one of the members of the Church.

126. *It is time for thee, O Jehovah! to be doing.* It being the object of the Prophet to imprecate upon the impious and wicked the vengeance which they have deserved, he says, that the fit time for executing it had now arrived, inasmuch as they had carried to a great extent their wanton forwardness against God. The general verb *doing* is more emphatic than if one more specific had been used. The language is as if he had said, that God would seem to delay too long, if he did not now execute the office of a judge. It is the peculiar work of God to restrain the wicked, and even to punish them severely when he finds that their repentance is utterly hopeless. If it is alleged, that this prayer is inconsistent with the law of charity, it may be replied, that David here speaks of reprobates, whose amendment is

become desperate. His heart, there is no doubt, was governed by the spirit of wisdom. Besides, it is to be remembered, that he does not complain of his own private wrongs. It is a pure and honest zeal which moves him to desire the destruction of the wicked despisers of God; for he adduces no other reason for the prayer, than that the wicked *destroyed God's law.* By this he gives evidence, that nothing was dearer to him than the service of God, and that nothing was held by him in higher recommendation than the observance of the law. I have already repeatedly warned you, in other places, that our zeal is forward and disordered whenever its moving principle is a sense of our own personal injuries. It is, therefore, to be carefully noticed, that the Prophet's grief proceeded from no other cause than that he could not endure to see the divine law violated. In short, this is a prayer that God would restore to order the confused and ruinous state of things in the world. It remains for us to learn from David's example, whenever the earth is fraught and defiled with wickedness to such a degree that the fear of him has become almost extinct, to call upon him to show himself the maintainer of his own glory. This doctrine is of use in sustaining our hope and patience whenever God suspends the execution of his judgments longer than we would incline. Previous to his addressing himself to God, the Prophet adopts it as a principle, that, although God may seem for a time to take no notice of what his creatures do, yet he never forgets his office, but delays the execution of his judgments for wise reasons, that at length he may execute them when the seasonable time arrives.

127. *And therefore I have loved thy statutes above gold.* This verse, I have no doubt, is connected with the preceding; for otherwise the illative particle *therefore* would be without meaning. Viewing it in this connection, I understand the Psalmist as intimating, that the reason why he esteemed God's law as more valuable than gold and precious stones, was because he had fixed in his mind a thorough persuasion of the truth, that although God may connive for a time at wickedness, the making havoc of all uprightness and equity will not always remain unpunished. Yea, the more he saw the wicked outrageously breaking forth into wickedness, the more was he incited by a holy indignation burning in his heart, to love the law. This is a passage deserving of special attention, for the baneful influence of evil example is well known, every man thinking that he may lawfully do whatever is commonly practiced around him. Whence it comes to pass, that evil company carries us away like a tempest. The more diligently then ought we to meditate on this doctrine, That when the wicked claim to themselves an unbridled liberty, it behoves us to contemplate with the eyes of faith the judgments of God, in order to our being thereby quickened to the observance of the divine law. If attention to this doctrine has been needful from the beginning, at the present day it is necessary to exert ourselves, that we may not be involved in violating the law of God with the wicked conspiracy which almost the whole world have formed to violate it. The more outrageously the

wicked vaunt themselves, let our veneration for and our love of the divine law proportionally increase.

128. *Therefore I have esteemed all thy commandments to be altogether right* [448] This verse, like the preceding, is connected with the 26th, and the connection may be brought out by observing, that the Prophet, waiting patiently for God's judgments, and also earnestly calling for their infliction, had subscribed to the law of God in every particular, and embraced it without a single exception — and moreover, that he hated every false way. Literally, it is *all the commandments of all;* but the words *of all* are to be referred to things and not to persons, as if he had said, that he approved of all the laws which God had ordained, whatever they enjoined. [449] A similar form of expression occurs in Ezekiel 44:30, "all oblations of all things" — that is to say, whatever kind of oblations men offer. The Prophet has not laid down this sentiment in such express terms without good reason; for there is nothing to which we are naturally more inclined than to despise or reject whatever in God's law is not agreeable to us. Every man, according as he is tainted with this or that particular vice, would desire their the commandment which forbids it were razed out of the law. But we cannot lawfully make any addition to it, or take away anything from it; and since God has joined his commandments together by a sacred and inviolable bond, to separate any one of them from the rest is altogether unwarrantable. We perceive then how the Prophet, inspired with a holy jealousy for the law, contended against the wicked rebellion of those who despised it. And assuredly, when we see that the ungodly mock God with such effrontery, at one time rising up audaciously against him, trod at another perverting every part of the law, it becomes us to be the more inflamed with zeal, and to be the more courageous in maintaining the truth of God. The extreme impiety of our age especially demands of all the faithful that they should exercise themselves in this holy zeal. Profane men strive to outdo one another in scornfully aspersing the doctrine of salvation, and endeavor to bring God's sacred Word into contempt by their derisive jeers. Others pour forth their blasphemies without intermission. We cannot, therefore, avoid

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Durell translates this verse — "For, as much as I esteem all thy precepts, etc., therefore I hate," etc.

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"*All the precepts of everything, i.e.,* all precepts concerning all things. I embrace thy revealed Word, without any exceptions. The Psalmist states, that he had most diligently applied his mind to the consideration of all God's commandments, the circumstances and occasions on which they were given, and he observed that they abounded in justice and holiness. Since, therefore, they are all equally just and holy, whatsoever is contrary to them he regarded as unjust, impure, false and detestable. Hammond remarks, that 'the reduplication of the universal particle כל is emphatic *all, even all;*' and so the plain rendering is most current, *all thy commandments, even all,* have I approved." — *Phillips.*

being chargeable with the crime of treacherous indifference, if our hearts are not warmed with zeal, and unless we burn with a holy jealousy. The Prophet not merely says, that he approved of God's law wholly and without exception, but he adds, *that he hated every way of lying,* or *every false way.* And, undoubtedly, no one subscribes in good earnest to the law of God, but he who rejects all the slanders by which the wicked taint or obscure the purity of sound doctrine. *By way of lying,* the Prophet doubtless means whatever is opposed to the purity of the law, intimating that he detested all corruption's which are contrary to the Word of God.

Psalm 119:129-136

129. פ Thy testimonies are marvelous; therefore my soul hath kept them. **130.** פ The entrance of thy words is light, which giveth understanding to the little ones. **131.** פ I opened my mouth and panted, because I loved thy commandments. **132.** פ Look upon me, and be merciful to me, according to thy judgment towards them that love thy name. **133.** פ Direct my steps according to thy word, and let no iniquity have [450] dominion in me. **134.** פ Deliver me from the oppression of men; and I will keep thy precepts. **135.** פ Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes. **136.** פ Rivers of waters run from my eyes, because they have not kept thy law.

129. *Thy testimonies are marvelous.* I have given this translation to avoid an ambiguous form of expression. The Prophet does not simply mean, that the doctrine of the law is wonderful, but that it contains high and hidden mysteries. Accordingly he declares, that the sublime and admirable wisdom which he found comprehended in the divine law led him to regard it with reverence. This is to be carefully marked, for the law of God is proudly despised by the great majority of mankind, when they do not duly taste its doctrine, nor acknowledge that God speaks from his throne in heaven, that, the pride of the flesh being abased, he may raise us upward by the apprehension of faith. We also gather from this passage, that it is impossible for any man to keep the law of God from the heart, unless he contemplate it with feelings of reverence: for reverence is the beginning of pure and right subjection. Accordingly, I have said that many despise God's Word, because they think it inferior to the acuteness of their own understandings. Yea, many are led to break forth more audaciously into this heaven-daring contempt, from the vanity of showing their own ingenuity. But, although worldly men may flatter themselves in that proud disdain of the divine law, yet the commendation which the Prophet pronounces upon it still holds

450 In the French it is, "that no iniquity may have," etc.

true, that it comprehends mysteries which far transcend all the conceptions of the human mind.

130. *The entrance of thy word is light.* The amount is, that the light of the truth revealed in God's word, is so distinct that the very first sight of it illuminates the mind. The word פתח *pethach,* properly signifies *an opening,* [451] but metaphorically it is taken for *a gate.* Accordingly the old translator has rendered it *beginning,* which is not improper, provided it is understood of the rudiments or first elements of the divine law. It is as if the Prophet had — "Not only do those who have attained an accurate acquaintance with the whole law, and who have made the study of it the business of their lives, discern there a clear light, but also those who have studied it even very imperfectly, and who have only, so to speak, entered the porch." Now we must reason from the less to the greater. If tyroes and novices begin to be enlightened at their first entrance, what will be the case when a man is admitted to a full and perfect knowledge?

In the second clause the Prophet unfolds his meaning more fully. By *little ones* he denotes such as neither excel in ingenuity nor are endued with wisdom, but rather are unskilled in letters, and unrefined by education. Of such he affirms that, as soon as they have learned the first principles of the law of God, they will be endued with understanding. It ought to have a most powerful influence in exciting in us an earnest desire to become acquainted with the law of God, when we are told that even those who, in the estimation of the world, are fools, and contemptible simpletons, provided they apply their minds to this subject, acquire from it wisdom sufficient to lead them to eternal salvation. Although it is not given to all men to attain to the highest degree in this wisdom, yet it is common to all the godly to profit so far as to know the certain and unerring rule by which to regulate their life. Thus no man who surrenders himself to the teaching of God, will loose his labor in his school, for from his first entrance he will reap inestimable fruit. Meanwhile we are warned, that all who follow their own understanding, wander in darkness. By affirming that *the little ones are enlightened,* David intimates, that it is only when men, divested of all self confidence, submit themselves with humble and docile minds to God, that they are in a proper state for becoming proficient scholars in the study of the divine law. Let the Papists mock, as they are accustomed to do, because we would have the Scriptures to be read by all men without exception; yet it is no falsehood which God utters by the mouth of David, when he affirms that the light of his truth is exhibited to fools. God will not, therefore, disappoint the desire

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"פתה *pethach,* 'the *opening* of thy words giveth light:' when I open my Bible to read, light springs up in my mind." — Dr. *Adam Clarke.* The corresponding word in Syriac signifies *to enlighten,* and in Arabic *to explain.* Hence, in the opinion of some, פתח, *pethach,* is the expounding of thy word.

of such as acknowledge their own ignorance, and submit themselves humbly to his teaching.

131. *I opened my mouth and panted.* [452] By these words the Psalmist would have us to understand that he was inflamed with such love to and longing for the divine law, that he was unceasingly sighing after it. In comparing himself to such as are hungry, or to such as burn with parching thirst, he has used a very appropriate metaphor. As such persons indicate the vehemence of their desire by opening the mouth, and by distressful panting, as if they would suck up the whole air, even so the Prophet affirms that he himself was oppressed with continual uneasiness. The opening of the mouth, then, and the drawing of breath, are set in opposition to a cold assent to the word of God. Here the Holy Spirit teaches with what earnestness of soul the knowledge of divine truth is to be sought. Whence it follows, that such as make little or no proficiency in God's law, are punished by their own indolence or carelessness. When David affirms that he panted continually, he points out not only his ardor but also his constancy.

132. *Look upon me, and be merciful to me.* In this verse he beseeches God to have a regard to him: as he is accustomed always to look to those who are his people. The Hebrew word משפט *mishpat,* translated *judgment,* signifies in this passage, as in many others, *a common rule,* or *ordinary usage.* [453] He next adds the purpose for which he desires that God would look upon him, namely, that he may be relieved from his miseries. This, then, is the prayer of an afflicted man, who, when apparently destitute of all help, and unable to come to any other conclusion than that he is neglected and forsaken of God, yet reflects with himself, that, for God to forsake him, was foreign to his nature and to his usual manner of procedure. It is as if he had said — Although I can perceive no token of thy favor, yea, although my condition is so wretched and desperate, that, judging according to sense and reason, I deem that thou hast turned the back: upon me; yet, as from the beginning of the world to the present day, thou hast testified, by numberless proofs, that thou art merciful to thy servants, I beseech time that, acting according

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The allusion, according to some, is to an exhausted or thirsty traveler in hot countries, who gasps and pants for the cooling breeze, or the refreshing fountain. According to others this is a metaphor, taken from an exhausted animal in the chase, which runs open-mouthed, to take in the cooling air, the heart beating high, and the muscular force being nearly expended through fatigue. In either view the language is extremely expressive, showing how intensely the Psalmist longed for the refreshment and delight which an acquaintance with the word of God affords. And if the "opening of God's words," mentioned in the preceding verse, means the expounding of them, David here points out his eager desire to hear God's word expounded.

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"*According to the custom, or usual mode of acting.* So Luther — *as thou art accustomed to do,* etc. In Genesis 40:13 — 'Thou shalt deliver the cup, כמשפט, *according to custom.*'"— *Phillips.*

to this rule, thou wouldst now exercise the like loving-kindness towards me. It is to be particularly noticed, lest those whom God does not immediately answer may become discouraged, that the Prophet had been long oppressed by miseries, without any prospect of relief. Yet it is at the same time to be observed, that the Prophets sole ground of confidence in asking this from God is his free goodness. Whence we gather that, although he was a man of eminent sanctity, yet the undeserved grace of God was his only refuge. With respect to the word *judgment,* let us learn from the Prophet's example to acquaint ourselves with the nature of God, from the various experiences we have had of it that we may have certain evidence that he is merciful to us. And, in truth, were not his grace known to us from the daily experience we have of it, which of us would dare to approach him? But if our eyes are not blind, we must perceive the very clear testimonies by which he fortifies our faith, so that we need not doubt that all the godly are the objects of his regard; only we must endeavor to be among the number of those *who love his name.* By this title is meant genuine believers; for those who only slavishly fear God are not worthy of being reckoned among his servants. He requires a voluntary obedience from us, so that nothing may be more delightful to us than to follow whithersoever he calls us. It is, however, at the same time to be observed, that this love proceeds from faith; yea, the Prophet here commends the grand effect of faith, by separating the godly, who lean upon the grace of God, from worldly men, who, having given their hearts to the enticements of the world, never lift up their minds towards heaven.

133. *Direct my steps according to thy word.* By these words he shows, as he has often done before in other places, that the only rule of living well is for men to regulate themselves wholly by the law of God. We have already repeatedly seen in this Psalm, that so long as men allow there-selves to wander after their own inventions, God rejects whatever they do, however laborious the efforts they may put forth. But as the Prophet declares that men's lives are then only framed aright when they yield themselves wholly to the obeying of God, so, on the other hand, he confesses that to do this is not within their own will or power. God's law, it is evident, will not make us better by merely prescribing to us what is right. Hence the outward preaching of it is compared to a dead letter. David, then, well instructed in the law, prays for an obedient heart being given him, that he may walk in the way set before him. Here two points are particularly deserving of our notice — first, that God deals bountifully with men, when he invites them to himself by his word and doctrine; and, secondly, that still all this is lifeless and unprofitable, until he govern by his Spirit those whom he has already taught by his word. As the Psalmist desires not simply to have his steps directed, but to have them directed to God's word, we may learn that he did not hunt after secret revelations, and set the word at nought, as many fanatics do, but connected the external doctrine with the inward grace of the Holy Spirit; and herein consists the completeness of the faithful,

in that God engraves on their hearts what he shows by his word to be right. Nothing, therefore, is more foolish than the fancy of those who say, that in enjoining upon men what he would have them to do, God estimates the strength which they have to perform it. In vain does divine truth sound in our ears, if the Spirit of God does not effectually pierce into our hearts. The Prophet confesses that it is to no purpose for him to read or hear the law of God, unless his life is regulated by the secret influence of the Holy Spirit, that he may thus be enabled to walk in that righteousness which the law enjoins. In the second clause he reminds us how necessary it is for us to be continually presenting this prayer at the throne of grace, acknowledging that he is the bond-slave of sin until God stretch forth his hand to deliver him. *direct* me, says he, *that iniquity may not have dominion in me.* [454] So long, then, as we are left to ourselves, Satan exercises', over us his despotic sway uncontrolled, so that we have not power to rid ourselves of iniquity. The freedom of the godly consists solely in this — that they are governed by the Spirit of God, and thus preserved from succumbing to iniquity, although harassed with hard and painful conflicts.

134. *Deliver me from the oppression of men.* When recounting what had befallen himself, the Prophet shows, by his own example, that all the godly are exposed to rapine and oppression, and that, like sheep in the mouths of wolves, they will be inevitably destroyed unless God defend them. As very few are governed by the Spirit of God, it is no wonder if all love of equity is banished from the world, and if all men are found everywhere rushing into all kinds of wickedness, some impelled by cruelty, [455] and others devoted to fraud and deceit. When, therefore, the Prophet saw that he was overwhelmed on all sides with injuries, he betook himself to God as his deliverer. By the word *deliver* he intimates, that unless he is preserved in a wonderful manner, it is all over with him. In the second clause, he engages that he will not prove ungrateful for his deliverance: *And I will keep thy precepts* Nothing more effectually strengthens us, in an earnest desire and endeavor to follow after integrity and righteousness, than when we find by experience, that God's defense is of more value to us than all the unlawful helps to which worldly men unusually have recourse. We are taught from this passage, that when engaged in contest with the wicked, we ought not to suffer our minds to be actuated by malice, but that, however violently and unjustly they may assault us, we should rest; contented with the deliverance which God bestows, and with that alone; and again, that every instance in which we experience the grace of God in delivering us, should be a spur to

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בי, *bi*, IN *me.* Let me have no governor but God; let the throne of my heart be filled by him, and none other. — *Dr. Adam Clark*

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In the French version it is "avarice."

incite us to follow after uprightness. He delivers us for no other end, but that the fruits of our deliverance may be manifested in our life; and we are too perverse if that experience is not sufficient to convince us, that all who persevere in the unfeigned fear of God, will always abide in safety by his aid, although the whole world may be against them.

135. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* There is here the repetition of a prayer which we have several times met with before in this Psalm. The Prophet intimates, that he regarded nothing as of more importance than rightly to understand the divine law. When he beseeches God *to make his face to shine upon his servant,* he, in the first place, seeks to win the fatherly favor of God — for nothing is to be hoped for from Him unless we have an interest in his favor — but he at the same time, shows the greatness of the blessing. There is no testimony of the love of God, as if he had said, which I am more desirous to obtain than to be enabled to make progress in his law. Whence we gather, as I have lately observed, that he preferred divine truth to all the possessions of the world. Would to God that this affection were vigorous in our hearts! But that which the Prophet extols so highly, is neglected by the great proportion of mankind. If individuals are to be found stimulated by this desire, we see them presently falling back to the Measurements of the world, so that there are very few, indeed, who renouncing all other desires, seek earnestly with David to become acquainted with the doctrine of the law. Besides, as God vouchsafes this privilege only to those whom he has embraced with his fatherly love, it is proper for us to begin with this prayer, That he would make his face to shine upon us. This form of expression, however, conveys something more — it implies, that it is only when God illumines the minds of his believing people with the true knowledge of the law, that he delights them with the beams of his favor. It often happens that, even in regard to them, God's countenance is overcast with clouds in this respect, namely, when he deprives them of tasting the sweetness of his word.

136. *Rivers of waters run from my eyes.* [456] Here David affirms that he was inflamed with no ordinary zeal for the glory of God, inasmuch as he dissolved wholly into tears on account of the contempt put upon the divine law. He speaks hyperbolically; but still he truly and plainly expresses the disposition of mind with which he was endued; and it corresponds with what he says in altogether place, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." (Psalm 69:9.) Wherever the Spirit of God reigns, he excites this ardent zeal, which burns the hearts of the godly when they see the commandment of the Most High God accounted as a thing of nought. It is not enough

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Rivers of waters — that is, a great profusion of tears. "The Orientals are in general very copious weepers; and this strong hyperbole is still much employed among them to express the highest degree of lamenting grief." — Illustrated *Commentary upon the Bible.*

that each of us endeavor to please God; we must also desire that his law may be held in estimation by all men. In this way holy Lot, as the Apostle Peter testifies, vexed his soul when he beheld Sodom a sink of all kinds of wickedness. (2 Peter 2:8.) If, in former times, the ungodliness of the world extorted from the children of God such bitter grief, so great is the corruption into which we at this day are fallen, that those who can look upon the present state of things unconcerned and without tears, are thrice, yea four times, insensible. How great in our day is the frenzy of the world in despising God and neglecting his doctrine? A few, no doubt, are to be found who with the mouth profess their willingness to receive it, but scarcely one in ten proves the sincerity of his profession by his life. Meanwhile countless multitudes are hurried away to the impostures of Satan and to the Pope; others are as thoughtless and indifferent about their salvation as the lower animals; [457] and many Epicureans openly mock at all religion. If there is, then, the smallest portion of piety remaining in us, full rivers of tears, and not merely small drops, will flow from our eyes. But if we would give evidence of pure and uncorrupted zeal, let our grief begin at ourselves — at our seeing that we are yet far from having attained to a perfect observance of the law; yea, that the depraved lusts of our carnal nature are often rising up against the righteousness of God.

Psalm 119:137-144

137. ץ O Jehovah! thou art righteous, and thy judgments are right. **138.** ץThou hast commanded righteousness in thy testimonies, and truth greatly. **139.** ץMy zeal hath consumed me, because my adversaries have forgotten thy words. **140.** ץ Thy word is exceedingly refined, and thy servant hath loved it. **141.** ץI am insignificant and despised; I have not forgotten thy commandments. **142.**ץ Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness; and the law is truth. **143.**ץ Trouble and anguish have come upon me; but thy commandments are my delight. **144.** ץThe righteousness of thy testimonies endereth for ever; give me understanding and I shall live.

137. O *Jehovah! thou art righteous.* The Prophet yields to God the praise of righteousness, and also acknowledges that it is to be found in his law. Some understand *judgments* as referring to those infliction's by which God chastises the sins of men; but this does not seem so fitly to agree with the scope of the passage. Besides, as the adjective ישר*, yashar,* translated *right,* is put in the singular number with the word *judgments,* the sentence should be explained thus that there is not any one of the judgments of God which is not right. Should we be inclined to take ישר as a substantive, the sense will be almost the same. All men indeed grant that God is righteous;

457 "Les autres s'endorment sans grand soin de leur salut comme bestes brutes." — Fr

but the Prophet has expressed more than the common sort of men, yea than the whole world, perceive in reference to this subject; for in designating God *righteous,* he means, that as soon as we depart from Him, we will not find a particle of righteousness anywhere else. When he adds that the evidence and testimony of this righteousness are to be seen in the law, he teaches us that God is robbed of his praise, if we do not subscribe to all his commandments. To the same purpose is the following verse, which declares that God has taught in his law full and perfect righteousness and truth. The adverb, מאד, *meod,* which signifies *greatly,* is with more propriety connected with the nouns than with the verb *commanded;* inasmuch as it was God's design to exhibit in the law a perfect rule of righteousness. The doctrine of the law is honored with these encomiums, that all of us may learn to derive wisdom from it, and that no man may devise for himself any other standard of rectitude or righteousness than that which is exhibited in the law; a very necessary lesson, since every man would willingly frame for himself a new pattern or standard of righteousness.

139. *My zeal hath consumed me.* [458] The Psalmist speaks of his persecutors, by whom it is certain he had been subjected to much trouble. But although they were virulent and cruel towards him, he avows that it was not so much his own private wrongs which offended him as the violation of God's law; yea rather, that he was so consumed with grief on that account as not to be affected at all with his own individual troubles. This is an example from which much profit may be derived. We are too tender and delicate in bearing wrongs; and hence it is that if we are but touched with a finger, we are instantly inflamed with anger, whilst at the same time we are but coldly affected at the most grievous offenses committed against God. But if we are animated with the zeal that inspired the Prophet it will carry us away to another kind of sorrow, which will take entire possession of our souls.

140. *Thy word is exceedingly refined.* In this verse he intimates that the cause of his zeal was the love which he bore to heavenly doctrine. For to be displeased with or severely to condemn the contempt of divine truth, unless we are bound to it by the cords of love, is pure hypocrisy. And he affirms that his love to God's word was not a rash, or a blind and inconsiderate affection, but that he loved it, because like gold or silver which has been refined, it was pure and free from all dregs and dross. This is the idea contained in the metaphorical term צרופה, *tseruphah,* translated *refined;* [459] and though it seems to be commonplace, yet, vindicating God's word

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"*Hath consumed me.* The strong term here made use of corresponds very well with the forcible language of the preceding verse. My zeal for thy word is so great, that when I see how my enemies disregard it, I am overpowered by feelings of shame at their neglect." — *Phillips.*

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from all perverse and malicious judgments, it expresses graphically the true obedience of faith. How few are there who are not guilty, either by their distrust, or waywardness, or pride, or voluptuousness, of casting upon God's word some spot or stain! The flesh then being so rebellious, it is no small commendation of revealed truth, when it is compared to gold well refined, so that it shines pure from all defilement. Farther, it serves not a little to show the truth of this testimony, that the Prophet confirms it by his own experience. The more effectually to repress the foolish rashness with which we are chargeable whenever we imagine that there is any fault in God's word, he declares that in commending it he gives utterance to the unfeigned feeling of his heart, having experienced a blissful pleasure in that purity of which he speaks.

141. *I am, insignificant and despised.* The meaning is, that although he was tried with poverty and many other calamities, he steadily persevered in the exercise of true godliness, and in the observance of the law. On that account, as he states, he was despised by wicked men. Every man gives praise to God just in proportion as he is gorged with his benefits; and very few will be found applying their minds to the service of God, unless they have all their wishes gratified. Hence it comes to pass that hypocrites, as long as they are pampered to the full, accumulate riches and increase in power, are very lavish in praising God. But let them be treated in some degree roughly, and immediately the blessed name of God is heard of no more. Since then men are ordinarily mercenary in serving God, let us learn from the Prophet's example that true godliness is disinterested, so that when under its influence we *cease* not to praise God, although he may afflict us with adversity and make us despised in the eyes of the world. These upbraiding words of Christ in John 6:26, ought, no doubt, to be carefully attended to,

"Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." (John 6:26)

The persons then who serve God ingenuously and sincerely, are such as continue steadfast in his fear, although their condition in this world may be mean and despised; in short, they are such as seek not their reward on earth, but through heat and cold, poverty and danger, slanders and mockeries, persevere with unwearied steps in the course of their warfare.

Dr. Adam Clarke translates צרופה, *tseruphah,* by *purification.* This rendering conveys a beautiful idea. God's word is not only *a purified thing,* but *a thing that purifies.* It cleanses from sin every heart with which it comes into contact.

"Now ye are clean," said Christ,
"by the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.)

This tendency of the word to impart a measure of its own purity to such as yield to its influence, endears it to all God's people; and for this reason they make it the subject of their constant meditation.

142. *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.* Here the law of God is honored by the additional encomium, that it is everlasting righteousness and truth; as if it had been said, that all other rules of life, with whatever attractions they may appear to be recommended, are but a shadow, which quickly vanishes away. The Psalmist, no doubt, indirectly contrasts the doctrine of the law with all the human precepts which were ever delivered, that he may bring all the faithful in subjection to it, since it is the school of perfect wisdom. There may be more of plausibility in the refined and subtle disquisition's of men; but there is in them nothing firm or solid at bottom, as there is in God's law. This firmness of the divine law he proves in the following verse from one instance — the continual comfort he found in it when grievously harassed with temptations. And the true test of the profit we have reaped from it is, when we oppose to all the distresses of whatever kind which may straiten us, the consolation derived from the word of God, that thereby all sadness may be effaced from our minds. David here expresses something more than he did in the preceding verse; for there he only said that he reverently served God, although from his rough and hard treatment he might seem to lose his labor; but now when distressed and tormented, he affirms that he finds in the law of God the most soothing delight, which mitigates all grief's, and not only tempers their bitterness, but also seasons them with a certain sweetness. And assuredly when this taste does not exist to afford us delight, nothing is more natural than for us to be swallowed up of sorrow. Nor ought we to omit noticing the form of expression which the Prophet employs, by which he teaches, that although he was besieged and shut up on all sides, he found a remedy sufficiently powerful in improving the consolation offered him by the word of God. As this could not be true of the bare commandments, which so far from remedying our distresses, rather fill us with anxiety, there is no doubt that under the word *commandments* there is comprehended by the figure synecdoche, the whole doctrine of the law, in which God not only requires what is right, but in which also calling his elect ones to the hope of eternal salvation, he opens the gate of perfect happiness. Yea, under the term *law* are comprehended both free adoption, and also the promises which flow from it.

144. *The righteousness of thy testimonies endureth forever.* The Psalmist repeats what he had already before stated, that there is a great dissimilarity between the righteousness of God's testimonies and man's inventions; the splendor of the last quickly vanishing away, whereas the other continues steadfast for ever. He repeats this twice; for although the world is forced to attribute the praise of righteousness to the law of God, yet the majority of mankind are carried away after their own speculations, so that there is nothing more difficult than to hold us fast in our obedience to God. David's drift is to show that everlasting righteousness is not comprehended elsewhere than in God's law, and that it is in vain to seek for it anywhere else; and there

is accordingly here laid down a clearer definition of righteousness, which is, that righteousness consists in our keeping ourselves within the bounds of the law. As to the last clause of the verse, *Give me understanding and I shall live,* I read it in connection with the preceding clause; for although David desires to have his mind enlightened by God, yet he does not conceive of any other way by which he was to obtain an enlightened understanding than by his profiting aright in the study of the law. Farther, he here teaches, that men cannot, properly speaking, be said to live when they are destitute of the light of heavenly wisdom; and as the end for which men are created is not that, like swine or asses, they may stuff their bellies, but that they may exercise themselves in the knowledge and service of God, when they turn away from such employment, their life is worse than a thousand deaths. David therefore protests that for him to live was not merely to be fed with meat and drink, and to enjoy earthly comforts, but to aspire after a better life, which he could not do save under the guidance of faith. This is a very necessary warning; for although it is universally acknowledged that man is born with this distinction, that he excels the lower animals in intelligence, yet the great bulk of mankind, as if with deliberate purpose: stifle whatever light God pours into their understandings. I indeed admit that all men desire to be sharp-witted; but how few aspire to heaven, and consider that the fear of,God is the beginning of wisdom. Since then meditation upon the celestial life is buried by earthly cares, men do nothing else than plunge into the grave, so that while living to the world, they die to God. Under the term *life,* however, as I have elsewhere said, the Prophet denotes the utmost he could wish. Lord, as if he had said, although I am already dead, yet if thou art pleased to illumine my mind with the knowledge of heavenly truth, this grace alone will be sufficient to revive me.

Psalm 119:145-152

145. ק I have cried with my whole heart; answer me, O Jehovah! and I will keep thy statutes. **146.** ק I have called upon thee; save me, and I will keep thy testimonies. **147.** ק I have prevented the twilight, [460] and have cried: I have looked up to thy word. **148.** ק My eyes have prevented the night-watches, to meditate upon thy word. **149.** ק Hear my yoke, O Jehovah! According to thy mercy, quicken me according to thy judgment. **150.** ק The pursuers of malice have drawn near; they have departed from thy law. **151.** ק Thou, O Jehovah! art near; and all thy commandments are truth. **152.** ק I have known from thy testimonies from the beginning that thou hast established them for ever.

460 The word which Calvin uses for "the twilight" is "crepusculum."

145 *I have cried with my whole heart.* This verse may be so read and connected as that in the end of it the Psalmist may show what he desired in crying; [461] and thus the meaning would be, that as he was inflamed with an intense desire to keep the law, he continually made supplication to God on that subject. But the subsequent verse compels us to take a different view, for the same thing is, no doubt, there again repeated. The Prophet then requests that God would hear him; and in token of his gratitude he promises to keep God's commandments. He simply uses the indefinite term *cry;* and thus he does not express what the prayers were which he offered up to God, but only shows, that while the children of this world are distracted by a multiplicity of objects, he directed all the affections of his heart exclusively to God, because he depended solely on him. As the world is compelled to acknowledge that God is the author of all good things, many formal prayers proceed from that principle. It was the consideration of this which led David to affirm that he prayed with his whole heart. When he shall have obtained his requests, he proposes to himself the glory of God as his end, resolving to devote himself with so much the more ardent affection to the work of serving him. Although God declares that he is served aright by the sacrifice of praise, yet David, to distinguish himself from hypocrites who profane the name of God by their cold and feigned praises, with good reason declares that he will give thanks by his life and works.

In the following verse he makes no new statement; but he speaks more expressly. In the first place, he says that he cried to God; and next he adds, that he commended his welfare to Him by prayer; thereby intimating that whether he was in safety, or whether imminent danger threatened him with death, he uniformly reposed upon God, being fully persuaded that the only way in which he could continue safe was by having him for the guardian and protector of his welfare.

147. *I have prevented the twilight.* The Hebrew noun נשף, *nesheph,* is in this place improperly translated by *crepusculum, twilight;* for it rather signifies the dawn of morning. But as the Latin's derive the word *crepusculum,* from *creperus,* which signifies *doubtful* or *uncertain,* so that it may signify the doubtful and intermediate time between light and darkness, I have not been particularly nice in the selection of the term only let my readers understand that the evening twilight commencing with sunset is not here denoted, but the imperfect light which precedes the rising of the sun. David then expresses the most eager haste when he says, that he prevented the dawn of the morning by his prayers. The verb *cry* always conveys the idea of earnestness; referring, as it does, not so much to the loudness of the voice as to the vehemency and ardor of the mind. In mentioning his haste, his object is the better to set forth his perseverance; for he tells us, that

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According to this view, the last clause would read, "that I may keep thy statutes."

although he betook himself to prayer with such promptitude, yet he did not immediately become weary of that exercise, like the unbelieving, who, if God does not suddenly grant them their requests, murmur and complain against him. Thus, in conjoining patience of hope with earnestness of desire, he shows what is the true manner of praying; even as Paul, in Philippians 4:6, when he exhorts us to

"let our requests be made known unto God with thanksgiving," (Philippians 4:6)

admonishes us, while engaged in the exercise of prayer, to bridle our turbulent affections, because one of the ends of prayer is to nourish our hope. Nor is the mention made of *the word* in the close of the verse superfluous; for it is only by having the Word of God continually before our eyes, that we can bridle the wanton impetuosity of our corrupt nature.

148. *My eyes have prevented the night watchers.* [462] The Psalmist here intimates, that he was more sedulously intent on meditating upon the law of God than watchmen of the night were to keep watch. Others are of opinion, that the verb שוח, *suach,* is put for *to discourse.* If this opinion is admitted, the sense will be, that the Prophet, not from ostentation, but for the welfare of his brethren, was so desirous of communicating instruction, that he gave

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The Hebrews divided the natural day into three portions–morning, noon, and evening — which are mentioned by David as seasons in which he engaged in prayer. (Psalm 55:17.) They also divided the night into three parts, called "watches," consisting of four hours each, and commencing at our six o'clock in the evening. In Lamentations 2:19, we read of the first watch; or, as it is there designated, "the beginning of the watches;" in Judges 7:19, of "the middle watch;" and in Exodus 14:24, of "the morning watch." A similar division of the night seems to have been made by other ancient nations, as appears from the references made to it by Homer and the early Greek writers. The Greeks and Romans, however, in improving their military discipline, afterwards divided the night into four watches, each consisting of three hours; and when the Jews fell under the dominion of the latter people, they adopted from them this division of the night. Hence we read of "the fourth watch of the night" in Matthew 14:25. And the four watches are mentioned together in Mark 13:35:

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing,
or in the morning."

The time at which each of these four watches began and ended is thus determined by Dr. Hales, who has written elaborately on the subject: "1. Οψε, *the late,* began at sunset, and ended with the third hour of the night, including the evening-dawn, or twilight. It was also called οψια ὡρα, *eventide,* Mark 11:11; or simply οψια, *evening,* John 20:19, etc. 2. Μεσονυκτιον, *the midnight,* lasted from the third hour till midnight. 3. Αλεκτοροφωνια, *the cock-crowing,* midnight till the third hour after, or the ninth hour of the night. It included the two cock-crowings, with the second or principal of which it ended. 4. Πρωι, *the early,* lasted from the ninth to the twelfth hor of the night, or sunrise, including the morning-dawn or twilight. It is also called πρωια, *morning, or morningtide,* (ὡρα being understood,) John 18:28, etc.

"When the Psalmist here declares, that his eyes prevented the nightwatches, we are to understand him as chiefly referring to the middle and morning watches, which falling at that period of the night when men in general are devoted to rest, envinced the strength, fervour, and self-sacrificing character of his devotions." — *Dr. Morison.*

himself no rest. The word *meditate* is, however, more appropriate in this place; for the night is an unseasonable time for discoursing upon the law of God; but at that season, when alone, he silently recalled to his memory what he had previously learned, so that he passed no part of the night without meditating upon the law.

149. *Hear my voice, O Jehovah! according to thy mercy.* In the first place he declares, that the goodness of God was the only ground of his hope of being heard by him. Whatever blessings the saints may plead for in prayer, their opening argument must be the free and unmerited grace of God. Nor is the term *judgments* [463] in the second clause to be taken in a different sense. As God has revealed his goodness in his word, his word is the source from which we must derive our assurance of his goodness. The Prophet, then, sensible that he had need of the divine mercy, betook himself directly to the word, in which God, sweetly alluring men to himself, promises that his grace will be ready and open for all. That each, therefore, may be confidently persuaded that God will be merciful to him in particular, let him learn from the example of the Prophet to entreat God to show himself such as he has promised to be. Some expound the word *judgments* by *manner* or *custom*; [464] because, God's usual way is to deal graciously with all his people. I would not altogether reject this exposition; but I think it is harsh and foreign to the scope of the text, while the meaning which I have adduced comes out very naturally. Moreover, he desires *to be quickened,* to testify that even in the, midst of life he is dead, except in so far as he is sustained by the power of God. And assuredly, all who are duly acquainted with their own infirmity, esteeming their life as nothing, will crave to be quickened every moment. It is also to be added, that God often so exercised his servant, that with good reason he might send up his prayers, as it were, out of the sepulcher, to be restored from death to life.

150. *The pursuers of malice have drawn near.* As the Hebrew word רודפי *rodphee,* translated *the pursuers of,* is put in the construct state, that is to say, as it is so related to the word זמה, *zimmah,* rendered *wickedness,* that in Latin the latter would be put in the genitive ease, I expound the clause as denoting that they draw near to do mischief. I wonder what could move interpreters to translate — The *pursuers have approached,* or *drawn near to wickedness;* which the idiom of the language will not admit, to say nothing of the fact that זמה, *zimmah,* signifies rather *perversity* or *malice,* than *wickedness.* David therefore says, that those who are vehemently bent on malice are pursuing him close behind, and that they rush upon him

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By "judgments," Calvin means "God's Word," as the reader will observe from what follows.

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Walford translates, "Revive me, e Jehovah! according to thy wonted manner."

with such violence in order to do him mischief, as plainly to indicate that they are far off from God's law, since they east far from them all regard to uprightness and equity. It was a most wretched condition for him to be in, to behold his enemies, who had shaken off all fear of God and reverence for his law, ready with uplifted hand to smite him to death, had not God been near to defend him, as he adds in the subsequent verse —

151. *Thou, O Jehovah! art near.* He encourages himself from the consolatory consideration, that God, when he sees his own people sore pressed, comes forward, seasonably to afford them succor; even as Paul on this subject says,

"Be not over-careful, the Lord is at hand, let your moderation be known to all men "
(Philippians 4:5)

The concluding sentence of the verse is to this effect, That God never forsakes nor disappoints his people in their necessity, because he is true to his promises; and in them he assures us, that the welfare of his people will always be the object of his care. That therefore we may be fully persuaded that the hand of God is always ready to repulse the assaults of our enemies, let us retain a settled belief of the truth, that he does not in vain promise in his word to be the guardian of our welfare.

152. *I have known from thy testimonies* [465] *from the beginning.* Others here translate, *I have known long ago of thy testimonies.* [466] This translation I would not directly reject; but I am more inclined to retain the sense which I have given, namely, That the Prophet not only knew the everlasting steadfastness which characterizes the testimonies of God; but that he had also derived this knowledge from the testimonies themselves. When the Hebrews would express the meaning conveyed by the Latin preposition *de,* they frequently use the particle מן, or the letter ב, *beth.* He therefore says, that he had learned from God's testimonies, or had been taught by them, that *they are established for ever* [467] This indeed is the chief point of faith, That the word of God is not only distinguished for fidelity and steadfastness for a time, but that it continues unchangeable for ever.

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"De testimoniis tuis." — *Lat.*

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Walford's rendering is, "I have known thy testimonies long since." Phillips translates "of old;" and gives this explanation, "I have been acquainted with thy testimonies ever since I have possessed any knowledge, i.e. as soon as I came to years of reflection.

'From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures.'
2 Timothy 3:15."

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Thou hast established them for ever. That is, thy revelations are unalterable and everlasting, as the attributes of their great Author, and can never fail those who rely upon them, in time, or in eternity." — *Warner on the Psalter.*

Were it otherwise, it could not include within it the hope of eternal salvation. That the assurance of this immutabiliy of God's word may be rooted in our minds, the inward revelation of the Holy Spirit is indeed necessary; for until God seal within us the certainty of his word, our belief of its certainty will be continually wavering. Yet the Prophet, not without cause, affirms, that he learned this truth from the word; for when God shines into us by his Spirit, he at the same time causes that sacred truth which endures for ever to shine forth in the mirror of his word.

Psalm 119:153-160

153. ר Behold my affliction, and rescue me: for I have not forgotten thy law. **154. ר** Debate my cause, and redeem me: quicken thy according to thy word. **155. ר** Safety is far from the wicked; because they have not sought thy statutes. **156. ר** O Jehovah! Thy tender mercies are many: quicken me according to thy judgments. **157. ר** My persecutors and oppressors are many: [468] I have not swerved from thy testimonies. **158. ר** I saw the perfidious, and chid them; because they have not kept thy word. **159. ר** Behold O Jehovah! how have loved thy commandments: quicken me according to thy loving kindness. **160. ר** The beginning [literally, the head [469]] of thy word is truth; and all the judgment of thy righteousness is everlasting.

153. *Behold my affliction and rescue me.* The Psalmist teaches by his own example that those who are devoted to the service and fear of God, must not be discouraged though they are not rewarded for it in this world. Their condition upon earth is one of warfare, and therefore they should not be dismayed by diversity, but rather rest satisfied with the consolatory consideration, that the gate of prayer is open to them. Yet the Prophet does not boast of his, endeavors to keep the law, as if he would have God to pay him wages for his service, but only to show that he was one of God's servants, just as he has spoken of his hope that he was so in other places. This reason, *for I have not forgotten thy law,* on account of which he beseeches God to consider his affliction and to rescue him, is peculiarly forcible in the present case; for it is an evidence of no ordinary courage when, instead of being led

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"Ou, forts robustes " — *Fr.* "Or, very strong."

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The word in the Hebrew text is ראש, *rash.* Dr. Adam Clarke suggests an explanation, which is at least ingenious. The first word in the book of Genesis is בראשית, *bereshith,* "in the beginning;" which is derived from ראש, *rash,* or *raash.* He therefore asks whether David in here calling the ראש of God's word truth, may not refer to בראשית, the first word in the book of Genesis? If so, the meaning is, Every word thou hast spoken from בראשית, the first in Genesis, to the end of the law and the prophets, and all that thou wilt yet speak, are true and shall have in due time their fulfillment.

away from the fear of God by adversity, we wrestle against temptations and seek him even when he seems purposely to drive us away from him.

154. *Debate thy cause, and redeem me.* In this verse David specifics the kind of his affliction, which was the wrongful and harassing treatment which he met with at the hands of evil and unprincipled men. The reading literally is, *Plead my cause,* which is the same thing as to undertake a cause, or to take the charge of defending one in judgment, or to maintain the right of the oppressed. In the first place the Prophet in invoking God to defend his cause, shows that he is wrongfully oppressed, either by violence, calumnies, or crafty policies; and in seeking *to be redeemed,* he intimates that he was unable to make any resistance, or that he was so entangled in their snares, as to have no remaining hope except in the deliverance of God. In the second clause the letter ל, *lamed,* seems to be taken for the letter כ, *caph,* the mark of similitude, [470] as would appear from his having used a little before (Psalm 119:149) a similar form of prayer. Again, as David here complains that he is held as it were in fetters by his enemies, unless he is delivered by the hand of his Redeemer, he with good reason beseeches God to restore him to life; for he who is rims abased is like a person dead. It is also aptly added *according to thy word;* for it is from the promises which God makes in his word of becoming our deliverer that the hope of life shines upon us. Whence the Prophet, when earnestly desiring to be brought from darkness to light, sustains and encourages himself by the word. If a different sense is preferred, then David is not to be understood as simply asking that life may be given him, but as praying for spiritual life, that he may be encouraged to exercise faith, to cultivate the fear of God, and to cherish the desire of living a holy life.

155 *Safety is far from the wicked.* Fully persuaded that the world is governed by the secret providence of God, who is a just judge, the Prophet draws from that source the doctrine, That the wicked are far removed from safety, and safety from them. Hence proceeds the confidence of prayer; for as God is turned away from the despisers of his word, so he is ready to succor his servants. It is to be noticed, that when the Prophet saw that his enemies were elated by their prosperity, he on the contrary lifted up his heart by faith that thus he might come to the settled persuasion that all their delights were cursed and tended to destruction. Whenever then the wicked prosper in the world according to their wishes, so that being pampered to the full they exult in their own fatness, let us learn, in order to defend ourselves, to lay hold upon this buckler which the Holy Spirit is holding out to us, namely, that they shall at length miserably perish, because they seek not the commandments of God. From this we draw a contrary doctrine, That although genuine believers, whilst they walk sincerely in the fear of

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"La letre כ, qui signifie Sclon." — Fr. "The letter כ, which signifies 'According to.'"

God may be as sheep appointed to the slaughter, yet their salvation, which is under the special care and protection of God's secret providence, is just at hand. In this sense the Prophet adds in the following verse,

156. *O Jehovah,! thy tender mercies are many;* as if he had said that no offenders are safe but those who betake themselves to the divine mercy. Farther, to encourage himself to approach God with the greater confidence, he not only says that God is merciful, but he mightily magnifies and extols his compassion's. From this we gather that he was so contented with them, as not to seek any aid from his own merits. It is however at the same time to be noted, that the Prophet was far from being lightly troubled with many temptations, seeing he was forced to oppose to them this vast abundance of mercy. It makes little difference whether we read *great* or *many* The prayer which follows, *Quicken me according to thy judgments,* I explain as referring to the promises. The original word for *judgment* is by some translated *manner* or *custom;* but I have already shown above that such a translation is less suitable than the other. The Prophet then again confirms the truth, That life cannot be hoped for or asked from God, unless hope is produced by his word; and he often repeats this truth, because it is one of which we are marvelously forgetful. But that we may boldly appropriate to ourselves all the grace which God promises to his servants, let the doctrine of the great and manifold tender mercies of God be ever present to our thoughts. If we imagine that God makes his promises because he is bound to do it, or because we have deserved it, doubting or mistrust will steal upon our minds, which will shut the gate against our prayers. But if we are thoroughly persuaded that the sole cause by which God is moved to promise us salvation is the mercy inherent in his own nature, we will approach him without hesitation or doubt, because he has bound himself to us of his own accord.

157. *My persecutors and oppressors are many.* The Psalmist here as in other places testifies, that although he had been provoked by many injuries, yet he had not departed from the right way; which, as I have elsewhere observed, was an evidence of great and singular constancy. It is an easy matter to act well when we are among the good; but if wicked men afflict us, if one man openly assault us by force, if another rob us of our property, if a third circumvent us by wiles, and a fourth attack us by calumnies, it is difficult for us to persevere in our integrity, and we rather begin to howl among the wolves. Besides, the license which is allowed them of doing what they please without the fear of being punished, is a powerful engine for shaking our faith, because, when God thus winks at the wicked, he seems to abandon us for a prey. The Prophet therefore, by *God's testimonies,* means not only the rule of holy and righteous living, but also the promises. Lord, as if he had said, I have not turned away from the path of integrity, although the conduct of the wicked has presented me with a temptation to do so; nor have I shaken off nay confidence in thy grace, but have waited

patiently for thy succor. Both these are necessary. For although he who has suffered wrongs may contend against the malice of his enemies by his well — doing, and may refrain from every act of retaliation, yet, provided he does not depend wholly upon God, this uprightness will not be sufficient to save him. Not that any man behaves himself in a manner so moderate, except he who leans upon God and waits upon him as his deliverer; but granting that such could be the ease, there would not be sufficient power in this half virtue to save him. The salvation of God is reserved for the faithful who ask it in the exercise of lively faith. And whoever, persuaded that God will be his deliverer, pillars and supports his mind on the divine promises, will endeavor also to overcome evil with good.

158. *I saw the perfidious and child them.* In this verse the Psalmist proceeds yet farther, declaring that he was inflamed with a holy zeal when he saw the law of God despised by the wicked. Expositors are not however agreed as to one word in the text, namely the verb אתקוטטה, *ethkotatah,* which we have rendered *chid,* some deriving it from קוט, *kut,* which often signifies *to debate* or *contend with,* it being in the conjugation *hithpael,* while others derive it from קטט *karat,* which signifies *to kill* or *to destroy.* I adopt the former interpretation, because it is more generally received among the learned, and is most appropriate. The Prophet then teaches that he was inflamed with such zeal for the law of God that he could no longer endure the impious mockery directed against it. The verb *debate* may however be understood as well of the vexation or anger which he felt in himself, as of the rebuke which he openly administered to the despisers of God; and therefore some translate it, *I shuddered,* or *I was grieved* [471] Nor assuredly will any person enter into debate with others for maintaining the glory of God, but he who is first chafed within himself, and has been grieved at heart; even as on the other hand, after this holy indignation there almost always follows transitive action; that is to say, it passes from the thought to the effect. [472] In short, we are admonished by the example of the Prophet, that we ought to feel such displeasure at the contempt of God's word as that our heart grows hot even to chiding. In the first place, then, let grief affect us inwardly; and next, whenever opportunity shall present itself, let; us strenuously endeavor to repress the forwardness and pride of the wicked, and let us not hesitate to do so from the fear of provoking their resentment against us.

159. *Behold, O Jehovah how I have loved thy commandments.* What I have state before must be remembered — that when the saints speak of their own piety before God they are not chargeable with obtruding their own

471 "Invasit me horror." — *Piscator.*

472 "C'est a dire, on vient de la pensee a l'effect." — *Fr.*

merits as the ground of their confidence; but they regard this as, a settled principle, that God, who distinguishes his servants from the profane and wicked, will be merciful to them because they seek him with their whole heart. Besides, an unfeigned love of God's law is an undoubted evidence of adoption, since this love is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Prophet, therefore, although he arrogates nothing to himself, very properly adduces his own piety for the purpose, of encouraging himself to entertain the more assured hope of obtaining his request, through the grace of God which he had experienced. At the same time we are taught that there can be no true keeping of the law but what springs from free and spontaneous love. God demands voluntary sacrifices, and the commencement of a good life is to love him, as Moses declares, (Deuteronomy 10:12,)

"And now, O Israel! what doth the Lord require of thee,
but to love him."

The same thing is also repeated in the summary of the law: (Deuteronomy 6:5,) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." For this reason David has previously stated, that the law of God was not only precious but also delightful to him. Now as in keeping the law it behoves us to begin with voluntary obedience, so that nothing may delight us more than the righteousness of God, so on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that a sense of the free goodness of God and of his fatherly love is indispensably necessary in order to our hearts being beheld to this affection. So far are the bare commandment's from winning men to obey them, that they rather frighten them away. Hence it is evident, that it is only when a man shall have tasted the goodness of God from the teaching of the law, that he will apply his heart to love it in return. The frequency with which the Prophet repeats the prayer, *that God would quicken him,* teaches us that he knew well the frailty of his own life, so that in his estimation men live only in so far as God every moment breathes life into them. Besides, it is probable that he had been continually besieged by many deaths, to the end he might the more earnestly betake himself to the fountain of life. He again rests his faith upon the goodness of God as its foundation — *quicken me according to thy loving-kindness* — from which we perceive how far he was from boasting of his own merits when he protested in the preceding sentence that he loved God's law.

160. *The beginning of thy word is truth.* The design of the Prophet it is not difficult to perceive; but the words admit of being understood in two ways. Some interpret the noun *beginning* as denoting that the truth of God shines forth conspicuously in his word, immediately when we enter for the first time upon the study of it, so that this entrance may justly be called the beginning of the word. This sentence contains the profitable doctrine, that if we are finished with eyes of understanding, we will no sooner cast our eyes upon heavenly doctrine than the truth of it will meet our view. Others, however, give a different explanation, and perhaps with no less

propriety, eliciting this sense, That the word of God has been from the beginning certain and infallible truth, and will continue so even to the end. These two clauses hang very well together — that God has been true to his word from the beginning, and that he will continue to be so everlastingly and immutably. The interpretation which refers the word *judgment* to the works of God and not to his doctrine, I would not altogether condemn, yet it is not in harmony with the context. Let us then retain this sense, That from the time when God began to speak he has always been faithful to his promises, and has never disappointed the hope of his people; and that the course of this faithfulness has been so uniform, that from the beginning even to the end his word is true and faithful.

Psalm 119:161-168

> **161. ש** Princes have persecuted me without a cause; yet my heart hath beer, afraid at thy word **162. ש** I have rejoiced at thy word as one who hath found great spoil. **163. ש** I have hated and abhorred deceit; but I have loved thy law. **164. ש** Seven times a day have I praised thee, because of thy righteous judgments. [473] **165. ש** Great peace have them that love thy law, and there will be no stumbling-block for them. [474] **166. ש** Jehovah I have waited for thy salvation and have done thy commandments. **167. ש** My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I have loved them exceeding. **168. ש** I have kept thy commandments and thy testimonies; for all my ways are before thee.

161 *Princes have persecuted me without a cause.* [475] Here the Psalmist, informs us that sore and grievous as his temptation had been, he was restrained by the fear of God from desiring to attempt anything unworthy of the character of a godly man. We are prone to fall into despair when princes who are armed with power to overwhelm us are hostile to and molest us. The evil is also aggravated from the consideration that it is the very persons who ought to be as bucklers to defend us, who employ their strength in hurting us. Yea, when the afflicted are stricken by those in high places, they in a manner think that the hand of God is against them. There was

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Literally, "Because of the judgments of thy righteousness."

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"*They have not any offense, i.e.* no occasion to bring them into sin, but such as, with God's Spirit assisting them, they are enabled to overcome. The love of the law is a security to them from the enticements of wickedness, by which others are drawn aside from the path of rectitude, and are brought to ruin." — *Phillips.*

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"David was persecuted by Saul and his associates 'without a cause.'" — *Warner on the Psalter.*

also this peculiarity in the case of the Prophet, that he had to encounter the grandees of the chosen people — men whom God had placed in such honor-able stations, to the end they might be the pillars of the Church. Some give, more restricted exposition, which is, that David followed the exhortation of Christ in Matthew 10:28,

"Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;"

a sentiment which although it had not as yet been uttered by Christ's mouth, ought nevertheless to have been fixed in the hearts of all the godly. The sense, then, in their opinion is, that the Prophet had not been turned aside from the fear of God by any of the threatening or terrors of his enemies. But his commendation of his own constancy is to be understood in a more extended sense than this. The exhortation of Isaiah is well known,

"Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." (Isaiah 8:12,13)

The Prophet in that place shows in general what the weapons are, with which the faithful being armed will succeed in vanquishing all the assaults of the world — he shows that they will do so, provided they not only stand in awe of God, but also rest assured that he will always be the guardian of their welfare, so that they may cast all their cares upon him. Thus it will come to pass that, resting contented with his protection, they will not turn aside to practice whatever may be sinful to secure their safety. In like manner the Prophet, in the passage before us, affirms that although being oppressed by the wrongful violence of princes, he presented a sad spectacle, yet he did not succumb, but considered what was lawful for him to do, and did not attempt to rival their wicked practices, by repelling craft with craft and violence with violence. In this text, as is evident from the connection, *to be afraid at God's word,* is to restrain one's self and to attempt nothing which is unlawful. I have already said that the adverb חנם, *hinnam, without a cause,* is added for the sake of amplification; for the temptation was so much the harder from the fact, that the tyrants, without cause and merely to gratify their own wicked inclination, assaulted an innocent individual. Men of a good disposition and of a noble mind, it is well known, are more easily excited to anger when the object assaulted is one who has done wrong to nobody. It was therefore a signal proof of self-control for the Prophet to bridle himself by the word of God, that he might not vie with others in evil doing, or, overcome with temptation, go out of the place which had been assigned him in the social body. Let us then learn to remain peaceable, although princes tyrannically abuse the power which God has committed to them, lest by creating insurrection we break in upon the peace and order of society.

162. *I have rejoiced at thy word as one who hath found great spoil* No gain, it is well known, brings greater joy than that which conquerors acquire from the spoil of their enemies; for to the gain there is added the glory of

triumph; and when profit comes on a sudden, the delight experienced is from that circumstance the greater. This is the reason why David compares the knowledge he had obtained of heavenly doctrine with spoils rather than with other riches; for by these words he intimates that his greatest joy was derived from the word of God, to which no gain however desirable could at all approach. From this was learn that he was contented with the word of God as a thing in which was all his delight, and in which he found solid felicity; which could not be, but, in the way of his first withdrawing his heart from all depraved desires. Nor is it wonderful to find David placing the whole sum of a happy life in the word of God, in which he well knew the treasure of eternal life to be included and offered to him by means of free adoption.

163. *I have hated and abhorred deceit.* In this verse he declares more distinctly what I have adverted to a little before, that he was cleansed from corrupt affections that he might bestow upon the law of God such honor and estimation as it deserved. Having elsewhere met with almost the same sentence, I shall but briefly touch upon the reason why the Prophet affirms that *he hated deceit* before he speaks of his love and devotedness to the law. As hypocrisy is in the hearts of all men by nature, and as we are naturally prone to vanity and deceitfulness, we ought diligently to labor to purge our hearts, that the love of the law may reign in them. Now if the beginning of a good life and the first point of righteousness is to hate and abhor deceit, it follows that nothing is more excellent than integrity; for unless that virtue hold the chief place, all the other virtues speedily disappear. Nor is *abhorring* superfluously added to *hating,* the design being to teach us that it is not enough to hate falsehood with a common hatred, but that God's children must hate it with a deadly hatred. Now if the love of the law and the hatred of falsehood are inseparably conjoined, it is a plain inference that all who are not taught in the school of God are infected with deceit and hypocrisy.

164. *Seven times a day have I praised thee.* By the adverb *seven times,* the Prophet means that he was continually or very often engaged in celebrating the praises of God; just as it is said in Proverbs 24:16, "A just man falleth seven times," when he often falls into divers temptations. [476] The phrase *the judgments of God* being in many places taken for the punishments which God inflicts upon sinners, and also sometimes applied in

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Among many other texts of Scripture which might be quoted to show that the number seven is often used for many, or an indefinite number, we may refer only to Genesis 4:15 and Leviticus 24:18. Some of the Jewish Rabbies, however, affirm that David is here to be understood literally, observing, that the devout Hebrews were accustomed to praise God twice in the morning before reading the ten commandments, and once after; twice in the evening before reading the same portion of inspiration, and twice after; which makes up the number of seven times a day.

general to the providence by which he governs the world, some understand the Prophet as praising God because he affords such manifest proofs of his justice both in punishing the wicked and in the whole government of the world. But I rather agree with others who refer the phrase to the divine law; not that I dislike the former interpretation, but because in this psalm the great topic upon which the Psalmist chiefly insists is the commendation of God's law. The amount then is, that when David was assiduously occupied in meditating upon the law of God, he found it distinguished by so great perfection of righteousness and wisdom, that from time to time he burst forth into the exercise of praise and thanksgiving. This diligence in praising God shows that David not only spoke reverently and honourably of the divine law, but that he accounted it an inestimable boon conferred upon the human race. It was not simply admiration which constrained him to this commendation, but a principle of gratitude; for he saw that nothing more excellent could be bestowed upon men than their being renewed to a blessed and an endless life by the incorruptible seed of heavenly truth. Yet scarcely one in a hundred of those to whom God offers this treasure puts himself to the trouble of giving God thanks for it even in an ordinary manner. On the contrary, there reigns such vile ingratitude everywhere in the world, that some scornfully reject divine truth, and others despise or slight it, while others rail and gnash their teeth against it if they find anything in it which does not please them.

165. *Great peace have they who love thy law.* If we take the word *peace* for a prosperous or happy condition of life — a sense in which the Hebrews often employ it — the word rendered *stumbling-block,* to correspond with it, will be used for *adversity;* as if it had been said, that those who love God's law shall continually prosper and retain their position, although the whole world should fall into ruins. But a different interpretation will be equally appropriate, namely, that they have great peace, because, being persuaded that both their persons and their life are acceptable to God, they calmly repose themselves on a good conscience. This tranquil state of conscience, this serenity of mind, is justly reckoned the chief point of a happy life, that is to say it is so, when it proceeds from God's being reconciled to us, and from his fatherly favor shining in our hearts. The Prophet justly teaches that we attain this peace from the love of the law; for whoever would make it to depend upon anything else, will be from time to time trembling at every little blast. If this sense is adopted, the word *stumbling-block,* in the second clause, will signify all the troubles and disquietudes of mind with which all who lean not upon God's word are miserably distressed and tormented, and with which they are driven about either by their own depraved passions, or by the caprice of other men. But in whatever way understand these two words, *peace* and *stumbling-block,* the design of the Prophet will remain the same, which is to show, that those who are not devoted to God are miserable; for although they may applaud themselves for a time, yet they

will meet with many stumbling-blocks to drive them suddenly out of their course. From the term *love,* we gather that this peace is not acquired by a slavish observance of the law, but proceeds from faith; for the law has no sweetness to attract us to it, unless it exhibit to us God in the character of a father, and tranquilize our minds by the assurance of eternal salvation. So far from enjoying peace, all worldly men and despisers of God are justly punished by their own depravity and obdurate rebellion; for each of them is his own executioner, and the more fiercely they rage against the word of God, the sorer are they tormented, until they bring upon themselves utter destruction. The godly, it is true, are also tormented or distressed, but this inward consolation wipes away all their sorrow, or, raising them up, enables them to surmount all stumbling-blocks, or so relieves them, that they faint not.

166 *O Jehovah! I have waited for thy salvation.* It is not without cause that the Prophet often repeats this sentence, which is in all men's mouths, there being nothing easier than to ascribe to God the praise and office of saving, while yet there is hardly to be met with in the world a single example of steadfast hope, when men come to wrestle with temptations for any length of time. From the order of the words we learn, that if a man would keep himself in the fear of God, and the love of the law, it is necessary for him, above all things, [477] to seek for salvation in God. If faith in God's grace be removed from our minds, or patience shaken off, we will be carried away hither and thither, and will cease any longer to cultivate godliness. The chief virtue of the faithful, therefore, is a patient endurance of the cross and mortification by which they calmly submit themselves to God; for so long as no adversity happens to hypocrites, they seem, also to be well-affectioned to the work of serving him. There are also other reasons why it behoves us to keep our minds intent upon the salvation of God, if we desire to regulate our life aright; for if the, allurements of the world hold us in their snares, we will immediately become discouraged. The reason, as we plainly see, why the hearts of the great majority fail, is because it is difficult to believe assuredly that salvation is to be hoped for only from the grace of God. That we may therefore persevere in serving God, it is indispensable that faith shine on the future before us, and next, that patience accompany us, to nourish within us the love of righteousness. For, as we have said, our alacrity in persevering proceeds from this, that with a patient spirit we suffer our salvation to lie hidden in the bosom of God, and that we doubt not of his at length, proving a faithful rewarder of all such as seek him, although he may withdraw his favor from the eye of sense. In the subsequent verse the Psalmist confirms this doctrine by other words, saying, *that he kept God's testimonies with his soul* By the word *soul* he expresses still more forcibly than before, that he

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"Primum," *Lat* — "Devant toutes choses," *Fr.*

had the doctrine of the law enclosed within the deepest recesses of his heart. The cause of this peculiarly diligent keeping of the law, was the singular love which he had to it, as he states in the concluding clause of the verse. He who by constraint and in a slavish manner obeys the law, is so far from receiving it into the secret habitation of his heart to keep it there, that he would have it removed far away from him.

168. *I have kept thy commandments and thy testimonies.* What the Psalmist had expressed more strongly, he now repeats more simply, adding there to reason. He abbreviates the statement as made in the preceding verse only by here omitting the word *soul,* which he there uses, whilst to *commandments* he joins *testimonies,* in order the more distinctly to show that he does not speak exclusively of the rule of an upright and holy life, but also comprehends the whole covenant of salvation. And, assuredly, the doctrine of the law could not be so sweet and attractive from its commanding what is right, did it not at the same time exhibit the free favor of God. The reason which the Prophet assigns for his keeping God's commandments and testimonies — *for all my ways are before thee* [478] — is to this effect, That the truth, which he well knew, that nothing is hidden from God, served as a bridle to keep him devoted to the cultivation of godliness; for if we live not as under the omniscient inspection of God, the fickle lustfulness of the flesh quickly carries us away now one way and now another. The meaning, also, may be this — that he made God the arbiter and judge of his life; for in Scripture language those are said *to walk before God,* who refer all their actions to him, and, as it were, withdrawing themselves from the sight of men, present themselves at his judgment-seat. In this way he gives us to understand that he had endeavored not only to be free from all fault and blame before men, but also to offer to God a sound and sincere heart. Whichever of these senses is adopted, he testifies that it is only when we consider that we have to deal with God, who searcheth the heart, and from whose eyes nothing is hidden, that we will observe his law aright. This concluding clause may also be a form of protestation; as if the Prophet had said, Lord, thou art the best witness of the fidelity with which I have kept thy law, for nothing is hidden from thee. But he seems rather to have intended to intimate that the principle of his holy living, was his having consecrated his life to God, and having kept his thoughts fixed on the diverse presence.

Psalm 119:169-176

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"*All my ways are before thee*" The meaning of this expression may be gathered from other scriptural phrases: such as 'walking before God;' or 'in his sight;' which merely signify to live holy and righteously, so as to be acceptable in his sight. God is omniscient, and, consequently, 'all the ways' or actions of men are 'before him,' or open to his knowledge and sight." — *Warner.*

169. ת Let my cry come near b, to thy presence, O Jehovah! Give me understanding according to thy word. **170. ת** Let my prayer come into thy presence: deliver me according to thy word. **171. ת** My lips shall speak praise, when thou shalt have taught me thy statutes. **172. ת** My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. **173. ת** Let thy hand be to succor me; for I have chosen thy commandments. **174. ת** I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah and thy law has been my delight. **175. ת** Let my soul live, and let it praise thee; and let thy judgments succor me. **176. ת** I have wandered like a lost sheep: seek thy servant, for I have not forgotten thy statutes.

169. *Let my cry come* [479] *near into thy presence.* The Psalmist repeats the same sentiment which has already come under our notice — that his chief desire, and what he, most of all pressed after, regarding everything else as of secondary importance, was to make progress in the study of the divine law. By the word *cry* he denotes earnestness. I am anxious, as if he had said, above all things, and am chiefly inflamed with this desire, (even as it is just and reasonable,) that the light of understanding by which we excel the lower animals, and approach very near to God, may be preferred by me to all earthly advantages. The expression, *according to thy word,* may be understood in two ways. It may denote that David besought God to impart to him understanding according to his promise; or, as some explain it, it may intimate that he desired to have his mind framed according to the rule of God's word, so that he might not be wise otherwise than according to the doctrine of the law. This last sense would not be inappropriate, did not these words in the following verse, *Deliver me according to thy word,* present an objection to such an interpretation. Having no doubt that these two sentences have a corresponding meaning — though at first sight it is more specious to understand David as praying to be made wise according to the rule of the law — I rather incline to the other sense, That he beseeches God to endue him with understanding, in fulfillment of his promise. And whilst God liberally promises all blessings to his people, to enlighten them by his Spirit, that they may excel in true and sound wisdom, is justly entitled to be ranked among the chief of his promises. This doctrine is profitable to us in many ways. In the first place we are taught that nothing is more to be desired than to have God guiding us by his light, that we may not be like brute beasts. In the second place we are taught that this is the peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit; for it would have been in vain for David to have besought. God to bestow upon him that which he had naturally in himself,

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As has been observed by some critics, the Psalmist's *cry* for deliverance is here personified. He represents it as if an intelligent being, and as sent up by him to heaven, there to plead his cause in the presence of God. The same elegant poetical figure is used in the following verse, and it is of frequent occurrence in the Book of Psalms.

or which he might have attained by his own painstaking. In the third place, what I have said concerning the promise is to be attended to, to the end the faithful may not hesitate to offer themselves to God to be enlightened by Him, who declares that he will be the guide of the blind, and who refuses not to be a master and teacher of little ones and of the humble.

170. *Let my prayer come into thy presence.* After having made supplication that the gift of right understanding might be imparted to him, the Psalmist now implores God for deliverance, by which he acknowledges that he was continually involved in multiplied dangers from which he found it impossible to escape, unless God stretched forth his hand from heaven to his aid. We know, indeed, that whenever any distress was pressing hard behind him, he called upon God for succor; but as he does not here specify any particular distress, I have no doubt that, in commending his life in general terms to the protection of God, he thought again and again how he was shut up on every side by innumerable deaths, from which he could not escape if God did not prove his continual deliverer. But this is an inestimable comfort to us, that God assures us that in all dangers he will be ready and prepared to help us.

171. *My lips shall speak praise.* David now shows in another way than in the preceding verse, how high a privilege he accounted it to be admitted by God among the number of His disciples, and to profit aright in His school, by declaring that, if so privileged, he will hasten forward to render thanks to him with fluent tongue. The word נבע, *naba,* which he employs, is a metaphor taken from the bubbling up of fountains, and accordingly it signifies not simply *to speak,* but to pour forth speech copiously. As therefore he a little before showed the earnestness of his desire by praying, so now he affirms that his rejoicing will bear testimony that he desires nothing more than to be thoroughly imbued with heavenly truth. He again confirms the doctrine, That the way by which we become truly wise is, first by submitting ourselves to the Word of God, and not following our own imaginations; and, secondly, by God's opening our understanding and subduing it to the obedience of his will. He here joins together both these truths — namely, that when God has set before us His law, from which we are to learn what, ever is profitable for our welfare, He, at the same time, teaches us inwardly. It were not enough to have our ears stricken with the outward sound, did not God illuminate our minds by the Spirit of understanding, and correct our obduracy by the Spirit of docility. As the labor of teachers is to no purpose until virtue and efficacy has been given to it, so it is also to be noticed that such as are truly taught of God, are not led away from the law and the Scriptures by secret revelations, like some fanatics, who think that they linger still at their A B C, unless disdainfully trampling under foot the Word of God, they fly away after their own foolish fancies.

172. *My tongue shall speak of thy word.* Here the Psalmist says, that when he shall have profited in God's law he will also employ himself in

teaching it to others. This order is undoubtedly to be observed, That divine truth take root in our hearts before we engage in the work of teaching it to others. Yet every man, according to the measure of his faith, ought to communicate to his brethren what he has received, that the doctrine, whose use and fruit God 'would have to be displayed for the common edification of the Church, may not be buried. There is added the reason which ought to stir up all the godly to declare the law of God — namely, because by this means righteousness is spread abroad through the whole world. When the Prophet honors the commandments of God with the title of *righteousness,* he does not simply express his approbation of them, but he indirectly shows, that, until this rule bear sway in governing mankind, the whole world is one scene of sad and horrible confusion. Yet, let my readers judge whether the word *answer* or *witness,* which the Hebrew verb ענה, *anah,* properly signifies, is not more suitable in this place than *speak;* bringing out this sense — "My tongue shall bear witness or answer to thy word; because the true knowledge of righteousness is to be sought only in the word;" but in that case, it will be necessary to supply the letter ל, *lamed, in* the word אמרתך, *imrathecha,* that it may read — *to thy word.*

173. *Let thy hand be to succor me.* As he had devoted himself to the doctrine of the law, David requests that the hand of God may be stretched forth for his aid. Farther, by these words he declares, that those who yield themselves to God to be governed by His word have continually need of His help. The more sincerely any individual studies to be a good man, so much the more numerous are the ways in which Satan troubles him, and so much the more are the enemies multiplied who molest him on all sides. But when God sees those who once embraced the truth of his word remaining steadfast in their resolution, he is so much the more inclined to aid them. By the word *choose* in the second clause, the Psalmist has expressed that nothing had hindered him from devoting himself to the law of God. No man will apply this mind to the love of the law without a great struggle, since the thoughts of every man are drawn away to a variety of objects, by the depraved affections of the flesh. This choosing then spoken of shows that it is not through ignorance or an inconsiderate zeal that the children of God desire above all things heavenly doctrine; but as they partake of the flexibility or pliancy of mind common to men, and feel the various impulses of the flesh, they purposely subdue their minds to the obedience of God.

174. *I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah!* Although all men desire to be in happy circumstances, and no man avowedly repudiates God's favor; yet so confused and uncertain are the ideas which they entertain of that in which a life of happiness or propriety consists, that very few are to be found directing their aspirations to God. Some are carried away by their own ambition, some are wholly possessed with avarice, and others burn with lust, all imagining, that the farther they recede from God, everything will prosper so much the better with them. In short, in proportion as each man

is desirous to be safe, in the same proportion does he provoke the anger of God, by seeking the means of his safety in all directions. The construction in the Hebrew text denotes steadfastness, or constancy of desire; for literally it is, that He Had *longed for the salvation of God,* and not that he only at the present time began to long for it. He next expresses the manner in which we are patiently to long for salvation; which is, by seeking consolation and relief in all our calamities from the word of God; for whoever does not comfort himself by a reliance on the grace promised in the word, will quail at the slightest assault made upon him. The Prophet then wisely kept his thoughts close upon the divine word, that he might not be turned away from hoping for the salvation of God.

175. *Let my soul live and let it praise thee.* As the verbs are in the future tense, *shall live, shall praise,* this sentence may be expounded thus: Lord, when thou shalt have bestowed life upon me, I will endeavor, by celebrating thy praises, to show that I am not ungrateful. If this sense is approved, the sentence will be a kind of rejoicing, in which the Prophet, depending upon the divine promises, confidently proclaims, that his life will continue in safety. And, certainly, although our life is hidden under the shadow of death, we may, nevertheless, boast that it is safe, because God is its faithful guardian; and this assured confidence proceeds from his quickening grace, which is offered to us in his word. Yet, as the majority of Commentators translate these words in the optative mood, let us follow the more generally received interpretation, which is, that David in asking to have his life prolonged, shows, at the same time, that the end for which he desired to live was, that he might exercise himself in singing the praises of God, even as it is said in Psalm 115:18, "We who shall remain in life shall praise Jehovah." In the second clause it would be harsh to understand the word *judgments* of the commandments, to which it does not properly belong to give help. It seems then, that the Prophet, perceiving himself liable to numberless calamities — even as the faithful, by reason of the unbridled license of the wicked, dwell in this world as sheep among wolves, — calls upon God to protect him in the way of restraining, by his secret providence, the wicked from doing him harm. It is a very profitable doctrine, when things in the world are in a state of great confusion, and when our safety is in danger amidst so many and varied storms, to lift up our eyes to the judgments of God, and to seek a remedy in them. As, however, in this Psalm the word *judgments* is commonly referred to God's commandments, we may also fitly interpret it of them in this place, so that the Prophet attributes to the word of God the office and charge of giving succor; for God does not feed us with delusive promises, but, whenever an emergency arises, confirms and ratifies his word by giving some palpable manifestation of the operation of his hand. Thus, when the Prophet calls the divine law to his help, he pronounces a singular encomium upon the efficacy of the divine word. If any would prefer expounding the sentence of the keeping of the law, I offer no objections. In

this sense it is as if the Prophet had said, — O Lord, let the uprightness which I have practiced, and the zeal with which I have employed myself in keeping thy commandments, be a defense to me.

176. *I have wandered like a lost sheep.* He is not to be understood as here confessing his sins, — an opinion erroneously held by many, — as if he had been drawn into the trails of Satan; for this is inconsistent with the second clause, in which he denies that he had forgotten God's law. It is a poor solution of this difficulty to say, that:, previous to the time of his calling, he was a wandering sheep, but that from the time of his calling he was devoted to godliness — or that in straying he was withheld by some godly affection from utterly casting off the fear of God; for the same time is undoubtedly referred to in both clauses. Again it is easy to gather, that the two clauses of this verse ought to be connected together by *although,* or *notwithstanding,* or some other such particle, as the Latins call adversative, [480] as if the Prophet had said, Although I have wandered about like a lost sheep, yet I have not forgotten the law of God. His meaning, I conceive, is, that he wandered, because, being chased by the force and violence of his enemies, he transported himself from place to place in great fear, in quest of retreats in which he might hide himself. We know for certain, that David was so hunted that in his exile he could nowhere find a secure place. This similitude would therefore very properly apply to him, because, although driven away and hunted after by his persecutors, he yet never turned aside from the law of God. Moreover, as the wolves pursued him everywhere, he prays God to bring him back and give him a place of safety and tranquillity, that he may at length cease from any longer wandering hither and thither, and being as a vagabond. [481] He had a very good ground for believing that he would be heard in the fact, that although provoked by manifold wrongs he yet never swerved from the fear of God — a statement which, however, ought to be referred rather to the general course of his life than to particular acts. Although when he fell into adultery he continued for a time in a state of insensibility, yet it cannot be denied that in his adversities he was restrained by a holy patience, so as to persevere in following after righteousness. [482]

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"En apres, il est facile de recueillir, que les deux membres de ce propos se doyvent lier ensemble par Combien, ou Ja soit, ou quelque autre telle partieule que les Latins appellent adversative." — *Fr.*

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"A ce qu'a la fin il cesse de plus tracasser ca et la et estre comme vagabond." — *Fr.*

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Before leaving this divine poem, to the close of which we halve now arrived, there are a few remarks which may be suggested upon a review of the whole. In the first place, it is worthy of observation, that its alphabetical structure has been so completely preserved, that not one of the initial letters in it has been lost, notwithstanding its length and great antiquity, being older by many ages than any of the celebrated writings of Greece and Rome. In the second place, the wonderful perfection and yet connection of its various parts is also deserving of attention. Wherever we begin we seem to be at the commencement, and wherever we stop the sense is complete; and yet the poem does not consist of detached sentences, but is a whole consisting of many parts, all of which seem necessary to its perfection. In the third place, the numerous apparent repetitions which occur in it ought not to excite the prejudice of the reader. Although the frequent recurrence of the same words may not have an effect altogether agreeable upon fastidious ears, yet these words are so connected with others, as to bring out new meanings and to suggest new trains of thought. Hence the intelligent and pious student, instead of finding the sentences tautological, will discover new sentiments welling out to preserve his attention and to keep alive the flame of devotion. Walford, after observing that some readers may think this poem singularly marked by frequent repetitions, adds — "It is not my intention to write an essay on this theme; and I shall therefore briefly say, that the implicitly of ancient writings is one of their greatest charms. If the repetitions of Psalm 119 create in it a blemish, it is one which the royal author of it shares in common with the most illustrious poet of Pagan antiquity; and that if simplicity and repetition are to be objected against David's Ode, the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey will hardly escape condemnation." In fine, the attentive reader must have observed the striking manner in which this composition exhibits the workings of genuine godliness in the regenerated soul. "I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures," remarks that eminent man, Jonathan Edwards, "where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated as in Psalm 119. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the Psalm, keeps his eye on it all along, and pursues it to the end. The excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste and delight. God's law — that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature and prescription of holiness to the creature — is all along represented as the great object of the *love,* the complacence, and the rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commands 'above gold, yea, the finest gold,' and to which they are 'sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.'" — *Edwards on the Religious Affections,* part 3 section 3.

Psalm 120

PSALM 120.

A Song of Degrees.

If we suppose David to have been the author of this Psalm, as is very probable, he declares how diligently he engaged in prayer, when, to escape the cruelty of Saul, he wandered as an exile from place to place. But he especially complains of wicked informers, who unjustly and calumniously charged him with crimes of which he was altogether innocent. If a different supposition is preferred, the language will be a simple and general complaint against false reports. This Psalm, and the immediately subsequent fourteen, are called *Psalms of Degrees;* but for what reason is not agreed upon, even among the Hebrew doctors. Some conceive that there were fifteen steps to that part of the Temple which was allotted for the men, whereas the women remained beneath [483] but this is a silly conjecture, for which there is no foundation; and we know the liberties which the Jews, in obscure and uncertain matters like this, take of giving forth as an explanation whatever comes into their own fancy. Some translate *Psalms of Ascents;* and by *ascent* they understand the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity

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[484] — an interpretation which is altogether forced; for it is manifest that the greater part of these Psalms were composed, either by David or Solomon; and it is easy to gather from their contents, that such of them as were written by David, were, sung in the Temple, while he was alive and on the throne. Others think that the word *ascents* refers to the tones of music [485] Some also affirm that it was the beginning of a song. This being a matter of small moment, I am not disposed to make it the subject of elaborate investigation; but the probable conjecture is, that this title was given to these Psalms, because they were sung on a higher key than others. The Hebrew word for *degrees* being derived from the verb צלה, *tsalah, to ascend* or *go up,* I agree with those who are of opinion that it denotes the different musical notes rising in succession. [486]

Psalm 120:1-4

This opinion was held by Rabbi David Kimchi; and he asserts that the Psalms, entitled Songs of Ascents or Steps, were so entitled because the Levites sang one of them upon each of the fifteen steps, which, says *he,* separated the court of the women from that of the men in Solomon's Temple. This Calvin justly characterizes as a "silly conjecture;" and such an explanation is now generally rejected. Jebb, after stating several of the attempted solutions of the title of these Psalms, observes — "On these notions it is unnecessary to dwell, and still less upon that Jewish fable mentioned by Rabbi David, that these Psalms were sung on ascending the fifteen steps, which were imagined to lead from one of the outer courts of the Temple to that of the Levites. No trace in history, or authentic tradition, can be found of these steps, which owe their construction solely to the accommodating fancy of the Rabbins, who, as usual, imagined facts, in order to support their preconceived theories." — *Jebb's Literal Translation of the Psalms, with Dissertations,* volume 2. It is an additional objection to this Rabbinical conceit, that David, whose name several of these Psalms bear — and others of which have evident reference to his time and circumstances — lived in the time of the tabernacle, which had no steps.

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The Syriac version calls them "Songs of Ascent out of Babylon;" and such is the interpretation of several modern critics, among whom is Calmet, who has given an able analysis of what has been written on this title in his *Dissertation sur les quinze Psaumes Gradue* After stating numerous explanations, and characterizing many of them as "vaines et frivoles conjectures," he adopts it as the most probable supposition, that they were sung during the journey of the returning captives from Babylon to Jerusalem.

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This is the opinion of Aben Ezra.

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1. I cried [487] to Jehovah in my distress, and he answered me. **2.** O Jehovah! deliver my soul from the lips [488] of falsehood, and from the tongue of deceit. [489] **3.** What shall the tongue of deceit [490] give thee, and what shall avail thee? **4.** The arrows of a strong man sharpened, with coals of junipers.

1. *I cried to Jehovah in my distress.* The name of the author of the Psalm is not expressed, but the style of it throughout presents David to our view. Although, therefore, I cannot positively affirm, yet I am rather inclined to think that it was composed by him. Nor will it be improper, in my judgment, to explain it as if his name had been mentioned in the inscription. This, then, being granted, I would observe that although David, when in this verse he affirms that the Lord had heard him, gives thanks to

While Calvin leans to this as the most probable explanation, he has before admitted that it is only a conjecture; and after all that has been said since his time on the subject, it is still involved in obscurity, and perhaps it is now impossible to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. The Psalms, however, which bear this title, have a striking resemblance to each other, and are different in style from the other divine Poems in this book. They are all very short, and in several of them there is a gradation of meaning, and a degree of point towards the dose, which may be called epigrammatic. Hence Gesenius suggests that the title may mark a peculiar species of Hebrew composition. "The construction of the songs" [of degrees,] says Jebb, "is such as to reduce the evidently to a class. They are all short compositions, sententious, eminently fitted for lyrical use, in the highest degree poetical, and, as Calmet justly remarks, epigramrustic; using this term in its highest sense as concinnate, terse, and abounding in turns expressed with the most exquisite brevity. Two remarkable characteristics they possess, which, though found occasionally in other Psalms, seem to enter into the very texture of these — I mean the frequent recurrence of a characteristic word, and that figure which the rhetoricians call *Epanaphora,* or the repetition of the same idea or expression. As to the characteristic words: In Psalm 121 this is the word *keep* (שמר); in Psalm 122 the word *Salem,* and others of a like sound; in Psalm 123 the word *eyes,* עיני, in Psalm 126 the words *turn* and *captivity,* which in Hebrew are almost the same, סרב and שיבה in Psalm 127 *vain,* שרא; in Psalm 133 the word *descend,* ירר; and *bless,* ברך in Psalm 134 " — *Jebb's Literal Translation of the Psalms, with Dissertations,* volume 2.

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"קראתי, *I have called* constantly, attentively, and anxiously, not with violent external gesture, or elevation of voice, but with strong inward emotion " — *Phillips.*

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"Des leures." — *Fr.* "From the lips." But in the Hebrew text it is in the singular," from a lip of falsehood," that is, "from a false lip."

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"רמיה לשון, *the deceitful* tongue. We have here two norms, both of which are in the absolute state, so that we must suppose the latter to be put emphatically for an abjective, the force of the expression being the same as that of רמיה לשון, *tongue of deceit*, i.e., *deceitful tongue*, a more frequent construction. So also we have שקר שפת, *lip of falsehood*, for *false lip*, in the first member of this verse. The literal rendering of the words לשון רמיה, *is tongue*, (which is) *deceit itself*." — *Phillips.*

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"La langue pleine de fraude." — *Fr.* "The tongue full of deceit."

him, yet his chief purpose was to set forth, in the form of complaint, how wickedly and cruelly Saul's flatterers employed all their ingenuity and power to accomplish his destruction. He, however, sets out with an expression of his gratitude to God, telling us that he had not called upon Him in vain; and he does this, that by his own example he might encourage others, especially when oppressed with adversity, to confidence in prayer. Men, it is true, have need of God's help every moment; but there is not a more suitable season for seeking him than when some great danger is immediately menacing us. It is therefore worthy of notice, that he was heard when, constrained and shut up by tribulation, he betook himself to the protection of God.

2. *O Jehovah! deliver my soul from the lip of falsehood.* David now points out the kind of his affliction, declaring that he was loaded with false accusations. In charging his enemies with lying and falsehood, he asserts his own innocence of the crimes which they slanderously imputed to him. His complaint therefore amounts to this, that as he was conscious of having committed no fault, he was assaulted *by* the wicked contrary to all law, human and divine, and that they brought him into hatred without his having given them any occasion for such injurious treatment. Deceitful tongues assault good and simple people in two ways' they either circumvent them by wiles and snares, or wound their reputation by calumnies. It is of the second way that the Prophet here complains. Now if David, who was endued with such eminent virtue, and free from every mark of disgrace, and far removed from every *wicked* action, was yet assailed with contumely, is it to be wondered at if the children of God in the present day labor under false accusations, and that when they have endeavored to conduct themselves uprightly they are yet in reported of? As they have the devil for their enemy, it is indeed impossible for them to escape being loaded with his lies. Yea, we see that slanderous tongues did not spare even the Son of God — a consideration which should induce us to bear the more patiently our condition, when the wicked traduce us undeservedly; since it is certain that we have here described the common lot of the whole Church.

3. *What shall the tongue of deceit give thee?* [491] The Prophet aggravates the malice of his enemies by asserting that they were so wickedly inclined as to be driven to evil speaking when they saw no prospect of deriving any advantage from such a course of conduct. He however seems to express more than this, — he seems farther to intimate, that after they have poured forth all the venom of their calumnies, their attempts will nevertheless be vain and ineffectual. As God is the maintainer of the innocence of his servants, David, inspired with hope from this truth, rises up against them with heroic courage, as if about to triumph over the whole crowd of his calumniators, [492]

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The Psalmist here addresses himself in particular to his traducers.

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reproaching them for doing nothing else than betraying an impotent passion for evil speaking, which God at length would cause to recoil upon their own heads. It is a consideration well fitted to assuage the grief of all the godly, when their good name is unrighteously wounded by calumniators, that such malicious characters will gain nothing thereby in the end, because God will disappoint their expectation.

4. *The arrows of a strong man sharpened, with coals of juniper.* Here the Psalmist amplifies in another way the malice of such as distress the simple and innocent by their calumnies, affirming that they throw out their injurious reports just like a man who should draw an arrow, and with it pierce through the body of his neighbor; and that their calumnies were like *coals of juniper,* [493] which penetrate more effectually, and burn more intensely the substances with which they come in contact than the coals of

"Comme s'il avoit desia le triomphe contre toute la bande de scs ennemis." — *Fr.* "As if he had already triumphed over the whole host of his enemies."

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The Hebrew word רתם, *rothem,* here rendered "*juniper,*" occurs also in I Kings 19:4, 5, and Job 30:4, in both which places it is translated in our English Bible by "juniper-tree." It would appear that this shrub was remarkable for the intense flame with which it burned, and for the length of time during which its embers retained their heat. Several critics, however, think that the Hebrew *rothem* means the genista or Spanish broom; and in support of this opinion it is said that the genista is much used as fuel by the Arabs, among whom the Psalmist describes himself as then living; and that, as Geierus asserts, it" sparkles, burns, and crackles more vehemently than any other wood." (See Parkhurst on רתם.) It is somewhat difficult to decide in this matter. As more than thirty different trees are mentioned in the Bible, and as we are but imperfectly acquainted with the natural history of these remote countries, it is no wonder though we find it impossible to identify all these trees. It may be observed that Calvin in his translation brings out that beautiful gradation of sense, terminating in a point of severity, for which the Hebrew text is remarkable, but which does not appear in our English version. Slanderous words are first compared to "arrows," secondly, to "arrows discharged from the bow by a strong man," and in proportion to the strength of a man will be the force with which his weapon strikes; next to "sharp arrows;" and lastly, to "coals of juniper," or some wood used in those days celebrated for burning fiercely and long, (for the particle עם, *im* translated *with,* is sometimes one of similitude, as in Psalm 106:6, "We have sinned *like as* our fathers,") intimating not only that malignant slanders deeply penetrate, but that they inflame and burn for a long time. Hence the Apostle James (James 3:5, 6) compares the tongue of slander to a fire enkindled from hell, and inflaming the course of nature. Some interpreters think that this verse is not to be understood as a description of calumny, but rather as the punishment which God will inflict on the calumniator. They therefore regard it as an answer to the question in the preceding verse, "What shall be given unto thee," etc.; observing that calumny and falsehood being frequently represented by the images of arrows and fire, the same images suitably express the requital which awaits them at the hand of God — the swift and terrible retributive vengeance of the Almighty, which will overtake all who practice falsehood and slander. See Psalm 57:4; Psalm 64:3, 7, 9; and Job 20:26. "Sharp arrows of the Mighty One, with coals of juniper," await them. This opinion is adopted by Street, Mant, Morison, Paxton, Fry, French and Skinner. Calvin's exposition is embraced by Walford and Phillips. The former, to elicit this meaning the more clearly, uses a supplement:

"Sharp arrows of a warrior,
And burning coals of juniper, thou resemblest."

any other kind of wood. The amount is, that the tongues of these slanderers were inflamed with the burning heat of fire, and, as it were, dipped in deadly poison; and that such persons were the less excusable, from the fact that, without deriving any advantage from it, they were impelled by an unbridled passion to inflict upon others deadly mischief. As the Prophet records nothing here which he did not experience in his own person, it may be inferred that if it behoved him and men of a similar character to be assailed by their enemies with lies, which were to them as arrows to pierce them, or coals to burn them, we need not be surprised at seeing the most eminent servants of God exercised with similar assaults.

Psalm 120:5-7

5. Alas for me! that I have been a sojourner [494] in Mesech, and have dwelt among the tents of Kedar. **6.** My soul hath long dwelt with him who hateth peace. **7.** I am for peace; and when I speak they are for war. [495]

5. *Alas for me! that I have been a sojourner in Mesech.* David complains that he was doomed to linger for a long time among a perverse people; his condition resembling that of some wretched individual who is compelled to live till he grows old in sorrowful exile. The Mesechites and Kedarenes, as is well known, were Eastern tribes; the former of which derived their original from Japhet, as Moses informs us in Genesis 10:2; and the latter from a son of Ishmael. (Genesis 25:13.) To take the latter for a people of Italy, who were anciently called Hetrurians, is altogether absurd, and without the least color of probability, Some 'would have the word Mesech to be an appellative noun; and because משׁ *mashak,* signifies *to draw, to protract,* they think that the Prophet bewails his protracted banishment, of the termination of which he saw no prospect. [496] But as immediately after he adds *Kedar,* by which term the Ishmaelites are unquestionably intended, I have no doubt that *Mesech* is to be understood of the Arabians who were their neighbors. If any one is of opinion that the Mesechites obtained this name from their dexterity in shooting with the bow, I will make no objections, provided it is admitted that the Prophet — as if he had been confined within a country of robbers — expresses the irksomeness of an uncomfortable and an annoying place of

He, however, in a footnote requests the reader "to observe, that this is given as what seems to be the most probable interpretation of the passage, though it cannot be regarded as absolutely certain."

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"C'est, en exile;" —"That is, in exile." — Fr-. *Marg.*

495

Literally it is, "I peace; and when I speak, they for war."

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residence. Although he names the Arabians, yet under the terms employed he speaks metaphorically of his own countrymen, just as he elsewhere applies the appellation of Gentiles to the corrupt and degenerate Jews. [497] But here, with the view of putting still more dishonor upon his enemies, he has purposely selected the name by which to designate them from some of the savage and barbarous nations whose horrible cruelty was well known to the Jews. From these words we are taught, that scarcely a more distressing evil can befall the people of God, than for them to be placed in circumstances which, notwithstanding their living a holy and an inoffensive life, they yet cannot escape the calumnies of venomous tongues. It is to be observed, that although David was living in his own country, he yet was a stranger in it, nothing being more grievous to him than to be in the company of wicked men. Hence we learn that no sin is more detestable to God, by whose Spirit David spake, than the false accusations which shamefully deface the beauty of God's Church, and lay it waste, causing it to differ little from the dens of robbers, or other places rendered infamous from the barbarous cruelty of which they are the scene. Now if the place where the uprightness of good men is overwhelmed by the criminations of lying lips is to the children of God converted into a region of miserable exile, how could they have pleasure, or rather, how could they fail to feel the bitterest sorrow, in abiding in a part of the world where the sacred name of God is shamefully profaned by horrible blasphemies, and his truth obscured by detestable lies? David exclaims, *Alas for me!* because, dwelling among false brethren and a bastard race of Abraham, he was wrongfully molested and tormented by them, although he had behaved himself towards them in good conscience. [498] Since, then, at

This is the sense in which the word is rendered in most of the ancient versions. Thus the Septuagint has ἡ παροικία μου ἐμακρύνθη, "my sojourning is protracted;" and it is followed by the Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic versions. Aquila has προσηλύτευσα ἐν μακρυσμῷ I was a stranger for a long time;" and Symmachus, παροικῶν παρίλκυσα "I have protracted sojourning." Bishop Patrick and Dr. Hammond, following these authorities, render משך, *mesech,* adverbially. But though this is a meaning which the word will bear, yet as Calvin observes, there is little room for doubting that it is here a proper name. The parallelism which enables us in many instances to determine the accurate interpretation of a word in Hebrew poetry when other helps entirely fail, decidedly favors this interpretation. The term corresponding to משך *mesech,* in the next hemistich, is קרר *kedar*; and as it is universally admitted that this is the name of a place, it cannot be justly questioned that such is also the case with respect to משך *mesech.* To render it otherwise is destructive of the poetical structure of the passage. "If," says Phillips, "the adverbial sense be intended, then the expression should not have been גרתי משך, but something analogous to שכנה רבת in the next verse. Many localities have been mentioned for the geography of Mesech, as Tuscany, Cappadocia, Armenia, etc., which proves that the particular district called by this name is uncertain." It is however obvious that some barbarous and brutal tribes of Arabs are intended.

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A similar mode of speaking is not uncommon in our own day. Thus we are accustomed to call gross and ignorant people Turks and Hottentots.

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the present day, in the Church of Rome, religion is dishonored by all manner of disgraceful imputations, faith torn in pieces, light turned into darkness, and the majesty of God exposed to the grossest mockeries, it will certainly be impossible for those who have any feeling of true piety within them to lie in the midst of such pollutions without great anguish of spirit.

6. *My soul* [499] *hath long dwelt with him who hateth peace.* The Psalmist now shows, without figure, and, so to speak, points with the finger to those [500] whom he had before indirectly marked out by the terms *Mesech* and *kedar,* namely, the perfidious Israelites, who had degenerated from the holy fathers, and who rather wore the mask of Israelites than were the true seed of Israel. [501] He calls them *haters of peace,* [502] because they wilfully, and with deliberate malice, set themselves to make war upon the good and unoffending. To the same purpose he adds immediately after, that his heart was strongly inclined to seek after peace, or rather, that he was wholly devoted to it, and had tried every means in order to win their favor, but that the implacable cruelty of their disposition invariably impelled them to do him mischief. When he says, *I peace,* it is an abrupt, yet not an obscure expression, implying that he had not done them any injury or wrong which could give occasion for their hatred there having been always peace on his part. He even proceeds farther, asserting, that when he saw them inflamed

"D'autant que dcmeurant entre des faux freres et une race bastardc d'Abraham, a tort il est par eux molest4 et tourment(cornroe ainsi soit th'envers eux il se porte en bonne conscience." — Fr.

499

My soul, for *I.*

500

"Et (par maniere de dire) monstre au doigt ceux," etc — *Fr.*

501

"Aseavoir les Israelites desloyaux qui avoyent forligne' des saincts Peres, et qui estoyent plustost des masques d'Israclites, que non pas une vraye semence d'Israel." — *Fr.*

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In describing those among whom he was now living as *haters of peace,* and, in the next verse, as bent on war, the inspired writer probably still alludes to the Arab tribes he had specified in the 5th verse, who have, from their origin to the present hour, been eminently characterized by their hatred of peace and propensity to war. Dr. Shaw thus writes concerning these barbarous tribes as they are to be found in our own day, and their character and habits were the same at the time when this Psalm was written: "The Arabs are naturally thievish and treacherous; and it sometimes happens, that those very persons are overtaken and pillaged in the morning who were entertained the night before with all the instances of friendship and hospitality. Neither are they to be accused for plundering strangers only, and attacking almost every person whom they find unarmed and defenceless, but for those many implacable and hereditary animosities which continually subsist among them: literally fulfilling the prophecy to Hagar, that 'Ishmael should be a wild man; his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him.'"

with resentment against him, he endcavourcd to pacify them, and to bring them to a good understanding; for *to speak,* is here equivalent to offering conditions of peace in an amicable spirit, or to treating of reconciliation. From this it is still more apparent, how savage and brutal was the pride of David's enemies, since they disdained even to speak with him — to speak with a man who had deserved well at their hands, and who had never in any respect injured them. We are taught by his example, that it is not enough for the faithful to abstain from hurting others: they must, moreover, study to allure them by gentleness, and to bend them to good will. Should their moderation and kindness be rejected, let them wait in patience, until God at length show himself from heaven as their protector. Let us, however, remember, that if God does not immediately stretch forth his hand in our behalf, it is our duty to bear the wearisomeness occasioned by delay, like David, whom we find in this Psalm giving, thanks to God for his deliverance, while, at the same time, as if worn out with the weariness of waiting for it, he bewails the long oppression to which he had been subjected by his enemies.

Psalm 121

PSALM 121

The Psalmist, to encourage true believers confidently to trust in the aid of God, and to teach them to betake themselves to his protection, first, affirms that, to whatever quarter we turn our eyes it is impossible to find salvation anywhere else; and, in the second place, extols in lofty terms the fatherly care of God in defending his faithful ones.

Song of Degrees.

Psalm 121:1-2

1. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains, whence my help will come
[503] **2.** My help is from Jehovah, who made heaven and earth.

1 *I will lift up my eyes to the mountains.* The inspired writer, whoever he was, seems, in the opening of the Psalm, to speak in the person of an unbelieving man. As God prevents his believing people with his blessings, and meets them of his own accord, so they, on their part, immediately cast

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Phillips, who thinks it "probable that that Psalm was written just as the Israelites were about to commence their journey to their native land," gives this explanation of the verse*:* "*I will l lift up eyes to the mountains,* viz., Zion, Tabor, Carmel, etc.; but especially to the first, as being the place of the ark, and consequently the place to which the Israelites directed their eyes, as to a fountain of all good. There they looked for help as often as circumstances rendered expected assistance requisite, as we learn from several passages in the Psalms. See Psalm 14:7; Psalm 20:3." In returning from Babylon, how many a longing and anxious look would the Jews cast to the hills of Palestine, and with how many stirring and sacred emotions would the sight of them fill their minds!

their eyes directly upon him. What then is the meaning of this unsettled looking of the Prophet, who casts his eyes now on this side and now on that, as if faith directed him not to God? I answer, that the thoughts of the godly are never so stayed upon the word of God as not to be carried away at the first impulse to some allurements; and especially when dangers disquiet us, or when we are assailed with sore temptations, it is scarcely possible for us, from our being so inclined to the earth, not to be moved by the enticements presented to us, until our minds put a bridle upon themselves, and turn them back to God. The sentence, however, may be explained as if expressed in a conditional form. Whatever we may think, would the Prophet say, all the hopes which draw us away from God are vain and delusive. If we take it in this sense, he is not to be understood as relating how he reasoned with himself, or what he intended to do, but only as declaring, that those lose their pains who, disregarding God, gaze to a distance all around them, and make long and devious circuits in quest of remedies to their troubles. It is indeed certain, that in thus speaking of himself, he exhibits to us a malady with which all mankind are afflicted; but still, it will not be unsuitable to suppose, that he was prompted to speak in this manner from his own experience; for such is the inconstancy natural to us, that so soon as we are smitten with any fear, we turn our eyes in every direction, until faith, drawing us back from all these erratic wanderings, direct us exclusively to God. All the difference between believers and unbelievers in this respect is, that although all are prone to be deceived, and easily cheated by impostures, yet Satan bewitches unbelievers by his enchantments; whereas, in regard to believers, God corrects the vice of their nature, and does not permit them to persevere in going astray. The meaning of the Prophet is abundantly obvious, which is, that although all the helps of the world, even the mightiest, should offer themselves to us, yet we ought not to seek safety anywhere but in God; yea, rather, that when men shall have long wearied themselves in hunting after remedies, now in one quarter and now in another, they will at length find from experience, that there is no assured help but in God alone. By the *mountains,* the Prophet means whatever is great or excellent in the world; and the lesson he teaches is, that we ought to account all such favor as nothing.

Farther, these two verses ought to be read connectedly, bringing out this sense: When I shall have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, then I will at length experience that I have fallen into a rash and unprofitable mistake, until I direct them to God alone, and keep them fixed upon him. It is at the same time to be observed, that God in this place is not in vain honored with the title of *Creator of heaven and earth;* it being intended hereby tacitly to rebuke the ingratitude of men, when they cannot rest contented with his power. Did they in good earnest acknowledge him as Creator, they would also be persuaded, that as he holds the whole world in his hand, and governs it as seemeth good in his sight, he is possessed of infinite power.

But when, hurried away by the blind impetuosity of their passions, they have recourse to other objects besides him, they defraud him of his right and empire. In this way ought we to apply this title of God to the case in hand. The amount is, that whilst we are naturally more anxious than is needful in seeking alleviation and redress to our calamities, especially when any imminent danger threatens us, yet we act a foolish and mistaken part in running up and down through tortuous mazes: and that therefore we ought to impose a restraint upon our understandings, that they may not apply themselves to any other but God alone. Nor is the opinion of those unsuitable, who think that the Hebrew word אל, *el,* which we translate *to,* namely, *to the mountains,* is put for על, *al,* which signifies *above,* giving this sense, That men, however high they may look, will find no true salvation except in God.

Psalm 121:3-5

> **3.** He will not suffer thy foot to stumble: he who keepeth thee will not slumber. **4.** Behold! he who keepeth Israel will not slumber nor sleep. **5.** Jehovah is thy keeper; Jehovah is thy defence [504] on thy right hand.

3 *He will not suffer thy foot to stumble.* Here the Prophet, in order to recall the faithful to the right path, and to defeat the influence of all the allurements which are wont to distract their minds, affirms that whatever advantages worldly men are accustomed to desire or hope for from the world, true believers will find abundantly and at hand in God alone. He not only attributes power to God, but also teaches that He is so affectioned towards us, that he will preserve us in all respects in perfect safety. As often as the power of God is extolled, there are many who immediately reply, It is very true that he can do such and such things if he is so inclined, but we do not certainly know what is his intention. In this passage, therefore, God is exhibited to the faithful as their guardian, that they may rest with assured confidence on his providence. As the Epicureans, in imagining that God has no care whatever about the world, extinguish all piety, so those who think that the world is governed by God only in a general and confused manner, and believe not that he cherishes with special care each of his believing people, leave men's minds in suspense, and are themselves kept in a state of constant fluctuation and anxiety. In short, never will the hearts of men

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The Hebrew word is צל, *tsel,* "a shadow;" and hence it has been supposed that the words, "thy shadow at thy right hand.," are a figurative expression, referring to the protection afforded by the shade of a tree against the scorching rays of the sun, or to the custom which prevails in tropical climates especially, of keeping off the intense heat of the sun by a portable screen, such as an umbrella or parasol. The word is often put for *defense* in general. Compare Numbers 14:9; Isaiah 30:2; Jeremiah 48:45

be led in good earnest to call upon God, until a persuasion of the truth of this guardianship is deeply fixed in their minds. The Psalmist declares that the purpose for which God is our keeper, is, that he may hold us up. The Hebrew word, מוט, *mot,* which is here used, signifies both *a sliding* or *falling,* and *a trembling* or *staggering.* Now, although it often happens that the faithful stagger, yea, are even ready to fall altogether, yet as God sustains them by his power, they are said to stand upright. And as amidst the many dangers which every moment threaten us, it is difficult for us to get rid of all anxiety and fear, the Prophet at the same time testifies, that God keeps watch unceasingly over our safety.

4. *Behold! he who keepeth Israel will not slumber nor sleep.* [505] To recall each individual to the consideration of the common covenant, he represents the Divine providence as extending to the whole body of the Church. In order that each of us for himself may be assured that God will be gracious to him, it behoves us always to begin with the general promise made to all God's people,. This form of expression, *he will not slumber nor sleep,* would be improper in other languages, according to the idiom of which it should rather be, *He will not sleep, yea, he will not slumber:* but when the Hebrews invert this order, they argue from the greater to the less. The sense then is, that as God never slumbers even in the smallest degree, we need not be afraid of any harm befalling us while he is asleep. The design of the Prophet is now obvious. To persuade true believers that God has a special care of each of them in particular, he brings forward the promise which God made to the whole people, and declares God to be the guardian of his Church, that from this general principle, as from a fountain, each might convey streams to himself. Accordingly immediately after, (Psalm 121:5,) addressing himself to each in particular, he repeats, *Jehovah is thy keeper,* that no person might hesitate to apply to himself that which belonged to the whole community of Israel. Besides, God is called *a defense at the right hand,* to teach us that it is not necessary for us to go far in seeking him, but that he is at hand, or rather stands at our side to defend us.

Psalm 121:6-8

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A notion was prevalent among the heathen, that their gods sometimes slept, and were not then conscious of the wants of their worshippers. Elijah thus addressed in irony the followers of Baal, 1 Kings 18:27:

"Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing,
or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth,
and must be waked."

Very different was the character of the guardian of Israel. He relaxed not his watchful care over his people by indulging in light slumbers during the day, nor even by sleeping in the night, when the tired frame of man seeks and demands repose.

6. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. [506]
7. Jehovah shall keep thee from all evil; he will keep thy soul. **8.** Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in, henceforth and for ever.

6. *The sun shall not smite thee by day.* By these forms of expression the Psalmist magnifies the advantages which result to us from our having God present with us; and, by the figure synecdoche, under one particular, he declares in general that the faithful shall be safe from all adversities, defended as they are by Divine power. The language is metaphorical, the cold of night and the heat of day denoting all kind of inconveniences. The sense then is, that although God's people may be subject in common with others to the miseries of human life, yet his shadow is always at their side to shield them from thereby receiving any harm. The Prophet does not, however, promise the faithful a condition of such felicity and comfort as implies an exemption from all trouble; he only, for the purpose of assuaging their sorrows, sets before them this consolation — that being interested in the Divine layout, they shall be secure from all deadly harm; a point which he unfolds more distinctly in the following verses, where he tells us that God will so keep his own people from all evils, as to maintain their life in safety. The statement in the text before us is indeed general, but he afterwards specifies the chief parts of human life.

8. *Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in.* The sense is, Whatever thou shalt undertake or engage in during thy life shall come to a happy and successful termination. God no doubt directs by his Holy Spirit the, deliberations of his servants; but it appears to me, that this passage is rather to be referred to prosperous issues. If, however, any one would give it a more extended meaning I have no objection. It is enough for me to embrace that sense which is indisputably certain and solid, That God will be the continual guide of his people, so that stretching out his hand to them he will conduct them according to their hearts' desire from the beginning even to the end. Farther, it is of importance to mark the reason why the

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There seems to be an allusion in the first member to sun-strokes, which are very fatal in hot countries, sometimes inflicting instant death, or being soon followed by death, while at other times, when the person lives, he continues through the remainder of his days in a state of idiocy. Comparatively few survive and perfectly recover the effects of such a visitation. What the Psalmist means by the *smiting of the moon* is at first sight not so obvious. Some suppose that he speaks in conformity with a popular belief, which it is supposed prevailed in the East in his time, just as it does in the present day, respecting the deleterious influence of the moonbeams on the human body, although there is no ground for such a belief, the moon no doubt getting the blame of the injury done by the cold and dampness of the night. But the probability is, that by the striking of the moon he simply alludes to the cold of the night, which has very baneful effects on the human frame, particularly in such oriental countries as Palestine, where there is a sudden change from extreme heat in the day to extreme cold in the night.

Prophet repeats so often what he had briefly and in one word expressed with sufficient plainness. Such repetition seems at first sight superfluous; but when we consider how difficult it is to correct our distrust, it will be easily perceived that he does not improperly dwell upon the commendation of the divine providence. How few are to be found who yield to God the honor of being a keeper, in order to their being thence assured of their safety, and led to call upon him in the midst of their perils! On the contrary, even when we seem to have largely experienced what this protection of God implies, we yet instantly tremble at the noise of a leaf falling from a tree, as if God had quite forgotten us. Being then entangled in so many unholy misgivings, and so much inclined to distrust, we are taught from the passage that if a sentence couched in a few words does not suffice us, we should gather together whatever may be found throughout the whole Scriptures concerning the providence of God, until this doctrine-" That God always keeps watch for us" — is deeply rooted in our hearts; so that depending upon his guardianship alone we may bid adieu to all the vain confidences of the world.

Psalm 122

PSALM 122

In this Psalm David congratulates himself and the whole Church upon the fact, that a seat had at length been appointed for the ark of the covenant, and that God had chosen a place where his name should be continually called upon. Afterwards, to incite and encourage the faithful to engage in the worship of the sanctuary, he briefly declares, that the prosperous condition of the people depended upon God's having chosen the seat of royalty to be at Jerusalem, from whence it was his purpose to defend, maintain, and assist his people.

A Song of Degrees of David. [507]

Psalm 122:1-3

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"The burden of the Psalm," says Jebb, "is שלום 'peace.' The play upon the words is very remarkable: שם, 'there,' and שם, 'the name,' lines 5 and 6; שבטים, 'tribes,' line 5 משפט, line 7. Then in line 9, and those which follow: שאלו, 'pray;' שלום, 'peace;' ירושלם, 'Jerusalem;' ישליו, 'shall prosper;' שלוה 'prosperity.'" — *Jebb's Literal Translation of the Psalters, with Dissertations,* volume 1. Speaking in reference to the author of the Psalm, and to the opinion held by some critics, that it was composed about the time or' the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, he says —"The extraordinary play upon words already noticed might argue a later period of composition: [than the time of David]. Still I cannot but think that the title assigning the Psalm to him is borne out by internal evidence of a stronger kind. The fond mention of Jerusalem, David's beloved city; the thrones of the house of David; and the recurrence of peace, which was so emphatically promised to David, as the blessing about to be conferred on his son Solomon, are all circumstances, which, taken in connection, stamp this song with a character evidently belonging to the reign of the royal Psalmist " — *Ibid.,* volume 2.

> **1.** I was glad when they said to me, We will go into the house of Jehovah. **2.** Our feet shall be [508] standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem! **3.** Jerusalem is built as a city, compact in itself together. [509]

1 *I was glad when they said to me.* God had often told Moses, that his Sanctuary would one day have a certain and fixed place of abode; yet from the time of Moses, for the space of more than a thousand years, the Ark of the Covenant had been carried about from place to place, as if it had been in a state of pilgrimage. At length it was revealed to David, that mount Zion was the spot where God would have his ark to be settled, and his temple built. Now, as David himself received this revelation with exceeding great joy, so he affirms that he was glad to find the whole people with one consent agreeing thereto. This circumstance has not been duly considered, and the consequence is, that interpreters have given the unhappy translation—*I was glad with those that said to me.* Such a rendering, however, only renders the sense a little obscure; but the translation of the Septuagint and the Vulgate, which puts upon the second verb of the verse a neuter signification, entirely vitiates the meaning, *I was glad in the things which, were said to me.* I indeed admit that literally the reading is—*I was glad in those who said to me;* but it is no uncommon thing for the letter ב, *beth,* which commonly signifies *in,* to be resolved into the adverb of time *when;* and here the scope of the text requires such a rendering. David testifies that he felt in his heart a double joy on observing that the whole people concurred in yielding obedience to the oracle which declared mount Zion to be the place which God had chosen for his solemn worship. By this example we are taught, that our joy, in like manner, should be doubled, when God by his Holy Spirit not only frames each of us to the obedience of his word, but also produces the same effect upon others, that we may be united together in the same faith. So stubborn and rebellious is human nature, that the great majority of mankind invariably murmur against God whenever he speaks. We have, therefore, no small ground for rejoicing when all harmoniously rank themselves with us on the side of God. Such as translate, *with those who said to me,* deduce this meaning: I take delight in the company of those who allure me to the service of God, and offer themselves to me as companions,

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"Ou, ont este. — *Fr. marg.* "Or, have been."

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Literally, Jerusalem built as a city, that is joined to itself together', i.e. the several parts of which are connected with each other, so as to form one compact whole. Before David's time, Zion was not a part of Jerusalem, neither it seems was Millo: but he added them to the city, and enclosed them within its wall. (2 Samuel 5:7, 9; 1 Chronicles 11:7, 8.) Solomon afterwards added the hill of Moria, on which his temple was built, to Jerusalem." — *Cresswell.*

that we may go to the sanctuary together. But from the second verse it will be still more obvious, that the joy of which David speaks proceeded from his seeing the people, with the ready obedience of faith, giving their consent to the utterance of the heavenly oracle, respecting the spot chosen to be the lawful and permanent scat of the ark of the covenant. For it immediately follows —

2. *Our feet shall be standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem!* In the Hebrew text the verb is indeed in the past tense, which it would not be unsuitable to retain; but as it makes little *difference* as to the meaning whether the one reading or the other is adopted, I have no difficulty in leaving my readers to their own *choice.* David rehearses the language in which all the godly in common expressed themselves — that they should at length stand with sure footing in Jerusalem, because it was the will of God there to establish his Sanctuary, which hitherto had often changed its lodgings, and had been carried from place to place. By such a pilgrimage state of the ark, God reminded the people that he had not without cause spoken by Moses what I have a little ago adverted to. Thus, whenever the ark of the covenant was conveyed from one place to another, God thereby stirred up the hearts of his servants to desire and pray that a certain settled place might be appointed to it. Moreover, this fixing of its seat was not a matter of small moment. As while it was frequently changing its abode, the faith of the people hung in suspense, so after God had chosen for it a permanent residence, he by this testified more unequivocally that he would be the ever, lasting and unchangeable protector of his people. It is, therefore, not surprising to find the faithful gratefully acknowledging that their feet, which had hitherto been wont to run from place to place, should henceforth stand steadfast within the gates of Jerusalem. The ark, it is true, dwelt a long time in Shiloh, (1 Samuel 1:3,) but God having made no promise concerning that place, it could not be the permanent abode of that symbol of the divine presence. On the contrary, since, as we shall see on Psalm 132:14, it was said of mount Zion — "This is my rest for ever," the faithful, depending upon that promise, confidently boast that their feet shall hereafter be at rest and stand firm. Farther, as Christ,

"in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," (Colossians 2:9,)

and who is our true Immanuel, (Isaiah 7:14,) now resides amongst us, he has furnished us with matter of more abundant joy. We are, therefore, ungrateful and stupid, if that promise —

"Lo, I am wit you always, even unto the end of the world,"
(Matthew 28:20,)

does not ravish us with exceeding joy, and especially if we see it in any place received publicly and with common consent. What I have just now quoted concerning the rest or repose of the Lord, has been at length accomplished in the person of Christ, as is evident from Isaiah 11:10 —

"His rest shall be glorious;" where the Prophet does not speak of the burial of Christ, as some interpreters erroneously suppose, but of the future distinction of the Church.

3. *Jerusalem is built as a city.* Here David begins to celebrate the praises of Jerusalem*;* and he does this with the design of encouraging the people to persevere with uniform steadfastness in their obedience. It was of great importance for the minds of the godly, instead of being drawn hither and thither, to be kept constantly fixed on that city*,* which was the bond of a holy unity. When the people came to be divided into two bodies, that was the commencement of melancholy devastation. It is not surprising, then, to find David commending with such earnestness the place which God had chosen, knowing, as he did, that the prosperity of the Church depended upon the children of Abraham worshipping God there in purity, according to the appointed observances of the law; and next, upon their acknowledging the royal seat which the same God had erected there by his own authority, and had taken under his own protection When it is said that *Jerusalem is built as a city,* it is not to be understood as referring only to the walls, or towers, or ditches of that city, but chiefly to the good order and holy polity by which it was distinguished, although I allow that there is some allusion to its ancient state. Salem, indeed, had been a noted town even from the beginning; but when God selected it to be the head of the kingdom, it changed its appearance, and in a manner its nature, so that then it began to deserve the name of a well-regulated city. At first sight it may seem a poor commendation to call Jerusalem a city; but it is to be observed that it is here exhibited as it were standing alone in the whole world — taking the precedence of all other cities, which will in vain attempt to equal it. David, certainly, in thus speaking, does not intend to divest other cities of the rank to which they may be entitled, but he raises Jerusalem higher, that it may appear conspicuous above them all, even as we find Isaiah, (Isaiah 2:2,) when speaking of mount Zion, asserting that it "shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills." In that passage the Prophet, to magnify this little hill, brings down the loftiest mountains of the world, that they may not obscure its glory. In like manner David here affirms that Jerusalem is compacted as a city, to induce the faithful, instead of gazing in all directions around them, to rest contented with the city which God had chosen, since they would nowhere find its equal. After having humbled all other cities, he shows, in a few words, the excellence of Jerusalem, representing it as regularly built, or fitly and neatly joined together in all its parts. Some take these words as expressing literally and without figure, that its citizens live together in peace and unity; but I see no impropriety in supposing that they describe, metaphorically, the peaceable state of a city. Thus the mutual concord which reigns among the citizens of a city, and by which they are united to each other, is compared to buildings, compacted together by a skillful and elegant workmanship, so that there is

nothing imperfect, in joined together, or rent, but throughout a beautiful harmony'. By this David teaches us, that the Church can only remain in a state of safety when unanimity prevails in her, and when, being joined together by faith and charity, she cultivates a holy unity.

Psalm 122:4-5

4. Thither the tribes ascended, the tribes of God, for a testimony to Israel, [510] to praise the name of Jehovah. **5.** For there were set thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

4. *Thither the tribes ascended.* David here invests Jerusalem with two titles of honor, calling it the sacred and regularly appointed place for calling upon the name of God; and next, the royal sea, to which the whole people were to have recourse for obtaining justice. All our salvation depends upon these two points; first, that Christ has been given to us to be our priest; and, secondly, that he has been established king to govern us. This God showed to his ancient people under figures. The sanctuary erected on mount Zion was intended to keep their faith fixed upon the spiritual priesthood of Christ; and in like manner, by the kingdom of David, there was presented to their view an image of the kingdom of Christ. The Psalmist, therefore, says in the first place, that the tribes or families of God shall come to Jerusalem; and then he immediately adds, that there the seat of judgment is erected, on which he and his posterity will sit. The reason why it was the will of God that there should be only one temple and one altar was, that the people might not fall away to various superstitions. David therefore here declares that this place was appointed by God's own mouth, that all the families of God, or the twelve tribes, might there assemble from all quarters. To express more plainly how important it was, for this form of God's worship to be preserved pure and complete, he says that it *was for a testimony* The noun employed comes from the verb עוד, *ud,* which signifies *to bear witness,* or *to covenant.* Now by the word in this place is denoted a mutual declaration or agreement between God and the people. When the tribes shall come thither, says the Prophet substantially, it will not be at random,

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Walford translates —"According to the institution of Israel." Phillips adopts a similar rendering, which he supports by the following: note: — "עדות, *testimony,* and thence *a statute* or *law.* Amyraldus says — 'Quacunque re Deus voluntatem suam significet, id Dei testimonium solet appellari.' The particle כ should be understood as prefixed to this word. The statute spoken of here is that which is found in Exodus 23:17, and Deuteronomy 16:16, enjoining the tribes of Israel to assemble together before the Lord at the three great feasts. The place of their assembling was that which God chose for the residence of the ark, which was first at Shiloh, and afterwards at Jerusalem." Bishop Horne, and French and Skinner read — "According to the testimony given unto Israel," which brings out exactly the same meaning — testimony denoting, as they explain it, the injunction given to the Israelites in that passage in Deuteronomy quoted above.

because their fancy thus leads them, but because God by his own mouth invites them. The amount therefore is, that the holy assemblies which shall be kept at Jerusalem will not be vain and unprofitable, since God has made a covenant with his people, determining and appointing that place for his service. Whence we learn, that in judging of the true temple of God, it is necessary to take into account the doctrine taught. With respect to the time in which David lived, as God had adopted the Jewish people, and as it was his will that they should be employed in the external worship of his name, he prescribed to them a rule from which it was unlawful for them to deviate. Thus when the faithful assembled on mount Zion, it was not foolishness or inconsiderate zeal, or the impulse of their own minds, which brought them thither, as if they resembled those men whom we daily see inventing for themselves, out of their own heads, numberless kinds of divine worship; but they were led thither by the command of God, that they might worship him on mount Zion, by which word the Prophet intimates, that all other temples are unholy, and all other religions perverse and corrupt, because they do not correspond with the rule laid down in God's word. He next subjoins the end of this contract or covenant, which was *that the name of God might be praised.* And, indeed, as to yield to God the glory of all good things is the end of our adoption, so it is the end of all our actions.

5. *For there were set thrones for judgment.* He means, that the throne of the kingdom was fixed or established at Jerusalem, or that there it had its permanent seat. Among that people some order of judgments had always existed; these, however, had formerly been in an unsettled state, and frequently changed, but God at length ordained, in the person of David, a new government which should flow in a continual course; for it was his will that the children of David should succeed their father in this royal dignity from age to age until the coming of Christ. The Prophet has a little before spoken of the Temple and the priesthood; and now he affirms, that this kingdom, which God had erected, will be firm and stable; in order to distinguish it from all the other kingdoms of the world, which are not only temporary, but also frail and subject to a variety of changes. This everlastingness of the kingdom has been expressly confirmed by other Prophets in various parts of their' writings, and not without cause; for the object was, to teach the faithful that God would be the guardian of their welfare only upon the supposition of their remaining under the protection and defense of David, and that, therefore, if they desired to continue in safety and to prosper, they should not make for themselves new kings at their own pleasure, but should live quietly under that kind of government which God had set up among them. The repetition of the word *throne* is emphatic. There, says the Psalmist, the throne of judgment and equity is erected. Then he adds, *the throne of the house of David;* for it was the will of God that the right and prerogative of reigning should continue in

David's posterity, until the true everlastingness of this kingdom should be manifested in the person of Christ.

Psalm 122:6-9

6. Pray ye for the peace of Jerusalem: may those who love thee prosper **7.** Peace be within thy bulwarks [511] prosperity [512] within thy towers! **8.** For the sake of my brethren and neighbors, I will now say, Peace be within thee! **9.** Because of the house of Jehovah our God, I will seek thy good.

6. *Pray ye for the peace of Jerusalem.* David now exhorts all the devout worshippers of God to make supplication for the prosperity of the holy city. The more effectually to stir them up to such exercise, he promises that, in this way the divine blessing will descend upon them. The reason why he was so deeply concerned about the prosperity of Jerusalem was, as we have formerly stated — and he again repeats the same thing at the end of the Psalm—because the welfare of the whole Church was inseparably connected with that kingdom and priesthood. Now as each of us in particular, were the whole Church to be involved in ruin, must *necessarily* perish miserably, it is not surprising to find David *recommending to* all the children of God to cultivate this anxious concern about the Church. If we would order our prayers aright, let us always begin with pleading that the Lord would be pleased to preserve this sacred community. Whoever, confining his attention to his own personal advantage, is indifferent about the common weal, he not only gives evidence that he is destitute of all true feeling of godliness, but in vain desires his own prosperity, and will profit nothing by his prayers, since he does not observe the due order. [513] Similar is the drift of the promise which is added immediately after: *They shall prosper that love thee;* which, however, may be read in the form of a wish, *May those who love thee prosper* But the sense in either case is almost the same. Farther, although the Hebrew verb שלה, *shalah,* which the Prophet here uses, signifies *to live in quietness* or *peace,* yet as the Hebrew noun for *peace,* from which it is derived, is employed by him generally for a joyful and happy condition, I have no doubt that he here announces in general to all the godly who

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"*Within thy walls.* Josephus tells us, that there were at Jerusalem *three* ranges of walls surrounding the city. The sense of the passage is, 'May no enemy approach even to thy out-works to disturb thy prosperity'" — *Warner.*

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"Ou, abondance." — *Fr marg.* "Or, abundance."

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"Et ne proufiter arien par ses prieres, d'autant qu'il n'observe point l'ordre legitime " — *Fr.*

have the well being of the Church near their heart, that they shall enjoy the blessing of God and a prosperous life. This sentence frequently occurs in the Prophecies of Isaiah, from the 54th chapter to the end of the book (Isaiah 54-66). Hence we learn that the curse of God rests upon all such as afflict the Church, or plot and endeavor by any kind of mischief to accomplish its destruction.

7. *Peace be within thy bulwarks,* etc. The two clauses express the same sentiment, and, therefore, the meaning of the first is gathered from the second. The term *peace* signifies nothing else than prosperity. The noun שלוה, *shalvah,* in the second clause, sometimes signifies *rest,* but it is more frequently taken for *abundance* or *prosperity* On this account I have translated the noun בחילך*, bechelech, within thy bulwark* [514] I do not find fault with others who have translated it *a ditch* or *outward wall;* but the word *bulwark* agrees better with the word *towers,* which occurs at the close of the verse. The amount is, that David prays for the prosperity of the Church through its whole extent. Moreover, it is to be noticed, that when he offers supplication for its external prosperity, it is not to be understood as implying that he was unconcerned about its internal state or spiritual well being; but under the similitude of *walls,* [515] he wishes that on all sides the blessing of God may environ and fortify the holy city.

8. *For the sake of my brethren and neighbors.* He specifies two causes on account of which he felt a care about the Church, for the purpose of stirring up, by his example, all the faithful to exercise the same care. These words, however, seem to contain a tacit contrast. Among the wicked and malicious he might be the object of suspicion, or, at least, he was in danger of being slandered; as if, in commending Jerusalem, he had rather an eye to his own particular advantage than to the public welfare. In order, therefore, to remove all ground for objecting, that in thus speaking he was craftily endeavoring to establish his own kingdom, he protests, that he is not influenced by personal considerations, but by a concern for the whole Church, which he embraced with a sincere affection of heart. I will speak, says he, O Jerusalem! of thy peace, not because it will be profitable for me or mine, but because thy prosperity shall extend itself to all the children of God; for under the term *brethren* he doubtless comprehends all believers that he did so, because the worship of God so far from remaining entire

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Calvin's meaning is, that as the nouns *peace* and *prosperity* have a corresponding signification, he was of opinion, that there existed a similar correspondence between the other two nouns.

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The Latin copy here reads, "sed ad mores alludens;" but *mores* is evidently a typographical error for *muros* The French version has "mais sous ceste similitude *des murs* "

would go to ruin unless Jerusalem continued standing. If then the salvation of our brethren is regarded by us as an object of importance, if religion is with us a matter of heart-work, we ought, at the same time, as much as in us lies, to *take* an interest in the prosperity of the Church. Whence it follows, that such as are indifferent about her condition, are no less cruel than impious; for if she is "the pillar and foundation of truth," the inevitable consequence of her destruction must be the extinction of true piety. And if the body is destroyed, how can each of the members fail to be involved in destruction? Farther, this passage teaches us, that the Church is not an empty title, but must be sought for where the true religion prevails. Whence it appears, how foolish the Papists are, who, notwithstanding their having rejected and overthrown the doctrine of the Gospel, yet mightily boast of the name of the Church.

9. *Because of the house of Jehovah our God, etc.* In this verse he adds a second reason why he cared for the Church — that he did so, because the worship of God so far from remaining entire would go to ruin unless Jerusalem continued standing. If then the salvation of our brethren is regarded by us as an object of importance, if religion is with us a matter of heart-work, we ought, at the same time, as much as in us lies, to take an interest in the prosperity of the Church. Whence it follows, that such are indifferent about her condition, are no less cruel than impious; for if she is "the pillar and foundation of truth," the inevitable consequence of her destruction must be the extinction of true piety. And if the body is destroyed, how can each of the members fail to be involved in destruction? Farther, this passage teaches us that the Church is not an empty title, but must be sought for where the true religion prevails. Whence it appears, how foolish the Papists are, who, notwithstanding their having rejected and overthrown the doctrine of the Gospel, yet mightily boast of the name of the Church.

Psalm 123

PSALM 123

In this Psalm, the faithful oppressed with the cruel tyranny of their enemies, beseech God to deliver them, there being no other source of hope left for them except in his protection.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 123:1-4

1. I lift up my eyes to thee, who dwellest in the heavens. **2.** Behold! as the eyes of servants look [516] to the hand of their roadsters; as the eyes of a handmaid look to the hand of her mistress, so do our eyes to Jehovah our God, until he have mercy upon us. **3.** Have mercy upon us O Jehovah have mercy upon us; for we are greatly cloyed with reproach. **4.** Our soul is in itself greatly cloyed with the mockery of men who are rich, and with the contempt of the proud.

1. *I lift my eyes to thee, who dwellest in the heavens.* It is uncertain at what time, or even by what Prophet, this Psalm was composed. I do not think it probable that David was its author; because, when he bewails the persecutions which he suffered in the time of Saul, it is usual with him to inter-pose some particular references to himself. My opinion, then, rather is, that this form of prayer was composed for all the godly by some Prophet, either when the Jews were captives in Babylon, or when Antiochus Epiphanes exercised towards them the most relentless cruelty. Be this as it

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"Look" is a supplement taken from the French version.

may, the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration the Prophet delivered it to the people, calls upon us to have recourse to God, when — ever wicked men unrighteously and proudly persecute, not one or two of the faithful only, but the whole body of the Church. Moreover, God is here expressly called *the God who dwelleth in the heavens,* not simply to teach his people to estimate the divine power as it deserves, but also that, when no hope of aid is left for them on earth, yea rather, when their condition is desperate, just as if they were laid in the grave, or as if they were lost in a labyrinth, they should then remember that the power of God remains in heaven in unimpaired and infinite perfection. Thus these words seem to contain a tacit contrast between the troubled and confused state of this world and God's heavenly kingdom, from whence he so manages and governs all things, that whenever it pleases him, he calms all the agitations of the world, comes to the rescue of the desperate and the despairing, restores light by dispelling darkness, and raises up such as were cast down and laid prostrate on the ground. This the Prophet confirms by the verb *lift up;* which intimates, that although all worldly resources fail us, we must raise our eyes upward to heaven, where God remains unchangeably the same, despite the mad impetuosity of men in turning all things here below upside down.

2. *Behold as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters.* This similitude is very suitable to the present case. It implies that without the protection of God true believers have no comfort, are completely disarmed and exposed to all manner of wrongs, have neither strength nor courage to resist; in short, that their safety depends entirely upon aid derived from another. We know how shamefully servants were treated in ancient times, and what reproaches might be cast upon them, whilst yet they durst not move a finger to repel the outrage. Being therefore deprived of all means of defending themselves, the only thing which remained for them to do was, what is here stated, to crave the protection of their masters. The same explanation is equally applicable to the case of *handmaids* Their condition was indeed shameful and degrading; but there is no reason why we should be ashamed of, or offended at being compared to slaves, provided God is our defender, and takes our life under his guardianship; God, I say, who purposely disarms us and strips us of all worldly aid, that we may learn to rely upon his grace, and to be contented 'with it alone. It having been anciently a capital crime for bond-men to carry a sword or any other weapon about them, and as they were exposed to injuries of every description, their masters were wont to defend them with so much the more spirit, when any one causelessly did them violence. Nor can it be doubted that God, when he sees us placing an exclusive dependence upon his protection, and renouncing all confidence in our own resources, will as our defender encounter, and shield us from all the molestation that shall be offered to us. It is, however, certain that we have here properly the description of a period in which the people of God were reduced to a state of extreme necessity, and brought even to

the brink of despair. As to the word *hand,* it is very well known to be put for *help.* [517]

3. *Have mercy upon us, O Jehovah! etc.* The Psalmist prosecutes and confirms the preceding doctrine. He had said that the godly, finding themselves utterly broken in spirit and cast down, intently directed their eyes to the hand of God: now he adds that they are filled with reproach. From this we learn that the wicked not only assaulted them by such ways of violence as suggested themselves to their minds, but that by their mockery they as it were trampled under foot the children of God. The repetition of the prayer, *Have mercy upon us,* which is a sign of vehement and ardent desire, indicates that they were reduced to the last degree of misery. When insult is added to wrongs, there is nothing which inflicts a deeper wound upon well constituted minds. The Prophet therefore complains chiefly of that, as if it were the consummation of all calamities. He says that *rich and proud men* treated the Church with insolent triumph; for it commonly happens that those who are elevated hi the world, look down with contempt upon the people of God. The lustre of their he. hour and power dazzles their eyes, so that they make no account of God's spiritual kingdom: yea, the more the wicked prosper and are smiled on by fortune, to the greater extent does their pride swell, and the more violently does it throw off its foam. This passage teaches us, that it is no new thing for the Church to be held in contempt by the children of this world who abound in riches. The epithet *proud* is justly applied to the same persons who are described as *rich;* for wealth engenders pride of heart. Farther, as we see that in old time the Church of God was covered with reproaches, and pointed at with the finger of scorn, we ought not to be discouraged if the world despise us, nor should we allow our faith to be shaken by the wicked when they assault us with their scoffs, yea, even defame us with their injurious and insulting language. We must always bear in mind what is here recorded, that the heart not of one man only, or of a few, but of the whole Church, was filled not merely with the violence, cruelty, craft, and other evil doings of the wicked, but also with reproaches and mockery. It is also to be remembered, that all the loftiness and pride existing in the world are here represented as in opposition to the Church, so that she is accounted as nothing better than "the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things," as the Apostle Paul

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"Unto *the hand of their masters* — if we retain the word *hand,* it must be taken in the well-known sense which it sometimes bears of *side* or *quarter:* and the original word is used (Exodus 2:5) in the same sense. The phrase will then simply mean, that the eyes of servants look towards their masters, and this agrees with — so *our eyes wait upon the Lord.* But the Hebrew word also signifies *power,* (as in Deuteronomy 32:36,) which may very well be substituted for. *hand* in this place, the notion being that servants when they are in danger or in distress look to the power of their masters for assistance; and in general expect from them subsistence and *defense.*" — *Cresswell.*

declares in 1 Corinthians. 4:13. When the same thing happens to us at the present day, let us leave the wicked to swell with their pride until they burst; and let it suffice us to know, that we are notwithstanding precious in the sight of God. By the verb *cloy,* especially as it is emphatically repeated, the Prophet intended to express a long continued oppression, which filled the hearts of the godly with weariness and sorrow. How necessary the lesson taught in this text is in our own day, it requires no lengthened discussion to demonstrate. We see the Church destitute of all worldly protection, and lying under the feet of her enemies, who abound in riches, and are armed with dreadful power. We see the Papists boldly rising up, and with all their might pouring forth their mockeries against us and the whole service of God. On the other hand, there are mingled amongst us, and flying about everywhere, Epicureans, who deride our simplicity. There are also many giants, who overwhelm us with reproaches; and this baseness has lasted from the time that the Gospel began to emerge from the corruption's of Popery even to the present day. What then remains to be done, but that, finding ourselves environed with darkness on all sides, we seek the light of life in heaven? and that our soul, although it may be filled to satiety with all kinds of reproaches, breathe forth prayers to God for deliverance with the importunity of the famished?

Psalm 124

PSALM 124

The Church having been providentially delivered from extreme peril, David exhorts true believers to thanksgiving, and teaches them by this memorable example, that their safety depends solely upon the grace and power of God.

A Song of Degrees of David.

Psalm 124:1-5

1. But for Jehovah, who was on our side, may Israel now say; **2.** But for Jehovah who was on our side, when men rose up against us; **3.** They had then swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us; **4.** The waters had then overwhelmed us, the torrent had gone over our soul: **5.** The proud waters [518] had then gone over our soul.

1. *But for Jehovah, who was on our side.* Some expositors think that this Psalm describes the very sad and calamitous condition of the Church when the, residue of the people were carried away into Babylon. This opinion is, however, without any good foundation for the complaints made, apply with equal propriety to the persecutions which the Church suffered under the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is another objection to this

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"Alors les eaux enfiees et impetueuses fussent," etc. — *Fr.* "*The* swollen and impetuous waters had then," etc. The epithet *proud* is applied to the waves of the sea in Job 38:11.

interpretation, that the Psalm bears in its inscription the name of David, and historically recounts the deliverance which the people had obtained from extreme danger by the power of God. To get quit of this difficulty they observe, that what had not yet come to pass is described prophetically; but this is a forced conjecture, for the Prophets usually speak of things to come in a different manner. It is more probable that David here sets forth a known history, and exhorts the faithful to reflect upon the divine succor which they had already actually experienced. I dare not, however, limit what is here spoken to David's time. It is indeed true that the heathen nations often waged war against the people of God, armed with such power as to come rushing upon them with the impetuosity of a deluge; but as David does not specify any particular instance, he is not, I conceive, to be understood as celebrating only some one deliverance, but in general all the instances in which God had succoured his Church. The heathen at many different times, as is well known, rose up against the Church, with such mighty hosts, that she was brought almost to the verge of destruction. David then represents as in a mirror the uncertain and changeable condition of the Church, just such as it had been from the beginning, to teach the faithful that its stability had not been owing to its own intrinsic strength, but that it had been preserved by the wonderful grace of God; and to habituate them to call upon God in the midst of dangers.

2. *But for Jehovah who was on our side.* It is not without cause that he twice repeats the same sentence. So long as we are in danger our fear is immoderate; but no sooner are we delivered than we lessen the greatness of our calamity, and Satan, deceiving us by this artifice, leads us to obscure the grace of God. Since then, after having been wonderfully preserved by the Lord, we for the most part devise all sorts of imaginary circumstances, in order to efface from our minds the remembrance of his grace, David, by introducing the people as struck with amazement, purposely dwells upon the amplification of the danger. In these words a bridle is put upon us, to keep us meditating upon our dangers, lest the sense of God's grace should vanish from our minds. The common translation, *Had not the Lord been on our side,* does not sufficiently express David's meaning; for he affirms that the deliverance and the salvation of the people proceeded from nothing else than God's succor, and at the same time shows that this succor was both certain and evident. Two things then are here to be distinctly noticed; first, that the Lord had been at hand to afford aid to his servants, and had taken their part; and secondly, that being already in a desperate condition, they could not by help from any other quarter, or in another manner, have escaped from danger. Thus we are taught, that men then only ascribe the glory of their preservation to God, when they are persuaded of his being so favourably inclined towards them as to defend them and maintain them safe. In the second clause there is extolled in high terms the infinite power of God, of which he had given abundant proof in delivering the people, to

teach us that such a manner of preserving does not belong to man. By the noun אדם, *adam,* which when it is collective signifies men in general, David seems to denote a vast number of enemies. The people of God, as if he had said, had not to contend merely against a few men, or against one nation, but were assailed by almost the whole world; it being abundantly manifest that all mankind were the enemies of the Jews.

When he says, (Psalm 124:3,) *They had swallowed us up alive,* [519] he not only expresses barbarous cruelty, but also disproportion of strength. He describes then in the first place how violent was the onset of the enemy, and secondly, how feeble and inadequate the Jews were to withstand them, since these cruel beasts had no need of swords for slaughter, but without a battle or an effort of strength, could easily devour that unwarlike and defenceless flock.

4. *The waters had then overwhelmed us.* He embellishes by an elegant metaphor the preceding sentiment, comparing the dreadful impetuosity of the enemies of the Jews to an inundation, which swallows up whatever it meets with in its overflowing course. And he continues to preserve the character of a man affrighted. He names *the waters,* next *the torrent,* thirdly, *the proud* or *impetuous waters.* He says, *over us,* and *over our soul,* as if, by presenting the thing to the eye, he intended to strike terror into the people. And certainly this impassioned language ought to have all the effect of a graphic representation, that the faithful might the better feel from what a profound gulf they had been rescued by the hand of God. He only truly attributes his deliverance to God, who acknowledges himself to have been lost before he was delivered. The adverb *them* is here either demonstrative, as if the Psalmist had pointed to the thing with the finger, or it is taken for *long ago.* The former signification is, however, more suitable to the present passage.

Psalm 124:6-8

6. Blessed be Jehovah! who gave us not for a prey to their teeth [520]
7. Our soul has been rescued as a bird from the snare of the fowlers;

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"The metaphor may be taken from famished wild beasts attacking and devouring men, (Comp. 5:5,) or the reference may 'be to the case of a man shut up alive in a sepulcher, (Proverbs 1:12,) and left there to perish, or (Numbers 16:30) swallowed up by an earthquake " — *Cresswell.* "A figurative expression to intimate the savageness of the adversaries, alluding to the practice of many predatory animals of swallowing their victims alive. Such is the well-known habit of many of the predatory kinds of fish." — *Phillips.*

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The Church's escape, be it observed, as appears from verse third, is likened to a rescue from the jaws of a ferocious animal, *which swallows its prey quick,* or *alive.*

the snare has been broken, and we have been delivered [521] **8.** Our help is in the name of Jehovah, who made heaven and earth.

6. *Blessed be Jehovah!* The Psalmist now exhorts the godly to a grateful acknowledgment of the divine goodness, and as it were puts words into their mouth. Here also he shows by another similitude, that it would have been all over with them had not God succoured them; affirming that they were delivered not otherwise than if some one had plucked *the prey from the teeth* of a wild and cruel beast. Of the same import is the third similitude, That they were on all sides entrapped and entangled in the snares of their enemies, even as *little birds* caught in the net he stretched under the hand of the fowler; and that when they were delivered, it was just as if one should set at liberty birds which had been taken. The amount is, that the people of God, feeble, without counsel, and destitute of aid, had not only to deal with blood-thirsty and furious beasts, but were also ensnared by bird-nets and stratagems, so that being greatly inferior to their enemies as well in policy as in open force, they were besieged by many deaths. From this it may be easily gathered that they were miraculously preserved.

8. *Our help is in the name of Jehovah.* David here extends to the state of the Church in all ages that which the faithful had already experienced. As I interpret the verse, he not only gives thanks to God for one benefit, but affirms that the Church cannot continue safe except in so far as she is protected by the hand of God. His object is to animate the children of God with the assured hope, that their life is in perfect safety under the divine guardianship. The contrast between the help of God, and other resources in which the world vainly confides, as we have seen in Psalm 20:7,

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God,"

is to be noticed, that the faithful, purged from all false confidence, may betake themselves exclusively to his succor, and depending upon it, may fearlessly despise whatever Satan and the world may plot against them. The *name of God* is nothing else than God himself; yet it tacitly conveys a significant idea, implying that as he has disclosed to us his grace by his word, we have ready access to him, so that in seeking him we need not go to a distance, or follow long circuitous paths. Nor is it without cause that the Psalmist again honors God with the title of Creator. We know with what disquietude our minds are agitated till they have raised the power of God to its appropriate elevation, that, the whole world being put under, it alone may be pre-eminent; which cannot be the case unless we are persuaded that

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The reader will perceive, that as the imagery goes on it becomes the more beautiful. Pleasing and tender ideas are associated with the escape of an innocent bird from the snares which the art and cruelty of man had contrived, to deprive it of life, or rob it of liberty.

all things are subject to his will. He did not show once and in a moment his power in the creation of the world and then withdraw it, but he continually demonstrates it in the government of the world. Moreover, although all men freely and loudly confess that God is the Creator of heaven and of earth, so that even the most wicked are ashamed to withhold from him the honor of this title, yet no sooner does any terror present itself to us than we are convicted of unbelief in hardly setting any value whatever upon the help which he has to bestow.

Psalm 125

PSALM 125

As the faithful being mingled in this world with the ungodly seem to be exposed to all the ills of life in the same manner as other people, the Prophet, comparing them to Jerusalem, shows that they are defended by an invincible bulwark. And if God at any time suffer them to be plagued by the malice of the wicked, he exhorts them to be of good hope. He however at the same time distinguishes between true and false Israelites, that hypocrites may not apply to themselves what is here said concerning the safety of the righteous.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 125:1-2

1. They who confide in Jehovah "are" as mount Zion, "which" shall not be removed, "but" shall abide for ever. [522] **2.** As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah round about his people, henceforth and for ever.

1. *They who confide in Jehovah are as mount Zion.* The present Psalm differs from the preceding in this — that while in the other it was said that the Church *had been preserved* by the power of God, without any human means, the Holy Spirit, in the one before us, teaches that *in the time to come* she shall always continue in *perfect* safety, because she is defended by the invincible power of God. When the Church is emblematically described

[522] The supplementary words in this verse marked by inverted commas are taken from the French version.

by the situation of the city of Jerusalem, the design of the Prophet is to encourage each of the faithful to believe, that the safety promised in common to all the chosen people belongs to him. But in exhibiting to the eyes a visible image of the Church, he accommodates himself to the rudeness of those who, detained by the dulness of the flesh, still continue settled down in the earth. It ought then, in the first place, to be noticed, that to those who may not sufficiently apprehend by faith the secret protection of God, the mountains which environ Jerusalem are exhibited as a mirror, in which they may see, beyond all doubt, that the Church is as well defended from all perils, as if it were surrounded on all sides with like walls and bulwarks. Moreover, it is profitable to know what I have just now touched upon — that whenever God speaks to all his people in a body, he addresses himself also to each of them in particular. As not a few of the promises are extended generally to the whole body of the Church, so many contemplate them as at a distance, as far removed from them, and will not presume to appropriate them to themselves. The rule here prescribed must therefore be observed, which is, that each apply to himself whatever God promises to his Church in common. Nor does the Psalmist without cause make Jerusalem a representation of the Church, for the sanctuary of God and the ark of the covenant were there.

With respect to the explanation of the words, it is to be observed that the last two verbs of the first verse may be understood in two ways. They may both be governed by Jerusalem as the nominative. But some understand the first verb, לא ימוט al, *lo yimmot, shall not be removed,* only as spoken of Jerusalem and the latter verb, ישב, *yesheb, shall abide,* as referring to the faithful, so that according to this view there is a change of number, which is very common among the Hebrews — the singular number, ישב, *yesheb,* being used instead of the plural, ישבו, *yeshbu.* And certainly the sentence might not improperly be translated thus: *They who trust in Jehovah, as mount Zion shall not be removed, shall dwell for ever,* or *continue steadfast,* for the verb translated *to abide* is taken in this sense. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet, which is, that although the world is subject to so many and so sudden changes as almost to put on a new face every moment, and although the faithful are mingled with and placed in the same external condition as others, yet their safety continues steadfast under the invincible protection of God. Not that they are permitted to dwell undisturbed and at ease; but because their safety being under the guardianship of God is assaulted in vain; at least they can never altogether fall, although they may stumble. But let us notice that the word הבמחים, *habbtechim,* which signifies, *those who hope* or *wait for,* conveys an implicit injunction to steadfastness of faith. Whoever, then, desires to be sustained by the hand of God, let him constantly lean upon it; and whoever would be defended by it, let him patiently repose himself under it. When God suffers us to be often carried hither and thither, or driven about like chaff by the wind, this comes to pass through our own inconstancy — because we prefer fluttering in the air

to fixing our minds on the rock of his help. The similitude employed in the second verse is abundantly plain, teaching us, that as the continuous chain of mountains round about Jerusalem exhibits the appearance of walls, so God encompasses the faithful by his power, to ward off from them all harm. [523] Similar forms of expression are frequently to be met with in the Scriptures' God often promises to be a wall and a fore-wall to his people. But David, or whoever was the author of the psalm, proceeds still farther, showing under the figure of mountains the secret protection with which God defends his own people, to the end that the ignorant and feeble-minded who are still held down to the earth by their own dulness of understanding, aided by the sight of the mountains, may raise their minds upwards to the conception and contemplation of heavenly things.

Psalm 125:3-5

> **3.** For the scepter [524] of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the just, lest the just should put faith their hands to iniquity. **4.** Do good, O Jehovah to the good, and to those who are upright in their hearts. **5.** But those who turn aside into their crooked paths, [525] Jehovah will make them walk with the workers of iniquity. But there shall be peace upon Israel.

3. *For the scepter of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the just.* This is, as it were, a correction of the preceding sentence. The Psalmist had said that the hand of God was extended on all sides to defend his Church. But as we are disposed to draw the divine promises to our own advantage, in the way of interpreting them as securing our exemption from all trouble, we are here warned that the guardianship of God does not secure us from being sometimes exercised with the cross and afflictions, and that therefore the faithful ought not to promise themselves a delicate and easy life in this world, it being enough for them not to be abandoned of God when they stand in need of his help. Their heavenly Father, it is true, loves them most

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From the mountains or hills which surrounded Jerusalem, the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 11:3) represents it under the image of a "cauldron."

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שבט If this word be translated *rod,* then we understand the Psalmist to speak of *the assaults* of the wicked upon the righteous; but as *the lot of the righteous* evidently denotes their estates, possessions, etc., שבט consequently seems employed as the emblem of dominion, i.e. scepter. This notion of שבט comports better with that of גורל[the word for *the lot of*]; and so the sense of the whole expression is, that the wicked shall not exercise dominion permanently over the righteous; the scepter of the wicked *shall not rest,*" etc. — *Phillips.*

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"Ou, se fourvoyent en leurs chemins obliques, ou, font fourvoyer." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, go astray in their crooked paths, or cause to go astray."

tenderly, but he will have them awakened by the cross, lest they should give themselves too much to the pleasures of the flesh. If, therefore, we embrace this doctrine, although we may happen to be oppressed by the tyranny of the wicked, we will wait patiently till God either break their scepter, or shake it out of their hands. It is a sore temptation, I admit, to see the wicked exercising cruelty in the heritage of the Lord, and the faithful lying extended beneath their feet; but as God does not without just reason thus humble his people, they should comfort themselves from the consideration suggested in the text.

The reason is added why God will not suffer the wicked always to triumph over the righteous — namely, lest the just, overcome by temptation, abandon themselves wholly to sinning, a reason which ought to be carefully marked. Hence we gather that God, from his willingness to bear with our weakness, moderates our adversities. Although, then, we may not possess in ourselves a sufficient amount of fortitude and constancy to enable us to persevere in our duty for a single moment, yet let this sentiment be present to our minds, That God will take care that, broken as we may be by afflictions, we shall not forsake his service. Were he even to afflict us without intermission during the whole course of our life, the cross is doubtless always profitable to us; for we see how indomitable is the rebellion of our flesh, and with what vehement impetuosity it is continually boiling up; yea, rather how it ceases not to kick amidst the very afflictions by which it ought to be reduced to obedience. So much the more necessary then is this lesson of instruction — that the Lord seasonably sets limits to our temptations, because he knows that we are too feeble to withstand them. Nor does the Prophet merely say, that the weak are in danger of failing, but that even the just, who serve God in truth and from the heart, and who are devoted to the cultivation of a holy life, are in danger of sinking under the load. However vigorous, then, the fear of God may be in our hearts, let us remember that we are not endowed with adequate strength for enduring to the end, unless the Lord have a regard to our infirmity. If the Holy Spirit makes this declaration concerning the best champions, what will be the case as to tyroes, who are as yet but imperfectly trained for the combat? It is also proper to mark the form of speech employed — *lest they stretch forth their hands;* by which it is intimated that the assaults of temptations are so violent, that the hands of the just, which were before, as we may say, bound, and whose motions were also framed and regulated according to the will of God, being now, as it were, let loose, apply themselves to the commission of sin without restraint.

4. *Do good, O Jehovah to the good.* The Prophet has already promised to all the faithful the seasonable help of God; but still he has recourse to prayer, and that not without cause; for although faith may sustain us, yet, as our carnal sense and reason are wavering, we ought to mingle prayers for our confirmation. Let us then follow this rule of the Prophet, who, having exhorted all the faithful to cherish confidence, teaches them at the same time,

that instead of sitting in listless inactivity, they should betake themselves to God, earnestly beseeching him by prayer, for what he has bidden them hope for by his word. And assuredly the importance of using this remedy is apparent from the consideration, that amidst the darkness of afflictions, the aid of God is not discerned, but that he rather seems to make no difference between the righteous and the wicked. Nor does the Psalmist simply pray that God would deal graciously with the good, he also defines the goodness by which they are characterized, as what proceeds from sincere affection of heart. It would not be enough for the children of God to abstain from all wrong-doing, were they not distinguished by corresponding integrity of heart, or rather did it not govern their whole life.

5. *But those who turn aside into their crooked paths, etc.* As the participle המטים, *hammattim,* is in the conjugation *Hiphil,* it should, according to the rules of grammar, be rather translated in an active sense — *those who cause to turn aside;* but it being no uncommon thing for verbs in that conjugation to be taken in a neuter sense, the, version which I have followed is probably the correct one. Still, as the active signification is not less appropriate, I would leave the reader freely to exercise his own judgment. The meaning is, that God does not always connive at the wickedness of those who, while boasting of a hollow and counterfeit profession, wander hither and thither according to their own lust, or even corrupt the simple, and draw them into the same excess of sinning with themselves. I have no doubt that the Psalmist here speaks of hypocrites, who are so hardened by temporary impunity, as to claim to themselves a place among the holiest of men, because God exercises forbearance towards them. Not only do we see the good mingled with the bad in the world, but we also behold on the barn-floor of the Lord the wheat lying hidden under the chaff and refuse. In this dubious and confused state of matters, the bad are elated with pride, as if they were among the best of God's servants. We ought therefore to pray that God would drag them into the light, and, with the workers of iniquity, thrust them down into the punishment which they have deserved. The consequence is that *peace,* which the Prophet desires may be the privilege of Israel. He does not speak generally of all the race of Abraham, according to the flesh; he rather wishes that the Church of God may be purged of hypocrites, who occupy a place in her, until God lift up his hand to judgment. On this account I have said, that the peace of the Church springs from this — that; God, while executing his just vengeance upon reigned and counterfeit Israelites, who rend and tear in pieces her bowels, gathers together the upright in heart, and openly shows by his blessing the fatherly love which he bears towards them.

Psalm 126

PSALM 126

This Psalm consists of three parts. First, the Prophet exhorts the faithful, who had returned from the captivity, to gratitude, and highly extols the grace displayed in their deliverance, to show them, beyond all doubt, that they were brought back to their own country by the hand of God, and not by a fortuitous conjuncture of circumstances, or by the favor of men. In the second part a prayer is added, that God would perfect his own work which he had begun. Finally, although there was no immediate prospect of a full restoration, yet he mitigates the feeling of weariness which delay might occasion, and assures them, that though at present the seed was watered with tears, the harvest would be joyous.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 126:1-3

1. When Jehovah brought back the captivity [526] of Zion, we were like those that dream. **2.** Now shall our mouth be filled [527] with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing: now shall they say [528] among the

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The abstract noun is put for the concrete, "the captivity of Zion" for "the captives of Zion" — those who were led away captive from Zion. Accordingly, in the French version, Calvin uses the concrete —"Les captifs;" —"The captives."

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"Ou, alors nostre bouche a este remplie." — Fr. *marg.* "Or, then our mouth was filled."

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"Ou, alors on disoit." — Fr. *marg.* "Or, then they said."

heathen, Jehovah hath done great things for them. **3.** Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we have been made glad.

1. *When Jehovah brought back the captivity of Zion, etc.* It is unnatural and forced to suppose, with some expositors, that this is a prediction of what was to come. For my part I have no doubt that the Psalm was composed upon the return of the Jewish people from the Babylonish captivity; and for this reason I have translated the verb בשוב, *beshub,* in the past tense. Now, whoever was the author of it, [529] whether one of the Levites or one of the Prophets, he affirms that the manner of their deliverance was too wonderful to be attributed to fortune, in order to lead the faithful to the conclusion that the prophecy of Jeremiah, which had assigned seventy years as the term of the captivity, was truly fulfilled. (Jeremiah 25:12, and Jeremiah 29:10.) By the verb *dream,* which expresses the astonishing character of the event, he teaches us that there is no room left for ingratitude. As often as God works by ordinary means, men, through the malignity of their natures, usually exercise their ingenuity in devising various causes of the deliverance wrought, in order to darken the grace of God. But the return of the Jewish people from the Babylonish captivity, having been a miracle of such splendor as was sufficient to swallow up and confound all the thoughts of men, it compels us to own that it was a signal work of God. This is the reason why the Prophet compares this deliverance to a dream. "So far," he materially says, "is any mind from comprehending this unparalleled benefit of God, that the bare thinking upon it transports us with amazement, as if it were a dream, and not an event which had already taken place. What impiety, then, will it be, not to acknowledge the author of it." Moreover, he does not mean that the faithful were so dull of understanding as not to perceive that they were delivered by the hand of God, but only that, judging according to carnal sense and reason, they were struck with astonishment; and he was apprehensive lest, in reasoning with themselves about that redemption, as about an ordinary thing, they should make less account of the power of God than it became them to do. The noun שיבת, *shibath,* translated *captivity,* might be rendered *bringing back,* as some do, which would give greater elegance to the expression of the Psalmist, as in that case שיבת would be a noun of the same verb which is used in the beginning of the verse. [530] As, however, this makes little difference in regard to the sense, it is enough to have noticed it to my readers in passing.

2. *Now shall our mouth be filled with laughter.* The adverb of time, אז, *az,* is commonly translated *then;* but as the verbs are in the future tense, I have thought that it might not be improper to translate tires — grow *shall our*

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Grotius and Amyraldus suppose that it was compiled by Ezra, after the Jews had begun to return from Babylon.

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mouth be filled, and *now shall they say.* If, however, we admit what some Hebrew Doctors affirm, that the force of this particle is to change the future tense into the past, the adverb *then* will be the appropriate word. The design of the Prophet is not at all obscure. He would have the people so to rejoice on account of their return, as not to bury in forgetfulness the grace of God. He therefore describes no ordinary rejoicing, but such as so fills their minds as to constrain them to break forth into extravagance of gesture and of voice. At the same time he intimates that there was good ground for this joy, in which it became the children of God to indulge, on account of their return to their own land. As there was at that period nothing more wretched than for them to live in captivity, in which they were in a manner dispossessed of the inheritance God had promised them; so there was nothing which ought to have been more desirable to them than to be restored. Their restoration to their own country having been therefore a proof of their renewed adoption by God, it is not surprising to find the Prophet asserting that their mouth was filled with laughter, and their tongue with exultation. With a similar joy does it become us at the present day to exult when God gathers together his Church and it is an undoubted evidence that we are steel-hearted, if her miserable dispersion does not produce in our minds grief and lamentation. The Prophet proceeds farther, declaring that this miracle was seen even by the blind; for in that age of the world, as is well known, the heathen were wandering in darkness like blind men, no knowledge of God having shone upon them; and yet God's power and operation were so conspicuous in that event, that they burst forth into the open acknowledgment *that God had done great things for his people.* So much the more shame-fill then was the indifference of the Jews to be accounted, if they did not freely and loudly celebrate God's grace, which had acquired so much renown among the unbelieving. The form of speech employed is also to be marked, which forcibly expresses the idea intended to be conveyed, that the mighty power of God in this deliverance was known by the Gentiles. In the following verse the Prophet repeats in his own person, and in that of the Church, the words uttered by the heathen in the last member of the preceding verse. Let us at least, as if he had said, put forth a confession corresponding to that which God has extorted from the unbelieving Gentiles. When he adds *that they were glad,* there is an implied antithesis between this fresh joy and the long continued sorrow with which they were afflicted in their captivity, he

That is, it would be derived from שוב, *shrub, he returned;* whereas if it is rendered *captivity,* it is derived from שבה, *shabah, he led captive.* The English Bible translators seem to have been uncertain whether שיבת, *shibath,* is to be considered as derived from the first of these verbs or from the second, their reading in the text being, "turned back our captivity," and their marginal rendering being, "returned the returning." There is a play upon the words, שוב, "turn," and שיבת, "captivity." It is to be observed that the concluding part of the above sentence in the text is from Calvin's French Commentary. There is nothing to represent it in the Latin Version.

expressly declares that joy was restored to them, to enable them the better to estimate the dismal condition from which they had been extricated.

Psalm 126:4-6

4. O Jehovah! bring back our captivity, [531] as rivers in the south. [532]
5. They who sow in tears shall reap in joy. **6.** Going forth, he shall go and weep, carrying the price of the seed: coming, he shall return with rejoicing, carrying his sheaves with him.

4. *O Jehovah! bring back our captivity.* The second part of the Psalm, as I have said, contains a prayer that God would gather together the residue of the captives. The Holy Spirit endited this form of prayer for the Jews who were already come home to their own country, that they might not forget their poor brethren who were still in exile. All the Jews, no doubt, had a door opened to them, and perfect liberty granted them, to come out of the land of their captivity, but the number of those who partook of this benefit was small when compared with the vast multitude of the people. Some were kept from returning by fear, and others by sloth and want of courage, on seeing such perils at hand as they apprehended they had not power to overcome, choosing rather to lie torpid in their own filthiness, than to undertake the hardship of the journey. It is probable also that many of them preferred their present ease and comfort to eternal salvation. What the Prophet Isaiah had foretold was no doubt fulfilled, (Isaiah 10:22,). That although the people were in number as the sand of the sea, yet only a remnant of them should be saved. Since, then, many openly refused the benefit when it was offered them, and as there were not; wanting many difficulties and impediments to be encountered by those who availed themselves of this liberty granted them by the good pleasure of the king, [533] so that it was only a few of sounder

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Walford reads, "Bring back all our captives, O Jehovah!" "The word *all,*" says he, "is not in the Hebrew text, but is necessary to the sense; for some had returned, and others were returning or about to return." Some of the captive Jews came back to their own land in the reign of Cyrus, others in the reign of Darius, and the rest in the reign of Xerxes. Such therefore as had been the first to return, may be supposed to pray in these words for the restoration of their brethren.

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Phillips translates *in the dry place.* "The noun נגב," says he, "in its usual acceptation, signifies *south;* but its primary sense is that *of dryness,* in which it is used in Joshua 15:19; Judges 1:15; where הנגב ארץ is opposed to מום גלת*, springs of water.*" In the Septuagint the reading is, like the torrents m the parched land.' Street has —

"Jehovah hath restored us from our captivity,
As he restoreth *the torrents in the dry country."*

French and Skinner in like manner read "in a thirsty land."

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"Precaria libertas." — *Lat.* "Ceste liberte obtenue d'eux par le bon plaisir du Roy." — Fr.

judgment and of a more intrepid heart, who dared to move a foot — and even they with reluctance, — it is no wonder that the Prophet requires the Church still to make supplication to God for the bringing back of the captivity. Along with this, the state of those who had already returned is also to be noted; for their land being in the possession of strangers, who were all their inveterate and sworn enemies, they were no less captives in their own country than among the Babylonians. It was therefore necessary, on a twofold account, that the Church should earnestly beseech God to gather together such as were dispersed; first, that he would give courage to the timid, awaken the torpid, cause the besotted to forget their pleasures, and stretch forth his hand to be a guide to all; and, secondly, that he would settle the body of the people who had returned in liberty and ease.

As to the similitude which follows, many think the sense to be, that the bringing back of their captivity prayed for would be as grateful to them as if water should flow through a desert. [534] We know how grievous and painful a thing it is to travel in a hot country through and sands. The *south,* is taken for the wilderness, because the region on the south of Judea was waste and almost uninhabitable. Yet it seems to me more just to say, that the grace of God is here magnified, and still more enlarged by the Prophet's comparing it to a miracle. "Although it is a difficult matter," he substantially says, "for the dispersed remnant to be again united into one body, yet God, if he please, can do this, just as he can cause rivers of water to flow through a parched desert." He, at the same time, alludes to the road intervening between Judea and Babylon, as appears from the situation of the two countries. Thus the words will not require any supplement, the meaning being simply this, that the bringing back of their captivity would be as if a river should run through a barren and and country. And, certainly, to open up a way for the people who, so to speak, were swallowed up in a deep gulf, was as if a course had been opened up for irrigating waters to flow through a desert.

5. *They who sow in tears shall reap in joy.* This sentence, in my opinion, ought not less to be extended to the future than understood of the past. The carrying away of the Jews into Babylon was to them as a seed-time; [535] God having, by the prophecy of Jeremiah, encouraged them to hope for the harvest. Still, it was not without very great heaviness and anguish of

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Walford reads, "like the streams of the south." — "In the southern districts of Palestine and Arabia," says he, "the heat is so vehement during some seasons as to dry up the rivers completely, and parch the soil. When rains come, the torrents again flow, and the soil is refreshed and verdant; — a delightful image of the joy experienced by captives on returning to their native land."

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"Fuit Judteis sun migratio sationis instar." — *Lat.* "Le tranaport des Juifs en Babvlone leur a este comme un temps de semence " — Fr

heart that they were dragged into such long continued captivity. It was, as if in the time of dearth the poor husbandman, who already experiences the gnawings of hunger, were compelled to abridge himself of his ordinary food in order to provide for the coming year; and although this is a hard and distressing case, he is yet moved to sow from the hope of the harvest. The Jews then, when led into captivity, were, doubtless, no less sorrowful than he who, in the time of scarcity, casts the precious seed into the ground; but afterwards a joyful harvest followed, when they were delivered; for the Lord restored to them gladness, like that which is experienced in a most abundant increase. [536] I, however, also conceive that the Prophet exhorts the faithful to patience in reference to the future. The restoration of the Church was not yet completed, and even, for the two reasons which I have a little before specified, that period was evidently the time of sowing. Although the edict of the king frankly invited the Jews to return, yet only a few of many returned, gradually and fearfully, in small companies. Moreover, those who did so were unkindly and harshly welcomed by their neighbors, and to so much trouble were they subjected that their former bondage appeared equally tolerable. Whence we gather, that they had still to suffer — the full time of harvest, not having yet arrived; and, therefore, the Prophet, not without cause, exhorts them strenuously to labor, and to persevere in the midst of continual difficulties without fainting, until they found themselves placed in more favorable circumstances. With respect to the words, some translate. משך*, meshech, a price;* and others, *a basket* or *seed vessel.* [537] For the latter translation there is no foundation. Those who translate *price* quote in support of their version that passage in the book of Job 28:18 “The price

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The word *then* may be prefixed to this verse: then, ie., when thou hast brought back the captives, they that sowed in tears shall reap in joy.” — *Cresswell.*

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“משך. This word has been variously interpreted; for as it is found only here and in Job 28:18, its signification is uncertain. In the Syriac we have it rendered by a word which signifies *a skin* and hence J. D. Michaelis proposes to take משך for *a sack* made of skin. So Aben Ezra thinks ‘that it is the name of a measure in which there is seed.’ The author of Mendlessohn’s Beor, approves of this comment, and observes, that משך was a small cup made of skin.’ The root is משך, to draw out.’ We should, however, adhere as strictly to the meaning of the root if we render the expression as Gesenius has done, by the *drawing of the seed,* i.e., the strewing or sowing of the seed. I think, however, Michaelis’s rendering is the best, as fitting with the preceding word גסא; and so we have *carrying* the *sack of seed,* at the end of the first hemistich, which corresponds with *carrying his sheaves* at the end of the second.” — *Phillips.* On the margin of our English Bible it is “seed-basket.” Street reads, “Bearing the vessel with the seed;” Horsley, “He that goeth, and weeping beareth the seed to be drawn forth; French and Skinner, “Bearing seed for his sowing;” Fry, “Sowing his seed,” observing, that משך expresses the action of casting the seed into the ground; and Walford, “Carrying seed for sowing.” “Literally it is,” says Cresswell, “a *drawing forth of seed, i.e.,* as much as the sower, putting his hand into whatever contained the seed, could take out at once. Amos 9:13.”

of wisdom is above rubies." But as the verb משך, *mashach,* from which this noun is derived, signifies *to extend* or *to draw out,* it may perhaps, both here and in that other place, be more fitly taken in its proper signification. In the text quoted from Job it is profound wisdom, and not intellectual acuteness, which is commended, and thus the extending of wisdom, that is to say, a continual course of wisdom, is, from its being deeply grounded, better than pearls. In like manner, in the passage before us, the drawing out of the seed is applied to the husbandmen themselves, implying, that they extend and prolong their life when they sow. If, however, the word *price* is preferred, the sense will be, that when corn is scarce, seed is committed to the ground with tears, because it is precious and costly. This doctrine extends still farther. Our life is, in other parts of Scripture, compared to the seed-time, and as it will often happen that we must sow in tears, it becomes us, lest sorrow should weaken or slacken our diligence, to raise our minds to the hope of the harvest. Besides, let us remember that all the Jews who were carried captives into Babylon did not sow; for as really among them, who had hardened themselves against God and the Prophets, had despised all threatenings, so they lost all hope of returning. Those in whom such despair brooded were consumed in their miseries; but those who were sustained by the promise of God, cherished in their hearts the hope of harvest, although in a time, of extreme scarcity they cast their seed into the ground, as it were, at venture. In order then that joy may succeed our present sorrow, let us learn to apply our minds to the contemplation of the issue which God promises. Thus we shall experience that all true believers have a common interest in this prophecy, That God not only will wipe away tears from their eyes, but that he will also diffuse inconceivable joy through their hearts.

Psalm 127

PSALM 127

This Psalm shows that the order of society, both political and domestic, is maintained solely by the blessing of God, and not by the policy, diligence, or wisdom of men; and that the procreating of children is his peculiar gift.

A Song of Degrees of Solomon.

Psalm 127:1-2

1. [538] Except Jehovah build the house, those who build it labor in vain except Jehovah keep the city the watchman watcheth in vain. **2.** It is in vain for you in hastening to rise early, to go late to rest, to eat the bread of sorrows: for [539] thus will he give sleep to his beloved.

1. *Except Jehovah build the house.* There is no reason why the Jews should deny that this Psalm was composed by Solomon. They think that the letter ל, *lamed,* which we translate of, is equivalent to, *in behalf of Solomon;* which is at variance with common usage, for such a title in all cases designates the author. Accordingly, they absurdly devise a new sense, for which there is no necessity, it being very suitable for Solomon, who was endued with the spirit of wisdom in the affairs of government, to

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"Augustine beautifully applies the language of this Psalm to Christian ministers and pastors, as God's builders and watchmen of his Church. How vain their labors without the grace and power of God!" — Fry.

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For is supplied from the French version.

discourse of things which he knew and had experience about. In affirming that God governs the world and the life of man, he does so for two reasons: First, whatever prosperous event may fall out to men, their ingratitude is instantly manifested by their ascribing it wholly to themselves; and thus God is defrauded of the honor which is his due. Solomon, to correct such a perverse error, declares, that nothing happens prosperously to us except in so far as God blesses our proceedings. Secondly, his purpose was to beat down the foolish presumption of men, who, setting God aside, are not afraid to undertake to do anything, whatever it may be, in exclusive reliance upon their own wisdom and strength. Stripping them, therefore, of that which they groundlessly arrogate to themselves, he exhorts them to modesty and the invocation of God. He does not, however, reject either the labor, the enterprises, or the counsels of men; for it is a praiseworthy virtue diligently to discharge the duties of our office. It is not the will of the Lord that we should be like blocks of wood, or that we should keep our arms folded without doing anything; [540] but that we should apply to use all the talents and advantages which he has conferred upon us. It is indeed true that the greatest part of our labors proceeds from the curse of God; and yet although men had still retained the integrity of their primitive state, God would have had us to be employed, even as we see how Adam was placed in the garden of Eden to dress it. (Genesis 2:15.) Solomon, therefore, does not condemn watchfulness, a thing which God approves; nor yet men's labor, by which when they undertake it willingly, according to the commandment of God, they offer to him all acceptable sacrifice; but lest, blinded by presumption, they should forcibly appropriate to themselves that which belongs to God, he admonishes them that their being busily occupied will profit them nothing, except in so far as God blesses their exertions. By the word *house* he means not only a building of wood or stone, but he comprehends the whole domestic order and government of a family, even as a little after by the word *city* he denotes not only the buildings or enclosure of the walls, but also the general state of the whole commonwealth. There is likewise a synecdoche in the words *builder* and *keeper;* for he intends to say in general that whatever labor, foresight, and skill men may employ in maintaining a family, or in preserving a city, will be to no purpose unless God grant from heaven a prosperous issue to the whole.

It behoves us to remember what I have just now touched upon, that since the minds of men are commonly possessed with such headstrong arrogance as leads them to despise God, and to magnify beyond measure their own means and advantages, nothing is of more importance than to humble them, in order to their being made to perceive that whatever they undertake it shall dissolve into smoke, unless God in the exercise of pure grace cause it to

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"Ou que nous demeurions les bras eroisez sans rien faire." — Fr.

prosper. When philosophers argue concerning the political affairs of a state they ingeniously gather together whatever seems to them to answer their purpose — they acutely point out the means of erecting a commonwealth, and on the other hand the vices by which a well-regulated state is commonly corrupted; in short, they discourse with consummate skill upon everything that is necessary to be known on this subject, except that they omit the principal point — which is, that men, however much they may excel in wisdom and virtue, and whatever may be the undertakings in which they may engage, can effect nothing, unless in so far as God stretches forth his hand to them, or rather makes use of them as his instruments. Which of the philosophers ever acknowledged that a politician is nothing else but an instrument guided by the hand of God? Yea, rather they held that good management on the part of man constituted the chief cause of the happiness of the social body. Now, since mortal men thus rise up with profane boldness to build cities, and to order the state of the whole world, the Holy Spirit justly reproves such madness. Let us then so occupy ourselves, each according to the measure of his ability and the nature of his office, as that at the same time the praise of the success attending our exertions may remain exclusively with God. The partition which many devise — that he who has behaved himself valiantly, while he leaves the half of the praise to God, may take the other half to himself, is deserving of all condemnation. The blessing of God should have the whole share and exclusively hold the throne.

Now, if our terrestrial condition depends entirely upon the good pleasure of God, with what wings shall we fly up into heaven? When a house is planned, or a certain manner of life is chosen — yea, even when laws are enacted and justice administered, all this is nothing else than to creep upon the earth; and yet the Holy Spirit declares, that all our endeavors in this way are fruitless and of no value. So much the less to be borne with, then, is the folly of those who strive to penetrate even into heaven by their own power. Farther, we may gather from this doctrine, that it is not wonderful to find in the present day the state of the world so troubled and confused as it actually is — justice put to flight in cities, the husband and the wife mutually accusing each other, fathers and mothers complaining of their children — in short, all bewailing their own condition. For how few are to be found who, in their vocation, turn to God, and who, being rather inflated with arrogance, do not wickedly exalt themselves? God then justly renders this sad reward to ungrateful men when he is defrauded of his honor. But were all men humbly to submit themselves to the providence of God, there is no doubt that this blessing which Solomon here commends would shed its lustre on all parts of our life, both public and private.

The verb עמל, *amal,* which we have translated *to labor,* signifies not only to employ one's self in something or other, but also to busy one's self even to lassitude and distress. I have said that by the word *keepers* is to

be understood not only those who are appointed to keep watch, but all magistrates and judges. If they are characterized by vigilance, it is the gift of God. There is, however, need of another vigilance — that of God; for unless he keep watch out of heaven no perspicacity of men will be sufficient to guard against dangers.

2. *It is vain for you in hastening to rise early.* Solomon now expresses more plainly that men in vain wear themselves out with toiling, and waste themselves by fasting to acquire riches, since these also are a benefit bestowed only by God. The more effectually to move them, he addresses himself to every man in particular. *It is,* says he, *in vain for you* He particularizes two means which are thought to contribute in an eminent degree to the amassing of riches. It is not surprising to find those growing rich in a short time who spare no exertion, but consume night and day in plying their occupations, and allow themselves only scanty fare from the product of their labor. Solomon, however, affirms that neither living at a small expense, nor diligence in business will by themselves profit anything at all. Not that he forbids us to practice temperance in our diet and to rise early to engage in our worldly business; but to stir us up to prayer, and to calling upon God, and also to recommend gratitude for the divine blessings, he brings to nought whatever would obscure the grace of God. Consequently, we shall then enter upon our worldly avocations in a right way when our hope depends exclusively upon God, and our success in that case will correspond to our wishes. But if a man, taking no account of God, eagerly makes haste, he will bring ruin upon himself by his too precipitate course. It is not, therefore, the design of the Prophet to encourage men *to* give way to sloth, so that they should think upon nothing all their life long, but fall asleep and abandon themselves to idleness- his meaning rather is, that, in executing what God has enjoined upon them, they should always begin with prayer and calling upon his name, offering to him their labors that he may bless them. The expression, *the bread of sorrows,* may be explained in two ways, either as denoting what is acquired by hard and anxious toil, or what is eaten with disquietude of mind; just as we see parsimonious and close-handed persons, when they have scarcely tasted a bit of bread, pulling back their hand from their mouth. It is of no great importance which of these senses is adopted; for we are simply taught that parsimonious men profit nothing — no not even when through their own niggardliness they grudge to eat as much as nature requires.

For thus will he give sleep to his beloved. The inspired writer intimates that the blessing of God, of which he has spoken, is actually seen in his children and servants. It will not suffice to believe this doctrine — that whatever, men attempt is to no purpose; it is necessary that the promise be added, in order to their being led with assured hope to perform their duty. The sentence may be read either — *he will give sleep to his beloved,* or, *he will give in sleeping;* that is, he will give them those things which unbelievers

labor to acquire by their own industry. The particle, כֵּן, *ken, thus,* is put to express certainty; [541] for with the view of producing a more undoubted persuasion of the truth — that God gives food to his people without any great care on their part — which seems incredible, and a fiction, Solomon points to the thing as it were with the finger. He indeed speaks as if God nourished the slothfulness of his servants by his gentle treatment; but as we know that men are created with the design of their being occupied, and as in the subsequent Psalm we shall find that the servants of God are accounted happy when they eat the labor of their hands, it is certain that the word *sleep* is not to be understood as implying slothfulness, but a placid labor, to which true believers subject themselves by the obedience of faith. Whence proceeds this so great ardor in the unbelieving, that they move not a finger without a tumult or bustle, in other words, without tormenting themselves with superfluous cares, but because they attribute nothing to the providence of God! The faithful, on the other hand, although they lead a laborious life, yet follow their vocations with composed and tranquil minds. Thus their hands are not idle, but their minds repose in the stillness of faith, as if they were asleep. If it is again objected, that God's people are often agitated with distressing cares, and that, oppressed with pinching poverty, and destitute of all resources, they are anxiously concerned about the morrow, I answer, that if faith and love to God were perfect in his servants, his blessing, of which the Prophet makes mention, would be manifest. Whenever they are tormented above measure, this happens through their own default, in not resting entirely upon the providence of God. I farther add, that God punishes them more severely than unbelievers, because it is profitable for them to be agitated by disquietude for a season, that at length they may attain to this peaceful sleep. In the meantime, however, God's grace prevails, and always shines forth in the midst of darkness, in respect of his cherishing his children as it were by sleep.

Psalm 127:3-5

3. Lo! children are the heritage of Jehovah: the fruit of the womb is the reward which he bestows. [542] **4.** As arrows in, the hand of a

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Walford reads — "He truly granteth sleep to his beloved;" and observes that the sentence is enfeebled by the word "so" in the vulgar translation. "It most likely means," he adds, "'in truth,' *i.e.,* truly; and the sense will be, though all exertion is vain without God, yet he truly bestows refreshing sleep, free from anxiety and excessive exertion, upon those who are the objects of his love, inasmuch as they combine all their endeavours with due regard to him." Cresswell adopts the rendering of the Septuagint, which is "since he giveth his beloved sleep."

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"*Fructus.* Merces, fructus ventris " — *Lat.* "Le fruict du ventre *est* loyer *qu'il donne* " — *Fr.*

strong man so are the children of youth. [543] **5.** Blessed is the man who shall have filled his quiver with them; for [544] they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

3. *Lo! children are the heritage of Jehovah.* Solomon here adduces one instance in which, in a particular manner, he would have us to recognize the truth which he has hitherto asserted generally — that the life of men is governed by God. Nothing seems more natural than for men to be produced of men. The majority of mankind dream, that after God had once ordained this at the beginning, children were thenceforth begotten solely by a secret instinct of nature, God ceasing to interfere in the matter; and even those who are endued with some sense of piety, although they may not deny that He is the Father and Creator of the human race, yet do not acknowledge that his providential care descends to this particular case, but rather think that men are created by a certain universal motion. With the view of correcting this preposterous error, Solomon calls children *the heritage of God,* and the fruit of the womb *his gift;* for the Hebrew word שכר, *sachar,* translated *reward,* signifies whatever benefits God bestows upon men, as is plainly manifest from many passages of Scripture. The meaning then is, that, children are not the fruit of chance, but that God, as it seems good to him, distributes to every man his share of them. Moreover, as the Prophet repeats the same thing twice, *heritage* and *reward* are to be understood as equivalent; for both these terms are set in opposition to fortune, or the strength of men. The stronger a man is he seems so much the better fitted for procreation. Solomon declares on the contrary, that those become fathers to whom God vouchsafes that honor.

As the majority of children are not always a source of joy to their parents, a second favor of God is added, which is his forming the minds of children, and adorning them with an excellent disposition, and all kinds of virtues. Aristotle in his Politics very properly discusses the question whether πολυτεκνια, that is, the having of many children, ought to be accounted among good things or no; and he decides it in the negative, unless there is added εὐγενεια, that is, generosity or goodness of nature in the children themselves. And assuredly it would be a far happier lot for many to be without children, or barren, than to have a numerous offspring,

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בני הנעורים, *sons of youth,* words which may signify children begotten by the father in his youth, as בז-זקנים, is a son begotten by a parent in his old age, (Genesis 37:3;) or the expression may denote youths, as בני נכר mean *strangers,* (Psalm 18:45.) Either rendering, I apprehend, will be suitable on this occasion; for the object of the verse is doubtless to show, that a numerous progeny is a great blessing to a man, and an important addition to his strength and safety; that they will be a defence to him in a time of danger, and serve him to repel an enemy, as arrows do in the hand of a mighty man." — *Phillips.*

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"*Car* " — *Fr.*

proving to them only the cause of tears and groans. In order, then, to set forth this blessing of God — the having offspring — in a clear light, Solomon commends a virtuous and generous disposition in children. The similitude introduced for this purpose is, that as an archer is armed 'with a well-furnished bow, so men are defended by their children, as it were with a bow and all arrow. This similitude might seem, at first sight, a little too harsh; but if it is examined somewhat more closely, its elegance will be readily admitted. The Prophet means that those who are without children are in a manner unarmed; for what else is it to be childless but to be solitary? It is no small gift of God for a man to be renewed in his posterity; for God then gives him new strength, that he who otherwise would straightway decay, may begin as it were to live a second time.

The knowledge of this doctrine is highly useful. The fruitfulness even of the lower animals is expressly ascribed to God alone; and if He would have it to be *accounted* his benefit that kine, and sheep, and mares *conceive,* how inexcusable will be the impiety of men, if when he adorns them with the honorable title of fathers, they account this favor as nothing. It is also to be added, that unless men regard their children as the gift of God, they are careless and reluctant in providing for their support, just as on the other hand this knowledge contributes in a very eminent degree to encourage them in bringing up their offspring. Farther, he who thus reflects upon the goodness of God in giving him children, will readily and with a settled mind look for the continuance of God's grace; and although he may have but a small inheritance to leave them, he will not be unduly careful on that account.

5. *They shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.* Here Solomon describes such children as, distinguished by uprightness and integrity, have no hesitation in rendering an account of their life, that they may shut the mouths of the malevolent and of calumniators. In ancient times, as is well known, judicial assemblies [545] were held at the gates of cities. He therefore here speaks of the gate, as if in the present day one should speak of the bench, or the courts, or the senate. Let it be observed that what is chiefly praised in children is innocence, that fathers may estimate this grace at its true value. In the preceding clause he had compared children endued with virtue and excellence of nature to arrows. Now, that no man may put a violent construction upon this comparison, as if it were intended to give children leave, like robbers, to rush upon doing mischief to such as come in their way, reckless of right and wrong, he expressly represents virtue and moral integrity as constituting the protection which they ought to afford to their fathers. He teaches us, then, that the children which we ought to wish for, are not such as may violently oppress the wretched and

545 "Legitimos conventus." — *Lat.* "Les assemblees Judiciales." — *Fr.*

suffering, or overreach others by craft and deceit, or accumulate great riches by unlawful means, or acquire for themselves tyrannical authority, but such as will practice uprightness, and be willing to live in obedience to the laws, and prepared to render an account of their life. Farther, although fathers ought diligently to form their children under a system of holy discipline, yet let them remember that they will never succeed in attaining the object aimed at, save by the pure and special grace of God. Solomon also tacitly intimates that however zealously we may be devoted to the practice of integrity, we shall never be without detractors and slanderers; for if integrity of life were exempt from all calumny, we would have no quarrel with our enemies.

Psalm 128

PSALM 128

This Psalm is akin to the preceding, and, so to speak, a kind of appendage to it; for it declares that the divine blessing, to the diffusion of which among the whole human race Solomon testified, is to be seen most conspicuously in the ease of God's true and sincere servants.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 128:1-3

1. Blessed is the man who feareth Jehovah, and walketh in his ways. **2.** For when thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands, thou shalt be blessed, and it shall be well with thee. **3.** Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house, and thy children as olive plants around thy table. [546]

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"The tables of the Jews, as we may hence (and from 1 Samuel 16:11) infer, were round: they had sobs (Ezekiel 23:41) placed about them, on which (Genesis 27:19; Judges 10:6; 1 Samuel 2:5, 24, 25; 1 Kings 13:20) they sat, excepting at the Paschal feast." — *Cresswell.* In the Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible, the writer on this passage objects to the common reading — *Fruitful vine by the sides of thine house. olive-plants round about thy table.* "We do not remember," says he, "to have met with a single instance in the East of vines trained against the walls of a house, or of olives near or about a house. Neither have we read of such instances. The passage doubtless derives its figures from the fertility of the vine, and from the appearance of the olive, or the order in which olive-trees are planted." He accordingly proposes the following construction — "Thy wife, on the sides (interior apartments) of thy house, shall be as the fruitful vine; and thy children, round about thy table, like olive-plants."

1 *Blessed is the man who feareth Jehovah.* In the preceding Psalm it was stated that prosperity in all human affairs, and in the whole course of our life, is to be hoped for exclusively from the grace of God; and now the Prophet admonishes us that those who desire to be partakers of the blessing of God must with sincerity of heart devote themselves wholly to him; for he will never disappoint those who serve him. The first verse contains a summary of the subject-matter of the Psalm; the remaining portion being added only by way of exposition. The maxim "that those are blessed who fear God, especially in the present life," is so much with variance with the common opinion of men, that very few will give it their assent. Everywhere are to be found fluttering about many Epicureans, similar to Dionysius, who, having once had a favorable wind upon the sea and a prosperous voyage, after having plundered a temple, [547] boasted that the gods favored church robbers. Also the weak are troubled and shaken by the prosperity of evil men, and they next faint under the load of their own miseries. The despisers of God may not indeed enjoy prosperity, and the condition of good men may be tolerable, but still the greater part of men are blind in considering the providence of God, or seem not in any degree to perceive it. The adage, "That it is best not to be born at all, or to die as soon as possible," has certainly been long since received by the common consent of almost all men. Finally, carnal reason judges either that all mankind without exception are miserable, or that fortune is more favorable to ungodly and wicked men than to the good. To the sentiment that those are blessed who fear the Lord, it has an entire aversion, as I have declared at length on Psalm 37. So much the more requisite then is it to dwell upon the consideration of this truth. Farther, as this blessedness is not apparent to the eye, it is of importance, in order to our being able to apprehend it., first to attend to the definition which will be given of it by and bye, and secondly, to know that it depends chiefly upon the protection of God. Although we collect together all the circumstances which seem to contribute to a happy life, surely nothing will be found more desirable than to be kept hidden under the guardianship of God. If this blessing is, in our estimation, to be preferred, as it deserves, to all other good things, whoever is persuaded that the care of God is exercised about the world and human affairs, will at the same time unquestionably acknowledge that what is here laid down is the chief point of happiness.

But before I proceed farther, it is to be noticed that in the second part of the verse there is with good reason added a mark by which the servants of God are distinguished from those who despise him. We see how the most depraved, with no less pride than audacity and mockery, boast of fearing God. The Prophet therefore requires the attestation of the life as to

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"Lequel true fois ayant bon vent sur mer, et la navigation prospore apres avoir pille une temple." — *Fr.*

this; for these two things, the fear of God and the keeping of his law, are inseparable; and the root must necessarily produce its corresponding fruit. Farther, we learn from this passage that our life does not meet with the divine approbation, except it be framed according to the divine law. There is unquestionably no religion without the fear of God, and from this fear the Prophet represents our living according to the commandment and ordinance of God as proceeding.

2. *For when thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands thou shalt be blessed.* Some divide this sentence into two members, reading these words, *For thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands,* as a distinct sentence, and then what follows, *Thou shalt be blessed,* as the beginning of a new sentence. I indeed grant that it is true, as they assert, that the grace of God, manifested in the faithful enjoying the fruits of their labor is set in opposition to the curse to which all mankind have been subjected. But it is more natural to read the words as one sentence, bringing out this meaning — That God's children are happy in eating the fruits of their labor; for if we make them two sentences, these words, *thou, shalt be blessed, and it shall be well with thee,* would contain a cold and even an insipid repetition. Here the Prophet, confirming the doctrine stated in the first verse, teaches us that we ought to form a different estimate of what happiness consists hi from that formed by the world, which makes a happy life to consist in ease, honors, and great wealth. He recalls God's servants to the practice of moderation, which almost all men refuse to exercise. How few are to be found who, were it left to their own choice, would desire to live by their own labor; yea, who would account it a singular benefit to do so! No sooner is the name of happiness pronounced, than instantly every man breaks forth into the most extravagant ideas of what is necessary to it, so insatiable a gulf is the covetousness of the human heart. The Prophet therefore bids the fearers of God be content with this one thing — with the assurance that having God for their foster-father, they shall be suitably maintained by the labor of their own hands; just as it is said in Psalm 34:10,

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

We must remember that the Prophet does not speak of the highest blessedness, which consists not in meat and drink, nor is confined within the narrow bounds of this transitory life; but he assures God's believing people that even in this pilgrimage or earthly place of sojourn they shall enjoy a happy life, in so far as the state of the world will permit; even as Paul declares that God promises both these to such as fear him, in other words, that God will take care of us during the whole course of our life, until he has at last brought us to eternal glory. (1 Timothy 4:8.) The change of person serves also to give greater emphasis to the language; for after having),' spoken in the third person, the Prophet comes to address his discourse to. *each* individual in particular, to this effect: — Not only

does immortal felicity await thee in heaven, but during thy pilgrimage in this world God will not cease to perform the office of the father of a family in maintaining thee, so that thy daily food will be administered to thee by his hand, provided thou art contented with a lowly condition.

3 *Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house.* Here again it is promised, as in the preceding Psalm, that God will make those who honor him fruitful in a numerous offspring. The majority of mankind indeed desire to have issue, and this desire may be said to be implanted in them by nature; but many, when they have obtained children, soon become cloyed therewith. Again it is often more grateful to want children than to leave a number of them in circumstances of destitution. But although the world is carried away by irregular desires after various objects, between which it is perpetually fluctuating in its choice, God gives this his own blessing, the preference to all riches, and therefore we ought to hold it in high estimation. If a man has a wife of amiable manners as the companion of his life, let him set no less value upon this blessing than Solomon did, who, in Proverbs 19:14, affirms that it is God alone who gives a good wife. In like manner, if a man be a father of a numerous offspring, let him receive that goodly boon with a thankful heart. If it is objected that the Prophet in speaking thus, detains the faithful on the earth by the allurements of the flesh, and hinders them from aspiring towards heaven with free and unencumbered minds, I answer, that it is not surprising to find him offering to the Jews under the law a taste of God's grace and paternal favor, when we consider that they were like children. He has, however, so tempered, or mixed it, as that by it; they might rise in their contemplations to the heavenly life. Even at the present day God, though in a more sparing manner, testifies his favor by temporal benefits, agreeably to that passage in Paul's first Epistle to Timothy just now quoted, (1 Timothy 4:8,)

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

But by this he does not cast any hindrance or impediment in our way to keep us from elevating our minds to heaven, but ladders are by this means rather erected to enable us to mount up thither step by step. The Prophet, therefore, very properly reminds the faithful that they already receive some fruit of their integrity, when God gives them their food, makes them happy in their wives and children, and condescends to take care of their life. But his design in commending the present goodness of God is to animate them to hasten forward with alacrity on the path which leads to their eternal inheritance. If the earthly felicity described in this Psalm may not always be the lot of the godly, but should it sometimes happen that their wife is a termagant, or proud, or of depraved morals, or that their children are dissolute and vagabonds, and even bring disgrace upon their father's house, let them know that their being deprived of God's blessing is owing to their having repulsed it by their own fault. And surely if each duly considers his

own vices he will acknowledge that God's earthly benefits have been justly withheld from him.

Psalm 128:4-6

> **4.** Lo! surely, thus blessed shall be the man who feareth Jehovah. **5.** Jehovah shall bless thee from Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life: **6.** And thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

4. *Lo! surely, thus blessed shall be the man who feareth Jehovah.* The preceding doctrine, that even in the outward condition of God's servants while in this transitory state there is afforded such evidence of the divine favor and goodness as demonstrates that we do not lose our labor in serving him, is here confirmed by the Prophet. Yet as the reward of godliness does not appear eminently conspicuous, he, in the first place, uses the demonstrative particle, *Lo!* [548] and then adds *surely;* for so I interpret the particle כי, *ki.* We must, however, always remember, as I have previously noticed, that the divine blessing is promised to us upon earth in such a way as that it may not engross our thoughts and keep them grovelling in the dust; for it is not meet that our hope of the life to come should be stifled. This is the reason why we do not at all times equally enjoy the benefits of God.

5. *Jehovah shall bless thee from Zion.* Some, would have this sentence to be a prayer, and therefore they resolve the future tense into the optative mood. But it seems rather to be a continued statement of the same doctrine previously dwelt on, the Prophet now expressing more plainly that the benefits which he has recounted are to be ascribed to God as their author. Although the gifts of God often present themselves before our eyes, yet through the obscurity which false imaginations throw around them our perception of them is dim and imperfect. Hence this repetition of the sentiment, That whenever true believers meet with any prosperous events in the course of their life, it is the effect of the divine blessing, is not to be deemed superfluous. The persons described are said to be blessed *from Zion,* to lead them to call to remembrance the covenant into which God had entered with them, for he had graciously promised to be favorable to the observers of his law; and these principles of godliness they had imbibed from their infancy. The Prophet, therefore, declares that it is no novel doctrine or something before unheard of which he adduces, the law having long ago taught them that it is made manifest even by the temporary benefits conferred on those who serve God, that the pains taken in serving him

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Il use en premier lieu d'un mot qui est commoe pour demonstrer la chose au doigt ou a l'oeil, *voyla* — *Fr.* "He, in the first place, uses a word, which is, as it were, to point to the thing with the finger, or show it to the eye, *Lo!*"

are not thrown away; and he affirms that of this they shall actually have the experience. What is added concerning *the good of Jerusalem* is to be regarded as en-joining upon the godly the duty not only of seeking their own individual welfare, or of being devoted to their own peculiar interests, but rather of having it as chief desire to see the Church of God in a flourishing condition. It would be a very unreasonable thing for each member to desire what may be profitable for itself, while in the meantime the body was neglected. From our extreme proneness to err in that respect, the Prophet, with good reason, recommends solicitude about the public welfare; and he mingles together domestic blessings and the common benefits of the Church in such a way as to show us that they are things joined together, and which it is unlawful to put asunder.

Psalm 129

PSALM 129

This Psalm teaches, in the first place, that God subjects his Church to divers troubles and affections, to the end he may the better prove himself her deliverer and defender. The Psalmist, therefore, recalls to the memory of the faithful how sadly God's people had been persecuted in all ages, and how wonderfully they had been preserved, in order by such examples to fortify their hope in reference to the future. In the second part, under the form of an imprecation, he shows that the divine vengeance is ready to fall upon all the ungodly, who without cause distress the people of God.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 129:1-4

1. They have often afflicted me from my youth, let Israel now say:
2. They have often afflicted me from my youth; but they have not prevailed against me. **3.** The ploughers have plouched upon my back, and made long their furrows. [549] **4.** But Jehovah who is righteous, hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

1. *They have often afflicted me from my youth.* This Psalm was probably composed at a time when the Church of God, reduced to a state of extreme distress, or dismayed by some great danger, or oppressed with tyranny, was on the verge of total destruction. This conjecture, I conceive, is supported

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"Targ. *lengthened out their ploughing, i.e.,* gave us no rest from their slavery, for the longer the furrows the more tedious is the labor of the oxen." — *Bythner.*

by the adverb of time, *now,* which appears to me to be emphatic. It is as if the Prophet; had said, When God's faithful ones are with difficulty drawing their breath under the burden of temptations, it is a seasonable time for them to reflect on the manner in which he has exercised his people from the beginning, and from age to age. As soon as God has given loose reins to our enemies to do as they please we are distressed with sorrow, and our thoughts are wholly engrossed with the evils which presently harass us. Hence proceeds despair; for we do not remember that the patience of the fathers was subjected to the like trial, and that nothing happens to us which they did not experience. It is then an exercise eminently fitted to comfort true believers to look back to the conflicts of the Church in the days of old, in order thereby to know that she has always labored under the cross, and has been severely afflicted by the unrighteous violence of her enemies. The most probable conjecture which occurs to me at present is, that this Psalm was written after the Jews had returned from the Babylonish captivity, and when, having suffered many grievous and cruel injuries at the hands of their neighbors, they hadn't length almost fainted under the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes. In this dark and troublous state of matters, the Prophet encourages the faithful to fortitude, nor does he address himself to a few of them only, but to the whole body without exception; and in order to their sustaining such fierce assaults, he would have them to oppose to them a hope inspired by the encouraging consideration, that the Church, by patient endurance, has uniformly proved victorious. Almost every word is emphatic. *Let Israel now say*, that is, let him consider the trials of the Church in ancient times, from which it may be gathered, that the people of God have never been exempted from bearing the cross, and yet that the various afflictions by which they have been tried have always had a happy issue. In speaking of the enemies of Israel simply by the pronoun *they,* without being more specific, the Psalmist aggravates the greatness of the evil more than if he had expressly named the Assyrians or the Egyptians. By not specifying any particular class of foes, he tacitly intimates that the world is fraught with innumerable bands of enemies, whom Satan easily arms for the destruction of good men, his object being that new wars may arise continually on every side. History certainly bears ample testimony that the people of God had not to deal with a few enemies, but that they were assaulted by almost the whole world; and farther, that *they* were molested not only by external foes, but also by those of an internal kind, by such as professed to belong to the Church.

The term *youth* here denotes their first beginnings, [550] and refers not only to the time when God brought the people out of Egypt, but also to the time

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Hence it is said in Hosea 11:1 —

"When Israel was a *child,* then I loved him,
and called my son out of Egypt."

when he wearied Abraham and the patriarchs during almost their whole life, by keeping them in a condition of painful warfare. If these patriarchs were strangely driven about in the land of Canaan, the lot of their descendants was still worse during the time of their sojourning in Egypt, when they were not only oppressed as slaves, but loaded with every kind of reproach and ignominy. At their departure from that land we know what difficulties they had to encounter. If in tracing their history from that period we find seasons in which some respite was granted them, *yet* they were not in a state of repose for any length of time, until the reign of David. And although during his reign they appeared to be in a prosperous condition, yet soon after troubles and even defeats arose, which threatened the people of God with total destruction. In the Babylonish captivity, all hope being well-nigh extinguished, they seemed as if hidden in the grave and undergoing the process of putrefaction. After their return they obtained, with difficulty, some brief intermission to take their breath. They were certainly often put; to the sword, until the race of them was almost wholly destroyed. To prevent it, therefore, from being supposed that they had received only some slight hurt, they are justly said *to have been afflicted;* as if the Prophet placed them before our eyes as it were half-dead, through the treatment of their enemies, who, seeing them prostrated under their feet, scrupled not to tread upon them. If we come to ourselves, it will be proper to add the horrible persecutions, by which the Church would have been consumed a thousand times, had not God, by hidden and mysterious means, preserved her, raising her as it were from the dead. Unless we have become stupid under our calamities, the distressing circumstances of this unhappy age will compel us to meditate on the same doctrine.

When the Prophet says twice, *they have afflicted me, they have afflicted me*, the repetition is not superfluous, it being intended to teach us that the people of God had not merely once or twice to enter the conflict, but that their patience had been tried by continual exercises. He had said that they had commenced this conflict *from their youth,* intimating that they had been inured to it from their first origin, in order to their being accustomed to bear the cross. He now adds, that their being subjected to this rigorous training was not without good reason, inasmuch as God had not ceased, by a continued course, to make use of these calamities for subduing them to himself. If the exercises of the Church, during her state of childhood, were so severe, our effeminacy will be very shameful indeed, if in the present day, when the Church, by the coming of Christ, has reached the age of manhood, we are found wanting in firmness for enduring trials. Matter of consolation is laid down in the last clause, which informs us that the enemies of Israel,

Youth is in like manner ascribed to a people, in Isaiah 47:12, 15; Jeremiah 48:11; and Ezekiel 16:43.

after having tried all methods, never succeeded in realizing their wishes, God having always disappointed their hopes, and baffled their attempts.

3. *The ploughers have ploughed upon my back.* [551] Here the Prophet, by an apparent similitude, embellishes his preceding statement respecting the grievous afflictions of the Church. He compares the people of God to a field through which a plough is drawn. He says that the furrows were made long, so that no corner was exempted from being cut up by the ploughshare. These words vividly express the fact — that the cross has always been planted on the back of the Church, to make long and wide furrows.

In the subsequent verse a ground of consolation under the same figure is subjoined, which is, that *the righteous Lord hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked* The allusion is to a plough, which, as we all know, is tied with cords to the necks of the oxen. The language very aptly conveys the idea, that the wicked, — since they would never have become tired or satiated in exercising their cruelty, and also in consequence of their being well armed, — were prepared to proceed farther, but that the Lord, in a way altogether unexpected, repressed their fury, just as if a man should unyoke oxen from the plough by cutting in pieces the cords and thongs which tied them to it. Hence we perceive what is the true condition of the Church. As God would have us contentedly to take his yoke upon us, the Holy Spirit not unfitly compares us to an arable field, which cannot make any resistance to its being cut, and cleaved, and turned up by the ploughshare. Should any one be disposed to indulge in greater refinement of speculation, he might say that the field is ploughed to prepare it for receiving the seed, and that it may at length bring forth fruit. But in my opinion the subject to which the Prophet limits his attention is the afflictions of the Church. The epithet *righteous,* with which he honors God, must, in a suitableness to the scope of the passage, be explained as implying that, although God may seem to dissemble for a time, yet he never forgets his righteousness, so as to withhold relief from his afflicted people. Paul in like manner adduces the same reason why God will not always suffer them to be persecuted,

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According to Archbishop Seeker, this refers to severe scourging; and those who have witnessed this cruel infliction tell us that the allusion is most expressive, the long weals or wounds left by the scourges at each stroke being most aptly compared either to furrows, or (as the original admits) to the ridges between the furrows. With respect to the alleged incongruity of ploughing, and making long furrows on the back, the Archbishop observes, "*Lacerare et secare tercum* are Latin phrases, and ploughing is not much stronger, to express a severe scourging." The language of the Psalmist may, however, without allusion to any particular species of persecuting violence, be, as Calvin understands it, simply a strong image of cruel oppression. "The persecutors of Israel," says Walford, "are compared to ploughmen; because as they cut up, and as it were torture the surface of the earth, so did the adversaries greatly and grievously distress these afflicted people."

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;
and to you who are troubled rest with us." (2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7,)

It is a point worthy of special notice, that the welfare of the Church is inseparably connected with the righteousness of God. The Prophet, also, wisely teaches us that the reason why the enemies of the Church did not prevail, was because God brought to nothing their enterprises, and did not suffer them to go beyond what he had determined in his own mind.

Psalm 129:5-8

> **5.** All who hate Zion shall be confounded, and turned backward. **6.** They shall be as the grass [552] of the housetops', which is withered before it comes forth: **7.** With which the mower hath not filled his hand, nor the gleaner his bosom. [553] **8.** Neither have they who pass by said, The blessing of Jehovah be upon you: we bless you in the name of Jehovah. [554]

5. *All who hate Zion shall be confounded, and tutored backward.* Whether we take this as a prayer or a promise, the Prophet has a respect to the time to come. Since all the verbs are in the future tense, it is certainly a very appropriate interpretation to understand him as deriving from times past instruction as to what is to be hoped for in future, even to the end. In whichever way we understand the passage, he declares that the faithful have no reason to be discouraged when they behold their enemies raised on high. The grass which grows upon the house-tops is not, on account of its higher situation, more valuable than the blade of corn which in the low ground is trampled under foot; for although it stands elevated above men's heads, it is, in the first place, unprofitable; and secondly, it quickly withers

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Fry reads "corn," "חציר," says he, "evidently includes corn as well as grass."

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In the French version it is "son aisselle;" — "his arm-pit."

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"Here is an allusion to the custom of blessing; the reapers at their work; as in that instance recorded in the book of Ruth 2:4, 'And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you; and they answered him, The Lord bless thee.'" — *Warner.* "Precisely the same customs of salutation which are here indicated still prevail in Mohammedan Asia. Nearly the same form of words, implying the blessing and peace of God, is retained, and the neglect to give the salutation is still an indignity and an insult " — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.*

away. [555] The verb, **שלף**, *shalaph,* [556] which we have translate *comes forth,* is by some rendered, *is plucked up.* According to this translation the sense is, that without the hand or labor of man the grass on the house-tops is dried up. But as the verb properly signifies *to be brought forth,* or *to come forth,* the meaning, in my opinion, is that the grass on the housetops, so far from continuing long in a state of freshness, withers and perishes at its first springing up, because it has no root under it, nor earth to supply it with sap or moisture for its nourishment. Whenever, then, the splendor or greatness of our enemies strikes us with fear, let us bring to our recollection this comparison, that as the grass which grows upon the house-tops, though high, is yet without root, and consequently of brief duration, so these enemies, the nearer they approach the sun by the height of their pride, shall be the sooner consumed by the burning heat, since they have no root, it being humility alone which draws life and vigor from God.

7 *With which the mower hath not filled his hand.* [557] We have here an additional confirmation of the truth, that although the wicked mount high or elevate themselves, and form an extravagant opinion of their own importance, yet they continue mere grass, not bringing forth any good fruit, nor reaching a state of ripeness, but swelling only with fresh appearance. To make this obvious, the Psalmist sets them in opposition to fruit-bearing herbs, which in valleys and low grounds produce fruit for men. In fine, he

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"In Judea, the roofs of the houses are flat, and covered with cement. On this the grass would not uncommonly grow: but, being thin and weak, and its situation hot and exposed, it was speedily 'dried up and withered.' The same sort of architecture, and the same appearances, are common in the East at this day." — *Warner.*

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שלף differently interpreted. By the greater number of persons it is translated, *to extract, to pull out;* and thus it is used in Ruth 4:7, 8, and John 20:25, 'Before any one extracts the grass it withereth.' The Septuagint has πρὸ τοῦ εκσπασθῶναι, and the Vulgate, 'priusquam evellatur.' Our translators have rendered שלף שקדמת, 'afore it groweth up,' in which they are supported by Aquila and Symmachus. Theodoret observes that many MSS. of the Septuagint have ἐξανθῶναι for ἐκσπασθῶναι. In either case the sense is, that the haters of Zion shall be exterminated by the just and wonderful judgments of God, before they have time to accomplish their wicked *intentions.*" — *Phillips.* "Parkhurst adopts Harmer's opinion, that the Hebrew verb in this place signifies, 'to push out, unsheath, as corn its ear.' It appears nowhere else but in the sense of 'unsheathing a sword,' or drawing off a shoe.' The proper translation seems to be, 'Which withereth before it unsheaths its ear.' See Parkhurst on שלף." — *Mant.*

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"*Whereof the mower hath not filled his hand,* etc. — i.e., It is too scanty to afford employment for a labourer to gather it by the hand, or for a reaper, who uses a sickle, depositing what he cuts in the fold of his garment, or as Le Clerc understands it, under his left arm. The Psalmist in effect prays, that the enemies of Israel may be reduced to such poverty, that none could become richer by despoiling them: in a word, that they might be altogether despicable. For *binding up the sheaves,* Hammond suggests, *gathereth the handfuls,* with reference to the gleaner, Ruth 2:2 " — *Cresswell.*

affirms that they deserve to be hated or despised of all, whereas commonly every one in passing by the corn fields blesses them and prays for the harvest? [558] Farther, he has borrowed this illustration of his doctrine from the affairs of ordinary life, we are taught that whenever there is a hopeful prospect of a good harvest, we ought to beseech God, whose peculiar province it is to impart fertility to the earth, that he would give full effect to his blessing. And considering that the fruits of the earth are exposed to so many hazards, it is certainly strange that we are not stirred ‘up to engage in the exercise of prayer from the absolute necessity of these to man and beast. Nor does the Psalmist, in speaking of passers by blessing the reapers, speak exclusively of rite children of God, who are truly taught by his word that the fruitfulness of the earth is owing to his goodness; but he also comprehends worldly men in whom the same knowledge is implanted naturally. In conclusion, provided we not only dwell in the Church of the Lord, but also labor to have place among the number of her genuine citizens, we will be able fearlessly to despise all fire might of our enemies; for although they may flourish and have a great outward show for a time, yet they are but barren grass, on which the curse of heaven rests.

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“Au lieu que chacun communement en passant par les bleds les benit, et prie pour la moisson.” — Fr.

Psalm 130

PSALM 130

Whether the Prophet in this Psalm prays in his own name in particular, or represents the whole Church, it is manifest, that finding himself overwhelmed with adversities, he supplicates deliverance with passionate ardor. And while acknowledging that he is justly chastised by the hand of God, he encourages himself and all genuine believers to cherish good hope, since God is the everlasting deliverer of his people, and has always in readiness the means of effecting their rescue from death.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 130:1-4

1. Out of the deep places have I cried to thee, O Jehovah **2.** O Lord hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my prayers **3.** If thou, O God shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand? **4.** But with thee there is forgiveness that thou mayest be feared.

1. *Out of the deep places have I cried to thee, O Jehovah!* It is to be noticed that the Prophet speaks of himself as sending forth his voice, as it were from out of a deep gulf, [559] feeling himself overwhelmed with calamities. As the miseries to which there is no prospect of a termination commonly

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The depths or deep gulfs are used in Scripture as an emblem of extreme danger or calamity, whether of body or of mind. See Psalm 69:2, 15. "The Papists, taking the deep as a type of purgatory, recite this Psalm in the persons of those who have died in their communion." — *Cresswell.* To this Calvin afterwards adverts.

bring despair in their train, nothing is more difficult than for persons, when involved in grievous and deep sorrow, to stir up their minds to the exercise of prayer. And it is wonderful, considering that whilst we enjoy peace and prosperity we are cold in prayer, because then our hearts are in a state of infatuated security, how in adversities, which ought to quicken us, we are still more stupefied. But the Prophet derives confidence in coming to the throne of grace from the very troubles, cares, dangers and sorrow into which he was plunged. He expresses his perplexity and the earnestness of his desire both by the word cry, and by the repetition continued in the second verse. So much the more detestable then is the barbarous ignorance of the Papist's, in shamefully profaning this Psalm by wresting it to a purpose wholly foreign to its genuine application. To what intent do they mumble it over for the dead, if it is not that, in consequence of Satan having bewitched them, they may by their profanity extinguish a doctrine of singular utility? From the time that this Psalm was, by a forced interpretation, applied to the souls of the dead, it is very generally believed to be of no use whatever to the living, and thus the world has lost an inestimable treasure.

3. *If thou, O God! shoudst mark iniquities* [560] Here the Prophet acknowledges that although grievously afflicted, he had justly deserved such punishment, as had been inflicted upon him. As by his own example he gives a rule which the whole Church ought to observe, let no man presume to intrude himself into the presence of *God,* but in the way of humbly deprecating his wrath; and especially when God exercises severity in his dealings towards us, let us know that we are required to make the same confession which is here uttered. Whoever either flatters himself or buries his sins by inattention to them, deserves to pine away in his miseries; at least he is unworthy of obtaining from God the smallest alleviation. Whenever God then exhibits the tokens of his wrath, let even the man who seems to others to be the holiest of all his fellows, descend to make this confession, that should God determine to deal with us according to the strict demands of his law, and to summon us before his tribunal, not one of the whole human race would be able to stand. We grant that it is one man only who here prays, but he at once pronounces sentence upon the whole human race. "All the children of Adam," he substantially says, "from the first to the last, are lost and condemned, should God require them to render up an account of their life." It is therefore necessary that even the holiest of men should pass under this condemnation, that they may betake themselves to

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The allusion is to judicial proceedings. It is as if the Psalmist had said, If thou wert, like an earthly judge, to note down every minute circumstance of guilt, who would be able to stand such a trial, or leave thy court unconvicted, or uncondemned? The verb, "שמר, denotes not only *to mark,* or *observe,* but to observe diligently, so as to retain a perpetual memory of what is done amiss a rigid and judicial observation of faults: see Job 10:14; Job 14:16, 17 " *Phillips.*

the mercy of God as their only refuge. The Prophet does not however mean to extenuate his own fault by thus involving others with himself, as we see hypocrites do, who when they dare not altogether justify themselves, resort to this subterfuge, "Am I the first or the only man who has offended?" and thus, mingling themselves with a multitude of others, they think themselves half absolved from their guilt. But the Prophet, instead of seeking to shelter himself under such a subterfuge, rather confesses, after having thoroughly examined himself, that if of the whole human race not even one can escape eternal perdition, this instead of lessening rather increased his obnoxiousness to punishment. Whoever, as if he had said, shall come into the presence of God, whatever may be his eminence for sanctity, he must succumb and stand confounded, [561] what then will be the case as to me, who am not one of the best? The right application of this doctrine is, for every man to examine in good earnest his own life by the perfection which is enjoined upon us in the law. In this way he will be forced to confess that all men without exception have deserved everlasting damnation; and each will acknowledge in respect to himself that he is a thousand times undone. Farther, this passage teaches us that, since no man can stand by his own works, all such as are accounted righteous before God, are righteous in consequence of the pardon and remission of their sins. In no other manner can any man be righteous in the sight of God. Very differently do the Papists think. They indeed confess that the deficiencies of our works are supplied by the lenity which God exercises towards us; but at the same time they dream of a partial righteousness, on the ground of which men may stand before God. In entertaining such an idea they go very far astray from the sense of the Prophet, as will appear more plainly from the sequel.

4. *But with thee there is forgiveness.* This verse leads us farther. Though all men confess with the mouth that there is no human being in the world whom God may not justly adjudge to everlasting death, should it so please him, yet how few are persuaded of the truth which the Prophet now adds, that the grace of which they stand in need shall not be denied them? They either sleep in their sins through stupidity, or fluctuate amidst a variety of doubts, and, at length, are overwhelmed with despair. This maxim, "that no man is free from sin," is, as I have said, received among all men without dispute, and yet the majority shut their eyes to their own faults, and settle securely in hiding places to which, in their ignorance, they have betaken themselves, if they are not forcibly roused out of them, and then, when pursued close by the judgments of God, they are overwhelmed with alarm, or so greatly tormented as to fall into despair. The consequence of this want of hope in men, that God will be favorable to them, is an indifference about coming into the Divine presence to supplicate for pardon. When a man is

561 "Et demeure confus." Fr.

awakened with a lively sense of the judgment of God, he cannot fail to be humbled with shame and fear. Such self-dissatisfaction would not however suffice, unless at the same time there were added faith, whose office it is to raise up the hearts which were cast down with fear, and to encourage them to pray for forgiveness. David then acted as he ought to have done when, in order to his attaining genuine repentance, he first summons himself before God's judgment seat; but, to preserve his confidence from failing under the overpowering influence of fear, he presently adds the hope which there was of obtaining pardon. It is, indeed, a matter which comes under our daily observation, that those who proceed not beyond the step of thinking themselves deserving of endless death, rush, like frenzied men, with great impetuosity against God. The better, therefore, to confirm himself and others, the Prophet declares that God's mercy cannot be separated or torn away from himself. "As soon as I think upon thee," he says in amount, "thy clemency also presents itself to my mind, so that I have no doubt that thou wilt be merciful to me, it being impossible for thee to divest thyself of thy own nature: the very fact that thou art God is to me a sure guarantee that thou wilt be merciful " At the same time let it be understood, that he does not here speak of a confused knowledge of the grace of God, but of such a knowledge of it as enables the sinner to conclude with certainty, that as soon as he seeks God he shall find him ready to be reconciled towards him. It is not therefore surprising that among the Papists there is no steady calling upon God, when we consider that, in consequence of their mingling their own merits, satisfactions, and worthy preparation as they term it with the grace of God, they continue always in suspense and doubt respecting their reconciliation with God. Thus it comes to pass, that by praying they only augment their own sorrows and torments, just as if a man should lay wood upon a fire already kindled. Whoever would reap profit from the exercise of prayer, must necessarily begin with free remission of sins. It is also proper to mark the final cause as we say for which God is inclined to forgive, and never comes forward without showing himself easy to be pacified towards those who serve him; which is the absolute necessity of this hope of obtaining forgiveness, to the existence of piety, and the worship of God in the world. This is another principle of which the Papists are ignorant. They, indeed, make long sermons [562] about the fear of God, but, by keeping poor souls in perplexity and doubt, they build without a foundation. The first step to the right serving of God unquestionably is, to submit ourselves to him willingly and with a free heart. The doctrine which Paul teaches concerning alms-deeds, 2 Corinthians 9:7, that "God loveth a cheerful giver," is to be extended to all parts of the life. How is it possible for any man to offer himself cheerfully to God unless he rely upon his grace, and be certainly

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"Concionantur." — *Lat.* "Ils tiendront long propos." — *Fr.*

persuaded that the obedience he yields is pleasing to him? When this is not the case all men will rather shun God, and be afraid to appear in his presence, and if they do not altogether turn their back upon him, they will catch at subterfuges. In short, the sense of God's judgment, unless conjoined with the hope of forgiveness, strikes men with terror, which must necessarily engender hatred. It is no doubt true, that the sinner, who, alarmed at the Divine threatenings, is tormented in himself, does not despise God, but yet he shuns him; and this shunning of him is downright apostasy and rebellion. Whence it follows, that men never serve God aright unless they know that he is a gracious and merciful being. The other reason to which I have adverted must also be remembered, which is, that unless we are assured that what we offer to God is acceptable to him, we will be seized with indolence and stupidity which will keep us from doing our duty. Although unbelievers often show a great deal of earnestness, just as we see the Papists laboriously occupied with their superstitions, yet, from their not being persuaded that God is reconciled to them, they do not all the while render to him any voluntary obedience. Were they not held back by a slavish fear, the horrible rebellion of their heart, which this fear keeps hidden and suppressed, would soon manifest itself externally.

Psalm 130:5-6

5. I have waited for Jehovah, my soul hath waited; and I have hoped in his word. **6.** My soul hath waited for the Lord before the watchers of the morning, idea, before the watchers of the mourning.

5. *I have waited for Jehovah.* After having testified in general that God is ready to show mercy to poor sinners who betake themselves to him, the Psalmist concludes that he is thereby encouraged to entertain good hope. The past tense in the verbs *wait* and *trust* is put for the present. *I have waited* for *I wait; I have hoped* for *I hope.* The repetition occurring in the first part of the verse is emphatic; and the word *soul* gives additional emphasis, implying, as it does, that the Prophet trusted in God even with the deepest affections of his heart. From this we also gather that he was not only patient and constant in the sight of men, but that even in the inward feelings of his heart he had maintained quietness and patience before God, which is a very evident proof of faith. Many, no doubt, are restrained by vain glory from openly murmuring against God or betraying their distrust, but there is hardly one in ten who, when removed from the inspection of his fellow-men, and in his own heart, waits for God with a quiet mind. The Psalmist adds, in the concluding clause, that what supported his patience was the confidence which he reposed in the divine promises. Were these promises taken away, the grace of God would necessarily vanish from our sight, and thus our hearts would fail and be overwhelmed with despair. Besides, he teaches us, that our being contented with the word of God alone

affords a genuine proof of our hope. When a man, embracing the word, becomes assured of having his welfare attended to by God, this assurance will be the mother of waiting or patience. Although the Prophet here speaks to himself for the purpose of confirming his faith, yet there is no doubt that he suggests to all the children of God like matter of confidence in reference to themselves. In the first place he sets before them the word, that they may depend entirely upon it; and next he warns them that faith is vain and ineffectual unless it frame us to patience.

6. *My soul hath waited for the Lord before the watchers of the morning.* In this verse he expresses both the ardor and the perseverance of his desire. In saying that he anticipated the watchmen, he shows by this similitude with what diligence and alacrity he breathed after God. And the repetition is a proof of his perseverance; for there is no doubt that thereby he intended to express an uninterrnitted continuance of the same course, and consequently perseverance. Both these qualities in his exercise, are worthy of attention; for it is too manifest how slow and cold we are in elevating our minds to God, and also how easily we are shaken and even fall at every little blast of wind. Farther, as the watches of the night were in ancient times usually divided into four parts, this passage may be explained as implying that as the watchmen of the night, who keep watch by turns, are careful in looking when the morning will dawn, so the Prophet looked to God with the greatest attention of mind. But the more natural sense seems to be, that as in the morning the warders of the gates are more wakeful than all other people, and are the earliest in rising, that they may appear at the posts assigned them, so the mind of the Prophet hastened with all speed to seek God. The repetition, as I have already observed, shows that he stood keeping his gaze perseveringly fixed upon its object. We must always beware of allowing our fervor to languish through the weariness of delay, should the Lord for any length of time keep us in suspense. [563]

Psalm 130:7-8

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Some, as Street, Mant, Dr. Adam Clarke, French and Skinner, and Phillips, suppose that the allusion in this verse is to the watchings which the Priests and Levites in their turns exercised during the night in the Temple, (see Psalm 34:1,) and especially to those officers of theirs who were appointed to watch for the first dawn of day, in order that the morning sacrifice might be offered. "In the Talmudical Tract Tamid it is related, 'The prefect said to them, Go and see if the time of slaying; have arrived; if it had arrived, the watcher calls out, ברקאי, Coruscations.' Agreeably to this explanation of the verse is the rendering of the Chaldee, which is as follows: "My soul waits for the Lord, more than the keepers of the morning vigils, which they observe for offering of the morning oblation." *Phillips.* "The custom alluded to by the Targumist," [or Chaldee,] says Street, "is mentioned in Exodus 30:7. 'And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps he shall burn incense upon it.'" "The similitude," observes Mant, "*is* beautifully expressive of the eager impatience of the Psalmist; which is still further augmented by the repetition."

> **7.** But let Israel hope in Jehovah; for with Jehovah there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption. **8.** And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. [564]

7. *But let Israel hope in Jehovah.* After having spoken of himself, and exhibited in his own person an example for all to follow, he now applies the doctrine to the whole body of the Church. It is to be noticed that the foundation upon which he would have the hope of all the godly to rest is the mercy of God, the source from which redemption springs. In the first clause he reminds them that although they bring with them no worth or merits of their own, it ought to suffice them that God is merciful. This mutual relation between the faith of the Church and the free goodness of God is to be attentively marked, to the end we may know that all those who, depending upon their own merits, persuade themselves that God will be their rewarder, have not their hope regulated according to the rule of Scripture. From this mercy, as from a fountain, the Prophet derives redemption; for there is no other cause which moves God to manifest himself as the redeemer of his people but his mercy. He describes this redemption as *plenteous,* that the faithful, even when reduced to the last extremity, may sustain themselves from the consideration that there are in the hand of God many and incredible means by which to save them. This Psalm may have been composed at a time when the Church was in so very afflicted a condition as might have discouraged one and all, had not the infinite greatness of the power of God served as a buckler to defend them. The true use of the present doctrine is, first, that the faithful, even when plunged in the deepest gulfs, should not doubt of their deliverance being in the hand of God, who, whenever necessity shall require, will be able to find means, which are now hidden and unknown to us; and, secondly, that they should hold it as certain, that as often as the Church shall be afflicted he will manifest himself to be her deliverer. To this truth the sentence immediately following refers.

8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* Here the Psalmist applies more closely to the Church what he has said in the preceding verse. He concludes that it is not to be doubted that God, who has it in his power to save by multiplied means, will prove himself the deliverer of the people whom he has chosen. By these words he teaches us, that when we have evidence of our being adopted by God, we ought also to regard our salvation as certain. His meaning might be explained more familiarly in this way: As to redeem is the continual office of God, and as he is not the redeemer of all men indiscriminately, but only of his chosen people, there is no reason for apprehending that the faithful will not emerge from all calamities; for were it otherwise, God would cease to execute the office which he claims to himself. He repeats the sentiment of the preceding verse, that, provided

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"Ou, punitions." — *Fr.* "Or, punishments."

Israel with all humility draw near to God to plead for pardon, his sins will not be an obstacle in the way of God's showing himself his redeemer. Although the Hebrew word, עון, *avon,* is often put for the punishment of sin, yet it also contains a tacit reference to the fault. Whenever, then, God promises a mitigation of the punishment, he at the same time gives assurance that he will pardon the sins; or rather in offering to sinners a gratuitious reconciliation, he promises them forgiveness. According to this exposition it is here said that he will redeem his Church, not from the captivity of Babylon, or from the tyranny and oppression of enemies, or from penury, or, in short, from any other disasters but from sin; for until God pardon the sins of the men whom he afflicts, deliverance is not to be hoped for. Let us then learn from this passage in what way we are to expect deliverance from all calamities, or the order which it becomes us to observe in seeking it. Remission of sins always goes first, without which nothing will come to a favorable issue. Those who only desire to shake off the punishment are like silly invalids, who are careless about the disease itself with which they are afflicted, provided the symptoms which occasion them trouble for a time are removed. In order, then, that God may deliver us from our miseries, we must chiefly endeavor to be brought to a state of favor with him by obtaining the remission of our sins. If this is not obtained, it will avail us little to have the temporal punishment remitted; for that often happens even to the reprobate themselves. This is true and substantial deliverance, when God, by blotting out our sins, shows himself merciful towards us. Whence, also, we gather, that having once obtained forgiveness, we have no reason to be afraid of our being excluded from free access to, and from enjoying the ready exercise of, the lovingkindness and mercy of God; for *to redeem from iniquity* is equivalent to moderating punishments or chastisements. This serves as an argument to disprove the preposterous invention of the Papists respecting satisfactions and purgatory, as if God, in forgiving the fault, still reserved for a future time the execution of the punishment upon the sinner. If it is objected that the Lord sometimes punishes those whom he has already pardoned; in reply, I grant that he does not always, at the very moment in which he reconciles men to himself, show them the tokens of his favor, for he chastises them to render them circumspect for the future, but while he does this, he in the meantime fails not to moderate his rigour. This, however, forms no part of the satisfactions by which the Papists imagine that they present to God the half of the price of their redemption. In innumerable passages of Scripture, where God promises to his people outward blessings, he always begins with a promise of the pardon of sin. It is therefore the grossest ignorance to say, that God does not remit the punishment till they have pacified him by their works. Moreover, while God's intention in inflicting some punishments or chastisements upon the faithful, is to bring them to yield a more perfect obedience to his law, the Papists are mistaken in extending these punishments beyond death. But it

is not wonderful to find them heaping together so many heathenish dreams, seeing they adhere not to the true and only way of reconciliation, which is, that God is merciful only to such as seek the expiation of their sins in the sacrifice of Christ. It is to be noticed that it is said *from all iniquities,* that poor sinners, although they feel themselves to be guilty in many ways, may not cease to cherish the hope that God will be merciful to them.

Psalm 131

PSALM 131

David, having it as his object in this Psalm to encourage the people to fight strenuously under his banner, and to exhort and excite the godly to acknowledge him as entitled to their obedience, declares that he had always submitted himself to the guidance of God, and had done nothing without his call and commission.

A Song of Degrees of David.

Psalm 131:1

1. O Jehovah! My heart has not been elated, nor have mine eyes been lifted up, neither have I walked in great matters, or in things shut up from me.

1. *O Jehovah! My heart has not been elated* David had been made head over God's people, and in order to prove that he was their lawful prince, entitled to the allegiance of the faithful, he is desirous to show that he had not been influenced, in anything which he had attempted, by ambition or pride, but had submitted himself with a quiet and humble spirit to the divine disposal. In this he teaches us a very useful lesson, and one by which we should be ruled in life — to be contented with the lot which God has marked out for us, to consider what he calls us to, and not to aim at fashioning our own lot, to be moderate in our desires, to avoid entering upon rash undertakings, and to confine ourselves cheerfully within our own sphere, instead of attempting great things. He denies that *his heart had been lifted up,* for this is the true cause of all unwarranted rashness and presumption in

conduct. Is not pride what leads men, under the instigation of their passions, to dare such presumptuous flights, to hurry on recklessly in their course, and throw the whole world into confusion? Were this loftiness of spirit checked, the consequence would be, that all men would study moderation of conduct. His eyes were not lifted up; there were no symptoms of pride in his looks or gestures, as elsewhere (Psalm 18:28) we find proud looks condemned. Something more than this, however, may be intended: That while he put a restraint upon the risings of ambition in his heart, he was careful that his eyes should not lend their assistance to the heart in any covetous aspirations after greatness. All the senses, in short, as well as his heart, were subjected to the restraints of humility. In denying that *he walked in,* or *was conversant with, great things,* he must be supposed to refer to the disposition or temper of his soul. For, to hold as he did the office of a Prophet, to be invested with regal dignity, nay, to sit upon the sacred throne of the only-begotten Son of God, not to speak of other distinctions with which he was honored above the generality of men, were great things. But the expression was applicable, in so far as he strictly confined himself to the one object of being serviceable to God and to the Church. Should any still be inclined to lay an undue stress upon the word which is here employed, I would observe that the words *from* or *above me,* at the close of the verse, are to be considered as connected with what David here says of great things, as well as of the things *shut up,* or *hidden,* so that we may read I have *not walked in great things which are above me.* The question, therefore, was not whether the lot of David was mean or exalted; it is enough that he was careful not to pass beyond the proper bounds of his calling. He did not think himself at liberty to move one step unless called to it by God.

His submission in such matters stands contrasted with the presumption of those who, without any call from God, hurry themselves into unwarrantable undertakings, and involve themselves in duties which properly belong to others. For so long as we have a clear call from God, things cannot be said to be shut up or hidden from us, or too great for us, provided we stand ready for all obedience; and, on the other hand, those who yield themselves up to the influence of ambition will soon lose themselves in a labyrinth of perplexity. We see how God confounds the proud and boasted enterprises of the children of this world. They run the full course of their wild career, they turn the earth upside down at their pleasure, and put forth their hand in every direction; they are filled with complacency at the thought of their own talents and industry, and, in a moment, when all their plans have been fully formed, they are entirely overthrown, because there is no solidity in them. There are two different forms which the presumption of those takes who will not submit to be humble followers of God, but must needs run before him. Some rush forward with a reckless precipitancy, and seem as if they would build to the skies; others do not so openly exhibit the inordinateness of their desires, are slower in their movements, and cautiously calculate upon the

future, and yet their presumption appears no less from the very fact, that, with a total oversight of God, as if heaven and earth were subject to them, they pass their decree as to what shall be done by them some ten or twenty years hereafter. These build, as it were, in the deep sea. But never shall it come to the surface, however extended may be the term of their lives; while those who, like David, submit themselves to God, keeping in their own sphere, moderate in their desires, will enjoy a life of tranquillity and assurance.

Psalm 131:2-3

> **2.** If I have not set and quieted my soul like one that is weaned from his mother, my soul is over me as a weaned child. **3.** Israel shall hope in Jehovah from henceforth, and for ever.

2. *If I have not set,* etc. He here employs a figure which appropriately explains what he meant, and likens himself to a weaned child; by which is intended, that he dismissed all the anxieties which disquiet the man of ambition, and was willing to be satisfied with small things. This assertion, which some might be inclined to disbelieve, he makes with an oath, expressed in that particular form of which I have elsewhere taken notice, in which the imprecation is not directly brought forward, but left to be understood, to teach us caution in the use of God's name. [565] As to the words, *to set his soul like a child,* is as if he had said, that he would frame it into such a likeness. And this with the view, as *he declares,* of composing himself to silence. For דוממתי *domaintee,* is formed from דום *dum,* and has the active sense of *reducing to silence.* The *quiet* of soul he alludes to is opposed to those tumultuous desires by which many cause disquietude to themselves, and are the means of throwing the world into agitation. The figure of childhood is elsewhere used in another sense, to convey reprehension. (Isaiah 28:9.)

"Whom shall I teach knowledge? them that are weaned from the milk? and drawn from the breasts?"

where the Prophet censures the people for their slowness of apprehension, and being as incapable of profiting by instruction as infants. In the passage now before us, what is recommended is that simplicity of which Christ spake,

"Unless ye become like this little child, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God." [566] (Matthew 18:3)

The vain desires with which men are carried away originate in their seeking to be wise and careful above what is necessary. David adds accordingly, *my soul over me is quieted,* not as expressing the language

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"לא-אם, A formula of swearing which may be translated *surely* or *indeed.* I have surely so disposed and disciplined my soul as to remove it from any longing after great things, from any ambitious tendencies." — *Phillips.*

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of self-confidence, but speaking as if his soul lay sweetly and peacefully on his bosom, undisturbed by inordinate desires. He contrasts the wayward and tumultuous agitation which prevails in those of a discontented spirit, with the peace which reigns in the man who abides in the calling of the Lord. From the verse with which the Psalm closes, we see the reason why David asserted his having undertaken nothing in the spirit of a carnal ambition. He calls upon Israel to *hope in the Lord,* words which must have been abrupt had it not deeply concerned the common safety of the Church, to know that he sat upon the throne of the kingdom by Divine appointment, in which case the faithful would be certain of the bestowment of the promised blessing. Our hope is of the right kind when we cherish humble and sober views of ourselves, and neither wish nor attempt anything without the leading and approbation of God.

Of all explanations the best is that of considering the comparison to consist between the humbleness and simplicity of the Psalmist's mind, and that of a little child, in whom there does not exist a sufficient consciousness to create an ambition for any worldly object. The comparison is not with יונק, a suckling; for it has a longing after the mother's breast, and, therefore, such a comparison would not be appropriate. The same, indeed, may be said of a child who has only just been weaned; for, in that stage, how often does it cry and mourn after that of which it has been deprived, and the possession of which was just before its chief pleasure? We therefore conclude, that the comparison is intended to be with a child who has been weaned a sufficient time to have forgotten its infantile nutriment, and who is not conscious of any particular desires or cravings, and quietly resigns itself to its mother's care and training. — *Phillips.*

Psalm 132

PSALM 132

The writer of this Psalm, whoever he may have been [567] here, in the name of all the faithful, puts God in remembrance of his promise, that he would never suffer his house or kingdom to fail, but support and defend both.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 132:1-5

1. O Jehovah! Remember David, and all his affliction: **2.** Who sware to Jehovah, vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob. **3.** If; shall enter into the tabernacle of my house, if I shall go up upon the cover of my

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Lightfoot ascribes this Psalm to David, and supposes it to have been composed on the second removal of the Ark from the house of Obededom. (1 Chronicles 15:4, etc.) But the mention of David's name in the tenth verse in the third person, and the terms there employed, militate against his being the Author. Others ascribe it to Solomon, who, they think, wrote it about the time of the removing of the Ark into the Temple, which he had built for it. (2 Chronicles 5:2, etc.) Others are of opinion, that it was composed by Solomon for the solemn services that were celebrated at the dedication of the Temple. "The whole tenor of this Psalm," says Jebb, "is an exact epitome of the Dedication Prayer of Solomon. (2 Chronicles 6) The topics are the same the building the house of the Lord the promise to David the inhabitation of the Almighty; and the concluding sentences of the Dedication, are identical with those expressions of the Psalm in verses 8, 9, 10. There can, therefore, be little question that this Psalm was composed by Solomon." *Jebb's Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms*, etc., volume 2. As this forms one of the "Songs of Degrees," those who conceive that these Psalms were so called because sung by the Jews about the time of their return from Babylon, conclude that Ezra selected this ancient song to be sung at the dedication of the second Temple.

couch, [568] **4.** If I give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids, **5.** Until I, find a place for Jehovah, habitations [569] for the Mighty One of Jacob [570]

1. *O Jehovah! remember David.* Interpreters are not agreed respecting the penman of this Psalm, though there is little doubt that it was either David or Solomon. At the solemn dedication of the Temple, when Solomon prayed, several verses are mentioned in the sacred history as having been quoted by him, from which we may infer that the Psalm was sufficiently well known to the people, or that Solomon applied a few words of it for an occasion in reference to which he had written the whole Psalm. The name of David is prominently mentioned, because it was to him that the continuance of the kingdom and Temple was promised, and though dead, this could not affect the truthfulness of God's word. The Church could very properly pray in the manner which is here done, that God would perform what he had promised to his servant David, not as a private individual, but in favor of all his people. It was therefore a preposterous idea of the Papists to argue from this passage that we may be benefitted by the intercession of the dead. Just as if the faithful were here to be understood as calling up an advocate from the tomb to plead their cause with God, when it is abundantly evident from the context that they look entirely to the covenant which God had made with David, knowing well that though given to one man, it was with the understanding that it should be communicated to all. There is a propriety why mention should be made of his *affliction* or *humiliation.* Some render the word *meekness,* but there is no reason for this whatsoever. In 2 Chronicles 6:42, it is true we read of חסדים*;* that is, *mercies,* which I consider to be there understood in the passive sense, as meaning the benefits

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The expression of going up to one's bed may be illustrated by what Dr. Shaw says of the Moorish houses in Barbary. Having observed that their chambers are spacious, of the same length with the square court, in the sides of which they are built, he adds, "At one end of each chamber there is a little gallery raised three, four, or five feet above the floor, with a balustrade in the front of it, with a few steps likewise leading up to it. Here they place their beds; a situation frequently alluded to in the Holy Scriptures." The language of the text is no doubt hyperbolical, as Calvin observes, being intended to express David's great anxiety to have a house built for the worship of God.

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משכנות We have here the plural put by enallage for the singular." *Phillips.*

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אביר יעקב*abir Yaaicob,* the *Mighty One of Jacob.* By this expression, which occurs both here and in Psalm 132:2, the Psalmist evidently has a reference to the Patriarch's own words which he employed in his blessing to Joseph, where God is emphatically so designated. (Genesis 49:24.) From this Hebrew name אביר, *abir,* and כביר, *cabir,* which is synonymous, probably came the *Cabiri,* or the great gods of the Grecians, and the *Abiry* of the Druids. See Thes. Antiq. Roman. tom. 5 page 760; Bryant's Myth. volume 2: page 473; and Cooke's Patriarchal and Druidical Religion.

which had been conferred upon David; but I am clearly of opinion that here the reference is to the anxious cares, the numerous difficulties and struggles which David had to undergo, so long as he was kept by God in suspense. Remember, as if it had been said, the great anxieties, the heavy troubles, which David endured before he came to the kingdom, and how fervently and earnestly he desired to build the Temple, though he was not allowed to do it during his whole life. The dangers, labors, and troubles which he underwent, must clearly have confirmed the faith of God's people in the truth of the divine oracle, inasmuch as they showed how firmly and certainly he was himself convinced of the truth of what God had spoken. Some insert the copulative reading, *remember David and affliction;* but of this I do not approve. The particle את *eth,* rather denotes that special respect in which they would have David remembered, viz., as regarded his afflictions, or that he might come forth before the view of God with his afflictions, and obtain his desire according to them.

2. *Who sware to Jehovah.* One affliction of David is particularly mentioned, That he was filled with perplexity on account of the situation of the Ark. Moses had commanded the people ages before to worship God in the place which he had chosen. (Deuteronomy 12:5.) David knew that the full time had now arrived when the particular place should be made apparent, and yet was in some hesitation — a state of things which was necessarily attended with much anxiety, especially to one who was so ardently attached to the worship of God, and so vehemently desirous to have the fixed presence of God with the nation, for its defense and government. It is said that he swore to see to the building of the Temple, and to postpone every other consideration to the accomplishment of this object. [571] The objurgation may seem to assume a somewhat too harsh and severe form, when he declares his resolution to refuse sleep, his food, and the common supports of life, until a place should have been set apart for the Temple. To have acted in this way would have been to show an inconsiderate zeal, for it did not become him to prescribe the time to God, nor was it possible for him to endure any number of fasting days or sleepless nights. Then when are we to consider that this vow was taken? I am aware indeed that some Hebrew writers judge it to have been at that period when he fell down trembling at the sight of the angel; but, without denying that the plot of ground was pointed out to him immediately after that circumstance, it is altogether a forced and unsupported conjecture to say, that what had so long been in the thoughts of David was conceived at that exact time. Nor is there anything which should prevent us from supposing that his language

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This oath is not mentioned in any of the historical books of the Old Testament. There is, however, allusion in them to his vow on the subject, although he was forbidden by God to perform it. See 2 Samuel 7:2, 3; and 1 Chronicles 22:7-10.

is here to be understood as hyperbolical, and that this was not a vow in the strict form of it, but to be understood in a qualified sense that he would never enter his house, nor ascend his couch, without feeling a concern upon this subject. He felt persuaded that the settlement of the sanctuary was intimately connected with the state of the kingdom; and we need not be surprised that so long as he was kept in uncertainty regarding the place of the Temple, he should scarcely have felt assured of his very crown, and have been incapable of sharing the ordinary comforts of life with any satisfaction. Still, where Scripture has been silent we can say nothing certain; and I may throw out these things as what seems to me the most probable interpretation. And I think the sense of the passage may very well bear to be that which I have mentioned, That until informed of the place of the Ark's destined residence, David was full of concern and anxiety, dwelling in his house, or when he lay upon his bed. As to the vow itself, this and other passages afford no ground for supposing, with the Papists, that God approves of whatever vows they may utter, without regard to the nature of them. To vow unto God that which he has himself declared to be agreeable to him, is a commendable practice; but it is too much presumption on our part to say that we will rush upon such vows as suit our carnal inclination. The great thing is that we consider what is agreeable to his will, otherwise we may be found depriving him of that wherein indeed his principal right lies, for with him "to obey is better than sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22.)

Psalm 132:6-9

> **6.** Lo! We heard of it at Ephratha; we found it in the fields of the wood. **7.** We will go into his habitations, we will worship at his footstool. **8.** Arise, O Jehova! Into thy rest, thou, and the Ark of thy strength. **9.** Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy meek ones rejoice.

6. *Lo! we heard of it at Ephratha.* This verse is obscure, and we need not wonder at the difficulty which interpreters have felt in ascertaining its meaning. First, the relative pronoun [572] being of the feminine gender has no antecedent, and we are forced to suppose that it must refer to the word *habitation* in the foregoing sentence, although there it reads *habitations,* in the plural number. But the principal difficulty lies in the word *Ephratha,* because the Ark of the Covenant was never placed there. If the reference be to past time, Shiloh should have been the place mentioned; but as it is plain the Psalmist speaks of its new *residence,* the question returns, why Ephratha and not Zion is specified? Some would get rid of the difficulty by resorting to a frivolous conceit, That the place had two names, and that the plat of ground which was shown to David (2 Samuel 24:18; 1 Chronicles 21:18) was called Ephratha, because it was *fertile,* on which account Jerome

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styles it καρποφοριαν, and yet is not very consistent with himself, for in another place, when he gets into his allegories, he most absurdly interprets it to mean *frenzy.* I have no doubt whatever that the word comes from פרה*parah,* which means to *bear fruit;* just as Bethlehem, which is situated in the same quarter, was called for its fruitfulness "the house of bread." But any conjecture founded upon the mere name of the place is necessarily unsatisfactory, and we must seek some more probable explanation. I might begin by mentioning one which is not without force. A rumor had spread that the Ark of the Covenant was to be deposited in Ephratha, which was the place of David's nativity [573] , and we may suppose at least that his native soil would seem to many the most appropriate locality for the Ark and Sanctuary. We can easily understand how such an opinion should get abroad. In that case the hearing referred to by the Psalmist alludes to the report which had been circulated. Should this be taken as the meaning, the verb would be in the pluperfect tense, *we HAD heard that it was in Ephratha,* but we found it in the woods, that is, in a place by no means so attractive or well cultivated. Jerusalem might be said to be woody, because we know that it was surrounded by mountains, and that it was by no means in a part of the country which was noted for fruitfulness. There is another meaning which I would submit to the judgment of the reader. Let us suppose that the faithful here say that they had *heard of its being in Ephratha,* because God had spoken still greater things of Ephratha than of Zion. It is true that the memorable prediction (Micah 5:2) had not yet been given, yet it may have been that God had already issued some very great and signal prophecy regarding Bethlehem. We have heard, as if they had said, of Bethlehem,

That is, the objective affix ה, which appears at each of the verbs in this verse, and which is translated *it.* By some it is thought that the antecedent is ארון, *aron, ark,* which, although it is generally masculine, is yet sometimes feminine, as in 1 Samuel 4:17; 2 Chronicles 8:11. Such is the opinion of Dr. Lightfoot, who explains the verse thus: "We heard of it (the ark) in Ephratah, (that is, Shiloh,) a city of Ephraim; we found it in the fields of the wood, that is in Kirjath-jearim. 1 Samuel 7:1," etc. (Lightfoot's Chorogr. Cent., c. 45.) Others consider the הto refer to *habitations,* in the preceding verse; and though that noun is in the plural, it is, as noticed in a preceding note, put by enallage for the singular. Rosenmuller thinks this opinion which is the one adopted by Calvin the more probable and no doubt at first sight the most obvious meaning is, that the pronoun *it* refers to the spot which David had discovered as a suitable place on which to erect the house of God. Walford, indeed, objects that "this cannot be intended, because the site of the Temple was neither at Ephratah, nor in the fields of the wood, or of Jaar;" and he gives at some length an ingenious explanation of this difficult passage, extracted chiefly from the German writer Tilingius. This objection, it will be perceived, is removed by one of the expositions suggested by Calvin, which supposes that the allusion is first to a report of Ephratha being the place where the Temple was to be built; and next to the certain information which the people of Israel afterwards obtained that Jerusalem was the spot which God himself had selected. Whether this however is the correct explanation of the verse, it is not so easy to determine.

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Bethlehem, the place of David's nativity, is called Ephratha in Genesis 35:19.

but it is only as yet a dim expectation which we have in reference to that place, and in the meantime we must worship God in this place of the woods, looking forward to the fulfillment of the promise regarding Ephratha. This interpretation, however, is far fetched, nor would I venture to adopt it, or at least recommend it to others as the right one. The simpler way seems to be to understand the word *Ephratha* as applying to David personally, and not so much to the place of that name, the declaration of the Psalmist being to this effect that now when God had chosen a king from Ephratha, the place would necessarily at the same time be marked out for the Ark of the Covenant. It is said, *have heard,* for the fixing of the place of the Sanctuary depended upon the will of God; nor until this was declared could men determine it according to their own fancy. The fact that now upon David's mounting the throne this illustrious oracle concerning the permanent settlement of the Temple was to take effect, afforded good ground of thanksgiving. We have proof here that the people of God did not deposit the Ark at random in any place, but had express directions from God himself as to the place where he would be worshipped all proper worship proceeding from faith, while faith cometh by hearing. (Romans 10:17.) Mount Zion had no peculiar excellencies almost to recommend it; but having once heard that it was the object of God's choice, they show that they consider it wrong to call the matter in question.

7. *We will go into his habitations.* Here he dictates to all the Lord's people a common form of mutual exhortation to the duty of going up to the place which had been pointed out by the Angel. The clearer the intimation God may have given of his will, the more alacrity should we show in obeying it. Accordingly, the Psalmist intimates that now when the people had ascertained beyond all doubt the place of God's choice, they should admit of no procrastination, and show all the more alacrity as God was calling them more closely, and with a more privileged familiarity, to himself, now that he had selected a certain place of rest amongst them. He thus passes a virtual condemnation upon the lukewarmness of those whose zeal does not increase in proportion to the measure of revelation which they enjoy. *Habitations* are spoken of in the plural number, and this it may be (though we may doubt whether the Psalmist had such minute distinctions in his eye) because there was in the temple an inner sanctuary, a middle apartment, and then the court. It is of more importance to attend to the epithet which follows, where the Psalmist calls the Ark of the Covenant *God's footstool,* to intimate that the sanctuary could never contain the immensity of God's essence, as men were apt absurdly to imagine. The mere outward temple with all its majesty being no more than his footstool, his people were called upon to look upwards to the heavens and fix their contemplations with due reverence upon God himself. We know that they were prohibited from forming any low and carnal view of him. Elsewhere, it is true, we find it called "God's face," (Psalm 28:8,) to confirm the faith of the people in looking to this divine symbol which was set before them. Both ideas are

brought out very distinctly in the passage before us, that, on the one hand, it is mere superstition to suppose God confined to the temple, and that, on the other hand, the external symbols are not without their use in the Church that, in short, we should improve these as helps to our faith, but not rest in them. While God dwells in heaven, and is above all heavens, we must avail ourselves of helps in rising to the knowledge of him; and in giving us symbols of his presence, he sets, as it were, his feet upon the earth, and suffers us to touch them. It is thus that the Holy Spirit condescends for our profit, and in accommodation to our infirmity, raising our thoughts to heavenly and divine things by these worldly elements. In reference to this passage, we are called to notice the amazing ignorance of the Second Council of Nice, in which these worthy weak Fathers [574] of ours wrested it into a proof of idolatry, as if David or Solomon commanded the people to erect statues to God and worship them. Now, that the Mosiac ceremonies are abolished we worship at the footstool of God, when we yield a reverential submission to his word, and rise from the sacraments to a true spiritual service of him. Knowing that God has not descended from heaven directly or in his absolute character, but that his feet, are withdrawn from us, being placed on a footstool, we should be careful to rise to him by the intermediate steps. Christ is he not only on whom the feet of God rest, but in whom the whole fullness of God's essence and glory resides, and in him, therefore, we should seek the Father. With this view he descended, that we might rise heavenward.

8. *Arise, O Jehovah?* [575] Such language as this, inviting the great God who fills heaven and earth to come into a new place of residence, might seem strange and harsh, but the external symbols of religion which God had appointed are spoken of in these exalted terms to put honor upon them, and the better to ensure to them the regard of God's people. Should God institute no medium of intercourse, and call us to a direct communication with heaven, the great distance at which we stand from him would strike us with dismay, and paralyze invocation. Although, therefore, he does not thereby change place himself, he is felt by us to draw sensibly nearer. It was thus that he descended amongst his ancient people by the Ark of the Covenant, which he designed to be a visible emblem of his power and grace being present amongst them. Accordingly, the second clause of the verse

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"Boni paterculi." — *Lat.*

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Arise, O Jehovah! were the words which Moses used (Numbers 10:35) whenever in the journey through the wilderness the Ark moved forward; and this and the two following verses form a part of the prayer which Solomon offered at the dedication of the Temple, (2 Chronicles 6:41, 42,) which might be considered as the restingplace of God and of the Ark. The Ark is here called "the Ark of thy strength" that is, the symbol of thy power and majesty. This phrase is found only in this place and in the passage above cited.

is of an exegetical *character,* informing the Church that God was to be understood as having come in the sense of making a conspicuous display of his power in connection with the Ark. Hence it is called the *Ark of his strength,* not a mere dead idle shadow to look upon, but what certainly declared God's nearness to his Church. By the *rest* spoken of we are to understand Mount Zion, because, as we shall see afterwards, God was ever afterwards to be worshiped only in that place.

9. *Let thy priests,* etc. He now prays in general for the prosperity of the Church, as what stood intimately connected with the previous statement, the promotion of our best interests being the great end for which God dwells amongst us. Some construe the words into a wish that the worship of God might be maintained in its purity, and think that the Psalmist prays that the priests might be clothed with holiness in allusion to their sacred garments. Upon a closer view of the words and the whole context, I am rather inclined to be of another opinion, and to consider this a prayer that the righteousness of God might be displayed amongst the people, being as an ornament upon the priests, and communicating joy to all the people. Thus I take *righteousness* to mean the fruit or effects of righteousness, and this the righteousness of God, not of men. The *priests* are of course mentioned first, as holding a higher place in the appointed order of the Church; while they have their due place assigned to them, it is still the Church collectively to which the prayer refers as though the Psalmist requested that the glory of this righteousness should be reflected from the priests upon the people generally. God is said to clothe us with his righteousness when he appears as our Savior and help, defends us by his power, and shows in his government of us that we are the objects of his care. The *rejoicing* which is spoken of must have reference to a life of happiness. And these two things being joined together may convince us that by *righteousness* nothing else is meant than God's guardianship and government. Consistently with this we find it said afterwards "Thy priests shall be clothed with salvation;" and I may add, that Solomon, in the solemn prayer already referred to, (2 Chronicles 6:41,) makes no mention of righteousness, but of salvation. I have repeatedly given the reason why the saints of God are called חסידים *chasidim,* or *merciful ones,* because mercy or beneficence is that grace which assimilates us most to God.

> Psalm 132:10-12
>
> **10.** For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thy Christ. **11.** Jehovah has sworn to David in truth, nor will he turn from it; of the fruit of thy belly will I set upon thy throne. **12.** If thy children will keep my covenant and my, testimonies which I will teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

10. *For thy servant David's sake, etc.* Some would connect the first part of the verse with the preceding, without adducing reasons against this, it

must at once strike the reader that this verse must be taken together. Before entering upon an explanation of the Psalmist's meaning I may just say that it would be to put a forced sense upon the words were we to understand by *turning away the face of thy Christ* depriving us of a view of the Redeemer. We may infer with certainty from Solomon's prayer, that they are a request that God would show favor to the king. The same expression is employed by Bathsheba in the request which she made to her son Solomon, "Turn not away thy face," meaning that he would not cast her out of his sight. (1 Kings 2:20.) It is an expression tantamount to *shewing displeasure;* and we might say a word or two in reference to it because the other idea of referring the words to our Redeemer is plausible, and might mislead persons of little discernment. Nothing more, then, is here asked than that God would not despise and reject the prayers which David had preferred in the name of all the people. The favor is asked for David's sake, only because God had made a covenant with him. So far as that privilege was concerned, he did not stand exactly upon the footing of any other ordinary man. The prayer, in short, is to the effect that God in remembrance of his promise would show favor to the posterity of David, for though this prayer for the Church must be considered as dictated to each of the kings, the foundation was in the person of David. The Church was thus taught figuratively that Christ, as Mediator, would make intercession for all his people. As yet he had not appeared in the flesh, nor entered by the sacrifice of himself into the Holiest of all, and in the meantime the people had a figurative Mediator to embolden them in their supplications.

11. *Jehovah sware unto David.* [576] Here he brings out the idea still more clearly, that the only thing he had respect to in David was the free promise which God had made to him. He takes notice of the fact, as confirmatory to his faith, that God had ratified the promise by oath. As to the particular words used, he speaks of God having sworn in truth, that is, not fallaciously, but in good faith, so that no doubt could be entertained of his departing from his word. The thing promised was a successor to David of his own seed; for though he did not want children, he had already almost despaired of the regular succession, from the fatal confusions which prevailed in his family, and the discord which internally rent his household, and might eventually ruin it. Solomon was particularly marked out, but the promise extended to a continuous line of successors. This arrangement affected the welfare of the whole Church, and not of David only, and the people of Godare encouraged by the assurance, that the kingdom which he had established amongst them was possessed of a sacred and enduring stability. Both king and people needed to be reminded of this divine foundation upon which it rested. We

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Compare Psalm 89:48. The sacred histories make no mention of such an oath, but a promise to the same effect is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12; 2 Kings 8:25.

see how insolently the sovereigns of this world often deport themselves filled with pride, though in words they may acknowledge that they reign by the grace of God. How often, besides, do they violently usurp the throne; how rarely do they come to it in a regular manner. A distinction is therefore drawn between the kingdoms of this world and that which David held by the sacred tenure of God's own oracle.

12. *If thy sons keep my covenant.* More distinct notice is now taken of the descending line, by which the perpetuity of the succession, as I have already shown, is pointed out. Sons of princes commonly succeed them in this world by right of inheritance, but there was this undoubted peculiarity of privilege in the case of David's kingdom, that God expressly declared that he would always have a descendant from his body upon the throne, not for one age merely, but for ever. For though that kingdom was for a time destroyed, it was restored again, and had its everlasting establishment in Christ. Here the question occurs Did the continuance of the kingdom rest upon good conduct, or human merit? for the terms of this agreement would seem to suggest that God's covenant would not be made good, unless men faithfully performed their part, and that thus the effect of the grace promised was suspended upon obedience. We must remember, in the first place, that the covenant was perfectly gratuitous, so far as related to God's promise of sending a Savior and Redeemer, because this stood connected with the original adoption of those to whom the promise was made, which was itself free. Indeed the treachery and rebellion of the nation did not prevent God from sending forth his Son, and this was a public proof that he was not influenced by the consideration of their good conduct. Hence Paul says, (Romans 3:3,)

"What if some did not believe
is therefore the truth of God of none effect?"

intimating that God had not withdrawn his favor from the Jews, having chosen them freely of his grace. We know, too, that notwithstanding their efforts, as if it had been of set purpose, to destroy the promises, God met their malicious opposition with displays of his marvellous love, made his truth and faithfulness to emerge in a most triumphant manner, and showed that he stood firm to his own purpose, independently of any merit of theirs. This may serve to show in what sense the covenant was not conditional; but as there were other things which were accessories to the covenant, [577] a condition was appended, to the effect that God would bless them if they obeyed his commandments. The Jews, for declining from this obedience, were removed into exile. God seemed at that time "to make void or profane his covenant," as we have seen elsewhere. The dispersion was a kind of breaking of the covenant, but only in part and to appearance. This will be

577 "Sed quia secum trahebat alias accessiones." *Lat.*

brought out more clearly by reference to what we learn, from sacred history, to have occurred shortly after David's death. By the defection of the ten tribes the kingdom suffered a severe blow, only a small portion of it being left. Afterwards it was reduced by fresh disasters, till at length it was torn up by the root. And although their return from the captivity gave some hope of restoration, there was no one bearing the name of king, and any dignity that attached to Zerubbabel was but obscure, till kings sprung up who were spurious, and not of the right line. In this case would we not have said that the covenant of God was abolished? and yet, as the Redeemer came forth from the very source predicted, it is plain that it stood firm and stable. In this sense it is said by Ezekiel of the crown, (Ezekiel 21:26,)

"Remove the diadem; reversed, reversed, reversed shall it be,
till he come whose it is;"

where the Prophet might seem to cancel what God had written with his own hand, and nullify his promise, for the safety of the people stood intimately connected with the throne, according to the expression we find in the Lamentations,

"The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord,
was taken in their pits." (Lamentations 4:20)

The Prophet, we say, might seem to strike directly against the covenant made by God, when he speaks of the crown being taken away, and yet what he adds in the subsequent part of the sentence, proves that covenant, in so far as it was gratuitous, to have been everlasting and inviolable, since he holds out the promise of the Redeemer, notwithstanding the conduct of the Jews, which was such as to exclude them temporarily from the divine, favor. God, on the one hand, took vengeance upon the people for their ingratitude, so as to show that the terms of the covenant did not run conditionally to no purpose; while on the other, at the coming of Christ there was a free performance of what had been freely promised, the crown being set upon Christ's head. The obedience which God demands is particularly stated to be the obedience of his covenant, to teach us that we must not serve him by human inventions, but confine ourselves within the prescription of his word.

Psalm 132:13-16

13. Seeing that Jehovah has chosen Zion, [578] he hath desired it for his habitation. **14.** This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell: because I have desired it. **15.** Blessing I will bless her provision, I will satisfy

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Solomon's Temple was built on mount Moriah, and not on mount Zion. But as Moriah was just at the end of Zion, it was sometimes reckoned a part of that mount, and was called by its name. Even the Temple and its courts are so designated, (Psalm 65:1; and Psalm 84:7.) Zion may, however, be here put for Jerusalem in general.

her poor with bread; **16.** And I will clothe her priests with salvation
[579] and her merciful ones shall shout aloud for joy.

13. *Seeing that Jehovah has chosen Zion.* By coupling the kingdom with the priesthood and sanctuary service, he declares it still more emphatically to have been of divine and not human appointment. The connection is not to be overlooked, on another account. The true strength and stability of that kingdom were in Christ, and Christ's kingdom is inseparable from his priesthood. This may explain why mention is made of Zion being chosen. God decreed nothing in relation to the kingdom, but what had a certain connection with the sanctuary, the more perfectly to prefigure the Mediator who was to come, and who was both priest and king, after the order of Melchizedek. The kingdom and tabernacle were, therefore, closely allied. Notice is taken of the reason upon which the choice proceeded that mount Zion was not chosen for any excellency belonging to it, as we have seen, (Psalm 68:16,) but because such was the will of God. His good pleasure is specified in contrast with any merit in the place itself. This is another proof of what we have already stated that the covenant made by God with David proceeded from his mere goodness.

14. *This is my rest for ever.* The same truth is here put into the mouth of God, to give it additional weight; and it is declared not to have been in vain that the Temple had been erected, since God would show effectually and by practical testimonies the delight which he had in the worship of his own appointment. God's resting, or talking up his habitation, are expressions which denote his being present with men in the manifestation of his power. Thus *he dwelt in Zion,* in the sense that there his people worshipped him according to the prescription of his law, and found besides the benefit of the service in his favorable answer to their requests. It was eventually seen, in a very striking manner, that this was the promise of an infallible God, whet, after the Temple had been overthrown, the altar cast down, and the whole frame of legal service interrupted, the glory of the Lord afterwards returned to it once more, and remained there up to the advent of Christ. We all know in what a wicked and shameful manner the Jews abused the divine promise which is here made, under the impression that it necessarily laid God under an obligation to favor them, taking occasion from if, in the pride of their hearts, to despise, and even cruelly persecute the Prophets. Luther on this account calls it "the bloody promise;" for, like all hypocrites who make God's holy name a covert for iniquity, they did not hesitate, when

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In Psalm 132:9, the prayer of the Psalmist to God is, that the priests may be clothed with righteousness; and in this concluding portion of the Psalm, where God is declaring what he will do to the king and city of his people, he promises to grant even more than was asked for in this petition; for, says he, 'I will clothe her priests with *salvation;'* not with righteousness only, but with what is the consequence or reward of righteousness, viz., salvation." *Phillips.*

charged with the, worst, crimes, to insist that it was beyond the power of the Prophets to take from them privileges which God had bestowed. With them to assert that the Temple could be stripped of its glory, was equivalent to charging God with falsehood, and impeaching his faithfulness. Under the influence of this spirit of vain confidence they proceeded such inconceivable lengths in shedding innocent blood. Were the Devil of Rome armed with pretensions as splendid, what bounds would be set to its audacity? As it is, we see how fiercely, and with what bloody pride it arrogates the name of the Church, while outraging all religion, in open contempt of God and flagrant violation of humanity. But what of that? the hierarchy would otherwise fall, and this must stand, if Christ would not desert his spouse the Church! The refutation of such a plea is not far to seek. The Church is limited to no one place: now that the glory of the Lord shines through all the earth, his rest is where Christ and his members are. It is necessary that we rightly understand what the Psalmist says of the everlasting continuance of the Temple. The advent of Christ was "the time of reformation," and the figures of the former Testament, instead of being then proved or rendered vain, were substantiated, and received their fulfillment in him. If it be still objected that mount Zion is here spoken of as the everlasting residence of God, it is sufficient to answer that the whole world became an enlarged mount Zion upon the advent of Christ.

15. *Blessing I will bless, etc.* God's dwelling in the midst of the people was what constituted the great source of their blessedness; and now some of the proofs are mentioned which he would give of his fatherly regard, such as preparing and administering their ordinary food, relieving their wants, clothing their priests with salvation, and filling all his people with joy and gladness. This it was necessary should be added, for unless we have ocular demonstration of the divine goodness, we are not spiritual enough to rise upwards to the apprehension of it. We have a twofold demonstration of it in the matter of our daily food; first in the earth's being enriched so as to furnish us with corn, and wine, and oil; and again in the earth's produce being multiplied, through a secret power, so as to provide us with sufficient nourishment. There is here a promise that God would exert a special care over his own people to supply them with food, and that though they might not have a great abundance, yet the poor would be satisfied. We must not omit mentioning the remarkable and ludicrous mistake which the Papists have made upon this passage, and which shows the judicial stupidity they lie under to be such, that there is nothing so absurd they will not swallow. By confounding two letters into one, for *victus* they read *vidus,* and then conjectured that this must be a mutilation for *viduas blessing I will bless her widows!* Thus they made "*widows*" out of "food" an extraordinary blunder, which we would scarcely credit, were it not a fact that they sing the word out in their temples to this present day. [580] But God, who blesses the food

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of his own people, has infatuated their minds, and left them to confound everything in their absurd reveries and triflings. The inspired penman goes on to repeat what he had already said of other blessings, only the term *salvation* is used instead of *righteousness,* but in the same sense I already mentioned. Some understand it to have reference to purity of doctrine and holiness of life; but this seems a forced interpretation, and he means simply that they would be safe and happy under the divine protection.

Psalm 132:17-18

17. There will I make the horn of David to bud; I have prepared a lamp [581] for my Christ. **18.** His enemies will I clothe with shame, and upon, him shall his crown flourish. [582]

17. *There will I make,* etc. He reverts to the state of the kingdom, which God had promised to take under his care and protection. It is necessary that we should attend to the peculiar force of the words employed *I will make the horn of David to bud* Now there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the term *horn,* which in Hebrew is very commonly used to signify *force* or *power;* but we are to mark that by the *horn budding* there is an allusion to the humble original of the kingdom, and the singular restorations which it underwent. David was taken from the menial drudgery of the sheepfold, and from the lowly cottage where he dwelt, the youngest son of his father, who was no more than an ordinary shepherd, and was advanced to the throne, and rose by a series of unlooked for successes. Under Jeroboam the kingdom was at an early period so effectually cut down again, that it was only by budding forth from time to time that it maintained itself in a moderate degree of advancement. Afterwards it underwent various shocks, which must have issued in its destruction, had it not still budded anew. And when the people were dispersed in the captivity, what must have become of them, had not God made the broken and trampled horn of David, again to bud? Isaiah

"צידה, *her provision.* The word ציד signifies food which is taken in hunting, and then it is used to express food of any kind — provision generally. The Septuagint has θήραν, which denotes provision that has been hunted, and so obtained; but another reading of the Greek version τὴν χήραν αὐτῶς, which has been followed by the Vulgate, Arabic, and Ethiopic; the rendering of the Vulgate being *viduam ejus* This corrupt reading is noticed by Jerome." *Phillips.*

581

"Some think the lamp (Exodus 27:20) of the Tabernacle to be here alluded to. Chrysostom and Cyrill understand that the lamp here mentioned has a prophetic reference to John the Baptist." — *Cresswell.*

582

The idea of the crown flourishing on the head, seems to have been suggested by the ancient crowns bestowed upon victors; which consisted of certain species of evergreens, as the bay, laurel, ivy, dive, myrtle, etc.

accordingly seems to have had this in his eye when he compared Christ to a rod which should spring not from tree in full growth, but from a trunk or stem. (Isaiah 11:1.) To the prophecy now before us Zechariah perhaps refers when he says, "Behold the man whose name is the Branch," (Zechariah 6:12,) intimating that in this way only could the power and dignity of the kingdom be restored after the dismemberment and ravages to which it had been exposed. In 2 Samuel 23:5, David makes use of the word employed in the verse before us, but in somewhat a different sense, referring to the continual advancement of the kingdom unto further measures of prosperity. Here the inspired penman rather refers to the singular manner in which God would cause the horn of David to revive again, when at any time it might seem broken and withered. The figure of *the lamp* is much to the same *effect,* and occurs in many other places of Scripture, being a prophecy very generally in the mouths of the people. The meaning is, that the kingdom, though it underwent occasional obscurations, would never be wholly extinguished under the calamities which overtook it, being as the lamp of God constantly burning, and pointing out safety to the Lord's people, though not shining to a great distance. At that time all the illumination enjoyed was but the feeble lamp which shone in Jerusalem; now Christ, the sun of righteousness, sheds a full radiance all over the world.

18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame.* The priests were said above "to be clothed with righteousness and salvation," now the enemies of David are represented as "clothed with shame." It is not enough that all go well within. God must keep us from the various harms and evils which come upon us from without, and hence we have this second promise added, which is one wherein we recognize often the goodness of God even more than in the blessings which he may shower upon us in the day of prosperity. The greater that fear which seizes upon us when exposed to aggression from enemies, the more are we sensibly awakened to take hold of divine help. The passage teaches us that the Church and people of God will never enjoy such peace on earth as altogether to escape being assaulted by the variety of enemies which Satan stirs up for their destruction. It is enough to have it declared, upon divine authority, that their attempts shall be unsuccessful, and that they will retire eventually with ignominy and disgrace. The, clause which follows has been variously interpreted. The verb which we have translated *to flourish,* in the Hiphil conjugation means sometimes *to see,* so that some have explained the words In that place shall the crown of David be seen, when the horn shall have been made to bud. Some derive the word from ציץ*, tsits, a plate,* as if it had been said that the crown of the king would be resplendent with plates of gold. But I consider that the crown is here said to *flourish,* just as formerly the allusion was to budding or germinating. Isaiah, on the other hand, speaks (Isaiah 28:5) of the crown of drunkenness of Ephraim as being a fading flower. Thus we have it here declared that

however frail to appearance the crown of David might be in his posterity, it would be invigorated by some secret virtue, and flourish for ever.

Psalm 133

PSALM 133

A Psalm of thanksgiving for that holy concord which prevailed in the nation, and which the Lord's people are earnestly exhorted to maintain.

A Song of Degrees of David.

Psalm 133:1-3

1. Behold! how good, and how becoming, that brethren [583] should even dwell together! **2.** Like the precious ointment upon the head, that descendeth upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, which descendeth upon the skirt of his garments. [584] **3.** Like the dew of

583

The word *brethren* is not limited to those who are descended from the same parents; it denotes such as are members of the same community, profess the same holy religion, and are governed by the same institutions. All the people of Israel are in the first instance here addressed.

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Kimchi, Jarchi, and others, instead of "to the *skirts,*" translate "to the *collar* of his garment." This seems to give the true meaning of the original, which implies that the head and beard of Aaron only were anointed, and that the costly sacerdotal robes were thus preserved from an unction, which must inevitably have spoiled them. For an account of this ointment and of its sprinkling on Aaron, and his sons, see Exodus 30:23-25, 30; Leviticus 8:12. When Aaron was consecrated High Priest the oil was poured on him, whilst on the other priests it was only sprinkled.

Hermon, [585] which descendeth upon the mountains of Zion, [586] for there [587] Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore.

1. *Behold how good,* etc. I have no doubt that David in this Psalm renders thanks to God for the peace and harmony which had succeeded a long and melancholy state of confusion and division in the kingdom, and that he would exhort all individually to study the maintenance of peace. This is the subject enlarged upon, at least so far as the shortness of the Psalm admits of it. There was ample ground to praise the goodness of God in the highest terms, for uniting in one a people which had been so deplorably divided. When he first came to the kingdom the larger part of the nation considered him in the light of an enemy to the public good, and were alienated from him. Indeed so mortal was the feud which existed, that nothing else than the destruction of the party in opposition seemed to hold out the prospect of peace. The hand of God was wonderfully seen, and most unexpectedly, in the concord which ensued among them, when these who had been inflamed with the most violent antipathy cordially coalesced. This [588] peculiarity in the circumstances which called forth the Psalm has been unfortunately by interpreters, who have considered that David merely

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There is a mountain called Hermon, which is the highest of the ridge of mountains designated Anti-Lebanon, and which is situated in the northern border of the country beyond Jordan. This, however, is not the mountain supposed to be here intended, but another of the same name lying within the land of Canaan on the west of the river Jordan. It is described by Buckingham as a range of hills running for several miles east and west, and forming the southern boundary of the plain of Esdraelon, overlooked in which Mount Tabor is situated. Maundrell, who, in his journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem had a full view of Tabor and Hermon at about six or seven hours' distance to the eastward, speaking of the copious dews which fell in that part of the country, says, "We were sufficiently instructed by experience what the Psalmist means by the dew of Hermon, our tents being as wet with it as if it had rained all night." — *Journey.*

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Calvin gives the construction of these words as it is in the Hebrew text. But to make them intelligible something must be supplied. As Hermon and Zion are many miles distant from each other, it would be absurd to speak of the dews of the former as falling on the latter, not to mention the difficulty of understanding how the dew of one mountain can descend upon another. The translators of our English Bible repeat the words *like the dew* before *which descended;* and the insertion of this supplement is fully justified, as it is the most natural way of bringing out an intelligent meaning.

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"The particles, שם כי, refer not to Zion, but are put as introducing the reason of the goodness spoken of in Psalm 133:1, חיים." — *Phillips.* Others, as Lowth, maintain that שמmust refer to Zion, and that to it the blessing must also refer. "May not שמmean the place wherever brethren dwell together in unity?" — *Archbishop Seeker.*

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"Les expositeurs laissent passer cette circonstanee, et mal, comme si David louoit generalement, et sans son propre regard, le consentement fraternel, etc." *Fr.*

passes a general commendation upon brotherly union, without any such particular reference. The exclamation with which the Psalm opens, *Behold!* is particularly expressive, not only as setting the state of things visibly before our eyes, but suggesting a tacit contrast between the delightfulness of peace and those civil commotions which had wellnigh rent the kingdom asunder. He sets forth the goodness of God in exalted terms, the Jews having by long experience of intestine feuds, which had gone far to ruin the nation, learned the inestimable value of union. That this is the sense of the passage appears still further from the particle גם, *gam,* at the end of the verse. It is not to be understood with some, who have mistaken the sense of the Psalmist, as being a mere copulative, but as adding emphasis to the context. We, as if he had said, who were naturally brethren, had become so divided, as to view one another with a more bitter hatred than any foreign foe, but now how well is it that we should cultivate a spirit of brotherly concord!

There can at the same time be no doubt; that the Holy Ghost is to be viewed as commending in this passage that mutual harmony which should subsist amongst all God's children, and exhorting us to make every endeavor to maintain it. So long as animosities divide us, and heartburnings prevail amongst us, we may be brethren no doubt still by common relation to God, but cannot be judged one so long as we present the appearance of a broken and dismembered body. As we are one in God the Father, and in Christ, the union must be ratified amongst us by reciprocal harmony, and fraternal love. Should it so happen in the providence of God, that the Papists should return to that holy concord which they have apostatized from, it would be in such terms as these that we would be called to render thanksgiving unto God, and in the meantime we are bound to receive into our brotherly embraces all such as cheerfully submit themselves to the Lord. We are to set ourselves against those turbulent spirits which the devil will never fail to raise up in the Church, and be sedulous to retain intercourse with such as show a docile and tractable disposition. But we cannot extend this intercourse to those who obstinately persist in error, since the condition of receiving them as brethren would be our renouncing him who is Father of all, and from whom all spiritual relationship takes its rise. The peace which David recommends is such as begins in the true head, and this is quite enough to refute the unfounded charge of schism and division which has been brought against us by the Papists, while we have given abundant evidence of our desire that they would *coalesce* with us in God's truth, which is the only bond of holy union.

3. *Like the precious ointment upon the head.* We have here clear proof that David, as we have just said, holds all true union among brethren to take its rise from God, and to have this for its legitimate object, that all may be brought to worship God in purity, and call upon iris name with one consent. Would the similitude have been borrowed from holy ointment if it had not

been to denote, that religion must always hold the first place? [589] Any concord, it is thus insinuated, which may prevail amongst men, is insipid, if not pervaded by a sweet savor of God's worship. We maintain, therefore, that men are to be united amongst themselves in mutual affection, with this as the great end., that they may be placed together under the government of God. If there be any who disagree with these terms, we would do well rather to oppose them strenuously, than purchase peace at the expense of God's honor. We must hold, that when mention is made of the Priest, it is to intimate, that concord takes its rise in the true and pure worship of God, while by the *beard and skirts of the garments,* we are led to understand that the peace which springs from Christ as the head, is diffused through the whole length and breadth of the Church. The other figure, of the *dew* distilling upon Mount Zion and Hermon, denotes, that a holy unity has not only a sweet savor before *God,* but is productive of good effects, as the dew moistens the earth and supplies it with sap and freshness. Moses, we know, said of Judea, that it was not like Egypt fertilized by the overflowings of its river, but such as drank daily of the rain of heaven. (Deuteronomy 11:11.) David suggests, that the life of man would be sapless, unprofitable, and wretched, unless sustained by brotherly harmony. It is evident, that mount Hermon must have been rich and fruitful, being famed amongst places for pasture. Mountains depend principally for fertility upon the dews of heaven, and this was shown in the case of mount Zion. David adds in the close, that God commands his blessing where peace is cultivated; by which is meant, that he testifies how much tie is pleased with concord amongst men, by showering down blessings upon them. The same sentiment is expressed by Paul in other words, (2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9,) "Live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you." Let us then, as much as lies in us, study to walk in brotherly love, that we may secure the divine blessing. Let us even stretch out our arms to those who differ from us, desiring to bid them welcome if they will but return to the unity of the faith. Do they refuse? Then let them go. We recognize no brotherhood, as I have said already, except amongst the children of God.

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"Car a quel propos tireroit il ceste similitude de l'huile sacree, sinon a ceste fin clue la vraye religion tiene tousjours le premier lieu?" *Ft.*

Psalm 134

PSALM 134

An exhortation to praise God, addressed to the people of God generally, but more particularly to the Priests and Levites.

A Song of Degrees.

Psalm 134:1-3

> **1.** Behold! bless ye Jehovah, all ye servants of Jehovah, who stand nightly in the house of Jehovah. **2.** Lift up your hands towards the sanctuary, [590] and bless Jehovah. **3.** Jehovah bless thee out of Zion, who made heaven and earth!

1. *Behold! bless ye Jehovah.* Some interpreters think, that others besides the Levites are here intended, and it must be granted, at least, that some of the more zealous of the people remained over night in the Temple, as we read (Luke 2:37) of Anna, a widow, "who served God constantly with prayers night and day." [591] But it is evident, from the close of the Psalm, that the inspired penman addresses priests only, since he prescribes the form

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"קדש. Some persons render this word as if it were an adverb. So Tilingins has 'Attollite manus vestras sanete.' There is no doubt, that lifting up the hands reverently, is the ordinary and proper posture of suppliants at the throne of grace. Farther, St. Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:8, apparently with reference to this passage, speaks of *lifting up holy hands.* The Septuagint and Syriac, however, have taken the word as a noun, signifying *the sanctuary;* the former have ἅγια." *Phillips.* Warner and Cress, well with Calvin would read "towards the sanctuary;" *i.e.,* towards the holy of holies, where the ark, the symbol of the Divine presence, was fixed.

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of benediction which they were to offer up for the people, and this was a duty belonging exclusively to the Priests. It would appear then, that the Levites are here called servants of God, from the functions they discharged, being specially appointed, and that by turns, to watch by night in the Temple, as we read in the inspired history. [592] (Leviticus 8:35.) The Psalm begins with the demonstrative adverb Behold! setting the matter of their duty before their eyes, for they were to be stimulated to devotion by looking constantly to the Temple. We are to notice the Psalmist's design in urging the duty of praise so earnestly upon them. Many of the Levites, through the tendency which there is in all men to abuse ceremonies, considered that nothing more was necessary than standing idly in the Temple, and thus overlooked the principal part of their duty. The Psalmist would show that merely to keep nightly watch over the Temple, kindle the lamps, and superintend the sacrifices, was of no importance, unless they served God spiritually, and referred all outward ceremonies to that which must be considered the main sacrifice the celebration of God's praises. You may think it a very laborious service, as if he had said, to stand at watch in the Temple, while others sleep in their own houses; but the worship which God requires is something more excellent than this, and demands of you to sing his praises before all the people. In the second verse he reminds them in addition, of the form observed in calling upon the name of the Lord. For why do men *lift their hands* when they pray? Is it not that their hearts may be raised at the same time to God? [593] It is thus that the Psalmist takes occasion to reprehend their carelessness in either standing idle in the Temple, or trifling and indulging in vain conversation, and thus failing to worship God in a proper manner.

3. *Jehovah bless thee out of Zion!* We have conclusive proof in my opinion from this verse that the Psalm is to be considered as referring to

"We know generally," says Fry, "that there was a nightly service in the Temple, (2 Chronicles 21:) and Kimchi, a Jewish writer, represents those who by night stand in the house of the Lord, as holy men who rose from their beds in the night and went to pray in the Temple." After referring to the case of "Anna, a Prophetess," he adds, "And St. Paul, before Agrippa, speaking 'of the hope of the promise made unto the fathers,' gives us this remarkable description: 'unto which our' twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. There was public service in the Temple at Jerusalem not only by day but by night; which latter service many of the Jews, for whose special use this and the next Psalm seem to have been composed, were in the habit of attending." *Cresswell.*

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Ye servants off the Lord, etc., i.e., ye Levites, whose duty it was, according to the Talmudists, to keep watch by night, standing in the Temple: the High Priest was the only one who sat in the Temple. Compare Leviticus 8:35; 1 Chronicles 9:33 Psalm 92:2; Psalm 119:147; Luke 2:37." Cresswell.

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"Car a quel propos les hommes *eslevent ils les mains* en priant, sinon afin qu'ils eslevent aussi leurs esprits a Dieu?" *Ft.*

the priests and Levites only, for to them it properly belonged under the law to bless the people. (Numbers 6:23.) The Psalmist had first told them to bless God; now he tells them to bless the people in his name. Not that God meant by any such injunction that the people might themselves indulge in a life of carnal security an opinion prevalent among the Papists, who think that if the monks chant in the temples, this is all the worship necessary on the part of the whole body of the people. What God intended was, that the priests should lead the way in divine service, and the people take example by what was done in the temple, and practice it individually in their private houses. The duty of blessing the people was enjoined upon the priests, as representing Christ's person. Express mention is intentionally made of two things, which are in themselves distinct, when the God who blessed them out of Zion is said to be also the Creator of heaven and earth. Mention is made of his title as *Creator* to set forth his power, and convince believers there is nothing that may not be hoped from God. For what is the world but a mirror in which we see his boundless power? And those must be senseless persons indeed, that are not satisfied with the favor of Him who is recognized by them as having all dominion and all riches in his hand. Since many, however, are apt, when they hear God spoken of as Creator, to conceive of him as standing at a distance from them, and doubt their access to him, the Psalmist makes mention also of that which was a symbol of God's nearness to his people and this that they might be encouraged to approach him with the freedom and unrestrained confidence of persons who are invited to come to the bosom of a Father. By looking to the heavens, then, they were to discover the power of God by looking to Zion, his dwellingplace, they were to recognize his fatherly love.

Psalm 135

Psalm 135

An exhortation to praise God, both for his goodness specially shown to his chosen people, and for his power and glory apparent in the world at large. A contrast is drawn between idols, which had but a vain show of divinity, and the God of Israel, who had established his claim to be considered the only true God by clear and indubitable proofs, and this with the view of leading his people the more cheerfully to praise him, and submit to his government.

Halleluiah.

Psalm 135:1-4

1. Praise ye the name of Jehovah, [594] praise him, O ye servants of Jehovah! **2.** Ye who stand in the house of Jehovah, and ye who stand in the courts of the house of our God. [595] **3.** Praise God, for good is Jehovah: sing unto his name, for it is pleasant. **4.** For God hath chosen Jacob [596] unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

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"Perhaps the original, יהוה שם הללו, *halelu et shem Jehovah,* should be translated, *Praise ye the namee Jehovah:* that is, praise God in his infinite essence, of being, holiness, goodness, and truth."—Dr. *Adam Clarke.*

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The words *ye who stand* we have supplied in the second clause, as being necessary to bring out the sense which Calvin attaches to it. The יהוה בית "the house of Jehovah," mentioned in the first clause, remarks Men-dlessohn in his Beor, is the place where the priests stood; whilst "the courts" surrounding the temple, referred to in the second clause, were occupied by the people when engaged in their public prayers.

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1. *Praise ye the name of Jehovah* Though this Psalm begins almost in the same manner with the preceding, the Psalmist would not appear to be addressing the Levites exclusively, but the people generally, since the reasons given for praising God are equally applicable to all God's children. No mention is made of night watching, or of their standing constantly in the Temple. But indeed, as it was the special duty of the priests to take the lead in this devotional exercise, to give out, if we might use such an expression, and sing the praises of God before the people, there is no reason why we should not suppose that they are primarily addressed, and stirred up to their duty. We need only to examine the words more closely in order to be convinced that the people are included as next in order to the priests. [597] For the Psalmist addresses the servants of God who *stand in the temple,* then those who are *in the courts,* whereas no notice was taken of the courts in the former Psalm. Mention seems to be made of *courts* in the plural number, because the priests had their court; and then there was another common to all the people, for by the law spoken of, (Leviticus 16:17,) they were prohibited from entering the sanctuary. To prevent any feeling of disgust which might arise from the very frequent repetition of this exhortation to the praises of God, it is only necessary to remember, as was already observed, that there is no sacrifice in which he takes greater delight than the expression of our gratitude. Thus, (Psalm 50:14,)

"Sacrifice unto the Lord thanksgiving,
and pay your vows to the Most High;"

and, (Psalm 116:12, 13,)

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

Particular attention is to be paid to those passages of Scripture which speak in such high terms of that worship of God which is spiritual; otherwise we may be led, in the exercise of a misguided zeal, to spend our labor upon trifles, and in this respect imitate the example of too many who have wearied themselves with ridiculous attempts to invent additions to the service of God, while they have neglected what is of all other things most important. This is the reason why the Holy Spirit so repeatedly inculcates the duty of praise. It is that we may not undervalue, or grow careless in this devotional exercise. It implies, too, an indirect censure of our tardiness in proceeding to the duty, for he would not reiterate the admonition were we ready and active in the discharge of it. The expression in the end of the verse — *because it is sweet,* admits of two meanings — that the name of God is sweet, as in the previous

The name "Jacob" is here put by metonymy for the posterity of Jacob, as is evident from the parallelism of the two members.

[597] "Et quand on advisera de bien pres aux mots, on y trouvera que le peuple est adjoint, etc."—*Fr.*

clause it was said that God is good — or, that it is a sweet and pleasant thing to sing God's praises. The Hebrew word נעים *naim,* properly signifies *beautiful* or *comely,* and this general signification answers best. [598]

4. *For God hath chosen Jacob* Other reasons are given afterwards why they should praise God, drawn from his government of the world. But as it was only the children of Abraham who were favored with the knowledge of God at that time, and were capable of praising him, the Psalmist directs them to the fact of their having been chosen by God to be his peculiar people, as affording matter for thanksgiving. The mercy was surely one of incomparable value, and which might well stir them up to fervent gratitude and praise, adopted as they were into favor with God, while the whole Gentile world was passed by. The praise of their election is given by the Psalmist to God — a clear proof that they owed the distinction not to any *excellency* of their own, but to the free mercy of God the Father which had been extended to them. He has laid all without exception under obligation to his service, for

"he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good."
(Matthew 5:45.)

But he bound the posterity of Abraham to him by a closer tie, such as that by which he now adopts men generally into his Church, and unites them with the body of his only-begotten Son. [599]

Psalm 135:5-7

> **5.** For I know that Jehovah is great, and our God above all gods. **6.** Whatsoever doth please him, Jehovah does in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and in all deep places. **7.** Causing the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth, he maketh lightnings for the rain, bringing forth the wind out of his secret places. [600]

5. *For I know that Jehovah is great* We have here a general description of the power of God, to show the Israelites that the God they worshipped was the same who made the world, and rules over all according to his will, neither is there any other besides him. He would not exclude others when he speaks of having known himself the greatness of God, but is rather to be considered as taking occasion from his own experience to stir up men generally to attend to this subject, and awake to the recognition of what lies abundantly open to observation. The immensity of God is what none

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"Signifie proprement chose bien seante ou belle: et ce sens general convient mieux." — *Fr.*

599

"Comme c'est aujourd'huy de tous ceux qu'il adopte en sa bergerie, et ente au corps de son fils unique." — *Fr.*

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can comprehend; still his glory, so far as was seen fit, has been sufficiently manifested to leave all the world without excuse for ignorance. How can one who has enjoyed a sight of the heavens and of the earth shut his eyes so as to overlook the Author of them without sin of the deepest dye? It is with the view, then, of stirring us up more effectually, — that the Psalmist makes reference to himself in inviting us to the knowledge of God's glory; or rather he reprehends our carelessness in not being alive enough to the consideration of it. The second part of the verse makes the truth of the observation which I have already stated still more apparent, — that the Psalmist's design was to retain the Israelites in the service and fear of the one true God, by a declaration to the effect that the God who covenanted with their Fathers was the same who created heaven and earth, No sooner had he made mention of Jehovah than he adds his being the God of Israel. It follows as a necessary consequence, that all who depart from this God prefer a god who has no claim to the title, and that Jews and Turks, for example, in our own day, are guilty of mere trifling when they pretend to worship God the Creator of the world. Where persons have diverged from the law and from the gospel, any show of piety they may have amounts to a renunciation of the true God. The Psalmist had, therefore, in his eye when he clothed God with a specific title„ to limit the Israelites to that.God who was set forth in the doctrine of the Law. If by אלהים, *Elohim,* we understand the false gods of the Gentiles — the title is given them only by concession, for it could not be properly assigned to what are mere lying' vanities; and the meaning is, that God's greatness altogether eclipses any pretended deity. But the expression would seem to include the *angels,* as has been already observed, in whom there is some reflection of divinity, as being heavenly

The heathen who in ancient times worshipped the elements, imagined them to possess the power of giving or withholding rain at pleasure, Referring to this superstitious imagination the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 14:22) reclaims that power as peculiar to God who made and governs the world. "Are there among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art thou not he, O Jehovah, our God? Therefore we will wait upon thee; for thou hast made all these things." Among the Greeks and Romans Jupiter was armed with the thunder and the lightning; and AEolus ruled over the winds. Here the Psalmist teaches us to restore the celestial artillery to its rightful owner. The description probably refers to the regular rainy season of autumn which comes on towards the end of September; and Dr. Russell's account of the weather at Aleppo in that month may be quoted as illustrating the particulars of the verse. "Seldom a night passes," says he, "without much lightning in the north-west quarter, but not attended with thunder; and, when this lightning appears in the west or south-west points, which is often followed with thunder, it is a sure sign of the approaching rain. A squall of wind, and clouds of dust, are the usual forerunners of these rains." Thus God may be said to "make lightnings for the rain," inasmuch as the lightnings in the west and south-west points are, in the East, the sure prognostics of rain; and the squalls of wind which bring on these refreshing showers may be said to be brought for that purpose from "God's secret places." From Dr. Russell's representing "*clouds of draft,*" as "the usual forerunners of these rains," Harmer concludes that נשאים*, nesiim,* which, in our English Bible is rendered" vapours," must mean, as they elsewhere translate the word, "clouds."

principalities and powers, but who are exalted by God, and assigned such a subordinate place as may not interfere with his glory. [601]

6. *Whatsoever doth please him, etc.* This is that immeasurable greatness of the divine being, of which he had just spoken. He not only founded heaven and earth at first, but governs all things according to his power. To own that God made the world, but maintain that he sits idle in heaven, and takes no concern in the management of it, is to cast an impious aspersion upon his power; and yet the idea, absurd as it is, obtains wide currency amongst men. They would not say, perhaps, in so many words, that they believed that God slept in heaven, but in imagining, as they do, that he resigns the reins to chance or fortune, they leave him the mere shadow of a power, such as is not manifested in effects; whereas Scripture teaches us that it is a real practical power, by which he governs the whole world as he does according to his will. The Psalmist expressly asserts every part of the world to be under the divine care, and that nothing takes place by Chance, or without determination. According to a very common opinion, all the power necessary to be assigned to God in the matter, is that of a universal providence, which I do not profess to understand. The distinction here made between the heavens, earth, and waters, denotes a particular governments. The term חפר, *chaphets,* is emphatical. The Holy Spirit declares that he does whatsoever pleases him. That confused sort of divine government which many talk of, amounts to no more than a certain maintenance of order in the world, without due counsel. No account whatever is made of his will in this way, for will implies counsel and method. Consequently there is a special providence exerted in the government of the various parts of the world, there is no such thing as chance, and what appears most fortuitous, is in reality ordered by his secret wisdom. We are not called to inquire why he wills events which contradict our sense of what his administration should be, but if we would not unsettle the very foundations of religion, we must hold by this as a firm principle, that nothing happens without, the divine will and decree. [602] His will may be mysterious, but it is to be regarded with reverence, as the fountain of all justice and rectitude, unquestionably entitled as it is to our supreme consideration. For farther information upon this subject the reader may consult Psalm 115.

7. *Causing the clouds to ascend* The Psalmist touches upon one or two particulars, in illustration of the point that nothing takes place of itself, but by the hand and counsel of God. Our understandings cannot comprehend

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"Tellement qu'il les embrasse et range en leur ordre, afin que sa grandeur ne soit nullement obscurcie par eux." — *Fr.*

602

"Neantmoins si nous ne voulons arracher tons les rudimens de la vraye religion, ceci doit demeurer ferme," *etc.* — *Fr.*

a thousandth part of God's works, and it is only a few examples which he brings forward to be considered in proof of the doctrine of a divine providence which he had just announced. He speaks of *the clouds ascending from the ends of the earth;* for the vapours which rise out of the earth form clouds, when they accumulate more densely together. Now who would think that the vapours which we see ascending upwards would shortly darken the sky, and impend above our heads? It strikingly proves the power of God, that these thin vapours, which steam up from the ground:, should form a body over-spreading the whole atmosphere. The Psalmist mentions it as another circumstance calling for our wonder, that *lightnings are mixed with rain,* things quite opposite in their nature one from another. Did not custom make us familiar with the spectacle, we would pronounce this mixture, of fire and water to be a phenomenon altogether incredible. [603] The same may be said of the phenomena of the winds. Natural causes can be assigned for them, and philosophers have pointed them out; but the winds, with their various currents, are a wonderful work of God. He does not merely assert the power of God, be it observed, in the sense in which philosophers themselves grant it, but he maintains that not a drop of rain falls from heaven without a divine commission or dispensation to that effect. All readily allow that God is the author of rain, thunder, and wind, in so far as he originally established this order of things in nature; but the Psalmist goes farther than this, holding that when it rains, this is not effected by a blind instinct of nature, but is the consequence of the decree of God, who is pleased at one time to darken the sky with clouds, and at another to brighten it again with sunshine.

Psalm 135:8-12

8. He smote the first-born of Egypt, from man to beast. **9.** He sent tokens and wonders in the midst of thee, O Egypt! On Pharaoh, and on all his servants. **10.**. He smote great nation, and slew mighty kings. **11.** Sikon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan. [604] **12.** And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage to Israel his people.

8. *He smote the first-born of Egypt* He now reverts to those more special benefits, by which God had laid his Church and chosen people under

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"*Si ce* meslange du fen et de l'eau n'estoit cognu par usage, qui ne diroit que c'est une merveille," *etc.* — *Fr.*

604

"Comp. Numbers 21; Deuteronomy 2: and Deuteronomy 3; Joshua 12:7, etc. The chiefs of very small communities were in ancient times styled kings; Sihon and Og are particularly enumerated as being (Deuteronomy 3:11; Amos 2:9) of a gigantic race, of prodigious size and strength." — *Cresswell.*

obligation to his service. As it was the Lord's believing people only whom he addressed, the chief point singled out as the subject of praise is God's having adopted them, small as they were in numbers, from the mass of the human family. Again, there was the fact of his having set himself in opposition, for their sakes, to great kingdoms and mighty nations. The wonderful works done by God in Egypt and in Canaan were all just so many proofs of that fatherly love which he entertained for them as his chosen people. It is not strictly according to historic order to begin with mentioning the destruction of the first-born of Egypt; but this is instanced as a memorable illustration of the great regard God had for the safety of his people, which was such that he would not spare even so mighty and wealthy a nation. The scope of the passage is to show that God, in delivering his people, had abundantly testified his power and his mercy.

10. *He smote great nations* He comes now to speak of the end for which God delivered them from their bondage. He did not lead his people out of Egypt, and then leave them to wander as they might, but brought them forth that he might settle them in the promised inheritance. This the Psalmist mentions as another signal proof of the favor of God, and his unwearied kindness to them; for having once taken the children of Abraham by the hand, he led them on, in the continued exercise of his power, till he put them in possession of the promised land. He takes occasion to extol God's power, from the circumstance that it was only after the slaughter of many enemies that they came to the peaceable possession of the country. And it was a striking illustration of the divine goodness to manifest this preference for the Israelites, who were but a multitude of inconsiderable persons, while those opposed to them were mighty kings and powerful nations. Notice is taken of two kings, Sihon and Og, not as being more powerful than the rest, but because shutting up the entrance to the land in front they were the first formidable enemies met with [605] and the people, besides, were not as yet habituated to war. As the crowning act of the Lord's goodness, the Psalmist adds, that the Israelites obtained firm possession of the land. One has said

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"Non minor est virtus quam quaerere, parta tueri,"

"It is no less an achievement to keep possession than to acquire it;" and as the Israelites were surrounded with deadly enemies, the power of God was very eminently displayed in preserving them from being rooted out and expelled again, an event which must have repeatedly taken place, had they not been firmly settled in the inheritance.

Psalm 135:13-14

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"Sed quia praecluso terrae aditu in primis erant formidabiles." — *Lat.* "Mais pource qu'ils estoyent les plus a redouter, a cause qu'ils tenoyent l'entree de la terre fermee." — *Fr.*

13. O Jehovah! thy name is for ever; O Jehovah! thy memorial is from generation to generation. **14.** For Jehovah will judge his people, and he will repent himself [606] concerning his servants.

13. *O Jehovah! thy name is for ever* There are many reasons why the name of God ought always to be kept up in the world, but here the Psalmist speaks more especially of that everlasting praise which is due to him for preserving his Church and people, the cause being immediately added — that *God will judge his people* The whole world is a theater for the display of the divine goodness, wisdom, justice, and power, but the Church is the orchestra, as it were — the most conspicuous part of it; and the nearer the approaches are that God makes to us the more intimate and condescending the communication of his benefits, the more attentively are we called to consider them. The term *judging* in the Hebrew expresses whatever belongs to just and legitimate government, [607] the future tense denoting continued action apparently, as it often does, so that what the Psalmist says is tantamount to this — that God would always watch over and preserve his people, and that being thus under God's guardian care, they would be placed in safety. Or we may suppose that the Psalmist employs the future tense to teach us that, under affliction, we must have a sustained hope, not giving way to despondency, though God may seem to have overlooked and deserted us, since whatever temporary delays there may be of his help, he will appear as our judge and defender at the proper season, and when he sees that we have been sufficiently humbled. This may recommend itself the more to be the true meaning, because the Psalmist seems to allude to the expression of Moses, (Deuteronomy 32:36,) whose very words indeed, he quotes. As some alleviation under the divine chastisements which the people would suffer, Moses foretold that God would come forth as their judge, to help and deliver them when in extremity. And this the writer of the present Psalm, whoever he may have been, makes use of with a general application to the Church, declaring that God would never allow it to be altogether destroyed, since upon the event of its destruction he would cease to be a King. To propose changing the tense of the verb into the past, and understand it of God having shown himself to be the judge of his people against the Egyptians, puts a feeble sense upon the passage, and one which does not suit with the context, either of this Psalm or of the address of Moses. The Hebrew verb נחם, *nacham,* means either to *repent,* or to *receive comfort,* and both meanings answer sufficiently well. On the one hand, when God

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"Ou, prendra consolation." — *Fr. Marg.* "Or, will take comfort."

607

"Le mot de *juger* selon les Hebrieux„ contient en soy toutes les parties d'un juste et legitime gouvernement. — *Fr.*

returns in mercy to his people, though this implies no change in him, yet there is a change apparent in the event itself. Thus he is said *to repent* when he begins to show mercy to his people, instead of manifesting his displeasure in just judgments against them. Again, he is said to *receive consolation,* or to be appeased and reconciled towards his people, when in remembrance of his covenant, which endures for ever, he visits them with everlasting mercies, though he had corrected them for a moment. (Isaiah 54:8.) The meaning, in short, is, that the displeasure of God towards his people is but temporary, and that, in taking vengeance upon their sins, he remembers mercy in the midst of wrath, as Habakkuk says. (Habakkuk 3:2.) Thus God is spoken of as man, manifesting a father's affection, and restoring his children, who deserved to have been cast off, because he cannot bear' that the fruit of his own body should be torn from him. Such is the sense of the passage — that God has a compassion for his people because they are his children, that he would not willingly be bereaved of them and left childless, that he is placable towards them, as being dear to him, and that having recoginsed them as his offspring, he cherishes them with a tender love.

Psalm 135:15-21

> **15.** The images of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. **16.** They have a mouth, and will not speak: they have eyes, and will not see. **17.** They have ears, and will not hear; also [608] there is no breath in their mouth. **18.** Like be they to them who make them, whosoever trusteth in them. **19.** Bless Jehovah, O house of Israel! bless Jehovah, O house of Aaron! **20.** Bless Jehovah, O house of Levi! ye that fear Jehovah, bless Jehovah. **21.** Blessed be Jehovah out of Zion, who dwelleth at Jerusalem. Hallelujah. [609]

15. *The images of the nations,* etc. As the whole of this part of the Psalm has been explained elsewhere, it is needless to insist upon it, and repetition might be felt irksome by the reader. I shall only in a few words, therefore, show what is the scope of the Psalmist. In upbraiding the stupidity of the heathen, who thought that they could not have God near them in any

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"Some persons take אף as the adverb in the sense of *even;* as Kimchi; but the context, and also the corresponding passage in Psalm 115:6, show that it has the signification of *nose* אין, because it is followed by יש, has merely the sense of *not.* (1 Samuel 21:9.) The meaning of this part of the verse is, that the idols of the heathen have not even breath to pass through the mouth and nostrils." — *Phillips.* "אף*:* I strongly suspect that a passage beginning with this word (noses have they) has fallen out of the text. It is found in one of Kennicotts MSS., and has been added in later times to the Septuagint." — *Jebb's Translation of the Psalms,* etc., volume 1.

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The hallelujah with which this Psalm in the original text ends, has been transferred by the Septuagint to the title of Psalm 136.

other way than by resorting to idol worship, he reminds the Israelites of the signal mercy which they had enjoyed, and would have them abide the more deliberately by the simplicity and purity of God's worship, and avoid profane superstitions. He declares, that idolaters only draw down heavier judgments upon themselves, the more zealous they are in the service of their idols. And there is no doubt, that, in denouncing the awful judgments which must fall upon the worshippers of false gods, it is his object to deter such as had been brought up under the word of God from following their example. In Psalm 115 the exhortation given is to trust or hope in the Lord; here, to bless him. The Levites are mentioned in addition to the house of Aaron, there being two orders of priesthood. Every thing else in the two Psalms is the same, except that, in the last verse:, the Psalmist here joins himself, along with the rest of the Lord's people, in blessing God. He says, *out of Zion,* for when God promised to hear their prayers from that place, and to communicate from it the rich display of his favor, he thereby gave good ground why they should praise him from it. [610] The reason is stated, that *he dwelt in Jerusalem;* which is not to be understood in the low and gross sense that he was confined to any such narrow residence; but in the sense, that he was there as to the visible manifestation of his favor, experience showing, that while his majesty is such as to fill heaven and earth, his power and grace were vouchsafed in a particular manner to his own people.

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"Quant et quant aussi il donnoit occasion et matiere de luy chanter louanges." — *Fr.*

Psalm 136

PSALM 136

The Psalmist reminds the Lord's people, that unless they were assiduous in his praises, they were chargeable with defrauding him of what was justly due to him for his benefits. And, in mentioning each benefit, he takes particular notice of the mercy of God, to teach us how necessary it is to the proper celebration of his praises that we own everything which we receive from him to be bestowed gratuitously. [611]

Psalm 136:1-9

1. Praise Jehovah, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. **2.** Praise the God of gods, for his mercy endureth for ever. **3.**. Praise the Lord of Lords, [612] for his mercy endureth for ever. **4**. Who alone hath done great wonders, for his mercy endureth for ever, **5.** Who made the heavens by his wisdom, [or, intelligently,] for his mercy endureth for ever. **6.** Who stretcheth out the earth above the waters, for his mercy endureth for ever. **7.** Who made the great lights, for his mercy endureth for ever. **8.** The sun for rule by day, for his mercy endureth

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This Psalm is called by the Jews, the Great Thanksgiving.

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"The three first verses of this Psalm contain the three several names of the Deity, which are commonly rendered *Jehovah, God,* and *Lord, re*spectively; the first having reference to his essence as *self-existent,* and being his proper name; the second designating him under the character of a Judge or of an all-powerful being, if Aleim be derived from Al; and the third, *Adoni,* representing him as exercising rule." — *Cresswell.*

for ever. **9.** The moon and stars for rule by night for his mercy endureth for ever.

1. *For his mercy,* [613] etc. The insertion of this clause again and again in so many short and abrupt sentences, may seem a vain repetition, but verses repeated by way of chorus are both allowed and admired in profane poets, and why should we object to the reiteration in this instance, for which the best reasons can be shown, Men may not deny the divine goodness to be the source and Fountain of all their blessings, but the graciousness of his bounty is far from being fully and sincerely recognised, though the greatest stress is laid upon it in Scripture. Paul in speaking of it, (Romans 3:23,) calls it emphatically by the general term of the glory of God, intimating, that while God should be praised for all his works, it is his mercy principally that we should glorify. It is evident from what we read in sacred history, that it was customary for the Levites according to the regulation laid down by David for conducting the praises of God, to sing by response, "for his mercy endureth for ever." The practice was followed by Solomon in the dedication of the Temple, (2 Chronicles 7:3, 6,) and by Jehoshaphat in that solemn triumphal song mentioned in 2 Chronicles 20:21, of the same book. [Before proceeding to recite God's works, the Psalmist declares his supreme Deity, and dominion, not that such comparative language implies that there is anything approaching] Deity besides him, but there is a disposition in

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Jebb observes, that "the 136th Psalm is altogether peculiar in its construction, as it has the recurrence of the same words, 'For everlasting is his mercy,' at the end of every distich." He adds, that "this elaborate artifice of construction seems characteristic of that later period which comprised the captivity and restoration;" although he at the same time admits, that it is to be found in Psalms of an earlier date than the Baby-lonish captivity, quoting a passage in the account of the dedication of Solomon's Temple, which informs us, that the whole choir of Israel united in praising God "for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever:" and observing that this expression forms the.commencement of three other Psalms, the Psalm 106, Psalm 107, and Psalm 118. In his remarks on the Psalm 119, after adverting to the alphabetical character of that Psalm, he adds, "There are other artifices of construction observable in the Psalms and Hymns composed in these later ages of the Church. For example, that repetition of the same words and clauses, and the frequent recurrence of a characteristic word, so frequent in the Greater Hallel, [from the Psalm 111 to Psalm 118th, inclusive,] and in the Songs of Degrees: and in a continually recurring burden, in each distich, as in the Song of the three Children, and Psalm 136, which latter is unique in the Psalter. It has been the tendency of the poetry of most countries, in the progress of time, to make its characteristic features depend less upon the exactness of sentimental arrangement, and more upon some external artifice, whether this be prosodial metre, alliteration, rhyme, assonance, or the recurrence of a burthen. Now, though the poetry of the Scriptures, because it was inspired, never declined from the perfection of its sentimental construction, still those artificial contrivances, practiced, indeed, in earlier times, seem to have been more prevalent at the time of the captivity, and the time immediately following, than heretofore. It was probably so ordained, for the purpose of assisting the memories of the Jews, who at Babylon were excluded from the open exercise of their religion, and from public teaching, and, therefore, required more private helps, which could be more easily communicated orally from parents to children, or from masters to disciples." — *Jebb's Translation of the Psalms,* etc., volume 2.

men, whenever they see any part of his glory displayed, to conceive of a God separate from him, thus impiously dividing the Godhead into parts, and even proceeding so far as to frame gods of wood and stone. There is a depraved tendency in all to take delight in a multiplicity of gods. For this reason, apparently, the. Psalmist uses the plural number, not only in the word אלהים, *Elohim,* but in the word אדונים, *Adonim,* so that it reads literally, *praise ye the Lords of Lords:* he would intimate, that the fullest perfection of all dominion is to be found in the one God.

4. *Who alone hath done great wonders* Under this term he comprehends all God's works from the least to the greatest, that he may awaken our admiration of them, for notwithstanding the signal marks of inconceivably great wisdom and divine power of God which are inscribed upon them we are apt through thoughtlessness to undervalue them. He declares that whatever is worthy of admiration is exclusively made and done by God, to teach us that we cannot transfer the smallest portion of the praise due to him without awful sacrilege, there being no vestige of divinity in the whole range of heaven and earth with which it is lawful to compare or equal him. He then proceeds to praise the wisdom of God, as particularly displayed in the skill with which *the heavens are framed,* giving evidence in a surprising degree of the fine discrimination with which they are adorned. [614] Next he comes to speak of *the earth,* that he may lead us to form a proper estimate of this great and memorable work of God, stretching forth as it does a bare and dry superficies above the waters. As these elements are of a spherical form, the waters, if not kept within their limits, would naturally cover the earth, were it not that God has seen fit to secure a place of habitation for the human family. This philosophers themselves are forced to admit as one of their principles and maxims. [615] The earth's expanded surface, and the vacant space uncovered with water, has been justly considered therefore one of the great wonders of God. And it is ascribed to his mercy, because his only reason for displacing the waters from their proper seat was that regard which he had in his infinite goodness for the interests of man.

7. *Who made the great lights, etc.* — Moses calls the sun and moon the two great lights, and there is little doubt that the Psalmist here borrows the same phraseology. What is immediately added about the stars, is, as it were, accessory to the others. It is true, that the other planets are larger than the moon, but it is stated as second in order on account of its visible effects. The Holy Spirit had no intention to teach astronomy; and, in proposing instruction meant to be common to the simplest and

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"Les cieux sont composez d'un si excellent et bel artifice, qu'ils crient que c'est d'une facon admirable qu'ils ont este ornez d'une si plaisante distinction." — *Fr.*

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"De mettre ceci entre lents principes et maximes." — *Fr.*

most uneducated persons, he made use by Moses and the other Prophets of popular language, that none might shelter himself under the pretext of obscurity, as we will see men sometimes very readily pretended an incapacity to understand, when anything deep or recondite is submitted to their notice. Accordingly, as Saturn though bigger than the moon is not so to the eye owing to his greater distance, the Holy Spirit would rather speak childishly than unintelligibly to the humble and unlearned. The same remark may be made upon what the Psalmist adds regarding God's having assigned the sun and moon their respective parts, making the one to *rule the day,* and the other *to rule the night,* by which we are not to understand that they exercise any government, but that the administrative power of God is very manifest in this distribution. The sun in illuminating the earth through the day, and the, moon and stars by night, may be said to yield a reverential homage to God.

Psalm 136:10-16

> **10.** Who smote the Egyptians in their first-born, for his mercy endureth for ever. **11.** And brought out Israel from, the midst of them, for his mercy endureth for ever: **12.** With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, for his mercy endureth for ever. **13.** Who divided the Red Sea into divisions, for his mercy endureth for ever, **14.** And made Israel to pass through the midst of it, for his mercy endureth for ever. **15.** And cast Pharaoh and his host headlong into the Red Sea, for his mercy endureth for ever. **16.** And led his people through the wilderness, for his mercy endureth for ever.

10. *Who smote the Egyptians in, their first-born* Some read *with their first-born,* but the other rendering reads better. As we do not mean to sermonize upon the passage, it is unnecessary to detain the reader here with many words, as nothing is mentioned but what has been treated elsewhere. Only we may notice that the Egyptians are well said to have been smitten in their first-born, because they continued in their outrageous obstinacy under the other plagues, though occasionally terrified by them, but were broken and subdued by this last plague, and submitted. As it was not intended to recount all the wonders successively done in Egypt, the whole is summed up in one word when it is said, that he led his people forth from the midst of it with a mighty and a stretched out arm. For pressed down as they were on every side, it was only by a wonderful display of divine power that they could effect an escape. The figure of *an outstretched arm* is appropriate, for we stretch out the arm when any great effort is required; so that this implies that God put forth an extraordinary and not a common or slight display of his power in redeeming his people. [616]

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"Dieu en deliverant son peuple n'a point monstre une petite puissance," etc. — *Fr.*

13. *Who divided the Red Sea* I have already (Psalm 106:7) spoken of the word סוף, *suph,* and have not therefore hesitated to render it *the Red Sea* The Psalmist speaks of *divisions* in the plural number, which has led some Jewish authors to conjecture that there must have been more passages than one — an instance of their solemn trifling in firings of which they know nothing, and of their method of corrupting the Scriptures entirely with their vain fancies. 'We may well laugh at such fooleries, yet we are to hold them at the same time in detestation; for there can be no doubt that the Rabbinical writers were led to this by the devil, as an artful way of discrediting the Scriptures. Moses plainly and explicitly asserts that the heaps of waters stood up on both sides, from which we infer that the space between was one and undivided. [617] But as the people passed through in troops, and not one by one, the pathway being so broad as to admit of their passing freely men and women, with their families and cattle, the Psalmist very properly mentions *divisions,* with a reference to the people who passed through, this circumstance not a little enhancing the mercy of God, that they saw large depths or channels dried up, so that they had no difficulty in advancing in troops abreast. Another circumstance which confirmed or enhanced the mercy shown, was, that Pharaoh was shortly afterwards drowned; for the very different issue proved that it could not be owing to any hidden cause of a merely natural kind, that some should have perished, while others passed over with entire safety. The distinction made afforded a conspicuous display of God's mercy in saving his people. Much is included in the single expression that God was *the leader of his people through the wilderness.* It was only by a succession of miracles of various kinds that they could have been preserved for forty years in a parched wilderness, where they were destitute of all the means of subsistence. So that we are to comprehend, under what is here stated, the various proofs of divine goodness and power which are mentioned by Moses as having been vouchsafed, in feeding his people with bread from heaven — in making water to flow from the rock — in protecting them under the cloud from the heat of the sun — giving them a sign of his presence in the pillar of fire — preserving their raiment entire — shielding them and their little ones in their exile wanderings under tents of leaves, [618] with innumerable other instances of mercy which must occur to the reader.

Psalm 136:17-26

617

"Dont nous pouvons bien recueillir que l'espace d'entre deux estoit sans aucune separation." — *Fr.*

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"Sous des logettes de feuilles." — *Fr.*

> **17.** Who smote great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever. **18.** And slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever. **19.** Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever. **20.** And Og, king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever. **21.** And gave their land for an heritage, for his mercy endureth for ever. **22.** An heritage to Israel his servant., for his mercy endureth for ever. **23.** Who remembered us in our humiliation, for his mercy endureth for ever. **24.** And hath rescued us from our oppressors, for his mercy endureth for ever. **25.** Who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever. **26.** Make acknowledgments to the God of heavens, for his mercy endureth for ever.

23. *Who remembered us in our humiliation* The six verses taken from the previous Psalm I pass over without observation; and I shall only touch very briefly upon the others, which do not need lengthened consideration. We may just observe that the Psalmist represents every age as affording' displays of the same goodness as had been shown to their fathers, since God had never failed to help his people by a continued succession of deliverances. It was a more notable proof of his mercy to interpose for the nation at a time when it was nearly overwhelmed by calamities, than to preserve it in its entire state and under a more even course of affairs, there being something in the emergency to awaken attention and arrest the view. Besides, in all the deliverances which God grants his people, there is an accompanying remission of their sins. In the close he speaks of the paternal providence of God as extending not only to all mankind, but to every living creature, suggesting that we have no reason to feel surprise at his sustaining the character of a kind and provident father to his own people, when he condescends to care for the cattle, and the asses of the field, and the crow, and the sparrow. Men are much better than brute beasts, and there is a great difference between some men and others, though not in merit, yet as regards the privilege of the divine adoption, and the Psalmist is to be considered as reasoning from the less to the greater, and enhancing the incomparably superior mercy which God shows to his own children.

Psalm 137

PSALM 137

At the Babylonish captivity the established order of God's worship was overthrown, and the Psalmist complains, in the name of the Church at large, of the taunts which the enemy east upon the name of God, addressing at the same time a word of comfort to his people under their captivity, to cheer them with the hope of deliverance.

Psalm 137:1-4

> **1.** By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, we even wept when we remembered thee, O Zion! **2.** We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. **3.** Then they that carried us away captive required of us the words of a song, and mirth when we were in suspense, saying, Sing to us one of the songs of Zion. **4.** How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a foreign land?

1. *By the rivers of Babylon* [619] *there we sat down* I have elsewhere said, that it is a great mistake to suppose that it is David who here prophetically

619

By "Babylon" is meant, not the city, but the kingdom; and the mention of rivers, according to the suggestion of Rosenmuller, is because the synagogues were usually built near rivers, for the greater convenience of the Jews, who were obliged to wash their hands before prayer. But as they had no synagogues in Babylon, they might frequent such localities as would, be suitable sites for places of worship, and there in the open air perform divine service. It is conjectured by Chrysostom that the Jewish captives were not suffered at first to dwell in any of their conquerors' towns or cities, but were dispersed all along several rivers of the country, where they built for themselves tabernacles or cottages.

apprises the people of God of the captivity which should come upon them. The Prophets in speaking of future events employ very different language. What is brought under notice is the event as now historically come, and matter of experience. We shall briefly explain the scope of the Psalmist. There was danger that the Jews when cast off in such a melancholy manner should lose hold altogether of their faith and of their religion. Considering how ready we are, when mixed up with the wicked and ungodly, to fall into superstition or evil practices, it was to be feared that they might wax profane amongst the population of Babylon. The people of the Lord might be thrown into despondency, besides, by their captivity, the cruel bondage they were subjected to, and the other indignities which they had to endure. The writer of this Psalm, whose name is unknown, drew up a form of lamentation, that by giving expression to their sufferings in sighs and prayers, they might keep alive the hope of that deliverance which they despaired of. Another end he has in view, is to warn them against, the decline of godliness in an irreligious land, and against; defilement with the contaminations of the heathen. Accordingly he denounces merited judgment upon the children of Edom, and declares that Babylon, whose prosperity, shortlived as it was destined to be in itself, eclipsed at that time the rest of the world, was an object of pity, and near to destruction. The length of time during which the captivity lasted, may of itself convince us how useful and even necessary it must have been to support the fainting minds of God's people. They must have been ready to acquiesce in the corrupt practices of the heathen, unless endued with surprising mental fortitude through a period of seventy years.

When they are said to have *sat,* this denotes a continued period of captivity, that they were not only torn from the sight of their native country, but in a manner buried and entombed. [620] The demonstrative adverb of place, שָׁם*, sham, there,* is emphatical, setting the subject, as it were, before the eyes of the reader. Though the pleasantness of the country, irrigated by streams, might have had an effect in soothing their dejected minds, we are

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It may also be observed that sitting on the ground is a posture which indicates mourning and deep distress. Thus it is said in Isaiah 3:26, where the captivity of the Jews in Babylon is foretold, "And she [Judea] being desolate shall sit upon the ground." And the Prophet Jeremiah, in portraying the sorrow which afflicted his pious and patriotic countrymen under the desolation of their country, says,

"The elders of the daughter of Zion
sit upon the ground and keep silence." (Lamentations 2:10)

"We find Judea," says Mr. Addison, "on several coins of Vespasian and Titus in a posture that denotes sorrow and captivity. I need not mention her sitting on the ground, because we have already spoken of the aptness of such a posture to represent an extreme affliction. I fancy the Romans might have an eye on the customs of the Jewish nation, as well as those of their own country, in the several marks of sorrow they have set on this figure. The Psalmist describes the Jews lamenting their captivity in the same pensive posture: 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion!'" — *Addison on Medals,* Dial. 2.

told that the Lord's people, so long as they dwelt there, were continually in tears. The particle גם, *gam, even,* is used as being intensative, to let us know that the true fearers of the Lord could not be tempted by all the luxuries of Babylon to forget their native inheritance. The language is such as to intimate at the same time that they were not so entirely overwhelmed by their calamities as not to recognize in them the deserved chatisement of God, and that they were not chargeable with obstinately struggling against him; for tears are the expression of humility and penitence, as well as of distress. This appears still more plainly from its being *Zion* they remembered, which proves that what had charms for them was not any advantage of a worldly kind they might there enjoy:, but the worship of God. God had erected his sanctuary like a flag upon mount Zion, that as often as they looked to it, they might be assured of his salvation. Fair then and fertile as was the region where they dwelt, with charms which could corrupt effeminate minds, and long as they 'were detained in it, tears, which are proverbially soon dried up, never ceased to stream from their eyes, because they were cut off from the worship of God, upon which they 'were wont to attend, and felt that they were torn from the inheritance of promise.

2. *We hanged our harps upon the willows* [621] He deplores the suspension of the songs of praise, which God had enjoined in his Temple. The Levites were set over the department of singing, and led the way among the people in this devotional exercise. Is it asked how they had carried their harps with them so far from their native land, we have in this another proof mentioned by the Psalmist of their faith and fervent piety, for the Levites when stripped of all their fortunes had preserved their harps at least as a piece of precious furniture, to be devoted to a former use when opportunity presented itself. We may suppose that those who truly feared God put a high value upon the relics of his worship, and showed the greatest care in preserving them, till the period of their restoration. [622] When *willows* are mentioned, this denotes the pleasantness of the banks, which were planted with willows for coolness. But the Psalmist says that these shades, however delightful, could not dispel a grief which was too deeply seated to admit of common consolations or refreshment. As they sat upon the banks of the rivers covered with the

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"On the banks of the Babylonian rivers (say the Euphrates and Tigris) there are no woods or forests, or any considerable trees besides the cultivated date-palm. But these rivers are in some parts rather extensively lined with a growth of tall shrubs and bushes, interspersed with some small, and a few middling trees, amongst which the willow is at this day the most frequet and remarkable." — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.* Hence Isaiah 15:7 calls the Euphrates "the brook *or* river of willows."

622

"It is probable that the Levites, (Ezra 2:40, 41,) who were the singers and the musicians of the temple, had taken their harps with them to Babylon, and that their captors, having heard of their skill in music, demanded of them a specimen of *it.*" — *Cresswell.*

shadows of the trees, this was just the place where they might have been tempted to take up their harps, and soothe their griefs with song; but the Psalmist suggests that their minds were too heavily wounded with a sense of the displeasure of the Lord to deceive themselves with such idle sources of comfort. He would even go farther, and intimate that joy of a good and holy kind was at this time suspended. For though it was neither right nor well judged to encourage their grief, we cannot wonder if the singing of praises in public was given up till their return from the captivity, called as they were by the chastisements of God to mourning and lamentation.

3. *Then they that carried us away captive, etc.* We may be certain that the Israelites were treated with cruel severity under this barbarous tyranny to which they were subjected. And the worst affliction of all was, that their conquerors reproachfully insulted them, and even mocked them, their design being less to wound the hearts of these miserable exiles, than to cast blasphemies upon their God. The Babylonians had no desire to hear their sacred songs, and very likely would not have suffered them to engage in the public praises of God, but they speak ironically, and insinuate it as a reproach upon the Levites that they should be silent, when it was their custom formerly to sing sacred songs. Is your God dead, as if they had said, to whom your praises were formerly addressed? Or if he delights in your songs, why do you not sing them? The last clause of the verse has been variously rendered by interpreters. Some derive תוללינו, *tholalenu,* from the verb ללי, *yalal, to howl,* reading — they required mirth *in our howlings.* Others translate it *suspensions of mirth.* [623] Some take it for a participle of the verb הלל, *halal, to rage,* and read, *raging against us.* But as תלינו, *talinu,* the root of the noun here employed, is taken in the preceding verse as meaning *to suspend,* I considered the reading which I have adopted the simplest one.

4. *How shall we sing, etc.* The Psalmist puts a lofty and magnanimous answer into the mouth of the Lord's people to their insolent reproach, which is this, that they abstained from their songs, as from their legal sacrifices, because the land where they now were was polluted. The Chaldeans thought the Jews were bound down permanently to this place of their exile; the Psalmist, when he calls it *a foreign land,* suggests that it was but the place of their temporary stay. But the main idea is, that Chaldea was not worthy of the honor of having God's praises sung in it. No doubt the children of God wherever they have lived have always been strangers and foreigners in the world, but the land of Canaan was the sacred rest provided for them, and the Psalmist well describes them as being foreigners and sojourners when they were in other climes. He would in this way have them to be

623

"Others have it from. תלה, *he suspended,* as thought, they demanded *joy on our suspended ones, i.e.,* harps which we had suspended from the willows." — *Bythner.*

always ready and prepared for their return, tacitly enforcing what Jeremiah had prophesied, when, in order to prevent them from forgetting their native country, he had definitely foretold the time during which their exile should last, (Jeremiah 25:11; Jeremiah 29:10.) He would in the meantime animate them to constancy, and have them not to coalesce with the Babylonians through motives of fear. In our own day under the Papacy, great as the danger may be to which the faithful expose themselves by not conforming to the example around them, the Holy Spirit makes use of such a barrier as this to separate them from sinful compliances. [624] To those, whether Frenchmen, Englishmen, or Italians, who love and practice the true religion, even their native country is a foreign clime when they live under that tyranny. And yet there is a distinction between us and God's ancient people, for at that time the worship of God was confined to one place, but now he has his Temple wherever two or three are met together in Christ's name, if they separate themselves from all idolatrous profession, and maintain purity of divine worship. The Psalmist by the language which he employs would by no means put down every attempt on their part to celebrate God's praises. He rather exhorts them under their affliction to wait with patience till the liberty of publicly worshipping God was restored, saying' upon the matter — We have been bereft of our Temple and sacrifices, we wander as exiles in a polluted land, and what remains but that in remembrance of our outcast state we should sigh and groan for the promised deliverance.

Psalm 137:5-9

5. If I shall forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right had forget. [625] **6.** Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not, if I set not Jerusalem over the head of all my joy. **7.** Remember, O Jehovah! the children or Edom, in the day of Jerusalem, saying, Lay it bare, lay it bare even to the foundation thereof. **8.** O daughter

624

"Toutesfois le Sainct Esprit leur met ia comme une barre pour les separer de toute simulation perverse, comme aussi elle emporteroit impiete." — *Fr.*

625

of Babylon laid waste. [626] happy he who shall pay thee back the retribution wherewith thou retributedst us! **9.** Happy he who shall take and dash thy little ones upon the stones. [627]

5. *If I shall forget thee, O Jerusalem!* This confirms what was said in the former verse, and leaves us in no difficulty to understand what the Psalmist meant by it. For here God's people declare, and with the solemnity of an oath, that the remembrance of the holy city would be ever engra-yen upon their hearts, and never, under any circumstances, effaced. Having spoken of song, and of the instruments of music, the Psalmist's appeal is made in terms which corre-spond — that *his hand would forager* its cunning, and *his tongue cleave to his palate,* or *the roof of his mouth* The meaning' is, that the Lord's people, while they mourn under personal trials, should be still more deeply affected by public calamities which befall the Church, it being' reasonable that the zeal of God's house should have the highest place

Let my right hand forget The sentence ends abruptly, and some supplementary word is necessary to render it complete. The Chaldee version, by altering the person of the verb, has avoided the ellipsis, *May I forget, my right hand.* The Syriac reads, *May my right hand forget.me.* The Septuagint has a passive verb, viz., ἐπιλησθείν, as if the original were תשכח. Calvin, in his Commentary, makes the same supplement as the translators of our English Bible — *Let my right hand forget its cunning;* and the correctness of this view is supported by the following verse, where we have, *Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,* etc. The object of both verses is to express a deep, heart-felt interest in Jerusalem; and should he lose that interest, the Psalmist wishes that the two members of the body, by which both instrumental and vocal music are performed, may be rendered incapable of doing their work — that the tongue may be unable to utter, and the right hand may forget the art of playing, or *its cunning.* "There here is a striking and appropriate point in this which has been overlooked. It is, that as it is customary for people in the East to swear by their possessions, so one who has no possessions — who is poor and destitute, and has nothing of recognised value in the world — swears by his right hand, which is his whole stake in society, trod by the 'cunning' of which he earns his daily bread. Hence the common Arabic proverb, (given by Burckhardt, No. 550,) reflecting on the change of demeanour produced by improved circumstances: 'He was wont to swear by *the cutting off of his right hand!* He now swears by 'the giving of money to the poor.'" — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.*

626

Bishop Horsley translates, "O daughter of Babylon, that delightest in destruction."

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"This is *not* the language of *imprecation,* but of *prophecy,* and predicts the horrors which would accompany the taking and sacking of the city of Babylon; and amongst these the atrocious cruelty of 'dashing the children against the stones.' (See Isaiah 13:16; Jeremiah 51:62; Hosea 13:16.) Homer mentions the unnatural practice as not uncommon in ancient times —

'Infants dashed
Against the ground, in dire hostility.'
— I1, 22 5 63." — Warner.

"Happy he," etc., is merely declarative of the general opinion which would be reputed happy, would be celebrated as having done good service in the world, by destroying a power so universally hated for its oppression.

in our hearts, and rise above all mere private considerations. The second part of the sixth verse some interpret — If this be not my chief joy to see Jerusalem once more in a flourishing condition. Others — Joy will never enter my heart more, till I be gladdened by the Church's restoration. Both meanings are in my opinion comprehended in the words of the Psalmist. The one cannot be separated from the other; for if we set Jerusalem above our chiefest joy, the height of this joy must arise from the consideration of its prosperity, and, if this be the case, the grief we feel under its calamities will be such as effectually to shut out all worldly joys.

7. *Remember, O Jehovah! the children of Edom* Vengeance was to be executed upon the other neighboring nations which had conspired to destroy Jerusalem, so that they are all doubtless included here under the children of Edom, who are specified, a parr, for the whole, either because they showed more hatred and cruelty than the rest, or that theirs were not so easily borne, considering that they were brethren, and of one blood, being the posterity of Esau, and that the Israelites had, by God's commandment, spared the Edomites, when they devoted all beside them to destruction. (Deuteronomy 2:4.) It was, therefore, the height of cruelty in them to invite the Babylonians to destroy their own brethren, or fan the flames of their hostility. We are to notice, however, that the Psalmist does not break forth into these awful denunciations unadvisedly, but as God's herald, to confirm former prophecies. God both by Ezekiel and Jeremiah had predicted that he would punish the Edomites, (Ezekiel 25:13; Jeremiah 49:7; and Lamentations 4:21,22) and Obadiah distinctly gives the reason, answerable to what is here stated — that they had conspired with the Babylonians. (Obadiah 1:11.) We know that God intended in this way to comfort and support the minds of the people under a calamity so very distressing, as that Jacob's election might have seemed to be rendered frustrate, should his descendants be treated with impunity in such a barbarous manner, by the posterity of Esau. The Psalmist prays, under the inspiration of the Spirit, that God would practically demonstrate the truth of this prediction. Anti when he says, *Remember, O Jehovah!* he would remind God's people of the promise to strengthen their belief in his avenging justice, and make them wait for the event with patience and submission. To pray for vengeance would have been unwarrantable, had not God pro-raised it, and had the party against whom it was sought not been reprobate and incurable; for as to others, even our greatest enemies, we should wish their amendment and reformation. The *day of Jerusalem„* is a title given by him, and of frequent occurrence in Scripture, to the time of visitation, which had a divinely appointed and definite term.

8. *O daughter of Babylon* [628] *laid waste!* The Psalmist discerns the coming judgment of God, though not yet apparent, by the eye of faith, as the Apostle well calls faith "the beholding of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1.)

628

Incredible as it might appear that any calamity should overtake so mighty an empire as Babylon then was, and impregnable as it was generally considered to be, he sees in the glass of the Word its destruction and overthrow. He calls upon all God's people to do the same, and by faith from the elevation of heaven's oracles, to despise the pride of that abandoned city. If the divine promises inspire us with hope and confidence, and God's Spirit attemper our afflictions to the rule of his own uprightness, we shall lift up our heads in the lowest depths of affliction to which we may be east down, and glory in the fact that it is well with us in our worst distresses, and that our enemies are devoted to destruction. In declaring those to be happy who should *pay back vengeance upon the Babylonians,* he does not mean that the service done by the Medes and Persians, in itself met with the approbation of God; [629] for they were actuated in the war by ambition, insatiable covetousness, and unprincipled rivalry; but he declares that a war which was carried on in a manner under God's auspices, should be crowned with success. As God had determined to punish Babylon, he pronounced a blessing upon Cyrus and Darius, while on the other hand Jeremiah (Jeremiah 48:10) declares those cursed who should do the work of the Lord negligently, that is, fail in strenuously carrying out the work of desolation and destruction, to which God had called them as his hired executioners. It may seem to savor of cruelty, that he should wish the tender and innocent infants to be dashed and mangled upon the stones, but he does not speak under the impulse of personal feeling, and only employs words which God had himself authorized, so that this is but the declaration of a just judgment, as when our Lord says,

"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:2.)

Isaiah (Isaiah 13:16) had issued a special prediction in reference to Babylon, which the Psalmist has doubtless here in his eye — "Behold God has sharpened the iron, and bent the bows; he sends forth the Medes and Persians, which shall not regard silver and gold; they shall thirst for blood only," etc.

Daughter of Babylon denotes the inhabitants of the Babylonish empire. The inhabitants of a city or kingdom are frequently spoken of in Scripture as its daughter. (See Psalm 45:13; Isaiah 47:1; Zechariah 9:9.)

629

"Il n'entend pas que le service des Perses et Medes ait este agreable a Dieu," etc. — *Fr.*

Psalm 138

PSALM 138

In this Psalm David, in remembrance of the singular help which had always been vouchsafed him by God — the experience he had enjoyed of his faithfulness and goodness, takes occasion to stir himself up to gratitude; and from what he had known of the divine faithfulness, he anticipates a continuance of the same mercy. If dangers must be met, he confidently looks for a happy issue.

A Psalm of David.

Psalm 138:1-5

1. I will praise thee [630] with my whole heart, before the gods [631] will I sing psalms to thee. **2.** I will worship thee towards the temple of

630

Here "O Jehovah" is to be understood. Though it is not in the received Hebrew text, it was found in six copies examined by Dr. Kennicott, and in eight examined by De Rossi. The Septuagint, Arabic, Vulgate, and AEthiopic versions add" Jehovah" after the verb for "praise." "The omission of the Divine name," says Jebb, in his Translation of the Psalms, "in a passage like this, at the beginning of the Psalm, is altogether unexampled."

631

By the Hebrew word אלהים, *Elohim,* translated *gods,* Calvin understands "angels" or "kings," but particularly the former. It is however proper to observe that אלהים, *Elohim,* is one of the names applied to the Supreme Being in the sacred volume, and therefore some critics translate "before God," which they explain as meaning "before the ark," where were the sacred symbols of his presence. If after the Hebrew word for "before," we should suppose "thee" to be understood, the reading would be "before thee, *or* in thy presence, O God! will I sing praise unto thee."

thy holiness, and sing unto thy name for thy mercy and for thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy name above all things by thy word. **3.** In the day when I cried to thee then thou answeredst me, and hast abundantly ministered strength to me in my soul. **4.** Let all kings of the earth praise thee, O Jehovah! because they have heard the words of thy mouth. **5.** And let theta sing in [632] the walls of Jehovah, for great is the glory of Jehovah.

1. *I will praise thee with my whole heart* As David had been honored to receive distinguishing marks of the divine favor, he declares his resolution to show more than ordinary gratitude. This is exercise which degenerates and is degraded in the case of hypocrites to a mere sound of empty words, but he states that he would return thanks to God not with the lips only, but with sincerity of heart, for by the *whole heart,* as we have elsewhere seen, is meant a heart which is sincere and not double. The noun אלהים, *Elohim,* sometimes means *angels,* and sometimes *kings,* and either meaning will suit with the passage before us. The praise David speaks of is that which is of a public kind. The solemn assembly is, so to speak, a heavenly theater, graced by the presence of attending angels; and one reason why the cherubim overshadowed the Ark of the Covenant was to let God's people know that the angels are present when they come to worship in the sanctuary. We might very properly apply what is said here to *kings,* on account of their eminence in rank, as in Psalm 107:32, "Praise ye the Lord in the assembly of the elders" — that is, as we should say, in an assembly of an honored and illustrious kind. But I prefer the former sense, and this because believers in drawing near to God are withdrawn from the world, and rise to heaven in the enjoyment of fellowship with angels, so that we find Paul enforcing his address to the Corinthians upon the necessity of decency and order, by requiring them to show some respect at least in their public religious assemblies to the angels. (1 Corinthians 11:10.) The same thing was represented by God long before, under the figure of the cherubim, thus giving his people a visible pledge of his presence.

632

Phillips observes that the force of ב, *beth,* seems to be that of *concerning:* — "'The kings of the earth shall sing concerning the ways of the Lord,' how that they are good and merciful."

2. *I will worship towards the temple* [633] *of thy holiness. H*e intimates that he would show more than private gratitude, and, in order to set an example before others, come in compliance with the precept of the law into the sanctuary. He worshipped God spiritually, and yet would lift his eyes to those outward symbols which were the means then appointed for drawing the minds of God's people upwards. He singles out the divine mercy and truth as the subject of his praise, for while the power and greatness of God are equally worthy of commendation, nothing has a more sensible influence in stimulating us to thanksgiving than his free mercy; and in communicating to us of his goodness he opens our mouth to sing his praises. As we cannot taste, or at least have any lively apprehensions in our souls of the divine mercy otherwise than through the word, mention is made of his faithfulness or truth. This coupling of mercy with truth is to be particularly taken notice of, as I have frequently observed, for however much the goodness of God may appear to us in its effects, such is our insensibility that it will never penetrate our minds, unless the word have come to us in the first place. Goodness is first mentioned, because the only ground upon which God shows himself to us as true is his having bound himself by his free promise. And it is in this that his unspeakable mercy shows itself — that he prevents those with it who were at a distance from him, and invites them to draw near to him by condescending to address them in a familiar manner. In the end of the verse some supply the copulative, and read — *Thou hast magnified thy name and thy word above all things* [634] This learned interpreters have rejected as a meagre rendering, and yet have themselves had recourse to what I consider a forced interpretation*, Thou hast magnified thy name above all thy word* I am satisfied David means to declare that God's name is exalted above all things, specifying the particular manner in which he has exalted his name, by faithfully performing his free promises. Nor can any doubt that owing to our blind insensibility to the benefits which God bestows upon us, the best way in which he can awaken us to the right notice of them is by first

633

This Psalm is entitled "a Psalm of David," and Calvin considers him to be its author agreeably to the title; lint the mention of "the temple" in the second verse seems to render such an opinion doubtful. If, however, we translate this word by "mansion," which is the proper rendering of the original — "the mansion of thy sanctity:" this objection to its composition by David falls to the ground. In the Septuagint version the title of this Psalm is, "A Psalm of David; of Haggai and Zechariah, when they were dispersed," (comp. Ezra 5:1); meaning a Psalm of David, used by Haggai and Zechariah.

634

According to this mode of rendering the passage כל, *cal,* the word for *all,* is independent of שמך, *shimcha,* the word for *thy name.* But "it has been properly observed by Aben Ezra, that כל in this case should have a Cholem, and not a Kametz Chateph, with which it is found in all copies. Besides, this translation is not supported by any of the ancient versions." — *Phillips.*

addressing his word to us and then certifying and sealing his goodness by accomplishing what he has promised.

3. *In the day when I cried to thee,* etc. Frequently God prevents our prayers, and surprises us, as it were, sleeping: but commonly he stirs us up to prayer by the influence of his Spirit, and this to illustrate his goodness the more by our finding that he crowns our prayers with success. David well infers that his escape front danger could not have been merely fortuitous, as it plainly appeared that God had answered him. This then is one thing noticeable, that our prayers more nearly discover his goodness to us. Some supply a copulative in the second part of the verse — Thou *hast increased me, and in my soul is strength.* But this is not called for, since the words read well enough as they stand, whether we render the passage as I have done above, or translate it, *Thou hast multiplied,* or *increased, me with strength in my soul.* The sense, is, That from a weak and afflicted state he had received fresh strength to his spirit Or some may, perhaps, prefer resolving it thus: Thou hast multiplied — that is, blest me, whence strength in my soul.

4. *Let all kings of the earth praise thee* Here he declares that the goodness he had experienced would be extensively known, and the report of it spread over all the world. In saying that even kings had heard the words of God's mouth, he does not mean to aver that they had been taught in the true religion so as to be prepared for becoming members of the Church, but only that it would be well known everywhere that the reason of his having been preserved in such a wonderful manner was God's having anointed him king by his commandment. [635] Thus although the neighboring kings reaped no advantage by that divine oracle, the goodness of God was illustrated by its being universally known, by his being called to the throne in an extraordinary manner. Having uniformly during the whole period of Saul's severe and bloody persecution declared that he raised his standard in God's name, there could be no doubt that he came to the crown by divine will and commandment. And this was a proof of divine goodness which might draw forth an acknowledgment even from heathen kings.

Psalm 138:6-8

> **6.** Because Jehovah the exalted will yet have respect to the lowly, and being high will know afar off, [or, will know afar off him that is high.] **7.** Should I will [636] in the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me: thou wilt put forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies,

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"Sed hoc ubique fore notum, non alia de causa mirabiliter servatum fuisse a Deo, nisi quod ejus mandate unctus fuerat in Regem." — *Lat.*

636

"*Though I walk* — *an* Hebraism for *though I am.*" — *Cresswell.*

and thy right hand shall save me. **8.** Jehovah will recompense upon me. [637] thy mercy, O Jehovah! is for ever; thou wilt not forsake the works of thine own hand.

6. *Because Jehovah the exalted,* etc. In this verse he passes commendation upon God's general government of the world. The thing of all others most necessary to be known is, that he is not indifferent to our safety; for though in words we are all ready to grant this, our disbelief of it is shown by the feat' we betray upon the slightest appearance of danger, and we would not give way to such alarm if we had a solid persuasion of our being under his fatherly protection. Some read, *Jehovah on high,* that is, he sits on his heavenly throne governing the world; but I prefer considering, that there is an opposition intended — that the greatness of God does not prevent his having' respect to the poor and humble ones of the earth. This is confirmed by what is stated in the second clause, That being highly exalted he recognises afar off, or from a distance. Some read גבה, *gabah,* in the accusative case, and this gives a meaning to the words which answers well to the context, That God does not honor the high and haughty by looking near to them — that he despises them — while, with regard to the poor and humble, who might seem to be at a great distance from him, he takes care of them, as if they were near to him. By some the verb ידע, *yada,* is rendered, *to crush,* and they take the meaning to be, that God, while he favors the lowly, treads down the mighty who glory in their prosperity. There is reason to doubt, however, whether any such refinement of meaning is to be attached to David's words, and it is enough to conclude, that he here repeats the same sentiment formerly expressed, that God though highly exalted, takes notice of what might be thought to escape his observation. Thus we have seen, (Psalm 113:6,)

"The Lord dwelleth on high, yet he humbleth himself to behold both the things that are in heaven and on earth."

The meaning is, that though God's glory is far above all heavens, the distance at which he is placed does not prevent his governing the world by his providence. God is highly exalted, but he sees after off, so that he needs not change place when he would condescend to take care of us. We on our part are poor and lowly, but our wretched condition is; no reason why God will not concern himself about us. While we view with admiration the immensity of his glory as raised above all heavens, we must not disbelieve his willingness to foster us under his fatherly care. The two things are, with great propriety, conjoined here by David, that, on the one hand, when we think of God's majesty we should not be terrified into a forgetfulness of his

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"Parfera en moy *son oeuvre.*" — *Fr.* "Will perform in me *his work.*"

goodness and benignity, nor, on the other, lose our reverence for his majesty in contemplating the condescension of his mercy. [638]

7. *Should I walk in the midst of trouble, etc.* Here David declares the sense in which he looked flint God would act the part of his preserver — by giving him life from the dead, were that necessary. The passage is well deserving our attention for by nature we are so delicately averse to suffering as to wish that we might all live safely beyond shot of its arrows, and shrink from close contact with the fear of death, as something altogether intolerable. On the slightest approach of danger we are immoderately afraid, as if our emergencies precluded the hope of Divine deliverance. This is faith's true office, to see life in the midst of death, and to trust the mercy of God — not as that which will procure us universal exemption from evil, but as that which will quicken us in the midst of death every moment of our lives; for God humbles his children under various trials, that his defense of them may be the more remarkable, and that he may show himself to be their deliverer, as well as their preserver. In the world believers are constantly exposed to enemies, and David asserts, that he will be safe under God's protection from all their machinations. He declares his hope of life to lie in this, that the hand of God was stretched out for his help, that hand which he knew to be invincible, and victorious over *every* foe. And from all this we are taught, that it is God's method to exercise his children with a continual conflict, that, having one foot as it were in the grave, they may flee with alarm to hide themselves under his wings, where they malt abide in peace. Some translate the particle אף, *aph, also,* instead of *anger,* reading — *thou wilt also extend over mine; enemies,* etc. But I have followed the more commonly received sense, as both fuller and more natural.

8. *Jehovah will recompense upon me, etc.* The doubtfulness which attaches to the meaning of the verb גמר, *gamar,* throws an uncertainty over the whole sentence. Sometimes it signifies *to repay,* and, in general, *to bestow,* for it is often applied to free favors. [639] Yet the context would seem to require.another sense, since, when it is added as a reason, *that Jehovah's mercy is everlasting, and that he will not forsake the works of his hands,* the better sense would seem to be — *Jehovah will perform for me,* that is, will continue to show that he cares for my safety, and will fully perfect what he has begun. Having once been delivered by an act of Divine mercy, he concludes that what had been done would be perfected, as God's nature is

638

"Ne nons oste le goust de sa bonte, et benignite: d'autre part aussi afin que sa bonte par laquelle il daigne bien s'abbaisser jusques a nons, ne diminue rien de la reverence que nous devons a sa gloire." — *Fr.*

639

"Il signifie aucunefois Rendre, recompenser, et mesme generalement ottroyer," etc — *Fr.*

unchangeable, and he cannot divest himself of that goodness which belongs to him. There can be no doubt that the way to maintain good hope in danger is to fix our eyes upon the Divine goodness, on which our deliverance rests. God is under no obligation on his part, but when, of his mere good pleasure, he promises to interest himself in our behalf. David concludes with the best reason, from the eternity of the Divine goodness, that the salvation granted him would be of no limited and merely evanescent character. This he confirms still farther by what he adds, that it is impossible God should leave his work, as men may do, in an imperfect or unfinished state through lassitude or disgust. This David is to be understood as asserting in the same sense in which Paul declares, that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29.) Men may leave off a work for very slight reasons which they foolishly undertook from the first, and from which they may have been diverted through their inconstancy, or they may be forced to give up through inability what they enterprised above their strength; but nothing of this kind can happen with God, and, therefore, we have no occasion to apprehend that our hopes will be disappointed in their course towards fulfillment. Nothing but sin and ingratitude on our part interrupts the continued and unvarying tenor of the Divine goodness. What we firmly apprehend by our faith God will never take from us, or allow to pass out of our hands. When he declares that God perfects the salvation of his people, David would not encourage sloth, but strengthen his faith and quicken himself to the exercise of prayer. What is the cause of that anxiety and fear which are felt by the godly, but the consciousness of their own weakness and entire dependence upon God? At the same time they rely with full certainty upon the grace of God, "being confident," as Paul writes to the Philippians,

"that he who has begun the good work will perform it till the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6.)

The use to be made of the doctrine is, to remember, when we fall or are disposed to waver in our minds, that since God has wrought the beginning of our salvation in us, he will carry it forward to its termination. Accordingly, we should betake ourselves to prayer, that we may not, through our own indolence, bar our access to that continuous stream of the divine goodness which flows from a fountain that is inexhaustible.

Psalm 139

PSALM 139

In this Psalm David, that he may dismiss the deceptive coverings under which most men take refuge, and divest himself of hypocrisy, insists at large upon the truth that nothing can elude the divine observation — a truth which he illustrates from the original formation of man, since he who fashioned us in our mother's womb, and imparted to every member its particular office and function, cannot possibly be ignorant of our actions. Quickened by this meditation to a due reverential fear of God, he declares himself to have no sympathy with the ungodly and profane, and beseeches God, in the confidence of conscious integrity, not to forsake him in this life.[640]

To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David.

Psalm 139:1-6

1. O Jehovah! thou hast searched me, and knowest me. **2.** Thou hast known my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. **3.** Thou besiegest my path, and my lying clown, and art acquainted with all my ways. **4.** For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo! O Lord! Thou knowest it altogether. **5.** Thou hast shut me up behind and before, and hast laid thine hand upon

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me. **6.** Thy knowledge is wonderful above me: [641] it is high, I cannot attain to it.

1. *O Jehovah! thou hast searched me* David declares, in the outset of this Psalm, that he does not come before God with any idea of its being possible to succeed by dissimulation, as hypocrites will take advantage of secret refuges to prosecute sinful indulgences, but that he voluntarily lays bare his innermost heart for inspection, as one convinced of the impossibility of deceiving God. It is thine, he says, O God! to discover every secret thought, nor is there anything which can escape thy notice, He then insists upon particulars, to show that his whole life was known to God, who watched him in all his motions — when he slept, when he arose, or when he walked abroad. The word רע*, rea,* which we have rendered *thought,* signifies also a

This Psalm has often been admired for the grandeur of its sentiments, the elevation of its style, as well as the variety and beauty of its imagery. Bishop Lowth, in his 29th Prelection, classes it amongst the Hebrew idyls, as next to the 104th, in respect both to the conduct of the poem, and the beauty of the style. "If it be excelled," says he, "(as perhaps it is) by the former in the plan, disposition, and arrangement of the matter, it is not in the least inferior in the dignity and elegance of its sentiments, images, and figures." "Amongst its other excellencies," says Bishop Mant, "it is for nothing more admirable than for the exquisite skill with which it descants on the perfections of the Deity. The Psalmist's faith in the omnipresence and omniscience of Jehovah is in the commencement depicted · with a singular and beautiful variety of the most lively expressions: nor can anything be more sublime than that accummulation of the noblest and loftiest images, in the 7th and following verses, commensurate with the limits of created nature, whereby the Psalmist labors to impress upon the mind some notion of the infinity of God." If we compare this sacred poem with any hymn of classical antiquity in honor of the heathen deities, the immense superiority of the sentiments it contains must convince any reasonable person that David and the Israelites, though inferior in other respects to some other nations, surpassed them in religious knowledge. No philosopher of ancient times ever attained to such sublime views of the perfections and moral government of God as the Hebrew Prophets. How are we to account for this difference but on the supposition of the divine origin of the religion of the Hebrews? On any other supposition these Psalms are a greater miracle than any of those recorded by Moses.

Bishop Horsley refers the composition of this Psalm to a later age than that of David. "The frequent Chaldaisms," says he, "of the diction, argue no very high antiquity." Dr. Adam Clarke, on the same ground, argues that it was; not written by the sweet singer of Israel, but during or after the time of the captivity. Other critics, however, maintain that the several Chaldaisms to be found in it afford no foundation for such an opinion. "How any critic," says Jebb, "*can* assign this Psalm to other than David, I cannot understand. Every line, every thought, every turn of expression and transition is his, and his only. As for the arguments drawn from the two Chaldaisms which occur, (רבעי for רבצי, and עריך for צריך,) this is really nugatory. These Chaldaisms consist merely in the substitution of one letter for another very like it in shape, and easily to be mistaken by a transcriber, particularly by one who had been used to the Chaldee idiom: but the moral arguments for David's author-ship are so strong as to overwhelm.'my such verbal or rather *literal* criticism, were even the objections more formidable than they actually are." — *Jebb's Literal Translation of the Psalms,* etc., volume 2.

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"C'est par dessus moy et ma capacite." — *Fr. Marg.* "That is, above me and my capacity."

friend or *companion,* on which account some read — *thou knowest what is nearest me afar* off, a meaning more to the point than any other, if it could be supported by example. The reference would then be very appropriately to the fact that the most distant objects are contemplated as near by God. Some for *afar off* read *beforehand,* in which signification the Hebrew word is elsewhere taken, as if he had said — O Lord, every thought which I conceive in my heart is already known to thee beforehand. But I prefer the other meaning, That God is not confined to heaven, indulging in a state of repose, and indifferent to human concerns, according to the Epicurean idea, and that however far off we may be from him, he is never far off from us.

The verb זרה, *zarah,* means to *winnow* as well as to *compass,* so that we may *very* properly read the third verse — *thou winnowest my ways,* [642] a figurative expression to denote the bringing of anything which is unknown to light. The reader is left to his own option, for the other rendering which I have adopted is also.appropriate. There has been also a difference of opinion amongst interpreters as to the last clause of the verse. The verb סכן, *sachan,* in the Hiphil conjugation, as here, signifies to *render successful,* which has led some to think that David here thanks God for crowning his actions with success; but this is a sense which does not at all suit the scope of the Psalmist in the context, for he is not speaking of thanksgiving. Equally forced is the meaning given to the words by others — Thou hast made me to get acquainted or accustomed with my ways; [643] as if he praised God for being endued with wisdom and counsel. Though the verb be in the Hiphil, I have therefore felt no hesitation in assigning it a neuter signification — Lord, thou art accustomed to my ways, so that they are familiar to thee.

4. *For there is not a word, etc.* The words admit a double meaning. Accordingly some understand them to imply that God knows what, we are about to say before the words are formed on our tongue; others, that though we speak not a word, and try by silence to conceal our secret intentions, we cannot elude his notice. Either rendering amounts to the same thing, and it is of no consequence which we adopt. The idea meant to be conveyed is, that while the tongue is the index of thought to man, being the great medium of

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Piscator, Campensis, Pagninus, Luther, and our English Version, read "thou compassest." This no doubt gives the meaning, of the original, though not the precise idea, which is noticed on the margin of our English Bible to be "winnowest." *The* verb זרה, *zarah,* employed, signifies *to disperse, to fan, to ventilate, to winnow;* and here it denotes that as men separate the corn from the chaff, so God separates between, or investigates, the good and the bad in the daily conduct of men. Hence the Septuagint reads ἐξιχνίασας, "thou hast investigated." Bishop Hare, who renders "thou dost compass," supposes it to be a metaphor taken from hunting. "Winnowing," says Archbishop Secker," would sound uncouth But Mudge hath hit on the word *siftest,* which, though an idea somewhat different, suits very well."

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"Fecisti assuescere vias meas." — *Lat.*

communication, God, who knows the heart, is independent of words. And use is made of the demonstrative particle *lo!* to indicate emphatically that the innermost recesses of our spirit stand present to his view.

In verse fifth some read — *behind and before thou hast fashioned me;* [644] but צור, *tsur,* often signifies *to shut up,* and David, there can be no doubt, means that he was surrounded on every side, and so kept in sight by God, that he could not escape in any quarter. One who finds the way blocked up turns back; but David found himself hedged in behind as well as before. The other clause of the verse has the same meaning; for those put a very forced interpretation upon it who think that it refers to God's fashioning us, and applying his hand in the sense of an artizan to his work; nor does this suit with the context. And it is much better to understand it as asserting that God by his hand, laid as it were upon men, holds them strictly under his inspection, so that they cannot move a hair's breadth without his knowledge. [645]

6. *Thy knowledge is wonderful above me* Two meanings may be attached to ממני: *mimmenni.* We may read *upon me,* or, *in relation to me,* and understand David to mean that God's knowledge is seen to be wonderful in forming such a creature as man, who, to use an old saying', may be called a little world in himself; nor can we think without astonishment of the consummate artifice apparent in the structure of the human body, and of the excellent endowments with which the human soul is invested. But the context demands another interpretation; and we are to suppose that David, prosecuting the same idea upon which he had already insisted, exclaims against the folly of measuring God's knowledge by our own, when it rises prodigiously above us. Many when they hear God spoken of conceive of him as like unto themselves, and such presumption is most condemnable. Very commonly they will not allow his knowledge to be greater than what comes up to their own apprehensions of things. David, on the contrary, confesses it to be beyond his comprehension, virtually declaring that words could not express this truth of the absoluteness with which all things stand patent to

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Thus the Septuagint have ἔπλασάς με, *Thou hast formed me.* Similar is the rendering of the Syriac. Those who embrace this view take the verb, as if the root were יצר, *yatsar.* "But," says Phillips, "it is certain that the root of צרתני must be צור, *to afflict, press, besiege.* Hence the meaning of the verse is, 'Thou hast so pressed upon, or besieged me, both behind and before, that I find there is no escaping from thee; *Thou hast placed thy hand* upon me, so that I am quite in thy power.' The whole passage is a figure, representing God's thorough knowledge of man." — *Phillips.* "*Thou besettest me behind and before, i.e.* thou knowest all my doings as perfectly as if I were begirt by thee on every *side.*" — *Cresswell.*

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"Comme mettant la main sur eux pour los arrester par le collet, ainsi qu'on dit, tellement qu'ils ne peuvent bouger le moins du monde qu'il ne le scache." — *Fr.*

the eye of God, this being a knowledge having' neither bound nor measure, so that he could only contemplate the extent of it with conscious imbecility.

Psalm 139:7-12

> **7.** Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? rind whither shall flee from thy face? **8.** If I ascend up into heaters, thou art there; if I lie down in the sepulcher, lo! thou art there. **9.** Shall I take the wings of the morning, that I may dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea? **10.** Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. **11.** If I shall say; at least the darkness shall cover me, and the night shall be light for me; **12.** Even the darkness shall not hide from thee, and the night shall be lightened up as day, and darkness as the light.

7. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?* I consider that David prosecutes the same idea of its being' impossible that men by any subterfuge should elude the eye of God. By the *Spirit of God* we are not here, as in several other parts of Scripture, to conceive of his power merely, but his understanding and knowledge. [646] In man the spirit is the seat of intelligence, and so it is here in reference to God, as is plain from the second part of the sentence, where by *the face of God* is meant his knowledge or inspection. David means in short that he could not change from one place to another without God seeing him, and following him with his eyes as he moved. They misapply the passage who adduce it as a proof of the immensity of God's essence; for though it be an undoubted truth that the glory of the Lord fills heaven and earth, this was not at present in the view of the Psalmist, but the truth that God's eye penetrates heaven and hell, so that, hide in what obscure corner of the world he might, he must be discovered by him. Accordingly he tells us that though he should fly to heaven, or lurk in the lowest abysses, from above or from below all was naked and manifest before God. *The wings of the morning,* [647] or of Lucifer, is a beautiful metaphor, for when the sun rises on the earth, it transmits its radiance suddenly to all regions of the world, as with the swiftness of flight. The same figure is employed in Malachi 4:2. And the idea is, that though one should fly with the speed of light, he could find no recess where he would be beyond the reach of divine power. For by *hand* we are to understand power, and the assertion is to the effect that should man attempt to withdraw from the observation of God, it were easy for him to arrest and draw back the fugitive. [648]

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Some commentators suppose the third person of the Trinity to be here referred to.

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Or "of the dawn of the morning." שחר*, shachar,* the word employed, "is the light which is seen in the clouds before the rising of the sun, and it is like as if it; had wings to fly with haste; for in a moment the dawn of the morning is spread over the horizon, from the end of the east to that of the west." — *Mendlessohn's Beor.*

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11. *If I shall say,* etc. David represents himself as a man using every possible method to make his escape from a situation of embarrassment. So having acknowledged that it was vain to dream of flight, he bethinks himself of another remedy, and says, If no speed of mine can bear me out of the range of God's vision, yet, on the supposition of light being removed, the darkness might cover me, that I might have a short breath of respite. But this also he declares to be hopeless, as God sees equally well in the deepest darkness as at noon-day. It is a mistake in my opinion to consider, as some have done, that the two clauses of the verse are to be taken separately, and read, *If I shall say the darkness will cover me, even the night shall be as light before me* — meaning that darkness would be converted into light, and so though he saw nothing himself, he would stand manifest before the eye of God. David is rather to be considered as in both clauses expressing what he might be supposed to feel desirous of, and intimates that, could he only find any covert or subterfuge, he would avail himself of the license; [649] "if I shall say, at least the darkness will cover me, and the night be as light for me," that is, in the sense in which it is so to the robbers or wild beasts of the forest, who then range at greater liberty. That this is the proper construction of the words we may infer from the particle גם, *gam.* If any one should 'think it a very unnecessary observation to say that as respects God there is no difference between light and darkness, it is enough to remind him that all observation proves with what reluctance and extreme difficulty men are brought to come forward openly and 'unreservedly into God's presence. In words we all grant that God is omniscient; meanwhile what none would ever think of controverting we secretly make no account of whatsoever, in so far as we make no scruple of mocking God, and lack even that reverence of him which we extend to one of our fellow-creatures. We are ashamed to let men know and witness our delinquencies; but we are as indifferent to what God may think of us, as if our sins were covered and veiled from his inspection. This infatuation if not sharply reproved will soon change light, so far as we are concerned, into darkness, and therefore David insists upon the subject at length in order to refute our false apprehensions. Be it our concern to apply the reproofs given, and stir ourselves up by them, when we feel disposed to become secure.

Dathe understands *thy hand* of God's gracious presence to defend the Psalmist; and such may be the meaning of the words. But whether we take them in this sense, or according to Calvin, as expressing man's being under the power of God, in whatever part of the world he may be, they illustrate the divine omniscience, which Calvin regards as the chief design of the inspired writer.

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"C'est plustost que David prononcant ee propos selon son propre sentiment, entend que pourveu qu'il puisse estre par quelqne moyen couvert et cache, il aura quelque peu de bon temps," etc. — *Fr.*

Psalm 139:13-16

> **13.** For thou hast possessed [650] my reins; thou hast covered me [651] in my mother's womb, **14.** I will praise thee; for I have been made wonderful terribly; marvellous are thy works, and my soul shall know them well. **15.** My strength is not hid from thee, [652] which thou hast made in secret: I was woven together in the lowest parts of the earth. **16.** Thine eyes did see my shapelessness; all are written in thy book, they were formed by days, and not one of them.

13. *For thou hast possessed my reins* Apparently he prosecutes the same subject, though he carries it out somewhat farther, declaring that we need not be surprised at God's knowledge of the most secret thoughts of men, since he formed their hearts and their reins. He thus represents God as sitting king in the very reins of man, as the center of his jurisdiction, and shows it ought to be no ground of wonder that all the windings and recesses of our hearts are known to him who, when we were inclosed in our mother's womb, saw us as clearly and perfectly as if we had stood before him in the light of mid-day. This may let us know the design with which David proceeds to speak of man's original formation, its scope is the same in the verse which follows, where, with some ambiguity in the terms employed, it is sufficiently clear and obvious that David means that he had been fashioned in a manner wonderful, and calculated to excite both fear and admiration, [653] so that he breaks forth into the praises of God. One great reason of the carnal security into which we fall, is our not considering how singularly we were fashioned at first by our Divine Maker. From this particular instance

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"The usual signification of קנה is, *to possess, to acquire;* but here it is thought to contain the notion of *forming,* or *creating.* The reason of this difference in the sense may be accounted for from the circumstance, that in Arabic there are two verbs to which קנה may correspond, viz., one *to possess,* and another *to form.* So in Genesis 14:19, God is said to be 'the *possessor* (קנה) of heaven and earth.' The Septuagint for קנה, reads ὅς ἔκτισε, *who created,* and the Vulgate, *qui creavit* Again in Proverbs 8:22, for קנני the Chaldee has בראני, *hath begotten,* or *created me.* From these and other passages it is evident that קנה was supposed by the ancient interpreters to have the sense of *to form,* or *create;* and this meaning seems to be required in the verse before us, which comports with the next verb." — *Phillips.*

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The "*covering*" here spoken of, is illustrated by Job 10:2, where God is said to have "clothed us with skin and flesh, and fenced us with bones and sinews." "A work so astonishing," observes Bishop Horne, "that before the Psalmist proceeds in his description of it, he cannot help breaking forth in rapture at the thought: 'I will praise thee, for! I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'"

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"Ou, mon os n'est point cache de toy." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, my bone is not hid from thee."

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David is led to refer in general to all the works of God, which are just so many wonders fitted to draw our attention to him. The true and proper view to take of the works of God, as I have observed elsewhere, is that which ends in wonder. His declaration to the effect that *his soul should well know* these wonders, which far transcend human comprehension, means no more than that with humble and sober application he would give his attention and talents to obtaining such an apprehension of the wonderful works of God as might end in adoring the immensity of his glory. The knowledge he means, therefore, is not that which professes to comprehend what, under the name of wonders, he confesses to be incomprehensible, nor of that kind which philosophers presumptuously pretend to, as if they could solve every mystery of God, but simply that religious attention to the works of God which excites to the duty of thanksgiving.

15. *My strength was not hid from thee* That nothing is hid from God David now begins to prove from the way in which man is at first formed, and points out God's superiority to other artificers in this, that while they must have their work set before their eyes before they can form it, he fashioned us in our mother's womb. It is of little importance whether we read *my strength* or *my bone,* though I prefer the latter reading. He next likens the womb of the mother to *the lowest caverns* or *recesses of the earth.* Should an artizan intend commencing a work in some dark cave where there was no light to assist him, how would he set his hand to it? in what way would he proceed? and what kind of workmanship would it prove? [654] But God makes the most perfect work of all in the dark, for he fashions man in mother's womb. The verb רקם, *rakam,* which means *weave together,* [655] is employed to amplify and enhance what the Psalmist had just said. David no doubt means figuratively to express the inconceivable skill which appears in the formation of the human body. When we examine it, even to the nails on our fingers, there is nothing which could be altered, without felt inconveniency,

"*Fearfully and wonderfully made* Never was so terse and expressive a description of the physical conformation of man given by any human being. So *fearfully* are we made, that there is not an action or gesture of our bodies, which does not, apparently, endanger some muscle, vein, or sinew, the rupture of which would destroy either life or health. We are so *wonderfully* made, that our organization infinitely surpasses, in skill, contrivance, design, and adaptation of means to ends, the most curious and complicated piece of mechanism, not only ever executed 'by art and man's device, but ever conceived by the human imagination." — *Warner.*

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"The figure," says Walford, "is derived from the darkness and obscurity of caverns and other recesses of the earth."

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"רקם is 'to embroider.'" — *Phillips.* Mant translates the verse thus: —

"By all, but not by thee unknown,
My substance grew, and, o'er it thrown,
The fine-wrought web from nature's loom,
All wove in secret and in gloom."

as at something disjointed or put out of place; and what, then, if we should make the individual parts the subject of enumeration? [656] Where is the embroiderer who — with all his industry and ingenuity — could execute the hundredth part of this complicate and diversified structure? We need not then wonder if God, who formed man so perfectly in the womb, should have an exact knowledge of him after he is ushered into the world.

16. *Thine eyes beheld my shapelessness, etc.* The embryo, when first conceived in the womb, has no form; and David speaks of God's having known him when he was yet a shapeless mass, τὸ κύημα, as the Greeks term it; for τὸ εμβρυον is the name given to the foetus from the time of conception to birth inclusive. The argument is from the greater' to the less. If he was known to God before he had grown to certain definite shape,

And after observing that the foetus is gradually formed and matured for the birth, like plants and flowers under ground, he adds — "The process is compared to that in a piece of work wrought with a needle, or fashioned in the loom: which, with all its beautiful variety of color, and proportion of figure, ariseth by degrees to perfection, under the hand of the artist, framed according to a pattern lying before him, from a rude mass of silk, or other materials. Thus, by the power and wisdom of God, and after a plan delineated in his book, is a shapeless mass wrought up into the most curious texture of nerves, veins, arteries, bones, muscles, membranes, and skin, most skilfully interwoven and connected with each other, until it becometh a body harmoniously diversified with all the limbs and lineaments of a man, not one of which at first appeared, any more than the figures were to be seen in the ball of silk. But then, which is the chief thing here insisted on by the Psalmist, whereas the human artificer must have the clearest light whereby to accomplish his task, the divine work-master seeth in secret, and effecteth all his wonders within the dark and narrow confines of the womb." Bishop Lowth supposes that the full force and beauty of the metaphor in this passage will not be understood, unless it is perceived that the Psalmist alludes to the art of embroidery as consecrated by the Jews to sacred purposes, in decorating the garments of the priests and the curtains at the entrance of the tabernacle. "In that most perfect ode, Psalm 139," says he, "which celebrates the immensity of the omnipresent Deity, and the wisdom of the divine artificer in forming the human body, the author uses a metaphor derived from the most subtle art of Phrygian workmen:

'When I was formed in the secret place,
W*hen I was wrought with a needle in the depths of the earth.*

Whoever observes this, (in truth he will not be able to observe it in the common translations,)and at the same time reflects upon the wonderful mechanism of the human body, the various amplifications of the veins, arteries, fibres, and membranes; the 'indescribable texture' of the whole fabric; may indeed feel the beauty and gracefulness of this well-adapted metaphor, but will miss much of its force and sublimity, unless he be apprised that the art of designing in needle-work was wholly dedicated to the use of the sanctuary, and by a direct precept of the divine law, chiefly employed in furnishing' a part of the sacerdotal habits, and the veils for the entrance of the tabernacle. (Exodus 28:39; Exodus 26:36; Exodus 27:16; compare Ezekiel 16:10, 13, 18.) Thus the poet compares the wisdom of the divine artificer with the most estimable of human arts — that art which was dignified by being consecrated altogether to the use of religion; and the workmanship of which was so exquisite, that even the sacred writings seem to attribute it to a supernatural guidance. See Exodus 35:30-35 " — *Lowth's Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, volume* 1.

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"Que sera-ce donc quand on viendra a contempler par le menu chacune partie?" — *Fr.*

much less could he now elude his observation. He adds, that *all things were written in his book;* that is, the whole method of his formation was well known to God. The term *book* is a figure taken from the practice common amongst men of helping their memory by means of books and commentaries. Whatever is an object of God's knowledge he is said to have registered in writing, for he needs no helps to memory. Interpreters are not agreed as to the second clause. Some read ימים, *yamim,* in the nominative case, *when days were made;* the sense being, according to them — All my bones were written in thy book, O God! from the beginning of the world, when days were first formed by thee, and when as *yet* none of them actually existed. The other is the more natural meaning, That the different parts of the human body are formed in a succession of time; for in the first germ there is no arrangement of parts, or proportion of members, but it is developed, and takes its peculiar form progressively. [657] There is another point on which interpreters differ. As in the particle לא, *lo,* the א, *aleph,* is often interchangeable with ו *vau;* some read לו*, to him,* and others לא *not.* According to the first reading, the sense is, that though the body is formed progressively, it was always one and the same in God's book, who is not dependent upon time for the execution of his work. A sufficiently good meaning, however, can be got by adhering' without change to the negative particle, namely, that though the members were formed in the course of days, or gradually, none of them had existed; no order or distinctness of parts having been there at first, but a formless substance. And thus our admiration is directed to the providence of God in gradually giving' shape and beauty to a confused mass. [658]

Psalm 139:17-18

> **17.** How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great the sums of them! **18.** If I should count them, they shall be multiplied above the sand: I have awaked, and am still with thee.

17. *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me* It is the same Hebrew word, רעה, *reah,* which is used here as in the second verse, and means

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"*They* (my members) *have been daily formed,* or *forming.* They were not formed at once, but gradually; each day increasing in strength and size. This expression is probably parenthetical, so that the last words of the verse will refer to the writing of those things previously mentioned in God's register." — *Phillips.*

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"The meaning is," says Warner, "there was a time when none of those curious parts, of which my form consists, existed. The germ of them all was planted by thee in the first instance; and gradually matured, by thy power, wisdom, and goodness, into that wonderful piece of mechanism which the human form exhibits." Phillips gives a different turn to the clause: "*And not one of them,* or among them, was omitted. Not one of the particulars concerning my formation has been left out of thy record."

thought, not *companion* or *friend,* as many have rendered it, after the Chaldee translator, under the idea that the Psalmist is already condescending upon the distinction between the righteous and the wicked. The context requires that he should still be considered as speaking of the matchless excellence of divine providence. He therefore repeats — and not without reason — what he had said before; for we apparently neglect or underestimate the singular proofs of the deep wisdom of God, exhibited in man's creation, and the whole superintendence and government of his life. Some read — *How rare are thy thoughts;* but this only darkens the meaning. I grant we find that word made use of in the Sacred History, (1 Samuel 3:1,) where the oracles of the Lord are said to have been rare, in the time of Eli. But it also means *precious,* and it is enough that we retain the sense which is free from all ambiguity. He applies the term to God's thoughts, as not lying within the compass of man's judgment. To the same effect is what he adds that the *sums* or aggregates of them were great and mighty; that is, sufficient to overwhelm the minds of men. The exclamation made by the Psalmist suggests to us that were men not so dull of apprehension, or rather so senseless, they would be struck by the mysterious ways of God, and would humbly and tremblingly sit themselves before his tribunal, instead of presumptuously thinking that they could evade it. The same truth is set forth in the next verse, that if any should attempt to number the hidden judgments or counsels of God, their immensity is more than *the sands of the sea.* Our capacities conseqently could not comprehend the most infinitesimal part of them. As to what follows — *I have a waked, and am still with, thee,* interpreters have rendered the words differently; but I have no doubt of the meaning simply being that David found new occasion, every time he awoke from sleep, for meditating upon the extraordinary wisdom of God. When he speaks of rising, we are not to suppose he refers to one day, but agreeably to what he had said already of his thoughts being absorbed in the incomprehensible greatness of divine wisdom, he adds that every time *he awoke* he discovered fresh matter for admiration. We are thus put in possession of the true meaning of David, to the effect that God's providential government of the world is such that nothing can escape him, not even the profoundest thoughts. And although many precipitate themselves in an infatuated manner into all excess of crime, under the idea that God will never discover them, it is in vain that they resort to hiding-places, from which, however reluctantly, they must be dragged to light. The truth is one which we would do well to consider more than we do, for while we may cast a glance at our hands and our feet, and occasionally survey the elegance of our shape with complacency, there is scarcely one in a hundred who thinks of his Maker. Or if any recognize their life as coming from God, there is none at least who rises to the great truth that he who formed the ear, and the eye, and the understanding heart, himself hears, and sees, and knows everything.

Psalm 139:19-24

> **19.** If thou shalt slay, O God! the wicked, then depart from me, ye bloody men. **20.** Who have spoken of thee wickedly, thine adversaries have taken [thy name] falsely. **21.** Shall not I hold in hatred those that hate thee, O Jehovah! And strive with those that rise up against thee? **22.** I have hated them with perfect hatred; they were to me for enemies. [659] **23.** Search me, O God! and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; **24.** And know whether the way of wickedness be in me, and lead me throughout the way of this life. [660]

19. *If thou shalt slay,* etc. It is unnatural to seek, as some have done, to connect this with the preceding verse. Nor does it seem proper to view the words as expressing a wish — "I wish," or, "Oh! if thou God wouldst slay the wicked." Neither can I subscribe to the idea of those who think that David congratulates himself upon the wicked being cut off. The sentiment seems to me to be of another kind, that he would apply himself to the consideration of the divine judgments, and advance in godliness and in the fear of his name, so often as vengeance was taken upon the ungodly. There can be no question that God designs to make an example of them, that his elect ones may be taught by their punishment to withdraw themselves from their society. David was of himself well disposed to the fear and worship of God, and yet he needed a certain check, like other saints, as Isaiah says, (Isaiah 26:9,) "when God has sent abroad his judgments, the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness," that is, to remain in the fear of the Lord. At the same time, I have no doubt that the Psalmist presents himself before God as witness of his integrity; as if he had said, that he came freely and ingenuously to God's bar, as not being one of the wicked despisers of his name, nor having any connection with them.

20. *Who have spoken of thee wickedly.* He intimates the extent to which the wicked proceed when God spares them, and forbears to visit them with vengeance. They not merely conclude that they may perpetrate any crime with impunity, but openly blaspheme their Judge. He takes notice of their *speaking wickedly,* in the sense of their taking no pains to disguise their sin under plausible pretences, as persons who have some shame remaining will exercise a certain restraint upon their language, but they make no secret of the contempt they entertain for God. The second clause, where he speaks of their taking God's name falsely, some have interpreted too restrictedly with

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"Je les ay tenus pour mes ennemis." — *Fr.* "I have held them as my enemies."

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"Via seculi." — *Lat.* "En la voye du siecle." — *Fr.* On the margin of the French Commentary there is the following note — "C'est, de ce monde;" — "That is, of this world."

reference to their sin of perjury. Those come nearer the truth who consider that the wicked are spoken of as taking God's name in vain, when they conceive of him according to their own idle fancies. We see from experience, that most men are ignorant of what God is, and judge of him rather as one dead than alive. In words they all acknowledge him to be judge of the world, but the acknowledgment comes to nothing, as they straightway denude him of his office of judgment, which is to take God's name in vain, by tarnishing the glory of it, and, in a manner, deforming it. But as *name* is not in the original, and נשא, *nasa,* means *to lift Up,* or *on high,* I think we are warranted rather to interpret the passage as meaning', that they carried themselves with an arrogant and false pride. This elation or haughtiness of spirit is almost always allied with that petulance of which he had previously taken notice. What other reason can be given for their vending such poisonous rancour against God, but pride, and forgetfulness, on the one hand, of their own insignificance as men, and on the other, of the power which belongeth unto the Lord? On this account he calls them God's *adversaries,* for all who exalt themselves above the place which they should occupy, act the part of the giants who warred against heaven.

21. *Shall I not hold in hatred those that hate thee?* He proceeds to mention how greatly he had profited by the meditation upon God into which he had been led, for, as the effect, of his having realized his presence before God's bar, and reflected upon the impossibility of escaping the eye of him who searches all deep places, he now lays down his resolution to lead a holy and pious life. In declaring his hatred of those who despised God, he virtually asserts thereby his own integrity, not as being free from all sin, but as being devoted to godliness, so that he detested in his heart everything which was contrary to it. Our attachment to godliness must be inwardly defective, if it do not generate an abhorrence of sin, such as David here speaks of. If that zeal for the house of the Lord, which he mentions elsewhere, (Psalm 69:9,) burn in our hearts, it would be an unpardonable indifference silently to look on when his righteous law was violated, nay, when his holy name was trampled upon by the wicked. As to the last word in the verse, קוט, *kut*, means *to dispute with,* or *contend,* and may be understood as here retaining' the same sense in the Hithpael conjugation, unless we consider David to have more particularly meant, that he inflamed himself so as to stir up his mind to contend with them. We thus see that he stood forward strenuously in defense of the glory of God, regardless of the hatred of the whole world, and waged war with all the workers of iniquity.

22. *I hate them with perfect hatred.* Literally it is, I hate them with perfection of hatred. He repeats the same truth as formerly, that such was his esteem for God's glory that he would have nothing' in common with those who despised him. He means in general that he gave no countenance to the works of darkness, for whoever connives at sin and encourages it through silence, wickedly betrays God's cause, who has committed the vindication

of righteousness into our hands. David's example should teach us to rise with a lofty and bold spirit above all regard to the enmity of the wicked, when the question concerns the honor of God, and rather to renounce all earthly friendships than falsely pander with flattery to the favor of those who do everything to draw down upon themselves the divine displeasure. We have the more need to attend to this, because the keen sense we have of what concerns our private interest, honor, and convenience, makes us never hesitate to engage in contest when any one injures ourselves, while we are abundantly timid and cowardly in defending the glory of God. Thus, as each of us studies his own interest and advantage, the only thing which incites us to contention, strife, and war, is a desire to avenge our private wrongs; none is affected when the majesty of God is outraged. On the other hand, it is a proof of our having a fervent zeal for God when we have the magnanimity to declare irreconcilable war with the wicked and them who hate God, rather than court their favor at the expense of alienating the divine layout. We are to observe, however, that the hatred of which the Psalmist speaks is directed to the sins rather than the persons of the wicked. We are, so far as lies in us, to study peace with all men; we are to seek the good of all, and, if possible, they are to be reclaimed by kindness and good offices: only so far as they are enemies to God we must strenuously confront their resentment.

23. *Search me, O God!* He insists upon this as being the only cause why he opposed the despisers of God, that he himself was a genuine worshipper of God, and desired others to possess the same character. It indicates no common confidence that he should submit, himself so boldly to the judgment of God. But being fully conscious of sincerity in his religion, it was not without due consideration that he placed himself so confidently before God's bar; neither must we think that he claims to be free from all sin, for he groaned under the felt burden of his transgressions. The saints in all that they say of their integrity still depend only upon free grace. Yet persuaded as they are that their godliness is approved before God, notwithstanding their falls and infirmities, we need not wonder that (hey feel themselves at freedom to draw a distinction between themselves and the wicked. While he denies that his heart was double or insincere, he does not profess exemption from all sin, but only that he was not devoted to wickedness; for עצב, *otseb,* does not mean any sin whatever, but *grief, trouble,* or *pravity* — and sometimes metaphorically *an idol.* [661] But the last of these meanings will not apply here, for David asserts his freedom not from superstition

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"Car le mot Hebrieu duquel il use en ce passage ne signifie pas indif-feremment tout peche, mais douleur et fascherie," etc. — *Fr.* "*Any way of wickedness* — the word rendered after the Septuagint by *wickedness* means both *sorrow, mischief;* and *idol:* the former is probably the sense in which the Psalmist here uses it, a *way of sorrow* is a way productive of sorrow, or tending to sorrow, as is the case (Psalm 1:7 [*sic*]) with every wicked way." — *Cresswell.*

merely, but unrighteousness, as elsewhere it is said, (Isaiah 59:7,) that in the ways of such men there is "trouble and destruction," because they carry everything by violence and wickedness. Others think the allusion is to a bad conscience, which afflicts the wicked with inward torments, but this is a forced interpretation. Whatever sense we attach to the word, David's meaning simply is, that though he was a man subject to sin, he was not devotedly bent upon the practice of it.

24. *And lead me,* etc. I see no foundation for the opinion of some that this is an imprecation, and that David adjudges himself over to punishment. It is true, that "the way of all the earth" is an expression used sometimes to denote death, which is common to all, but the verb here translated to *lead* is more commonly taken in a good than a bad sense, and I question if the phrase *way of this life* ever means death. [662] It seems evidently to denote the full continuous term of human life, and David prays God to guide him even to the end of his course. I am aware some understand it to refer to eternal life, nor is it denied that the world to come is comprehended under the full term of life to which the Psalm~ ist alludes, but it seems enough to hold by the plain sense of the words, That God would watch over his servant to whom he had already shown kindness to the end, and not forsake him in the midst of his days.

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On the margin of the French Commentary Calvin refers to Joshua 23:14.

Psalm 140

PSALM 140

David complains of the implacable cruelty of his enemies, and of their treachery and rancorous calumnies. In the close, having besought God's help, and expressing his persuasion of obtaining his layout, he comforts himself with the hope of deliverance, and just vengeance being executed upon his enemies.

To the chief Musician — A Psalm of David.

Psalm 140:1-5

1. Deliver me, O Jehovah! from the evil man, (homo,) preserve me from the man (vir) [663] of injuries. **2.** Who imagine mischiefs in their heart; daily they congregate for war. **3.** They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent: [664] the poison of an asp [665] is under their lips.

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"The word 'man' in these two lines is expressed in the first by אדם (homo,) in the second by איש (vir.)" — *Jebb's Translation of the Psalms,* etc., volume 1.

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Mant translates —

"The serpent's brandished tongue is theirs."

"The verb," says he, "here rendered 'brandished,' signifies either 'to whet, sharpen,' which is performed by reiterated motion or friction, or to 'vibrate.' In either case the metaphor, as applied to a wicked tongue, is beautiful and appropriate. I have preferred the latter as affording a more poetical image. See Parkhurst on שנן, 3." In illustration of this figure Kimchi observes, that "the serpent when it comes to bite will open its mouth, and will hiss, and move its tongue here and there as if it would make it sharp as a *barber's razor.*"

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> Selah **4.** Keep us, O Jehovah! from the hands of the wicked: preserve me from the man of injuries, who plot to overthrow my goings. **5.** The proud have set a snare for me, and have spread a net with cords: by the way side they have set gins for me. [666] Selah

To the chief Musician, etc. I cannot bring myself to restrict this Psalm to Doeg, as the great body of interpreters do, for the context will clearly show that it speaks of Saul, and of the counselors who ceased not to inflame the king — himself sufficiently incensed against the life of one who was a saint of God. Being as he was a figure of Christ, we need not wonder that the agents of the devil directed so much of their rage against him. And this is the reason why he animadverts so sharply upon their rancor and treachery.

The terms *wicked* and *violent* men denote their unwarranted attempts at his destruction without provocation given. He therefore commends his cause to God, as having studied peace with them, as never having injured

The original word עכשוב, *achshub,* rendered "asp," is to be found in Scripture only in this place; and though it evidently denotes some of the serpent tribe, it is not so easy to determine the particular species intended. In our English Bible it is translated "adder," and as the word is derived from an Arabic verb, which signifies to coil up, or bend back, it has been said that this act perfectly corresponds with the nature of the adder, which in preparing to strike contracts itself into a spiral form, and raises its horrid head from the middle of the orb; and which also assumes the same form when it goes to sleep, coiling its body into a number of circles, with its head in the center. — (*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture*, vol. i. p. 428.) But the same action is common to most serpents; and this name may, therefore have reference to no particular species. Some, however, contend that it is another name for the *pethem*, or *asp* mentioned in Job 20:14, the venom of which is so deadly as to be incurable and followed by speedy death, unless the wounded part is amputated. Such seems to have been the opinion of the LXX., as they render it by ασπις, in which they are followed by the Vulgate and by the Apostle Paul, who quotes this text in Romans 3:13. Calvin here adopts the word sanctioned by these authorities.

"As to the poison, it will be observed, that in the venomous serpents there is a gland under the eye secreting the poisonous matter which is conveyed in a small tube or canal to the end of a fang which lies concealed at the roof of the mouth. This fang is moveable at the pleasure of the serpent, and is protruded when it is about to strike at an antagonist. The situation of this poison, which is in a manner behind the upper lip, gives great propriety to the expression — 'Adders' poison is under their lips.' The usage of the Hebrew language, renders it by no means improbable that the fang itself is called לשון, *lashon*, 'a tongue,' in the present text; and a serpent might be said to sharpen its tongue, when in preparing to strike it protruded its fangs. We do not see any explanation by which a more consistent meaning may be extracted from the expression here employed." — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.*

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The imagery in this verse is borrowed from the practices of hunters and fowlers in the eastern regions of the world, who are accustomed to take and destroy the ferocious beasts and the larger species of birds by a variety of ingenious snares and devices. It is a curious circumstance, as noticed by Thevenot, that artifices of this kind are literally employed against men as well as against birds and wild beasts by some of the Orientals. "The cunningest robbers in the world," says he, as quoted by Mant, "are in this country. They use a certain slip, with a running noose, which they cast with so much slight about a man's neck when they are within reach of him, that they never fail, so that they strangle him in a trice."

them, but being the innocent object of their unjust persecution. The same rule must be observed by us all, as it is against violence and wickedness that the help of God is extended. David is not Multiplying mere terms of reproach as men do in their personal disputes, but conciliating God's favor by supplying a proof of his innocence, for he must always be upon the side of good and peaceable men.

2. *Who imagine mischief's in their heart.* Here he charges them with inward malignity of heart. And it is plain that the reference is not to one man merely, for he passes to the plural number (in a manner sufficiently common,) reverting from the head to all his associates and copartners in guilt. Indeed what was formerly said in the singular number may be taken indefinitely, as grammarians say. In general he repeats what I have noticed already, that the hostility to which he was subjected arose from no cause of his. From this we learn that the more wickedly our enemies assail us, and the more of treachery and clandestine acts they manifest, the nearer is the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, who himself dictated this form of prayer by the mouth of David. The second clause may be rendered in three ways. Literally it reads, who gather wars, and so some understand it. But it, is well known that the prepositions are often omitted in the Hebrew, and no doubt he means that they stirred up general enmity by their false information's being as the trumpet which sounds to battle. Some render the verb — *to conspire, or plot together*, but this is a farfetched and meager sense. He intimates afterwards in what manner they stirred up unjust war by the wicked calumnies which they spread, as they could not crush a good and innocent person by violence, otherwise than by first overwhelming him with calumny.

4. *Keep me, O Jehovah!* To complaints and accusations he now again adds prayer, from which it appears more clearly, as I observed already, that it is God whom he seeks to be his avenger. It is the same sentiment repeated, with one or two words changed; for he had said *deliver me*, now he says *keep me*, and for *the wicked man* he substitutes the *hand of the wicked*. He had spoken of their conceiving mischief's, now of their plotting how they might ruin a poor unsuspecting individual. What he had said of their fraud and deceit he repeats in figurative language, which does not want emphasis. He speaks of nets spread out on every side to circumvent him, unless God interposed for his help. Though at first sight the metaphors may seem more obscure than the prayer was in its simple unfigurative expression, they are far from darkening the previous declarations, and they add much to the strength of them. From the word גאים, *geim*, which signifies *proud* or *lofty* in the Hebrew, we learn that he does not speak of common men, but of men in power, who considered that they would have no difficulty in crushing an insignificant individual. When our enemies attack us in the insolence of pride, let us learn to resort to God, who can repel the rage of the wicked. Nor does he mean to say that they attacked him merely by bold and violent

measures, for he complains of their spreading gins and snares; both methods are spoken of, namely, that while they were confident of the power which they possessed, they devised stratagems for his destruction.

Psalm 140:6-10

> **6.** I said to Jehovah thou art my God; hear the voice of my supplication. **7.** O, Jehovah, my Lord! the strength of my salvation, thou hast set a covering upon my head in the day of arms. [667] **8.** Grant not, O Jehovah! the desires of the wicked; they have devised, do not though consummate, they shall be exalted. Selah. **9.** As for the head of those compassing me about, let the mischief of his lips cover him. **10.** Let coals with fire fall upon them; he shall cast them into deeps,
>
> [668] they shall not rise again.

6. *I said to Jehovah.* In these words he shows that his prayers were not merely those of the lips, as hypocrites will make loud appeals to God for mere appearance sake, but that he prayed with earnestness, and from a hidden principle of faith. Till we have a persuasion of being saved through the grace of God there can be no sincere prayer. We have here an excellent illustration of the nature of faith, in the Psalmist's turning himself away from man's view, that he may address God apart, hypocrisy being excluded in this internal exercise of the heart. This is true prayer — not the mere idle lifting up of the voice, but the presentation of our petitions from an inward principle of faith. To beget in himself a persuasion of his obtaining his present requests from God, he recalls to his mind what deliverance's God had already extended to him. He speaks of his having been to him as a shield in every time of danger. Some read the words in the future tense — "Thou wilt cover my head in the day of battle." But it is evident David speaks of protection formerly experienced from the hand of God, and from this derives comfort to his faith. He comes forth, not as a raw and undisciplined recruit, but as a soldier well tried in previous engagements. The strength of salvation is equivalent to salvation displayed with no ordinary power.

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That is, in the day of battle, in the day of the clashing or noisy collision of arms.

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In the French version it is, as in our English Bible — "Fosses profondes;" "deep pits." The Hebrew word, according to Parkhurst, properly means *breaches* or *disruptions* of the earth, such as are made by an earthquake. He conceives that the Psalmist alludes to the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and of the two hundred and fifty men who burnt incense. (Numbers 16:31-35.) See Parkhurst on המר. Bishop Horsley, who concurs with Parkhurst in the supposed allusion, translates *chasms of the yawning earth*, observing that he cannot otherwise than by this periphrasis express the idea of the word מהמרות

8. *Grant not, O Jehovah! the desires of the wicked* [669] We might render the words *Establish not*, though the meaning would be the same — that God would restrain the desires of the wicked, and frustrate all their aims and attempts. We see from this that it is in his power, whenever he sees proper, to frustrate the unprincipled designs of men, and their wicked expectations, and to dash their schemes. When, therefore, it is found impracticable to bring our enemies to a right state of mind, we are to pray that the devices which they have imagined may be immediately overthrown and thwarted. In the next clause there is more ambiguity. As the Hebrew verb פוק, *puk*, means to lead out, as well as to strike or fall, the words might mean, that God would not carry out into effect the counsels of the wicked. But the opinion of those may be correct who read — *their thought is thou wilt not strike*, David representing such hopes as the wicked are wont to entertain. We find him elsewhere (Psalm 10:6) describing their pride in a similar way, in entirely overlooking a divine providence, and considering all events as subject to their control, and the world placed under their sole management. The word which follows with thus come in appropriately — they shall be *lifted up*, in illusion to the wicked being inflated by pride, through the idea that they can never be overtaken by adversity. If the other reading be preferred, the negative particle must be considered as repeated — "Suffer not their attempts to be carried into effect; let them not be exalted." At any rate David is to be considered as censuring the security of his enemies, in making no account of God, and in surrendering themselves to unbridled license.

9. *As for the head, etc.* There may be a doubt whether, under the term head, he refers to the chief of the faction opposed to him; for we call suppose an inversion in the sentence, and a change of the plural to the singular number, bringing out this sense.

[670] "Let the mischief of their wicked speeches, which they intended against me, fall upon their own head." [671] As almost all interpreters, however, have taken the other view, I have adopted it, only understanding the reference as being to Saul rather than Doeg. There follows an imprecation upon the whole company of his enemies generally, that *coals may fall upon*

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"The desires which the wicked have for my destruction." — *Phillips.*

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"Car il pourreit estre que l'ordre des mots seroit renverse, et que le nombre singulier seroit mis pour le pluriel, en ce sens," etc. — *Fr.*

671

"The meaning of the verse may be, that the mischief designed by the wicked against others shall fall on their own head, as Psalm 7:17, 'his violence shall descend on his own head;' or it may express the leader of the hostile party, as Saul or Doeg, in the case of David being here the speaker." — *Phillips.*

them, alluding to the awful fate of Sodom and Gomorrha. We find this elsewhere (Psalm 11:6) set forth by the Spirit of God as an example of Divine vengeance, to terrify the wicked; and Jude (Jude 1:7) declares that God testified, by this example of everlasting significance, that he would be the Judge of all the ungodly. Some translate what follows — *the wilt cast them into the fire*, which might pass. But as: ב, *beth*, in the Hebrew often denotes instrumentality, we may properly render the words — *thou wilt cast them down* By *fire*, or With *fire*, as God sent it forth against Sodom and Gomorrha. He prays they may be sunk into deep pits, whence they may never rise. God sometimes heals those whom he has smitten with great severity; David cuts off the reprobate from the hope of pardon, as knowing them to be beyond recovery. Had they been disposable to repentance, he would have been inclinable on his part to mercy.

Psalm 140:11-13

> **11.** The man (vir) of tongue shall not be established in the earth, evil shall hunt the man (vir) [672] of violence to banishments. **12.** I have known that God will accomplish the judgment of the poor, the judgment of the afflicted. **13.** Surely the righteous will praise thy name, the upright shall dwell before thy face.

11. *The man of tongue*, [673] *etc.* Some understand by this the *loquacious man*, but the sense is too restricted; nor is the reference to a reproachful, garrulous, vain and boastful man, but the man of virulence, who wars by deceit and calumny, and not openly. This is plain from what is said of the other class of persons in the subsequent part of the sentence, that his enemies were given to open violence as well as to treachery and cunning — like the lion as well as the wolf — as formerly he complained that the poison of the asp or viper was under their lips. The words run in the future tense, and many interpreters construe them into the optative form, or into a prayer; but I prefer retaining the future tense, as David does not appear so much to pray, as to look forward to a coming deliverance. Whether his enemies wrought by treachery, or by open violence, he looks forward to God as his deliverer. The figure drawn from hunting is expressive. The hunter, by spreading his toils on all sides, leaves no way of escape for the wild beast; and the ungodly cannot by any subterfuge elude the divine judgments. *Mischief hunts them*

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איש is the word for man in both these clauses.

673

"*A man, of tongue*, *i.e.*, of evil tongue; a slanderer or detractor." — *Phillips.* The Bible translation renders the phrase "an evil speaker;" and the Chaldee Paraphrase has "the man of detraction, with a three-forked tongue;" because such a man wounds *three* at once — the receiver, the sufferer, and himself.

into banishment's, for the more they look for impunity and escape, they only precipitate themselves more certainly upon destruction.

12. *I have known; that God, etc.* There can be no question that David here seals or corroborates his prayer by turning his thoughts and discourse to the providential judgments of God, for, as I have already said, doubtful prayer is no prayer at all. He declares it to be a thing known and ascertained that God cannot but deliver the afflicted. As he may connive for a time, however, and suffer good and upright persons to be grievously tried, David suggests as consideration which may meet this temptation, that God does so advisedly, that he may relieve those who are in affliction, and recover those who are oppressed. He accordingly says in express words that he will be *the judge of the poor and the afflicted*. In this way does he encourage both others and himself under continued troubles, till the time proper for deliverance arrive, intimating that though he might be universally considered an object of pity in being exposed to the fury of the wicked, and in not being immediately delivered by the hand of God, he would not give way to despair, but remember that it was the very part of God to undertake the cause of the poor. It were to weaken the passage if we considered David merely to be speaking of his own individual case.

He infers (Psalm 140:13) that the righteous would give thanks to God, and be safe under his help. For the particle אך, *ach*, which is often adversative in the Hebrew, is here affirmative, and denotes inference or consequence from what was formerly stated. Though the godly may be silenced for a time, and through the force of trouble may not raise the praises of God, David expresses his conviction that what was taken away would be speedily restored, and they would celebrate the loving kindness of the Lord with joy and alacrity. As this is not easily believed in circumstances of trial, the already referred to is inserted. We must endeavor, though with a struggle, to rise to a confident persuasion, that however low they may be brought, the Lord's people will be restored to prosperity, and will soon sing his praises. The second clause of the verse gives the reason of their thanksgiving's. He speaks of this as being the ground of the praises of the righteous, that they experience God's care of them, and concern for their salvation. For *to dwell before God's face* is to be cherished and sustained by his fatherly regards.

Psalm 141

PSALM 141

Whatever may have been the immediate cause pressing David to pray in the manner he does in this Psalm, [674] it is plain that his desire is through divine grace to check and bridle his spirit, under injuries of a causeless and unprovoked description, so as not to break out into retaliation and revenge, and return evil for evil. Having attained to the exercise of forbearance, he seeks that God would judge between him and his enemies.

A Psalm of David.

Psalm 141:1-4

1. O Jehovah! I have cried unto thee, make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice when I cry unto thee. **2.** Let my prayer be directed as incense before thy face; the lifting up of my hands, as [675] the evening sacrifice. **3.** Set a watch, O Jehovah! upon my mouth, keep a guard upon the door of my lips. **4.** Incline not my heart to an evil thing, to

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Many commentators are strongly of opinion, that this Psalm was written as a memorial of that very interesting scene in the life of David, recorded in 1 Samuel 24, relating to his generous treatment of Saul. Though he had an opportunity of putting that his cruel persecutor to death in the cave of En-gedi, yet he spared his life, only cutting off his skirt, and not suffering his followers to touch him; and when Saul had gone out of the cave, David going out after him, remonstrated with him from some distance in the gentlest and most respectful language in regard to the injustice of his conduct towards him. It is thought that the sixth verse contains so express a reference to this very remarkable occurrence in David's history, as to leave little doubt that it was the occasion on which the Psalm was composed.

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practice wicked works with men that work iniquity, and that I may not eat of their dainties.

1. *O Jehovah! I have cried unto thee.* From such an exordium and manner of praying, it is evident that David was laboring under no small trial, as he repeats his requests, and insists upon receiving help. Without venturing to say anything definite upon the point, we would not disapprove of the conjecture that this Psalm was written by David with reference to the persecutions he suffered from Saul. He teaches us by his example to make application immediately to God, and not be tempted, as wicked men are, to renounce prayer, and rely on other resources. He says that he cried to God, not to heaven or earth, to men or to fortune, and other vain objects, which are made mention of, in the first place at least, in such cases by the ungodly. If they do address themselves to God, it is with murmurs and complaints, howling rather than praying.

In the second verse the allusion is evidently to the legal ceremonies. [676] At that time the prayers of God's people were according to his own appointment sanctified through the offering up of incense and sacrifices, and David depended upon this promise. [677] As to the conjecture some have made, that he was at this time an exile, and cut off from the privileges of the religious assembly, nothing certain can be said upon that point; their idea being that there is a tacit antithesis in the verse — that though prevented from continuing with God's worshippers into the sanctuary, or using incense and sacrifice, he desired God would accept his prayers notwithstanding. But as there seems no reason to adopt this restricted sense, it is enough to understand the general truth, that as these symbols taught the Lord's people

As, here and in the preceding clause, is a supplement, very properly made by our author; a word signifying *like*, or *in the stead of*, being frequently understood in the Hebrew text of the Psalms.

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The allusion, according to the opinion of most commentators, is to the morning and evening sacrifices, of which see an account in Exodus 29:38-42. In the phraseology of the verse it is supposed that there is a reference to the commencing and concluding acts of the daily public worship among the Jews. Every morning and evening the priests offered incense upon the incense-altar which stood in the holy place, while the people prayed without. But in the morning the incense was offered *before* the sacrifice was laid upon the altar of burnt-offering; whereas in the evening (at the ninth hour) it was offered after the sacrifice was laid upon the altar; and thus in the evening the sacrifice and the incense were offered at the same time. See Lightfoot's Temple Service, chapter 9: section 5. Dr. Adam Clarke, however, thinks that David does not refer to any *sacrifice*; "for," says he, "he uses not זבח, *zebach*, which is almost universally used for a *slaughtered animal*, מנחת, *minchath*, which is generally taken for a *gratitude offering*, or an *unbloody* sacrifice." He translates the last two words "the evening oblation."

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"Car pource que lors Dieu vouloit que les prieres des fideles fussent sanctifiees par encensement et par sacrifices, David s'appuye sur ceste promesse." — *Fr.*

to consider their prayers equally acceptable to God with the sweetest incense, and most excellent sacrifice, David derived confirmation to his faith from the circumstance. Although the view of the fathers was not confined entirely to the external ceremonies, David was bound to avail himself of such helps. As he considered, therefore, that it was not in vain the incense was burned daily on the altar by God's commandment, and the evening offering presented, he speaks of his prayers in connection with this ceremonial worship. *The lifting up of the hands,* evidently means prayer, for those who translate משאת, *masath*, *a gift*, obscure and pervert the meaning of the Psalmist. As the word, which is derived from נשא, *nasa*, means *lifting up* in the Hebrew, the natural inference is, that prayer is meant, in allusion to the outward action practiced in it. And we can easily suppose that David here as elsewhere repeats the same thing twice. As to the reason which has led to the universal practice amongst all nations of lifting up the hand in prayer, I have taken notice of it elsewhere.

3. *Set a watch, O Jehovah! upon my mouth.* As David was liable to be hurt at the unbridled and unprincipled rage of his enemies, so as to be tempted to act in a manner that might not be justifiable, he prays for divine direction, and not that he might be kept back from manual violence merely, but that his tongue might be restrained from venting reproach, or words of complaint. Even persons of the most self-possessed temper, if unwarrantably injured, will some — times proceed to make retaliation, through their resenting the unbecoming conduct of their enemies. David prays accordingly that his tongue might be restrained by the Lord from uttering any word which was out of joint. Next he seeks that his heart be kept back from every mischievous device that might issue in revenge. The words added — *that I may not eat of their delicacies*, are to be understood figuratively, as a petition that he might not be tempted by the prosperity which they enjoyed in sin to imitate their conduct. The three things mentioned in the context are to be connected; and it may be advisable to consider each of them more particularly. Nothing being more difficult than for the victims of unjust persecution to bridle their speech, and submit silently and without complaint to injuries, David needed to pray that his mouth might be closed and guarded — that the door of his mouth might be kept shut by God, as one who keeps the gate watches the ingress and egress — נצרה, *nitsrah*, being the imperative of the verb, rather than a noun. He next subjoins *that God would not incline his heart to an evil thing*; for דבר, *dabar*, is here, as in many other places, used to signify *a thing.* Immediately after he explains himself to mean, that he would not desire to strive with them in wickedness, and thus make himself like his enemies. Had that monk of whom Eusebius makes mention duly reflected upon this resolution of David, he would not have fallen into the silly fallacy of imagining that he had shown himself the perfect scholar by observing silence for a whole term of seven years. Hearing that the regulation of the tongue was a rare virtue, he betook

himself to a distant solitude, from which he did not return to his master for seven years; and being asked the cause of his long absence, replied that he had been meditating upon what he had learned from this verse. It would have been proper to have asked him at the same time, whether during the interim he had thought none, as well as spoken none. For the two things stand connected the being silent, and the being free from the charge of evil thoughts. It is very possible that although he observed silence, he had many ungodly thoughts, and these are worse than vain words. We have simply alluded in passing to this foolish notion, as what may convince the reader of the possibility of persons running away with a word torn from its connection, and overlooking the scope of the writer. In committing himself to the guidance of God, both as to thoughts and words, David acknowledges the need of the influence of the Spirit for the regulation of his tongue and of his mind, particularly when tempted to be exasperated by the insolence of opposition. If, on the one hand, the tongue be liable to slip and too fast of utterance, unless continually watched and guarded by God; on the other, there are disorderly affections of an inward kind which require to be restrained. What a busy workshop is the heart of man, and what a host of devices is there manufactured every moment! If God do not watch over our heart and tongue, there will confessedly be no bounds to words and thoughts of a sinful kind, — so rare a gift of the Spirit is moderation in language, while Satan is ever making suggestions which will be readily and easily complied with, unless God prevent. It need not seem absurd to speak of God inclining our hearts to evil, since these are in his hand, to turn them whithersoever he willeth at his pleasure. Not that he himself prompts them to evil desires, but as according to his secret judgments he surrenders and effectually gives over the wicked to Satan's tyranny, he is properly said to blind and harden them. The blame of their sins rests with men themselves, and the lust which is in them; and, as they are carried out to good or evil by a natural desire, it is not from any external impulse that they incline to what is evil, but spontaneously and of their own corruption. I have read — *to work the works of iniquity;* others read — *to think the thoughts of iniquity.* The meaning is the same, and it is needless to insist upon the preference to be given. By מנעמים, *manammim*, translated *delicacies*, is meant the satisfaction felt by the ungodly when their sins are connived at through the divine forbearance. While their insolence in such a case becomes more presumptuous, even the Lord's people are in danger of being deceived by the prosperity they see enjoying, and to take liberties themselves. David had reason therefore to pray for the secret restraints of the Holy Spirit, that he might be kept from *feasting on their delicacies*; that is, being intoxicated into license or sinful pleasure through anything debasing, flattering, or agreeable in outward circumstances. [678]

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Psalm 141:5-7

> **5.** Let the righteous smite me, a kindness; and let him chastise me, a precious oil, it shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. **6.** Their judges have been thrown down upon stony places; and they shall hear my words, for they are sweet. **7.** As one who breaketh and cutteth [679] on the earth, our bones have been, scattered at the mouth of the grave.

5. *Let the righteous smite me, etc.* While Satan tempts the wicked by his allurements, they, at the same time, deceive one another by flattery, which leads David to declare, that he would much rather be awakened to his duty by the severe rod of reproof, than be seduced through pleasing falsehoods. Among those who hold religion in contempt no reproof is administered to one who has contracted any sin, and, therefore, if we have any concern for our spiritual safety we will connect ourselves with good men, who restore such as have fallen by upright admonition, and bring back those who have erred to the right way. It is not agreeable to corrupt nature to be reproved when we sin, but, David had brought himself to that degree of docility and self-denial which led him to consider no reproof distasteful which he knew to proceed from the spirit of kindness. As there is some ambiguity in the words, we may see to ascertain the proper meaning of them. The noun חסד, *chesed*, can very well be resolved into the adverb — *the righteous shall smite me mercifully*, or in *mercy*, supplying the preposition. And this is the meaning adopted by most interpreters, that David reckoned as the best ointment such reproofs as breathed charity and kindness, or proceeded from a kind and dispassionate spirit. Should this reading be preferred it is to be remembered, that David refers, not so much to the outward manner in which the reproof is to be administered, as to the frame of the heart. However how good men may be, and whatever severity of language they may employ in admonishing those who have erred, they are still actuated by the force of brotherly affection. My, the very severity is, in fact, occasioned by their holy anxiety and fear of their brother's safety. The righteous act mercifully under all this apparent sharpness and severity — as the wicked, on the other hand, act cruelly who censure only in a very gentle manner. By

"C'est a dire qu'il ne s'enyure de la vaine douceur qu'ils out en se desbordant a mal, et qu'ainsi il ne s'esgaye en pechez." — *Fr.*

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"*As one cutting and slitting.* Many persons understand עצים, *wood*, after these participles, supposing the comparison of scattering the bones to be made with the scattering of wood after it has been cleft. But it is more probable that what the Psalmist intended to say was in substance as follows: 'Our bones lie scattered at the edge of the grave, just as one cutting and cleaving the earth in making a grave often throws up bones, which may be seen scattered here and there with the earth lying at its sides.' The verse is poetical, and the figure indicates great distress." — *Phillips*

noticing this feature in reproof, David besides would distinguish that kind of it which takes its rise in sincere affection, from invectives which proceed from hatred or private animosity, as Solomon says. (Proverbs 10:12.) The other rendering of the words, however, which I have adopted, is equally suitable —

Let the righteous censure me, it shall be mercy, or, I will reckon it a benefit, let him reprove me, this shall be precious ointment that will not hurt my head.

The last clause some interpret in another way — *the oil of the head let it not break my head*, that is, let not the wicked seduce me to destruction by their pleasing flatteries. [680] By the *oil* they understand the pernicious adulations by which the wicked would ruin us, and plunge us deeper and deeper in destruction, while they seem to administer pleasure. This would make the passage convey a fuller meaning, That while David was pliable and yielding in the matter of reproof, he fled from flattery as from the fatal songs of the Sirens. However sweet praise may be to the taste at first, every one who lends an ear to flattery, drinks in a poison which will presently diffuse itself through the whole heart. Let us learn by David's example to reject all flatteries, prone as we are naturally to receive them, and to renounce waywardness and obstinacy, lest we should put away from us those corrections which are wholesome remedies for our vices. For such is the infatuated love men have to their own destruction, that even when forced to condemn themselves they wish to have the approbation of the world. And why? that by superinducing torpor of conscience, they may, by their own spontaneous act, devote themselves to ruin.

For yet my prayer, *etc.* Three explanations of this clause have been suggested. According to some the meaning of it is, that, as we are ever ready to be corrupted by bad example, David here prays, that he might not decline to their evils, or the evils which they practiced. The second sense assigned is, that David, recognizing their mischievous devices, prays that he may be kept by the Lord from their wickedness. The third sense, that recognizing them as reduced to desperate calamities, he prays that the just vengeance of God might be executed upon them according to their deserts. The very opposite meaning might seem the more suitable, that David was not prevented by their obstinacy in wickedness from praying for their welfare. For there is the adverb yet emphatically inserted. Or, what if David is to be considered as predicting their unfortunate end, intimating, that though the ungodly now riot in excess, they shall shortly be arrested, and that before long his compassion would be exercised towards them? The way in which the words stand connected favors this view; for he does not say

680 "Que l'huile de la teste ne rompe point ma teste, c'est a dire, que les meschans ne m'amadouent point par leurs flatteries a ma perdition et ruine." — *Fr.*

— *yet my prayer shall be in their calamities*, but rather separately, "*yet*, or, *yet a little while*, and then my power shall be in their calamities." As David was in danger of being tempted to yield to similarly vain courses with them, he very properly suggests a sustaining motive to his soul, why he should retain his integrity, that erelong they would be overtaken with so awful a destruction as to entreat compassion from him and others of the people of God.

6. *Their judges have been thrown down upon stony places* [681] Almost all interpreters agree, that the tense of the verb should be changed from the preterit to the future, and then resolve it into the optative — *let them be thrown down.* It appears to me that the sense of David would be made very plain by reading, *When their judges have been cast down from the rock, or upon stony places, they shall hear my words.* David, on perceiving the rage which the common people expressed towards him, as carried away through the influence of error and misrepresentation, lays the blame upon their leaders. When their power should be taken away, he is confident that the simple, who had been misled, would be brought to a right mind. *Casting from the rocks, or upon stony places,* is a metaphorical expression in reference to the high and dignified position in which they were placed. Although not without blame in following evil counselors so as to persecute unjustly a good and godly man, yet he had reason to entertain more hope of their repentance, that they would return to consideration when God executed vengeance upon those who were at their head. We see how ready the common people are to judge by impulse rather than deliberation, and to be hurried into most condemnable proceedings by blind prejudice, while afterwards upon being admonished they retrace their steps with equal precipitation. So that, granting cruelty must always be sinful, and simplicity no excuse, we are taught by David's example to pray that sound counsel may be sent to such as are in error, with a view to enabling them to hear the truth and the right with patience.

7. *As one who breaketh, etc.* Here David complains that his enemies were not satisfied with inflicting upon him one death — death of a common description — but must first mangle him, and those associated with him, and then cast them into the grave. The common robber on the highway

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Those who understand this verse as containing an allusion to the generous manner in which David acted towards Saul in the cave of En-gedi, and to his mild expostulation after they had both left the cave, translate thus: —

"Their princes on the sides of the rock were dismissed,
or *let go* in safety*; And they heard my words that they were pleasant."*

This exactly corresponds with the occurrences referred to. In correspondence with the first line, it, is said in 1 Samuel 24:2, that Saul and his chosen men went to seek David upon the *rocks* of the wild goats; and the terms in which David expostulated with Saul, were so gentle, dutiful and affecting, as for the time to melt into tenderness and contrition the heart of Saul, and to impress the minds of all who heard them.

throws the body of his murdered victim whole into the ditch; David tells us, that he and those with him were treated more barbarously, their Bones being dispersed, as one cleaves wood or stones into fragments, or digs the earth. From this it appears, that David, like Paul, (2 Corinthians 1:9,) was delivered from deaths oft; [682] and we may learn the duty of continuing to cherish hope of life and deliverance even when the expression may apply to us, that our bones have been broken and scattered.

Psalm 141:8-10

> **8.** Because to thee, O Jehovah! My Lord, are my eyes; in thee have I hoped: leave mot my soul destitute. **9.** Keep we from the hands of the snare which they have spread for me, from the nets of the workers of iniquity. **10.** Let the wicked fall together into his nets; I always shall pass by. [683]

8. *Because to thee, O Jehovah*! *etc.* If we reflect upon what was comprehended under the previous figure of their bones being broken, his praying in such circumstances is just as if the torn fragments of a mangled corpse should cry unto God. This may give us some idea of the heroical courage of David, who could continue to direct his eyes to God even under such overwhelming difficulties; this being the very part faith ought to discharge, in making us collected and composed when our senses would otherwise be confounded. [684] Great a miracle as it would have been for God to have preserved them in life, when their bones were scattered abroad,

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If David here refers to the treatment he and his followers met with at the hands of Saul, this exhibits in dark colors the extreme inhumanity of that monarch. "We are not sufficiently informed," says Walford, "respecting the cruelties which were perpetrated against David and those who adhered to him, to enable us to point out the instances to which he here alludes; but the murder of Abimelech, and of the priests who were with him, furnishes a pregnant proof of the atrocities which Saul and his agents were capable of perpetrating. (See 1 Samuel 22.) It appears from the language of this verse that such enormities were not confined to a few cases, but must have been numerous, to give occasion to the image which is employed to describe them." How striking the contrast between David's treatment of Saul, and that which Saul adopted towards him! Mr. Peters in his Dissertations on Job, gives an exposition of this 7th verse which is ingenious, and which Archbishop Secker calls "admirable, though not quite unexceptionable." Understanding the verse as referring to the slaughter of the priests at Nob, just now adverted to, he renders the words לפי שאול, (which Calvin translates, *at the grave's mouth*,) *at the mouth*, that is, *at the command of Saul*. In support of this translation he produces similar expressions, פרעה פי על, *at the command of Pharaoh*, (Genesis 45:21,) and פיך על, *at thy command*. (Job 39:17.) To this rendering there is, however, this strong objection, that we do not find David ever mentioning Saul by name in any of the Psalms. Peters, indeed, states that this objection was offered to him against his view, and he endeavors to remove it, though, as we think, with indifferent success.

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"Jusques a ce que je passe." — *Fr.* "Until I pass."

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it was a double miracle to support their minds in the firm persuasion of their not perishing.

9. *Keep me*, *etc.* He owns himself to be shut up in the snares of his enemies, unless set free by a higher hand. In praying to God under the straits to which he was reduced, he proves what a high estimate he formed of what his mercy could effect, as elsewhere he says, that the issues from death belong to him. (Psalm 68:20.) God often delays interposing, that the deliverance may be the more signal; and afterwards he makes the devices of the wicked to recoil upon their own heads. It seems absurd to refer the pronoun *his* to Saul, as if the sense were that Doeg and others of that character would fall into the snares of Saul. It would seem to be God who is intended. First, he had spoken of being preserved by God from the toils of the wicked, and now to these snares which the wicked spread for the upright he opposes the snares with which God catches the crafty in their own devices. And as the number of his enemies was great, he uses the expression, *let them fall together*, for escape would have been impossible, had he not been persuaded that it was easy for God to overthrow any combined force and array of men. What follows admits of two meanings. Many read, *I shall always pass.* But we may suppose order of the words changed and read, *until I pass.* It prays that his enemies should be held in the snare till he got off safe,

"C'est le propre de la foy de rassembler lessens de la personne dispersez, lequels autrement s'esvanouiroyent a chacun coup." —*Fr.*

Psalm 142

PSALM 142

When Saul came into the cave where David lay concealed, this saint of God might upon such an occurrence have been either thrown into consternation, or led by his alarm into some unwarrantable step, it being common for persons in despair either to be prostrated with dismay, or driven into frenzy. But it appears from this Psalm that David retained his composure, relying with assured confidence upon God, and resigning himself to vows and prayers instead of taking any unauthorized steps.

A Prayer of David, giving instruction when he was in the cave. [685]

Psalm 142:1-4

> **1.** I cried to Jehovah with my voice, with my voice to Jehovah I made supplication. **2.** I pour out my meditation before his face: I tell my affliction before his face. **3.** When my spirit was perplexed within me, and thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked they laid a snare for me. **4.** On looking to the right hand, and perceiving, none would know me, refuge failed me, there was none seeking after my soul.

1. *I cried* [686] *to Jehovah, etc.* It showed singular presence of mind in David that he was not paralyzed with fear, or that he did not in a paroxysm

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In the history of David we read particularly of the two caves in which he took shelter, that of Adullam, (1 Samuel 22:1,) and that of En-gedi, (1 Samuel 24:3.) The latter is generally supposed to be the cave here

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of fury take vengeance upon his enemy, as he easily might have done; and that he was not actuated by despair to take away his life, but composedly addressed himself to the exercise of prayer. There was good reason why the title should have been affixed to the Psalm to note this circumstance, and David had good grounds for mentioning how he commended himself to God. Surrounded by the army of Saul, and hemmed in by destruction on every side, how was it possible for him to have spared so implacable an enemy, had he not been fortified against the strongest temptations by prayer? The repetition he makes use of indicates his having prayed with earnestness, so as to be impervious to every assault of temptation.

He tells us still more clearly in the next verse that he disburdened his ears unto God. To pour out one's thoughts and tell over his afflictions implies the reverse of those perplexing anxieties which men brood over inwardly to their own distress, and by which they torture themselves, and are chafed by their afflictions rather than led to God; or it implies the reverse of those frantic exclamations to which others give utterance who find no comfort in the superintending providence and care of God. In short, we are left to infer that while he did not give way before men to loud and senseless lamentations, neither did he suffer himself to be tormented with inward and suppressed cares, but made known his grief's with unsuspecting confidence to the Lord.

3. *When, my spirit, etc.* Though he owns here that he felt anxiety, yet he confirms what he had said as to the constancy of his faith. The figure which he uses of his spirit being *perplexed*, [687] aptly represents the state of the mind in alternating between various resolutions when there was no apparent outgate from danger, and increasing its distress by resorting to all kinds of devices. He adds, that though there was no apparent way of safety, God knew from the beginning in what way his deliverance should be effected. Others put a different meaning upon this clause, *thou knowest my way,* as if David asserted God to have been witness of his integrity, but the other is the more correct, that God knew the way to deliver him, while his own mind was distracted by a variety of thoughts, and yet could not conceive any mode of extrication. The words teach us, when we have tried

In the Hebrew the verb is in the future — "I will cry;" but as that language has no present tense, it frequently uses for it the past and future promiscuously. Bishop Horne, therefore, renders in the present all the verbs in this Psalm, which Calvin translates in the past, except the verbs in the two first verses, which he renders in the future. Translators, however, in general concur with Calvin, and we think justly, the Psalm, as we conceive, being a recollection of the substance of the prayers he addressed to God while in the cave of En-gedi, but which it cannot be supposed he had then an opportunity of committing to writing.

687 "Or c'est une belle similitude quand il dit que son esprit a este en tortille et enveloppe," etc. — *Fr.*

every remedy and know not what to do, to rest satisfied with the conviction that God is acquainted with our afflictions, and condescends to care for us, as Abraham said —

"The Lord will provide." (Genesis 22:8.)

4. *On looking to the right hand*, [688] *etc.*, He shows that there was good cause for the dreadful sufferings he experienced, since no human aid or comfort was to be expected, and destruction seemed inevitable. When he speaks of having looked and yet not perceived a friend amongst men, he does not mean that he had turned his thoughts to earthly helps in forgetfulness of God, but that he had made such inquiry as was warrantable after one on the earth who might assist him. Had any person of the kind presented himself, he would no doubt have recognized him as an instrument in the hand of God's mercy, but it was God's purpose that he should be abandoned of all assistance from man, and that his deliverance from destruction should thus appear more extraordinary. In the expression, *none seeking after my soul*, the verb to *seek after* is used in a good sense, for being solicitous about any man's welfare or safety.

Psalm 142:5-7

5. I cried unto thee, O Jehovah! I said thou art my hope and my portion in the land of the living. **6.** Attend unto my cry, for I labor very much under affliction: deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I. **7.** Rescue my soul from prison, that I may praise thy name; the righteous shall crown me, for thou wilt recompense me.

5. *I cried unto thee, O Jehovah*! With a view to hasten God's interposition, David complains of the low estate he was reduced to, and of his extremity; the term cry denoting vehemence, as I have elsewhere noticed. He speaks of deliverance as being plainly needed, since he was now held a prisoner. By *prison* some suppose he alludes to the cave where he was lodged, but this is too restricted a meaning. The subsequent clause, *the righteous shall compass me*, is translated differently by some, *they shall wait me*. I have retained the true and natural sense. I grant that it is taken figuratively for surrounding, intimating that he would be a spectacle to all, the eyes of men being attracted by such a singular case of deliverance. If any consider the words not to be figurative, the sense will be, That the righteous would not only congratulate him, but place a crown upon his head in token of victory. Some explain the passage, They will assemble to congratulate

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The allusion here, it is supposed, is to the observances of the ancient Jewish courts of judicature, in which the advocate, as well as the accuser, stood on the *right hand* of the accused. (Psalm 109:5.) The Psalmist felt himself in the condition of one who had nobody to plead his cause, and to protect him in the dangerous circumstances in which he was placed.

me, and will stand round me on every side like a crown. As the words literally read, *they will crown* upon me, some supply another pronoun, and give this sense, that the righteous would construe the mercy bestowed upon David as a glory conferred upon themselves; for when God delivers any of his children he holds out the prospect of deliverance to the rest, and, as it were, gifts them with a crown. The sense which I have adopted is the simplest, however, That the mercy vouchsafed would be shown conspicuously to all as in a theater, proving a signal example to the righteous for establishment of their faith. The verb גמל, *gamal*, in the Hebrew, is of a more general signification than to repay, and means *to confer a benefit*, as I have shown elsewhere.

Psalm 143

PSALM 143

Although the enemies with whom David had to contend were wicked, and their persecution as unjust as it was cruel, David recognized the just judgment of God in it all, and seeks to conciliate his favor by humbly supplicating pardon. Having complained of the cruelty of his enemies, and declared that amidst all his affliction he still remembered God, he prays for restoration, and the guidance of God's Spirit, that the remainder of his life might be devoted to his fear.

A Psalm of David. [689]

> Psalm 143:1-3
>
> **1.** Hear my prayer, O Jehovah! give ear to my supplication, in thy truth answer me, in thy righteousness. **2.** And enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. **3.** For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath prostrated my life on the ground: he hath set me in dark places, as the dead of an age.

1. *Hear my prayer, O Jehovah*! It is evident that the oppression of his enemies must have been extreme, when David laments his case in such earnest and pathetic terms. The introductory words show that the grief

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To the title "A Psalm of David," some copies of the Septuagint and the Vulgate add — "when his son Absalom pursued him," (see 2 Samuel 17:24, 25;) and interpreters in general agree that this is the most probable occasion on which it was penned.

he felt was great. His reason for speaking of the justice and faithfulness of God in connection we have shown elsewhere. Under the term *justice*, or *righteousness*, we are not to suppose that he speaks of merit, or hire, as some ignorantly imagine, but of that goodness of God which leads him to defend his people. To the same effect does he speak of God's *truth* or *faithfulness*; for the best proof he can give of his faithfulness is in not forsaking those whom he has promised to help. In helping his people he shows himself to be a just and true God, both in not frustrating their expectation, and in so far as he shows in this extension of mercy what his nature is, that David very properly encourages himself in prayer by making mention of both.

2. *And enter not into judgment,* [690] *etc.* I have hinted already why he proceeds to pray for pardon. When overtaken by adversity, we are ever to conclude that it is a rod of correction sent by God to stir us up to pray. Although he is far from taking pleasure in our trials, it is certain that our sins are the cause of his dealing towards us with this severity. While those to whom David was opposed were wicked men, and he was perfectly conscious of the rectitude of his cause as regarded them, he freely acknowledged his sin before God as a condemned suppliant. We are to hold this as a general rule in seeking to conciliate God, that we must pray for the pardon of our sins. If David found refuge nowhere else than in prayer for pardon, who is there amongst us who would presume to come before God trusting in his own righteousness and integrity? Nor does David here merely set an example before God's people how they ought to pray, but declares that there is none amongst men who could be just before God were he called to plead his cause. The passage is one fraught with much instruction, teaching us, as I have just hinted, that God can only show favor to us in our approaches by throwing aside the character of a judge, and reconciling us to himself in a gratuitous remission of our sins. All human righteousnesses, accordingly, go for nothing, when we come to his tribunal. This is a truth which is universally acknowledged in words, but which very few are seriously impressed with. As there is an indulgence which is mutually extended to one another amongst men, they all come confidently before God for judgment, as if it were as easy to satisfy him as to gain man's approval. In order to obtain

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Walford thinks there is probably here a reference to the great transgression, the consequences of which followed David all his days. "As he would not fail to be reminded of it," says that writer, "by the sorrows which had now come upon him, from Absalom's misconduct, and as his purpose was, notwithstanding, to implore divine support and deliverance, he deprecates God's righteous judgment, since if no man could be just with God, certainly he, who had so greatly transgressed, could have no claim to such a state. The consciousness of his guilt, though he had reason to believe it was forgiven, induced him thus to abase himself before God, when he was about to offer earnest entreaties for deliverance from dangers which threatened his dignity and life; while he still maintained his hope, that God looked upon him as his servant, whom he had pledged himself to protect."

a proper view of the whole matter, we are first to note what is meant by being justified. The passage before us clearly proves that the man who is justified, is he who is judged and reckoned just before God, or whom the heavenly Judge himself acquits as innocent. Now, in denying that any amongst men can claim this innocence, David intimates that any righteousness which the saints have is not perfect enough to abide God's scrutiny, and thus he declares that all are guilty before God, and can only be absolved in the way of acknowledging they might justly be condemned. Had perfection been a thing to be found in the world, he certainly of all others was the man who might justly have boasted of it; and the righteousness of Abraham and the holy fathers was not unknown to him; but he spares neither them nor himself, but lays it down as the one universal rule of conciliating God, that we must cast ourselves upon his mercy. This may give us some idea of the satanic infatuation which has taken hold of those who speak so much of perfection in holiness, with a view to supersede remission of sins. Such a degree of pride could never be evinced by them, were they not secretly influenced by a brutish contempt of God. They speak in high and magnificent terms of regeneration, as if the whole kingdom of Christ consisted in purity of life. But in doing away with the principal blessing of the everlasting covenant — gratuitous reconciliation — which God's people are commanded to seek daily, and in puffing up both themselves and others with a vain pride, they show what spirit they are of. Let us hold them in detestation, since they scruple not to put open contempt upon God. This of itself, however, which we have stated, is not enough; for the Papists themselves acknowledge that were God to enter upon an examination of men's lives as a judge, all would lie obnoxious to just condemnation. And in this respect they are sounder, more moderate and sober, than those Cyclopses and monsters in heresy of whom we have just spoken. But though not arrogating to themselves righteousness in the whole extent of it, they show, by obtruding their merits and satisfactions, that they are very far from following the example of David. They are always ready to acknowledge some defect in their works, and so, in seeking God's favor, they plead for the assistance of his mercy. But there is nothing intermediate between these two things, which are represented in Scripture as opposites — being justified by faith and justified by works. It is absurd for the Papists to invent a third species of righteousness, which is partly wrought out by works of their own, and partly imputed to them by God in his mercy. Without all doubt, when he affirmed that no man could stand before God were his works brought to judgment, David had no idea of this complex or twofold righteousness, but would shut us up at once to the conclusion that God is only favorable upon the ground of his mercy, since any reputed righteousness of man has no significance before him.

3. *For the enemy hath persecuted my soul.* Having acknowledged that he only suffered the just punishment of his sins, David comes now to speak of his enemies; for to have begun by speaking of them would have been a

preposterous order. Their cruelty was shown in their not resting satisfied but with the destruction of one who was a saint of God; he declares that he must even now perish unless God should help him speedily. The comparison is not merely to a dead man, but a putrid corpse; for by *the dead of an age* [691] are meant those who have been long removed from the world. Such language intimates that he not only trusted in God as he who could heal him of a deadly disease, but considered that though his life should be buried, as it were, and long out of mind, God could raise it again, and restore his very ashes.

Psalm 143:4-7

> **4.** And my spirit is perplexed within me, my heart within me is astonished. **5.** I remembered the days of old, I meditated upon all thy works; I meditated upon the work of thy hands. **6.** I spread out my hands to thee, my soul is to thee as the earth without water. [692] Selah. **7.** Hasten, answer me, O Jehovah! my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, because I shall be like to those descending into the pit.

4. *And my spirit*, etc. Hitherto he has spoken of the troubles that were without, now he acknowledges the feebleness of his spirits, from which it is evident that his strength, was not like that of the rock, imperturbable or without feeling, but that, while overwhelmed with grief as to the feeling of the flesh, he owed his support entirely to faith and the grace of the Spirit. We are taught by his example not to throw up the conflict in despair, however much we may be weakened, and even exanimated by afflictions, as God will enable us to surmount them, if we only rise to him with our hearts amidst all our anxieties.

In the next verse David mentions that he had diligently sought means whereby to mitigate his grief. It is not to be wondered at, that many

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עולם כמתי. These words are differently rendered in the ancient versions. The Septuagint has ὡς νεκροὺς αἰωνος, *as the dead of the age*; the Syriac, *forever*; the Chaldee, *as they that lie down of that age*. The real sense of the expression is, *as they who have been dead a long time*. The Psalmist employs hyperbolical language in this verse; he says, the enemy hath beaten his life to the ground, hath made him dwell in dark places, and for such a length of time, that there remained no remembrance of him, and that he had become like those persons who had long since been in their graves. The design of all this is to express emphatically great sorrow and oppression." — Phillips.

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In the Book of Common Prayer it is — "My soul gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty land." Mant translates similarly. The word *gaspeth* is a supplement, but it may convey the precise meaning; and according to this view the allusion is to the cracking of the lands of the east, in consequence of the extreme drought of the summer months. These dry lands, as has been noticed by travelers, have often chinks too deep for a person to see to the bottom of. This may be observed in the Indies more than anywhere, a little before the autumnal rains fall, and, wherever the lands are rich and hard. See Jeremiah 14:4.

who spontaneously give themselves up to inaction, should sink under their trials, not using means to invigorate themselves by calling to remembrance the grace of God. Sometimes, it is true, our trials are only more keenly felt when we recall the former kindness which God may have shown to us, the comparison tending to awaken our feelings, and render them more acute; but David proposed a different end than this to himself, and gathered confidence from the past mercies of God. The very best method in order to obtain relief in trouble, when we are about to faint under it, is to call to mind the former loving-kindness of the Lord. Nor does David mean such as he had experienced from childhood, as some have thought, adopting in my judgment too restricted a sense; for the word קדם, *kedem*, has a more extensive signification. I have no doubt, therefore, that he includes past history, as well as his own personal experience, it being easy to discover proofs there of God's continued goodness to his people. We should ourselves learn by his example, in reflecting upon personal favors received from God, to remember also how often he has assisted those that served him, and improve the truth for our own benefit. Should this not immediately or at once abate the bitterness of our grief, yet the advantage of it will afterwards appear. In the passage before us, David complains that he did not get relief from his anxieties and cares from this consolatory source, but he prosecuted his meditations in expectation of finding the good result in due time. The verb שוה, *suach*, I have elsewhere observed, may mean either *to declare with the tongue*, or *to revolve in the mind.* Some accordingly read — "I have discoursed of thy works." But as the verb הגה, *hagah*, means to *meditate*, I consider that the Psalmist repeats the same thing twice, and this in token of earnestness. We will often upon a slight exercise of the thoughts upon God's works, start aside from them almost immediately; nor is it matter of surprise, that, in this case, there results no solid comfort. That our knowledge may be abiding we must call in the aid of constant attention.

6. *I have stretched forth my hands to thee.* Here appears the good effect of meditation, that it stirred David up to pray; for if we reflect seriously upon the acting's of God towards his people, and towards ourselves in our own experience, this will necessarily lead out our minds to seek after him, under the alluring influence of his goodness. Prayer, indeed, springs from faith; but as practical proofs of the favor and mercy confirm this faith, they are means evidently fitted for dissipating languor. He makes use of a striking figure to set forth the ardor of his affection, comparing *his soul to the parched earth.* In great heats we see that the earth is cleft, and opens, as it were, its mouth to heaven for moisture. David therefore intimates, he drew near to God with vehement desire, as if the very sap of life failed him, as he shows more fully in the verse which follows. In this he gives another proof of his extraordinary faith. Feeling himself weak, and ready to sink into the very grave, he does not vacillate between this and the other hope of relief, but fixes his sole dependence upon God. And heavy as the struggle was that he

underwent with his own felt weakness, the fainting of spirit he speaks of was a better stimulant to prayer than any stoical obstinacy he might have shown in suppressing fear, grief, or anxiety. We must not overlook the fact, how in order to induce himself to depend exclusively upon God, he dismisses all other hopes from his mind, and makes a chariot to himself of the extreme necessity of his case, in which he ascends upwards to God.

Psalm 143:8-12

> **8.** Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning, for in thee have I hoped; show me the way in which I may walk, for I have lifted up my soul to thee. **9.** Deliver me, O Jehovah! from my enemies; I have hidden with thee. **10.** Teach me that I may do thy will, for thou art my God; let thy good Spirit lead me into the right land. **11.** For thy name's sake, O Lord! thou wilt quicken me: in thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble. **12.** And in thy mercy thou wilt scatter my enemies, and thou wilt destroy [693] all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant.

8. *Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness.* In this verse he again prays that God would show him his favor visibly and effectually. The expression cause me to hear, may seem not very proper, as the goodness of God is rather felt than heard; but as the mere perception of God's benefits, without a believing apprehension and improvement of them, would do us little good, David very properly begins with hearing. We see how wicked men riot in the abundance of them, while yet they have no sense of the Lord's goodness, through want of attention to the word, and a believing apprehension of God as a father. The adverb in the morning some confine to a reference to sacrifices — which is a meager interpretation — in allusion to the well-known fact that sacrifices used to be offered twice, in the morning and in the evening. Others give a more strained sense, understanding that when God deals in a more favorable way with his people, he is said to form a new day. [694] Others consider it to be a metaphor for a prosperous and happy condition, as an afflicted and calamitous time is often denoted by darkness. I wonder that there should be such a search after extraneous meanings for this word, by which he is simply to be considered as repeating his former prayer to God — make haste. In the

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In our English Bible the verbs "quicken," "scatter," and "destroy," are in the imperative mood; but Calvin renders them in the future tense. In this he is followed by Dr. Hammond and Bishop Horne; "and then," as this last commentator remarks, "the Psalm will end as usual, with an act of faith and assurance that all those mercies which have been asked shall be obtained."

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"Que Dieu quand il commence a traitter ses serviteurs plus doucement, fait (par maniere de dire) luire un jour nouveau." — *Fr.*

morning means the same with speedily or seasonably. He founds a reason here, as elsewhere, upon his having hoped in God, this being something by which, in a sense, we lay God under obligation to us, for in making a liberal offer of himself to us, and promising to sustain the relationship of a father, he gives what men would call a pledge. This, accordingly, is a species of obligation. But so far is this from implying any worthiness or merit on our part, that the hope we entertain rather proves our nothingness and helplessness. His prayer that a way might be opened up for him to walk in, refers to the anxieties which perplexed him. He intimates that he was dismayed, and brought to a stand, unable to move a step, if God did not open a way, by his divine power; that all the desires of his soul terminated upon him; and that he looked for counsel from him to procure relief in his perplexity.

9. *Deliver me, O Jehovah! from my enemies.* This prayer is to the same effect, his enemies being so earnestly bent upon his destruction as to leave no outgate for him. The verb כסיתי, *chisithi*, some render *to hope*: the proper meaning is *to cover*, and I am unwilling to depart from it. The explanation some give is, that David upon perceiving the imminent danger to which he was exposed, betook himself to the covert of God's shadow, and concealed himself under the protection of it. This seems a very natural rendering, at least I prefer it to another which has recommended itself to some as being ingenious — that David, instead of having recourse to various quarters for relief, was satisfied to have God cognizant of his case, and called upon him in a hidden manner and apart.

10. *Teach me that I may do thy will.* He now rises to something higher, praying not merely for deliverance from outward troubles, but, what is of still greater importance, for the guidance of God's Spirit, that he might not decline to the right hand or to the left, but be kept in the path of rectitude. This is a request which should never be forgotten when temptations assail us with great severity, as it is peculiarly difficult to submit to God without resorting to unwarrantable methods of relief. As anxiety, fear, disease, languor, or pain, often tempt persons to particular steps, David's example should bad us to pray for divine restraint, and that we may not be hurried, through impulses of feeling, into unjustifiable courses. We are to mark carefully his way of expressing himself, for what he asks is not simply to be taught what the will of God is, but to be taught and brought to the observance, and doing of it. The former kind of teaching is of less avail, as upon God's showing us our duty we by no means necessarily follow it, and it is necessary that he should draw out our affections to himself. God therefore must be master and teacher to us not only in the dead letter, but by the inward motions of his Spirit; indeed there are three ways in which he acts the part of our teacher, instructing us by his word, enlightening our minds by the Spirit, and engraving instruction upon our hearts, so as to bring us observe it with a true and cordial consent. The mere hearing of the

word would serve no purpose, nor is it enough that we understand it; there must be besides the willing' obedience of the heart. Nor does he merely say, Teach me that I may be capable of doing, as the deluded Papists imagine that the grace of God does no more than make us flexible to what is good, but he seeks something to be actually and presently done.

He insists upon the same thing in the next clause, when he says, *Let thy good Spirit lead me*, *etc.*, for he desires the guidance of the Spirit not merely as he enlightens our minds, but as he effectually influences the consent of our hearts, and as it were leads us by the hand. The passage in its connection warns us of the necessity of being sedulously on our guard against yielding to inordinate passions in any contests we may have with wicked persons, and as we have no sufficient wisdom or power of our own by which to check and restrain these passions, that we should always seek the guidance of God's Spirit, to keep them in moderation. More generally, the passage teaches us what we are to think of free will; for David here denies the will to have the power of judging rightly, till our hearts be formed to a holy obedience by the Spirit of God. The term leading, which I have already adverted to, proves also that David did not hold that middle species of grace which Papists talk so much about, and which leaves man in a state of suspension or indecision, but asserts something much more effectual, agreeably to what Paul says, (Philippians 2:13,) that

"it is God who works in us both to will and to do
of his good pleasure."

By the words *right hand*, I understand, figuratively, *uprightness*; David's meaning being, that we are drawn into error whenever we decline from what is agreeable to the will of God. The term *Spirit* is tacitly opposed to that corruption which is natural to us; what he says being tantamount to this, that all men's thoughts are polluted and perverted, till reduced to right rule by the grace of the Spirit. It follows that nothing which is dictated by the judgment of the flesh is good or sound. I grant that wicked men are led away by an evil spirit sent from God, for he executes his judgments by the agency of devils, [695] (1 Samuel 16:14;) but when David in this place speaks of God's *good Spirit*, I do not imagine that he has any such strained allusion, but rather that he takes here to himself the charge of corruption, and assigns the praise of whatever is good, upright, or true, to the Spirit of God. When he says, *Because thou art my God,* he shows that his confidence of obtaining his request was founded entirely upon the free favor and promises of God. It is not a matter lying within our own power to make him our God, but it rests with his free preventing grace.

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"Je confesse bien que le mauvais esprit de Dieu agite et transporte les reprouvez, (car Dieu execute ses jugemens par les diables,)" etc. — *Fr.*

11. *For thy name's sake, O Jehovah! etc.* By this expression he makes it still more clear that it was entirely of God's free mercy that he looked for deliverance; for, had he brought forward anything of his own, the cause would not have been in God, and only in God. He is said to help us *for his own name's sake,* when, although he discovers nothing in us to conciliate his favor, he is induced to interpose of his mere goodness. To the same effect is the term *righteousness*; for God, as I have said elsewhere, has made the deliverance of his people a means of illustrating his righteousness. He at the same time repeats what he had said as to the extraordinary extent of his afflictions: in seeking to be quickened or made alive, he declares himself to be exanimated, and that he must remain under the power of death, if the God who has the issues of life did not recover him by a species of resurrection.

12. *And in thy mercy, etc.* In this verse he repeats for the fifth or sixth time that he looked for life only of God's free mercy. Whatever severity may appear on the part of God when he destroys the wicked, David affirms that the vengeance taken upon them would be a proof of fatherly mercy to him. Indeed these two things often meet together — the severity and the goodness of God; for in stretching out his hand to deliver his own people, he directs the thunder of his indignation against their enemies. In short, he comes forth armed for the deliverance of his people, as he says in Isaiah,

"The day of vengeance is in mine heart,
and this is the year of my redemption." (Isaiah 63:4.)

In calling himself *The servant of God,* he by no means boasts of his services, but rather commends the grace of God, to whom he owed this privilege. This is not an honor to be got by our own struggles or exertions — to be reckoned among God's servants; it depends upon his free choice, by which he condescends before we are born to take us into the number and rank of his followers, as David elsewhere declares still more explicitly —

"I am thy servant, truly I am thy servant,
and the son of thine handmaid." (Psalm 116:16.)

This is equivalent to making himself God's client, and committing his life to his protection.

Psalm 144

PSALM 144

This Psalm contains a mixture of praise trod prayer; for David, while he extols in very high terms the great mercies which God had bestowed upon him, is led at the same time, either from a consideration of the many trials to be met with in the whole course of human life, or from the connection he still had with wicked men, to pray that God would continue to show this favor to the end. There is this difference between it and Psalm 18, [696] that the latter is triumphant throughout, the kingdom having been thoroughly subdued, and affairs going forward prosperously, whereas in the present he mixes up one or two things which are indicative of fear and anxiety, there being some remaining enemies to cause him apprehension. [697]

A Psalm of David.

Psalm 144:1-4

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The ideas and the phraseology of a considerable part of this Psalm appear to be borrowed from the eighteenth.

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The occasion on which this Psalm was written can only be conjectured. The Septuagint, Vulgate, Aethiopic, and Arabic versions entitle it "A Psalm of David against Goliah;" and that the Chaldee paraphrast took this to be the subject of the Psalm is evident from his reading in verse 10th, "the sword of Goliah." Judging, however, from internal evidence, the enemies referred to seem rather to be those of David and his kingdom, after he ascended the throne. Some refer the Psalm to David's war with the Ammonites and Syrians, recorded in 2 Samuel 10; and it may have been composed by him when about to encounter these hostile powers.

> **1.** Blessed be Jehovah, my strength, who teaches my hands for battle, my fingers for war. **2.** My goodness, and my munition, my citadel, and my deliverer, my shield, and in him I have hoped, who subdues my people under me. **3.** O Jehovah! what is man that thou acknowledgest him? the son of man that thou thinkest of him? **4.** Man is like to vanity: his deeds are as a shadow passing away.

1. *Blessed be Jehovah, my strength* [698] It is very evident that David, since he celebrates the favor of God in such high terms, had not only obtained the kingdom, but gained signal victories. When he calls God *his strength*, he acknowledges that any courage he had was given him from above, not only because he had been made from a country shepherd a mighty warrior, but because the constancy and perseverance he had shown was signally a gift from God. This term answers better than were we to translate it rock; for, by way of explanation, he adds immediately afterwards, that he had been formed under God's teaching for war. The words certainly imply an acknowledgment, that though of a warlike spirit, he was not born for warlike enterprises but needed to undergo a change. What kind of a commencement, for example, did he show in the case of Goliah? That attempt would have been preposterous on any other supposition than his being upheld by secret divine support, so as to be independent of mere human help. (1 Samuel 17:40.)

2. *My goodness*, *etc.* This way of using the word in a passive sense, as in the Hebrew, sounds harsh in Latin; just as elsewhere (Psalm 18:50) he calls himself "God's king," not in the sense of his having dominion over God, but being made and appointed king by him. Having experienced God's kindness in so many ways, he calls him "his goodness," meaning that whatever good he possessed flowed from him. The accumulation of terms, one upon another, which follows, may appear unnecessary, yet it tends greatly to strengthen faith. We know how unstable men's minds are, and especially how soon faith wavers, when they are assailed by some trial of more than usual severity. It is not enough, if God would sustain us under such weakness, to promise us his help in individual or single expressions; and, even however many aids he supplies us with, we are subject to very great vacillations, and a forgetfulness of his mercy creeps in upon us which almost overwhelms our minds. We are to remember that it is not merely in token of his gratitude that David heaps together so many terms in declaring the goodness of God, but to fortify God's people against all attacks of the world, and of the evil one. He had a reason for reckoning it among the chiefest of God's mercies, that he controlled the people under his government. For עמי, *ami*, *my people*, some read, עמים, *amim*, *peoples*; [699] and it is surprising they should

698 "Ou, mon rocher." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, my rock."

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prefer such a forced rendering, as David means simply that the settled state of the kingdom was owing not to any counsel, valor, or authority of his own, but to God's secret favor. The verb רדד, *radad*, is used appropriately, signifying *to spread out*. The idea some have, that by a people spread out is meant a people set down at ease in a prosperous and happy condition, is farfetched. I have as great objections to the idea of others, that he means a people laid prostrate, so as that they may be trodden under foot; for a violent domination like this would not have been desirable over the chosen people, and sacred inheritance of the Lord. When a people yields a cordial and willing obedience to the laws, all subordinating themselves to their own place peaceably, this signally proves the divine blessing. And in such a settlement as this, where there is no turbulence, nor confusion, the people are appropriately represented, according to what we have said above, as being *spread out*. David accordingly having ascribed the victories he had gained over foreign enemies to God, thanks him at the same time for the settled state of the kingdom. Raised indeed as he was from an obscure station, and exposed to hatred from calumnious charges, it was scarcely to have been believed that he would ever obtain a peaceable reign. The people had suddenly and beyond expectation submitted to him, and so surprising a change was eminently God's work.

3. *O Jehovah! what is man, etc.* He amplifies the goodness shown by God by instituting a comparison. Having declared how singularly he had been dealt with, he turns his eyes inward, and asks, "Who am I, that God should show me such condescension? "He speaks of man in general; only the circumstance is noticeable that he commends the mercy of God, by considering his lowly and abject condition. In other places he mentions grounds of humiliation of a more personal or private nature, — here he confines himself to what has reference to our common nature; and though even in discussing the nature of man there are other reasons he might have specified why he is unworthy of the regard and love of God, he briefly adverts to his being like the smoke, and as a *shadow.* [700] We are left to infer

Those who conjecture that עמים, *amim*, is the correct reading, refer to the parallel passage in Psalm 18:47, where the word is in the plural. They also observe in support of their opinion, that this reading is actually found in a great number of MSS. examined by Kennieott and De Rossi; and they account for עמי, *ami*, having got into the text by supposing that it was written in the first instance as a contraction for עמים, *amim*. Rosenmuller supposes, but with less probability, that the original word was עם, and that the letter י, *yod*, is paragogic, that is, has been annexed to improve the sound; עם, *am*, being taken collectively. The Masorets have noticed that עם, which the translators of our English Bible took to be עם, with its possessive affix here, in 2 Samuel 22:44, and Lamentations 3:14, and consequently rendered by *my people*, is to be taken as the plural number of that noun.

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"Et mesmes combion qu'en espluchant la nature des hommes il eust peu toucher d'autres choses, pour lesquelles ils sont indignes. — neantmoins," etc. — *Fr.*

that the riches of the divine goodness are extended to objects altogether unworthy in themselves. We are warned, when apt at any time to forget ourselves, and think we are something when we are nothing, that the simple fact of the shortness of our life should put down all arrogance and pride. The Scriptures, in speaking of the frailty of man, comprehend whatever is necessarily connected with it. And, indeed, if our life vanish in a moment, what is there stable about us? We taught this truth also — that we cannot properly estimate the divine goodness, unless we take into consideration what we are as to our condition, as we can only ascribe to God what is due unto him, by acknowledging that his goodness is bestowed upon undeserving creatures. The reader may seek for further information upon this point in the eighth Psalm, where nearly the same truth is insisted upon.

Psalm 144:5-8

5. O Jehovah! bow thy heavens, [701] and descend: [702] touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. **6.** Thunder forth thunderings, and scatter them; [703] shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. **7.** Send thy hand from above, rid me and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of the sons of the stranger. **8.** For their mouth hath spoken falsehood; and their right hand is a right hand of deceit.

5. *O Jehovah! bow thy heavens.* After extolling, as was due, the great goodness of God, he requests him to furnish such help for the preservation of the kingdom as was necessary in the present exigency. As formerly we saw that he had gloried in God with a heroical courage, so here he makes use of the same lofty terms in his prayers, That he would bow the heavens — that he would make the mountains to smoke — disturb the air with thunderings — and shoot forth arrows; forms of speech by which, doubtless, he would put away from him all the obstacles which stand between us and a believing apprehension of the omnipotence of God, and from which we find

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"*Bow thy heavens.* This expression is derived from the appearance of the clouds during a tempest: they hang low, so as to obscure the hills and mountains, and seem to mingle heaven and earth together. Such an appearance is figuratively used to depict the coming of God, to execute vengeance upon the enemies of his people. See Psalm 18:10, and other instances." — *Walford*

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The verbs in this and the two following verses are in the imperative mood, whereas in the corresponding passages in the eighteenth Psalm they are in the past tense. This difference is best accounted for by supposing, with Calvin, that these verses are the language of prayer, uttered by David in a time of threatened danger from the enemies of his kingdom and people; whilst those of the eighteenth Psalm were spoken after some signal deliverance or deliverances had been vouchsafed.

703

"Scatter them. The antecedent of 'them' is 'peoples' in verse second." — *Walford.*

it so difficult to emerge. He employs almost the same phraseology in the eighteenth Psalm, but it is in praising God for help already extended, and to signify that he had been preserved from above in a wonderful and unusual manner. For although such signs as he mentions might not always occur when God interposed in his behalf, he had good ground to celebrate what had happened to him of an unexpected kind, by reference to extraordinary phenomena. In the passage before us his purpose is different. Threatened by destruction of various kinds, which might overwhelm his mind with despair, he would realize the wonderful power of God, before which all obstacles of a worldly kind must necessarily give way. We may be certain at least that he indulged in this figurative phraseology for a good reason, that he might not confine deliverance to human remedies; for nothing could be more preposterous at such a time than to measure divine power by ordinary rules.

7. *Send thy hand*, etc. In one word we are now made to see what was meant by the figures formerly used — that in the absence of all earthly help, God would put forth his hand from above, the greatness of the exigency making extraordinary help necessary. Accordingly he compares his enemies to great and deep waters. He calls them strangers, not in respect of generic origin, but character and disposition. It were a mistake to refer the term to the uncircumcision, for David rather animadverts upon degenerate Jews who gloried in the flesh; and shortly afterwards he hints that he had to do with internal foes rather than a foreign enemy, who would openly assault him with violence and arms. By the right hand of falsehood some understand rash attempts, which David hoped would be frustrated. Others limit the phrase to the solemn ceremony of taking an oath, as if he said they were perjured; [704] while others explain it as meaning that they not only lied with the tongue, but executed wicked devices with the hand. [705] But as it was customary in making promises to join hands, as Solomon says, (Proverbs 11:21; Proverbs 16:5,) I have no doubt David's reference here is to false, treacherous, and perfidious persons. The two things go naturally together in the verse — the lying tongue and the deceitful hand, meaning upon the matter that nothing was to be looked for from any of their promises, since it was only to deceive that they flattered with their mouth and gave the hand.

Psalm 144:9-11

704

"In taking an oath the right hand was lifted up. The enemies of David profaned their oaths by violating the covenants into which they entered, and breaking their solemn engagements." — *Walford.*

705

"The meaning is, the hands with which they confirm their treaties of peace and leagues of friendship are immediately lifted up against the lives and liberties of their allies." — *Warner.*

> **9.** O God! I will sing a new song to thee: upon the nablum, upon the psaltery, [706] I will sing psalms to thee. **10.** Giving salvation to kings, delivering David his servant from the hurtful sword. **11.** Deliver me, and rescue me from the hand of the sons of the stranger, whose mouth hath spoken falsehood, and their right hand is a right hand of deceit.

9. *O God! I will sing a new song to thee.* He again sets himself, with self-possession, to the exercise of praising God, not doubting but he would continue those mercies which he had once bestowed. I have taken notice in another place that by a *new song* is meant one of a singular or uncommon kind; and we are left from this to infer that David's expectations stretched beyond the conclusions of man's judgment; for, with a view to the greatness of the help to be extended, he promises a song of praise unprecedented in its nature, and distinguished, by the title here applied to it, from ordinary thanksgiving's. As to the *nablum* and *psaltery*, I have elsewhere observed that they formed part of that system of training under the law to which the Church was subjected in its infancy. But the chief thing to be noticed is the subject of his songs that God, who is the preserver of kings, had kept — and even rescued from the sword — David, whom he had made and anointed king by his authoritative decree. As to the idea of there being implied in the term *kings* an opposition to the commonalty, David meaning that not only the common class of people are indebted to divine preservation, but the more influential, and such as appear to have sufficient and abundant strength of their own, I question whether it be well founded. His meaning

706

In the French version it is — "Upon the psaltery, and upon an instrument of ten strings." It is evident that Calvin supposed two instruments to be here mentioned. This, however, has been doubted. The rendering in the Hebrew text is — עשור בנבל, *benebel asor*, "with a nobel (or psaltery, as the term is translated in our English Bible) ten (*stringed*)." Thus only one musical instrument may be indicated — "the psaltery of ten strings." In Psalm 33:2, we read similarly, עשור בנבל, *benebel asor*, "with the psaltery ten (*stringed*)." In Psalm 42:3, however, nebel and *asor* are represented as two distinct musical instruments. We there read, נבל-ועלי עשור-עליא, *ale-asor veale-nabel*, "upon the *asor* or *ten* (*stringed instrument*), and upon the nebel *or* psaltery." But whatever inference may be drawn from the independent exhibition of *asor* in that text, yet in the passage before us, and in Psalm 33:2, if we may judge from the construction, it seems rather to represent the number of strings of the common nebel or psaltery, or a particular variety of that instrument, than to be a distinct musical instrument. With respect to the Hebrew nebel from which comes the ναβλος; of the Greeks, and the *nablum* of the Latins, our information is very limited and indistinct. It is supposed to have been a stringed instrument of the harp or lyre kind, and appears to have been of the triangular form. As it is not noticed in Scripture earlier than the days of David, it is not considered of equal antiquity with some other musical instruments. It was formed of precious wood, as we learn from 1 Kings 10:12, and ultimately, according to Josephus, of that species of precious mixed metal called *electrum*. From its being never mentioned in the Sacred Writings, except in connection with the worship of the sanctuary, it has been conjectured that it was not used in private, and that it was probably larger, and more costly, than other instruments of a similar kind. Josephus says that it was played upon with the fingers, and had twelve strings. The number of strings may, however, have varied according to circumstances.

seems to me rather to be different from this, That while God preserves all men without exception, his care is peculiarly extended to the maintenance of political order, which is the foundation of the common safety of all. It is in effect as if he called him the guardian and defender of kingdoms; for as the very mention of government is an odious thing, and none willingly obeys another, and nothing is more contrary to natural inclination than servitude, men would seek to throw off the yoke, and subvert the thrones of kings, were these not hedged round by a hidden divine presidency. David, however, distinguishes himself from other kings, as elsewhere he is called "the firstborn of kings," (Psalm 89:27;) at least he speaks of the goodness of God as having been preeminently shown to him, representing himself as holding the highest place, on account of the holy anointing which had been more eminently bestowed upon him. As a title of distinction, he claims the special name of *God's servant*; for although all kings are God's servants, and Cyrus has the name applied to him by Isaiah emphatically, (Isaiah 45:1,) yet as no heathen prince ever recognized himself as called of God, and David alone of all others in the world was invested with legitimate authority, and had a warrant to reign which faith could rest upon with certainty, it was not without reason that this mark of distinction is applied to him. By *the hurtful sword*, are doubtless meant all the dangers he had passed through for a series of years, which were such that he might be truly said to have come to the throne by deaths oft, and to have been settled upon the throne in the midst of them.

Psalm 144:12-15

12. Because our sons are as plants which have grown up in their youth, our daughters as corners polished after the similitude of a palace. [707]
13. Our recesses [or corners] full, going out, [708] from kind to kind; our sheep brining forth to thousands, to ten thousands, [709] in our

707

"The paraphrase of Bishop Patrick, doubtless, conveys the real meaning: 'Tall and beautiful, like those polished pillars which are the ornaments of a palace.'" — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.* "*The polished corners of the Temple* — rather, *the sculptured angles*, the ornament of a palace. Great care and much ornament were bestowed by the ancients upon the angles of their splendid edifices. It is remarkable that the Greeks made use of pilasters, called Caryatides, (carved after the figure of a woman dressed in long robes,) to support the entablatures of their buildings." — Cresswell.

708

"Ou, produisans, fournissans." — *Fr*, *marg.* "Or, producing, providing."

709

In the East sheep are remarkably fruitful, bringing forth, as Boehart shows, not only two at a time, (Song 4:2,) but sometimes three or four, and that twice a year. This accounts for the prodigious number of sheep which whitened the extensive pastures of Syria and Canaan. See 2 Kings 3:4; 1 Chronicles 5:21; 2 Chronicles 35:7; Psalm 65:14 [*sic*].

streets. [710] **14.** Our oxen accustomed [711] to the burden, no breach, nor going out, nor cry in our streets. **15.** Happy the people to whom it is so! happy the people whose God is Jehovah!

12. *Because our sons, etc.* These three concluding verses some consider as being a wish or a prayer. [712] Others think that David congratulates himself, and all the people, that through the divine blessing every species of mercy was showered down prosperously upon them. I have no doubt that David commemorates, by way of thanksgiving, the liberality which God had shown to his people. But it consists very well with this, to suppose that he prays at the same time for the continuance or preservation of those divine benefits which must well-nigh be cut off altogether by wicked men and domestic foes, unless God should interpose, in the troubles and confusions which prevailed. The end he has in view therefore is, that God would not suffer the signal blessings with which he had loaded his people to fail and depart. He begins by making mention of the children, comparing the male portion of them, by way of commendation of their excellency, *to plants which have grown up in their youth*; for trees rarely come to any height if they do not grow large early, and when yet tender. He speaks of the girls as being like *corners skillfully and ingeniously cut out*, to make the building beautiful; as if he would say that they adorned the house by their comeliness and elegance. It is not surprising that he should reckon a noble and well trained offspring to be the very first of God's earthly blessings, a point of which I have spoken elsewhere more at large. As David speaks in the name of the whole people, and of his own condition as mixed up with that of the community, we may infer from this that he was not exclusively occupied with his own private interests.

13. *Our recesses full, etc.* Some read *storehouses*, [713] and I would not reject this meaning. But as the word comes from the same root with

710

"*In our streets.* Streets are not proper places for sheep. The word חוצות, *chutzoth*, is different from that properly rendered 'streets' in the ensuing verse, and is the same that is translated 'fields' in Job 5:10. The word literally means 'outplaces,' and as such is susceptible of various applications; in the present text it probably denotes the outpastures in the commons and deserts." — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible*

711

"Ou, gras." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, fat."

712

"Grant that our sons may be as plants," etc. Such is the view taken by the Translators of the English Bible.

713

מזוינו, *Our garners.* This word is to be found in Scripture only once, but it has most probably the same root as זוית, and it may denote primarily *our corners*, and then our *garners*; because garners or storehouses were usually at the ends or corners of edifices." — *Phillips*

זוה, *zavah*, which is rendered corner in the previous verse, it seems more agreeable to the etymology to translate the words as I have done — "that the recesses or corners were full." The participle מפיקים, *mephikim*, some take transitively, and read *producing*, but the meaning comes to the same thing, that abundance of every blessing flowed from all the corners, expression זן-אל מזן, *mizan el-zan*, [714] seems to me to denote the variety and manifold nature of the blessings, rather than, as some interpreters think, so abundant a produce as would issue in the different species being mixed, and forming a confused heap owing to the unmanageable plenty. We have no need to have recourse to this strained hyperbole, and the words as they stand evidently do not favor that sense, for had a confused heap been meant, it would have read simply זן זן, *zan*. The meaning in short is, that there prevailed amongst the people such plenty, not only of wheat, but all kinds of produce, that every corner was filled to sufficiency with every variety.

14. *Our oxen, etc.* The Hebrew word סבל, *sabal*, is properly to carry. Accordingly some understand מסובלים, *mesubbalim*, to mean robust, [715] as unless they were strong oxen they would not be fit for carriage, or bearing burdens. Others think they are spoken of as laden with fat. There is no need for insisting upon this point, as it does not affect the main scope of the passage. It may be more important to notice, that God's fatherly care of his people is celebrated on the account that he condescends to attend to every the smallest matter which concerns their advantage. As in the verse before he had ascribed the fruitfulness of the herds and flocks to God's goodness, so now the fattening of their oxen, to show that there is nothing relating to us here which he overlooks. As it would signify little to have abundance of everything unless we could enjoy it, he takes notice of it as another part of the Lord's kindness that the people were peaceable and quiet. By *breach* I have no doubt that he alludes to hostile incursions, that there was no enemy to break in upon them through demolished gates or walls. By *goings out* it is surprising that any should understand exile, that the people were not torn away from the bounds of their native country. All he means simply is, in my opinion, that there was no necessity of sallying out to repel an enemy, none offering violence or molestation. To the same effect is the expression, as to any crying in the streets, the effect of a sudden tumult. The meaning

714

Literally, "from kind to kind."

715

מסבלים, *burdened*, viz. with flesh, according to Pagninus, who has *onusti carne*. The root is סכל, and the form is the pual participle, which occurs only in this place. Compensis has paraphrased it: santi et ferendis *oneribus apti*. Perhaps burdened oxen may be a phrase equivalent to our *beasts of burden* such as are strong and adapted to carry burdens; and here the prayer of the Psalmist is, that they may be *eminently* fitted for this service." — *Phillips*

is, accordingly, that there was no disturbance in the cities, because God kept enemies at a distance.

15. *Happy the people, etc.* He thus concludes that the divine favor had been sufficiently shown and manifested to his people. Should any object that it breathed altogether a gross and worldly spirit to estimate man's happiness by benefits of a transitory description, I would say in reply that we must read the two things in connection, that those are happy who recognize the favor of God in the abundance they enjoy, and have such a sense of it from these transitory blessings as leads them through a persuasion of his fatherly love to aspire after the true inheritance. There is no impropriety in calling those happy whom God blesses in this world, provided they do not show themselves blinded in the improvement and use which they make of their mercies, or foolishly and supinely overlook the author of them. The kind providence of God in not suffering us to want any of the means of life is surely a striking illustration of his wonderful love. What more desirable than to be the objects of God's care, especially if we have sufficient understanding to conclude from the liberality with which he supports us he is our Father? For everything is to be viewed with a reference to this point. Better it were at once to perish for want than have a mere brute satisfaction, and forget the main thing of all, that they and they only are happy whom God has chosen for his people. We are to observe this, that while God in giving us meat and drink admits us to the enjoyment of a certain measure of happiness, it does not follow that those believers are miserable who struggle through life in want and poverty, for this want, whatever it be, God can counterbalance by better consolations.

Psalm 145

PSALM 145

The Psalmist is led to celebrate the praises of God by reflecting upon his excellent wisdom, goodness, and righteousness, both in the government of the world generally, and particularly in managing, superintending, and defending the children of men. After recounting in general the praises of his providence, he comes to speak of the special favor shown by him to his own people.

The Praise of David [716]

Psalm 145:1-6

1. I will extol thee, my God and my king! [717] and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. **2.** Daily I will bless thee, and will praise thy

716

This Psalm is with much propriety entitled "Praise of David;" for it is throughout a continued celebration of the perfections and doings of God. It is certainly one of the most interesting and beautiful of the compositions of the sweet singer of Israel; and so high an opinion did the ancient Hebrews form of it that they were wont to say — "Whoever utters this Psalm thrice each day with the heart and tongue is a happy man, and shall infallibly enjoy the blessings of the world to come." The time and occasion of its composition can only be conjectured. Dr. Morison thinks it probable that it was composed by David when he and the nation of Israel obtained the blessings which he implored in the preceding Psalm; and that it is that new song which he purposed to sing (Psalm 144:9) when God appeared in glory for his chosen people. This is the last of the alphabetical Psalms. The first verse commences with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second verse with the second letter, and so on to the close, with the exception that the hemistich of which נ, *nun*, was the commencing letter is wanting. The other alphabetical Psalms are Psalm 25, Psalm 34, Psalm 37, Psalm 111, Psalm 112, Psalm 119.

717

name for ever and ever. [718] **3.** Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised, and there is no searching out, his greatness. **4.** Generation to generation, will praise thy works, and will show forth thy power. **5.** I will meditate upon [719] the beauty of the glory of thy excellency, and the words of thy wonderful things. **6.** And they shall speak of the might of thy terrible works, and I will declare thy greatness.

1. *I will extol thee, my God and my king.* David does not so much tell what he would do himself, as stir up and urge all others to this religious service of offering to God the praises due to his name. The design with which he declares God to be beneficent to the children of men is, to induce them to cultivate a pious gratitude, he insists upon the necessity of persevering in the exercise; for since God is constant in extending mercies, it would be highly improper in us to faint in his praises. As he thus gives his people new ground for praising him, so he stimulates them to gratitude, and to exercise it throughout the whole course of their life. In using the term *daily*, he denotes perseverance in the exercise. Afterwards he adds, that should he live through a succession of ages he would never cease to act in this manner. The repetitions used tend very considerably to give emphasis to his language. As it is probable that the Psalm was written at a time when the kingdom of David was in a flourishing condition, the circumstances deserves notice, that in calling God *his king* he gives both himself and other earthly princes their proper place, and does not allow any earthly distinctions to interfere with the glory due to God.

This is made still more manifest in the verse which follows, where, in speaking of the greatness of God as unmeasurable, he intimates that we only praise God aright when we are filled and overwhelmed with an ecstatic admiration of the immensity of his power. This admiration will form the fountain from which our just praises of him will proceed, according the measure of our capacity.

4. *Generation to generation*, etc. Here he insists upon the general truth, that all men were made and are preserved in life for this end, that they may devote themselves to the praise of God. And there is an implied contrast between the eternal name of God, and that immortality of renown which great men seem to acquire by their exploits. Human excellencies are eulogized in histories; with God it stands differently, for there is not a day in

The Jewish government was a *theocracy*.

718

"In seculum et usque." — *Lat.* The original Hebrew words are ועד לעולם, *leolam vaad*, which Dr. Adam Clarke had translated "*for ever and onward* in this and the coming world." "These sorts of expressions," he adds, "are very difficult to be translated."

719

"Ou, parleray." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, will speak of."

which he does not renew remembrance of his works, and cherish it by some present effect, so as indelibly to preserve it alive upon our minds. For the same reason he speaks of the *glorious brightness*, or beauty of his excellence, the better to raise in others a due admiration of it. *By the words of his wonderful works,* I consider that there is an allusion to the incomprehensible method of God's works, for so many are the wonders that they overwhelm our senses. And we may infer from this, that the greatness of God is not that which lies concealed in his mysterious essence, and in subtle disputation upon which, to the neglect of his works, many have been chargeable with mere trifling, for true religion demands practical not speculative knowledge. Having said that he would *speak of*, or *meditate upon God's works*, (for the Hebrew word, אשיחה, *asichah*, as we have elsewhere seen, may be rendered either way,) he transfers his discourse to others, intimating, that there will always be some in the world to declare the righteousness, goodness, and wisdom of God, and that his divine excellencies are worthy of being sounded, with universal consent, by every tongue. And, should others desist and defraud God of the honor due to him, he declares that he would himself at least discharge his part, and, while they were silent, energetically set forth the praises of God. Some think, that *the might of his terrible works* is an expression to the same effect with what had been already stated. But it seems rather to denote the judgments of God against profane scoffers.

Psalm 145:7-13

> **7.** They shall steak forth [or, utter copiously] the memory of the greatness of thy goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. **8.** Jehovah is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and great in mercy. **9.** Jehovah is good to all, and his mercies above all his works. **10.** All thy works shall praise thee, O Jehovah! and thy merciful ones shall bless thee. **11.** They shall speak the glory of thy kingdom, and shall talk of thy power. **12.** That they may make known his powers to the sons of men, and the glory of the beauty of his kingdom. **13.** Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and thy dominion unto all successive generations. [720]

720

After this verse two lines appear to have been lost in the Hebrew text. The Psalm, as we have said before, is alphabetical; and each stanza begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in regular order, till we come to Psalm 145:14, when a break — the only one in the Psalm — takes place. Psalm 145:13 begins with the letter מ, *mem*, and Psalm 145:14 with the letter ס, *samech*. Thus the stanza beginning with the letter, נ, *nun*, is wanting. It is thus supplied in the Septuagint: Πιστὸς Κύριος ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ὅσιος ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ. "Faithful is Jehovah in all his words, and holy in all his works." Dr. Adam Clarke, after observing that there is not a verse answering to נ, *nun*, in any of the printed copies of the Hebrew Bible, states, that there is one MS., now in Trinity College, Dublin, which has it thus (he supposes by correction) at the bottom of the page:

מסיו בכל וֹציד דבריו בכל יהוה נאמנ

Neeman Yehovah be-cal debaraiv; ve-chasid be-cal maasaiv.

7. *They shall speak forth, etc.* As the verb נבע, *nabang*, means properly to *gush out*, some suppose, that, as applied to speech, it means not simply speaking, but an overflowing utterance, like water rushing from a fountain, and the verb ירננו, *yerannenu*, in the close of the verse, answers to this, meaning *to shout*, or *sing aloud*. To celebrate the memory of the Lord's goodness, is the same with recalling to memory what we have personally experienced of his goodness. We cannot deny God's claim to praise in all his excellencies, but we are most sensibly affected by such proofs of his fatherly mercy as we have ourselves experienced. David makes use, therefore, of this alluring consideration to induce us the more readily and cheerfully to engage in the praises of God, or rather, (according to the figurative word already used,) to burst forth in celebration of them.

8. *Jehovah is gracious, etc.* He opens up the goodness of which he spoke by using several expressions, as that God is inclined to mercy, (for such is the proper meaning of the word חנון, *channun*,) and that he helps us willingly, as one sympathizing with our miseries. It is to be noticed that David has borrowed the terms which he here applies to God from that celebrated passage in Exodus 34:6; and as the inspired writers drew their doctrine from the fountain of the law, we need not wonder that they set a high value upon the vision which is there recorded, and in which as clear and satisfactory a description of the nature of God is given us as can anywhere be found. David, therefore, in giving us a brief statement of what it was most important we should know in reference to God, makes use of the same terms employed there. Indeed no small part of the grace of God is to be seen in his alluring us to himself by such attractive titles. Were he to bring his power prominently into view before us, we would be cast down by the terror of it rather than encouraged, as the Papists represent him a dreadful God, from whose presence all must fly, whereas the proper view of him is that which invites us to seek after him. Accordingly, the more nearly that a person feels himself drawn to God, the more has he advanced in the knowledge of him. If it be true that God is not only willing to befriend us, but is spoken of as touched with sympathy for our miseries, so as to be all the kinder to us the more that we are miserable, what folly were it not to fly to him without delay? But as we drive God's goodness away from us by our sins, and block up the way of access, unless his goodness overcome this obstacle, it would be in vain that the Prophets spoke of his grace and mercy. [721] It was necessary, therefore, to add what follows, that great is his mercy,

This exactly corresponds with the reading in the Septuagint. "Nothing," says Dr. Lowth in Merrick's Annotations on the Psalms, "can be more certain than the genuineness of the verse נ which the Septuagint has preserved, varying only in two words from Psalm 145:17."

721

"Si la bonte de Dieu ne surmonte cest empeschement, c'est en vain que les Prophetes traitteroyent de sa grace et misericorde." — *Fr.*

that he pardons sins, and bears with the wickedness of men, so as to show favor to the unworthy. As regards the ungodly, although God shows them his long-suffering patience, they are incapable of perceiving pardon, so that the doctrine on which we insist has a special application to believers only, who apprehend God's goodness by a living faith. To the wicked it is said —

"To what end is the day of the Lord for you? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, affliction and not joy."
(Amos 5:18.)

We see in what severe terms Nahum threatens them at the very beginning of his prophecy. Having referred to the language used in the passage from Moses, he adds immediately, on the other hand, to prevent them being emboldened by it, that God is a rigid and severe, a terrible and an inexorable judge. (Nahum 1:3.) They therefore who have provoked God to anger by their sins, must see to secure his favor by believing.

9. *Jehovah is good to all, etc.* The truth here stated is of wider application than the former, for the declaration of David is to the effect, that not only does God, with fatherly indulgence and clemency, forgive sin, but is good to all without discrimination, as he makes his sun to rise upon the good and upon the wicked. (Matthew 5:45.) Forgiveness of sin is a treasure from which the wicked are excluded, but their sin and depravity does not prevent God from showering down his goodness upon them, which they appropriate without being at all sensible of it. Meanwhile believers, and they only, know what it is to enjoy a reconciled God, as elsewhere it is said —

"Come ye to him, and be ye enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed; taste and see that the Lord is good."
(Psalm 34:5, 8.)

When it is added that *the mercy of God extends to all his works*, this ought not to be considered as contrary to reason, or obscure. Our sins having involved the whole world in the curse of God, there is everywhere an opportunity for the exercise of God's mercy, even in helping the brute creation.

10. *All thy works, etc.* Though many would suppress God's praises, observing a wicked silence regarding them, David declares that they shine forth everywhere, appear of themselves, and are sounded, as it were, by the very dumb creatures. He then assigns the special work of declaring them to believers, who have eyes to perceive God's works, and know that they cannot be employed better than in celebrating his mercies. What is added — *they shall speak the glory of thy kingdom* — I consider to have reference only to believers. If any incline to think that these words rather apply to God's creatures universally, I would not object to that view. But the particular kind of speaking or teaching which David here refers to, applies only to saints. Accordingly I have retained the future tense of the verbs,

rather than the optative mood, as others have done. In using the term kingdom, David intimates that this is the tendency of the manifestation of God's works, to reduce the whole world to a state of order, and subject it to his government. He insists upon the excellency of this kingdom, that men may know that things are to be considered as in disorder and confusion, unless God alone be acknowledged supreme. He denies it to be transitory, like all earthly kingdoms, asserting that it will stand fast for ever. And to call our attention more particularly to its everlasting nature, he breaks out into an admiring exclamation, and addresses his discourse to God.

> Psalm 145:14-16
>
> **14.** Jehovah upholding all the falling, [722] and raising up all who are bowed down. **15.** The eyes of all hope in thee, and thou givest them their food in its season. **16.** Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest every living thing by thy good pleasure.

14. *Jehovah upholding all the falling.* He gives instances of the goodness and mercy of God, such as make it evident that God reigns only for the promotion of the general welfare of mankind. By *the falling*, and *those who are bowed down*, he means figuratively those who are overwhelmed by adversity, and would sink at once, were not God to extend his hand for their support. God, in short, has respect to the troubles of men, and helps such as are in distress, so that all ought not only to look upon his divine government with reverence, but willingly and cordially submit themselves to it. Another lesson taught us is, that none will be disappointed who seeks comfort from God in his affliction.

15. *The eyes of all hope in thee.* David adduces an additional proof of God's goodness, in giving food to all living creatures, and thus showing himself in the character of the father of a family. Some interpreters, led by the term hope, which is employed, restrict the application to men, as being endued with reason and intelligence, to seek their food from their heavenly father, while the beasts seek it only in a gross manner, by sight or smell. But although not endued with the exercise of reason, leading them to depend upon God's providence, necessity itself forces even them, by a certain hidden instinct, to seek their food, so that they may very properly be said to hope in God, as elsewhere the young ravens are said to cry unto him. (Psalm 147:9.) Besides, those who would restrict the words to man, still leave them open to the charge of impropriety; for the wicked have no regard to the fatherly care of God, more than the ox or the ass. Since such is the order established in nature that all animals are brought to a dependence upon their Maker,

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"נפלים *nophelim*, *the falling*, or those who are not able to keep their feet — the weak. He shores them up — he is their *prop*. No man falls through his own weakness *merely*; if he rely on God, the strongest foe cannot shake him." — *Dr. Adam Clarke*

there is no impropriety in supposing the affection of desire or expectation to be here put for the fact of dependence itself. [723] All ambiguity is taken away by the next verse, where every living thing is said to be satisfied. It is said that he gives them their food, and in its season, for the very variety of it serves more to illustrate the providence of God. Each has its own way of feeding, and the different kinds of aliment are designed and adapted for different uses. David therefore speaks of that food which is particular to them. The pronoun is not in the plural, and we are not to read *in their season*, as if it applied to the animals. The food he notices as given in its season; for here also we are to notice the admirable arrangements of divine providence, that there is a certain time appointed for harvest, vintage, and hay crop, and that the year is so divided into intervals, that the cattle are fed at one time upon grass, at another on hay, or straw, or acorns, or other products of the earth. Were the whole supply poured forth at one and the same moment, it could not be gathered together so conveniently; and we have no small reason to admire the seasonableness with which the different kinds of fruit and aliment are yearly produced.

16. *Thou openest thine hand, etc.* The figure is a beautiful one. Most men pass over without observation the singular goodness of God apparent in this admirable ordering of things in nature, and David therefore represents him as stretching out his hand to distribute to the animals their food. We sinfully confine our attention to the earth which yields us our food, or to natural causes. To correct this error David describes God as opening his hands to put the food into our mouths. The word רצון, *ratson*, some render *desire*, as though he meant that God supplied each kind of animal with food according to its wish. And a little afterwards we do indeed find it used in that sense. Others, however, refer it rather to God's feeding them of his mere good pleasure and kindness; it not being enough to say that our food is given us by God, unless we add, as in the second clause of the verse, that his kindness is gratuitous, and that there is no extrinsic cause whatever moving him to provide so liberally for every living creature. In that case the cause is put for the effect; the various kinds of provision being effects of his good pleasure — χαρισματα της χάριτος. If it be found that men and others of his creatures often suffer and die from want, this is to be traced to the change which has come upon nature by sin. The fair order which subsisted in it by God's original appointment often fails since the fall through our sins, and yet in what remains of it, though marred, we may see the kindness of God referred to by David, for in the severest failures of crop, there is no year so barren and unproductive, that God may not be said to open his hand in it.

723 "Il ne sera point mal connenable que l'affection soit yei mise pour la chose mesme." — *Fr.*

Psalm 145:17-21

> **17.** Jehovah is righteous in all his ways, and merciful in all his works. **18.** Jehovah is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. **19.** He will perform the desire of them that fear him, and will hear their cry, and will save them. **20.** Jehovah preserves all them that love him, and will destroy all the wicked. **21.** My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah, and all, flesh shall bless his holy name for ever and ever.

17. *Jehovah is righteous in all his ways.* He does not now speak of God's goodness merely in providing all his creatures with their daily food, but comprehends other parts of his providence, as in correcting men for their sins, restraining the wicked, trying the patience of his people under the cross, and governing the world by judgments which are often inscrutable to us. The ground upon which praise is here ascribed to God may seem a common one, being in every one's mouth; but in nothing is wisdom shown more than in holding fast the truth, that God is just in all his ways, so as to retain in our hearts an unabated sense of it amidst all troubles and confusions. Though all acknowledge God to be just, most men are no sooner overtaken by affliction than they quarrel with his severity: unless their wishes are immediately complied with, they are impatient, and nothing is more common than to hear his justice impeached. As it is everywhere abused by the wicked imputations men cast upon it, here it is very properly vindicated from such ungrateful treatment, and asserted to be constant and unfailing, however loudly the word may disparage it. It is expressly added, *in all his ways and works,* for we fail to give God due honor unless we recognize a consistent tenor of righteousness in the whole progress of his operation. Nothing is more difficult in the time of trouble, when God has apparently forsaken us, or afflicts us without cause, than to restrain our corrupt feelings from breaking out against his judgments; as we are told of the emperor Mauricius in a memorable passage of history, that seeing his sons murdered by the wicked and perfidious traitor Phocas, and being about to be carried out himself to death, he cried out — "Thou art righteous, O God, and just are thy judgments!" As this man of no bad character opposed such a shield to the cruel trials he met with, we must learn to put a check upon our spirits, and always give God's righteousness the honor due to it. David, however, goes farther still, intimating that God, even when he seems to be most severe, is so far from being cruel as to temper his heaviest judgments with equity and clemency.

18. *Jehovah is near to all that call upon him.* This truth is principally applicable to believers, whom God in the way of singular privilege invites to draw near him, promising that he will be favorable to their prayers. Faith, there is no doubt, lies idle and even dead without prayer, in which the spirit of adoption shows and exercises itself, and by which we evidence that

all his promises are considered by us as stable and sure. The inestimable grace of God, in short, towards believers, appears in this, that he exhibits himself to them as a Father. As many doubts steal upon us when we pray to God, and we either approach him with trembling, or fail by becoming discouraged and lifeless, David declares it to be true without exception, that God hears all who call upon him. At the same time, as most men pervert and profane the method of calling upon God through inventions of their own, the right manner of praying is laid down in the next part of the verse, which is, that we should pray in truth. Although men resort to God in a cold manner, or even in their prayers expostulate with him, while their hearts are swelling with pride or with anger, they yet complain that they are not heard; just as if there were no difference between praying and quarreling, or the exercise of faith and hypocrisy. The greater part of men, involved in infidelity, scarcely believe that there is a God in heaven at all; others would banish him from it if they could; others would tie him down to their views and, wishes, while some seek slight and insufficient ways of reconciling him, so that the common way of praying is but an idle and empty ceremony. [724] And although nearly all men without exception have recourse to God in the time of their need, they are few indeed who bring the smallest measure of faith or repentance. It were better that the name of God should be buried in oblivion than exposed to such insults. There is good reason, therefore, why truth should be said to be necessary in our prayers — that they come from a sincere heart. The falsehood, which is the opposite of this sincerity, is of various kinds; indeed it were difficult to enumerate them — infidelity, wavering, impatience, murmuring, pretended humility, in short there are as many sorts of it as there are sinful dispositions. The truth being one of no small importance, David again confirms and enlarges upon it in the next verse. The repetition is worthy of our particular notice, for such is our tendency to unbelief, that there are few who in calling upon God do not look upon their prayers as fruitless. Hence the perverse manner in which the wandering minds of men are tossed hither and thither, as in the Papacy they invented patrons without number, holding it of no importance almost to embrace with an unwavering faith the promises by which God invites us to himself.

To throw the door still more open, the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of David, tells us, that *God will accommodate himself to the desires of all who fear him.* This is a mode of expression of which it is difficult to say how much it ought to impress our minds. Who is man, that God should show complaisance to his will, when rather it is ours to look up to his exalted greatness, and humbly submit to his authority? Yet he voluntarily condescends to these

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"Les autres voudroyent qu'il fust sujet a eux: les autres comme par maniere d'acquit cerchent cluelque moyen de l'appaiser," etc. — *Fr.*

terms, to obtemper our desires. At the same time, there is a check to be put upon this liberty, and we have not a license of universal appetency, as if his people might forwardly clamor for whatever their corrupt desires listed, but before God says that he will hear their prayers, he enjoins the law of moderation and submission upon their affections, as we learn from John, —

"We know that he will deny us nothing,
if we seek it according to his will." (1 John 5:14.)

For the same reason, Christ dictated that form of prayer, "Thy will be done," setting limits round us, that we should not preposterously prefer our desires to those of God, nor ask without deliberation what first comes into our mouth. David, in making express mention of *them that fear God,* enjoins fear, reverence, and obedience upon them before holding out the favorable indulgence of God, that they might not think themselves warranted to ask more than his word grants and approves. When he speaks of their cry, this is a kind of qualification of what he had said. For God's willingness to grant our prayers is not always so apparent that he answers them at the very moment they are made. We have, therefore, need of perseverance in this trial of our faith, and our desires must be confirmed by crying. The last clause — *he will save them* — is also added by way of correction, to make us aware how far, and for what end God answers the prayers of his people, namely, to evidence in a practical manner that he is the faithful guardian of their welfare.

20. *Jehovah preserves*, etc. He insists upon the same truth, — that God is near to his people to help them in the time of need; this being a sure proof of his presence, that by his mercy they come safe and unhurt out of every danger which befalls them. It is worthy of our notice, that, instead of fear, he now speaks of love; for, in distinguishing believers by this title, *that they love God*, he intimates it to be the root of true godliness, that they submit themselves to him voluntarily, which again is the effect of faith. Till God draw us by the attractions of his grace, this placid submission will never follow. The love spoken of by David, however, is perhaps more extensive, as God's people not only attach themselves to him in the way of obedience to his authority, but knowing that union to him is of all other things most desirable, aspire with their whole soul after this happiness. Still there can be no doubt, that the reference is to it here as the chief part of holiness and righteousness, as was said by Moses,

"And now, O Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee," etc. (Deuteronomy 10:12.)

This effect of godliness in securing our safety and preservation under the divine guardianship, David exemplifies by an opposition clause, declaring, that all the wicked shall, in the just judgment of God, miserably perish. That he might close as he had begun, he again affirms, *that he will publish the praises of God*, and urges all to the same duty by his example. Some would read, *every living thing shall bless*, but this does not seem to me a

proper reading. When Moses, speaking of the flood, says, that "all *flesh* in which was the breath of life perished," I grant that the term comprehends the brute creation, but wherever "flesh" is mentioned without any addition, the reference is only to men. Nor is David here stating what they would, but what they should do, declaring all men bound by the great and inexhaustible goodness of God constantly and for ever to praise him.

Psalm 146

PSALM 146 [725]

After stirring up himself, and others by his example, to praise God, David animadverts upon the diseased disposition, almost universally prevalent, to deceive ourselves by expectations entertained from various quarters. He, at the same time, points out the remedy — that our whole hope should be centered in God. To persuade us to resort to him more readily, he touches shortly upon some proofs of his power and mercy.

Hallelujah.

Psalm 146:1-5

1. Praise Jehovah, O my soul! **2.** I will praise Jehovah in my life; I will sing psalms to my God so long as I shall have being. **3.** Trust not in princes; in the son of man in whom there is not safety. **4.** His breath shall go forth; he shall return to his earth, in that day his thoughts [726] shall perish. **5.** Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in Jehovah, his God.

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In the original Hebrew and in the Chaldee paraphrase, no author's name is prefixed to this Psalm: in the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, AEthiopic, and Arabic versions it is ascribed to Haggai and Zechariah. Upon the supposition that it was written by these Prophets its composition would be after the captivity; "and it may refer," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "to the time when Cyrus, prejudiced by the enemies of the Jews, withdrew his order for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, to which revocation of the royal edict the Psalm 146:3 may refer, 'Put not your trust in princes,' etc." Horsley, proceeding on the same view, entitles it, "A thanksgiving of the returning captives." There is, however, nothing in it which prohibits us from looking upon it as a Psalm of David.

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1. *Praise Jehovah.* The five last Psalms close with the same word with which they begin. [727] But having in general called upon all to praise God, he addresses himself, or, which is the same thing, his soul, only that under the name of *soul* he addresses his inward self more emphatically. We may infer from this, that the influence which moved him was not volatile and superficial, (as many will blame themselves with remissness on this point, and then immediately lapse into it again,) but a staid and constant affection, followed up by activity, and proved by its effects not to be feigned. As David felt, that good endeavors are frustrated or hindered through the craft of Satan, he thinks it proper to apply a stimulus for exciting his own zeal, in the first place, before professing to be a leader or teacher to others. Although his heart was truly and seriously in the work, he would not rest in this, until he had acquired still greater ardor. And if it was necessary for David to stir himself up to the praises of God, how powerful a stimulant must we require for a more difficult matter when we aim at the divine life with self-denial. As to the religious exercise here mentioned, let us feel that we will never be sufficiently active in it, unless we strenuously exact it from ourselves. As God supports and maintains his people in the world with this view, that they may employ their whole life in praising him, David very properly declares, that he will do this to the end of his course.

3. *Trust not in princes* This admonition is appropriately inserted, for one means by which men blind themselves is that of involving their minds through a number of inventions, and being thus prevented from engaging in the praises of God. That God may have the whole praise due to him, David exposes and overthrows those false stays on which we would otherwise be too much disposed to trust. His meaning is, that we should withdraw ourselves from man in general, but he names *princes*, from whom more is to be feared than common men. For what promise could poor people hold out, or such as need the help of others? The great and wealthy, again, have a dangerous attraction through the splendor attaching to them, suggesting to us the step of taking shelter under their patronage. As the simple are fascinated by looking to their grandeur, he adds, that the most powerful of the world's princes is but a *son of man* This should be enough to rebuke our folly in worshipping them as a kind of demigods, as Isaiah says, (Isaiah 31:3,) "The Egyptian is man, and not God; flesh, and not spirit." Although princes then are furnished with power, money, troops of men, and other resources, David

Horsley prefers translating "his false deceitful show," instead of "his thoughts." He observes, that the original word is literally "his glitterings." Parkhurst would render the original word "splendours, glories," "which," says he, "makes an excellent sense."

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That is, with the word "Hallelujah," the Hebrew for "Praise Jehovah." Hence they have been called, "Hallelujah Psalms."

reminds us, that it is wrong to place our trust in frail mortal man, and vain to seek safety where it cannot be found.

This he explains more fully in the verse, which follows, where he tells us how short and fleeting the life of man is. Though God throw loose the reins, and suffer princes even to invade heaven in the wildest enterprises, the passing of the spirit, like a breath, suddenly overthrows all their counsels and plans. The body being the dwelling-place of the soul, what is here said may very well be so understood; for at death God recalls the spirit. We may understand it more simply, however, of the vital breath; and this will answer better with the context — that as soon as man has ceased to breathe, his corpse is subject to putrefaction. It follows, that those who put their trust in men, depend upon a fleeting breath. When he says that *in that day all his thoughts perish,* or *flow away*, perhaps under this expression he censures the madness of princes in setting no bounds to their hopes and desires, and scaling the very heavens in their ambition, like the insane Alexander of Macedon, who, upon hearing that there were other worlds, wept that he had not yet conquered one, although soon after the funeral urn sufficed him. Observation itself proves that the schemes of princes are deep and complicated. That we may not fall, therefore, into the error of connecting our hopes with them, David says that the life of princes also passes away swiftly and in a moment, and that with it all their plans vanish.

5. *Blessed is he, etc.* As it would not have been enough to reprove the sin, he submits the remedy upon which the proper correction of it depends; and this is, that the hopes of men are only stable and well-founded when they rest entirely upon God. For even the wicked sometimes come the length of acknowledging the folly of trust in man. Accordingly they are often angry with themselves for being so inconsiderate as to expect deliverance from men; but by neglecting the remedy, they are not extricated from their error. The Psalmist having condemned the infatuation, which we have seen to be natural to us all, wisely subjoins that they are blessed who trust in God. Jeremiah observes the same order. (Jeremiah 17:5, 7.)

"Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," etc.;

and then — "Blessed is the man whose hope the Lord is." When David pronounces *those blessed whose help is the Lord*, he does not restrict the happiness of believers to present sense, as if they were only happy when God openly and in outward acts appeared as their helper, but he places their happiness in this — that they are truly persuaded of its being entirely by the grace of God they stand. He calls him *the God of Jacob*, to distinguish him from the multitude of false gods in which unbelievers gloried at that time; and there was good reason for this; for while all propose to themselves to seek God, few take the right way. In designating the true God by his proper mark, he intimates that it is only by an assured faith of adoption that any of us can rest upon him; for he must show himself favorable to us before we can look for help from him.

Psalm 146:6-10

> **6.** Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things which are in them: who keepeth truth for ever. **7.** Rendering right to the unjustly oppressed, giving bread to the hungry, Jehovah, loosening the bound. **8.** Jehovah enlightening the blind, [728] Jehovah raising up the bowed down, Jehovah loving the righteous. **9.** Jehovah guarding the strangers; he relieves the fatherless and widow, and will destroy the way of the wicked. **10.** Jehovah shall reign for ever; thy God, O Zion! from generation to generation. Hallelujah.

6. *Who made heaven, etc.* By all these epithets he confirms the truth previously stated. For though at first sight it may seem inappropriate to speak of the Creation, the power of God bears most pertinently upon his helping us whenever danger is near. We know how easily Satan tempts to distrust, and we are thrown into a state of trembling agitation by the slightest causes. Now, if we reflect that God is the Maker of heaven and earth, we will reasonably give him the honor of having the government of the world which he created in his hands and power. There is in this first ascription, then, a commendation of his power, which should swallow up all our fears. As it is not enough that God is merely able to help us, but as a promise is farther necessary, to the effect that he is willing and shall do it, David next declares *that he is faithful and true,* that, on discovering his willingness, no room may be left for hesitation.

7. *Rendering right, etc.* He instances other kinds both of the power and goodness of God, which are just so many reasons why we should hope in him. All of them bear upon the point, that the help of God will be ready and forthcoming to those who are in the lowest circumstances, that accordingly our miseries will be no barrier in the way of his helping us; nay, that such is his nature, that he is disposed to assist all in proportion to their necessity. He says first, that God *renders justice to the oppressed,* to remind us that although in the judgment of sense God connives at the injuries done to us, he will not neglect the duty which properly belongs to him of forcing the wicked to give an account of their violence. As God, in short, would have the patience of his people tried, he here expressly calls upon the afflicted

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In our English Bible it is "openeth *the eyes of* the blind." From this clause some of the ancients concluded that the whole of the attributes here enumerated are intended to apply to Christ. Bishop Horne, and other modern divines, entertain the same opinion. But though all that is here said may with the strictest truth be predicated of Christ, the propriety of restricting the interpretation of the Psalm to him, upon the slender ground specified, may be doubted. Walford translates this clause — "Jehovah delivereth them that are in darkness." "There is no word," says he, "in Hebrew to correspond with the 'eyes' of the English Bible; and it is more in agreement with the parallelism of the verse, to understand this clause of persons who are in distress and adversity, expressed by being in darkness."

not to faint under their troubles, but composedly wait for deliverance from one who is slow in interposing, only that he may appear eventually as the righteous judge of the world. It follows, that he *gives bread to the hungry.* We learn from this that he is not always so indulgent to his own as to load them with abundance, but occasionally withdraws his blessing, that he may succor them when reduced to hunger. Had the Psalmist said that God fed his people with abundance, and pampered them, would not any of those under want or in famine have immediately desponded? The goodness of God is therefore properly extended farther to the feeding of the hungry. What is added is to the same purpose — that *he looses them that are bound, and enlightens the blind.* As it is the fate of his people to be straitened by anxiety, or pressed down by human tyranny, or reduced to extremity, in a manner equivalent to being shut up in the worst of dungeons, it was necessary to announce, by way of comfort, that God can easily find an outgate for us when brought into such straits. *To enlighten the blind* is the same with giving light in the midst of darkness. When at any time we know not what to do — are in perplexity, and lie confounded and dismayed, as if the darkness of death had fallen upon us — let us learn to ascribe this title to God, that he may dissipate the gloom and open our eyes. So when he is said *to raise up the bowed down,* we are taught to take courage when weary and groaning under any burden. Nor is it merely that God would here have his praises celebrated; he in a manner stretches out his hand to the blind, the captives, and the afflicted, that they may cast their grief's and cares upon him. There is a reason for repeating the name *Jehovah* three times. In this way he stimulates and excites men to seek him who will often rather chafe and pine away in their miseries, than betake themselves to this sure asylum. [729] What is added in the close of the verse — *that Jehovah loves the righteous*, would seem to be a qualification of what was formerly said. There are evidently many who, though they are grievously afflicted, and groan with anxiety, and lie in darkness, experience no comfort from God; and this because in such circumstances they provoke God more by their contumacy, and by failing for the most part to seek his mercy, reap the just reward of their unthankfulness. The Psalmist therefore very properly restricts what he had said in general terms of God's helping the afflicted, to the righteous — that those who wish to experience his deliverance, may address themselves to him in the sincere exercise of godliness.

9. *Jehovah guarding, etc.* By *strangers, orphans*, and *widows,* the Psalmist means all those in general who are destitute of the help of man. While all show favor to those who are known to them and near to them, we know that strangers are, for the most part, exposed to injurious treatment.

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"Qui saepe frenum rodendo, malunt putrescere in suis miseriis, quam ad certum hoe asylum se conferre." — *Lat.*

We find comparatively few who come forward to protect and redress widows and orphans; it seems lost labor, where there is no likelihood of compensation. Under these cases the Psalmist shows that whatever the grievance may be under which we suffer, the reason can only be with ourselves if God, who so kindly invites all who are in distress to come to him, does not stretch forth his arm for our help. On the other hand, he declares that everything will have an adverse and unfortunate issue to those who wickedly despise God. We have said upon the first Psalm, that by *the way* is meant the course of life in general. God *will destroy the way of the wicked,* inasmuch as he will curse all their counsels, acts, attempts, and enterprises, so that none of them shall have good success. However excellent they may be in planning, although they may be crafty and sharp-sighted, and abound in strength of resources of every kind, God will overturn all their expectations. While he extends his hand to those who are his people, and brings them through all obstacles, and even impassable ways, he on the contrary destroys the path of the wicked, when apparently most open and plain before them.

10. *Jehovah shall reign, etc.* He directs his discourse to the Church, that he may more effectually persuade all God's people of their really finding him to be such as he had just described. When he says that God is king for ever, we are to remember at the same time the purpose for which he reigns — taking our definition of it from the preceding ascription's. It follows that, whether living or dying, we shall be safe under the keeping of a king who reigns expressly for our salvation. Had he said no more than that Jehovah reigned for ever, we would have been ready to object the distance between us and his inconceivable greatness. He states, therefore, in express terms, his being bound by sacred covenant to his chosen people.

Psalm 147

PSALM 147

This Psalm also incites the people of God to praise him upon two accounts; first, for the display of his power, goodness, wisdom, and other perfections in the common government of the world, and the several parts of it, the heavens and the earth, but more particularly for his special goodness in cherishing and defending the Church which he has chosen of his free grace, in restoring it when fallen down, and gathering it when dispersed. [730]

Psalm 147:1-6

1. Praise ye God; for it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. **2.** Jehovah building up Jerusalem, will gather the dispersed of Israel: **3.** Healing the contrite in heart, and binding up their griefs: **4.** Numbering the multitude of the stars, giving names to each of them. **5.** Great is our Lord, and plenteous in power, there is no figure for his understanding. **6.** Jehovah raiseth up the miserable, and casteth the wicked down to the ground.

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In the Hebrew text, and in the Chaldee and Vulgate versions, this Psalm is without a title, but in the Septuagint it is assigned to the days of Haggai and Zephaniah, the title being — Αλλελουια Αγγαιου και Ζαχαριου; and this may be regarded as a probable reference. In Psalm 147:2 and Psalm 147:13 there seems to be an allusion to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Bishop Horsley entitles it — "Thanksgiving of the returned captives. Perhaps composed for a Pentecost or Feast of Trumpets, after the Restoration." "Eben Ezra, and other Jewish writers, think that it foretells the future rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restoration of the Jews from their present captivity, and refer it to the times of Messiah." — *Dr. Gill.*

Praise ye God, etc. Though the benefits he speaks of are such as God extends to all men indiscriminately, it is plain that he addresses more especially God's people, who alone behold his works in an enlightened manner, whereas stupidity and blindness of mind deprive others of their understanding. Nor is his subject confined to the common benefits of God, but the main thing which he celebrates is his mercy, as shown to his chosen people. That the Church may address itself to the praises of God with more alacrity, he states that this kind of exercise is good, delightful, and pleasant, by which he indirectly censures a sin which is all but universal of becoming wearied at the very mention of God, and counting it our highest pleasure to forget both God and ourselves, that we may give way to unrestrained indulgence. To teach men to take a delight in this religious exercise, the Psalmist reminds them that praise is *comely,* or *desirable.* For the term נאוה, *navah,* may be rendered either way.

2. *Jehovah building up, etc.* He begins with the special mercy of God towards his Church and people, in choosing to adopt one nation out of all others, and selecting a fixed place where his name might be called upon. When he is here called the builder of Jerusalem, the allusion is not so much to the outward form and structure, as to the spiritual worship of God. It is a common figure in treating of the Church to speak of it as a building or temple. The meaning is, that the Church was not of human erection, but formed by the supernatural power of God; for it was from no dignity of the place itself that Jerusalem became the only habitation of God in our world, nor did it come to this honor by counsel, industry, effort or power of man, but because God was pleased to consecrate it to himself. He employed the labor and instrumentality of men indeed in erecting his sanctuary there, but this ought never to take from his grace, which alone distinguished the holy city from all others. In calling God the former and architect of the Church, his object is to make us aware that by his power it remains in a firm condition, or is restored when in ruins. Hence he infers that it is in his power and arbitrament to gather those who have been dispersed. Here the Psalmist would comfort those miserable exiles who had been scattered in various quarters, with the hope of being recovered from their dispersion, as God had not adopted them without a definite purpose into one body. As he had ordered his temple and altar to be erected at Jerusalem, and had fixed his seat there, the Psalmist would encourage the Jews who were exiles from their native country, to entertain good hope of a return, intimating that it was no less properly God's work to raise up his Church when ruined and fallen down, than to found it at first. It was not, therefore, the Psalmist's object directly to celebrate the free mercy of God in the first institution of the Church, but to argue from its original, that God would not suffer his Church altogether to fall, having once founded it with the design of preserving it for ever; for he forsakes not the work of his own hands. This comfort ought to be improved by ourselves at the present period, when we

see the Church on every side so miserably rent asunder, leading us to hope that all the elect who have been adjoined to Christ's body, will be gathered unto the unity of the faith, although now scattered like members torn from one another, and that the mutilated body of the Church, which is daily distracted, will be restored to its entireness; for God will not suffer his work to fail.

In the following verse he insists upon the same truth, the figure suggesting that though the Church labor under, and be oppressed by many diseases, God will speedily and easily recover it from all its wounds. The same truth, therefore, is evidently conveyed, under a different form of expression — that the Church, though it may not always be in a flourishing condition, is ever safe and secure, and that God will miraculously heal it, as though it were a diseased body.

4. *Numbering the multitude, etc.* As the gathering together of the people of whom the Psalmist spoke might appear to be an impossibility, there seems some ground for the opinion of those who think that he confirms it in this verse. The connection they give to the Psalmist's words is this — that as it is at least not more difficult to gather men together who are outcast and scattered, than to number the stars, there was no reason why the wandering exile Israelites should despair of their return, provided they should resort with one consent to God as their only head. There is some probability, too, in the conjecture that the Psalmist may allude to that promise —

"Look now towards the stars of heaven, if thou canst tell them,
so shall thy seed be." (Genesis 15:5.)

But as the Psalmist immediately afterwards treats of the order of things in nature generally, the simplest rendering, I think, is to understand this verse with reference to the admirable work of God to be seen in the heavens, where we behold his matchless wisdom, in regulating, without one degree of aberration, the manifold, complex, winding courses of the stars. To each of them he assigns its fixed and distinct office, and in all the multitude there is no confusion. He therefore exclaims immediately — *Great is God, and boundless, both in power and understanding.* We learn from this that there cannot be greater folly than to make our judgment the measure of God's works, displaying in these, as he often does, his incomprehensible power and wisdom.

6. *Raising up, etc.* The ascription of this to God fitly tends to confirm our hope under affliction, and prevent our souls from fainting under the cross. From this we may infer that although our fathers who lived under the Law were more gently dealt with, they knew something at least of that warfare with which God daily exercises us, in order to make us seek our true rest elsewhere than in this world. Should a doubt steal upon the minds of those who have been brought under heavy afflictions, as to the forthcoming of that help which God has promised to extend, let the truth recur to our remembrance, that we are brought low that God may lift us up again. And

if upon seeing the prosperity of the wicked we are smitten and inflamed with envy, let the words of the Psalmist come into our mind, That they are lifted up that they may be cast down into destruction. When he speaks of their being *cast down even to the earth,* there can be no doubt that he passes an indirect censure upon their pride which leads them to exalt themselves on high, as if they belonged to some superior order of beings.

Psalm 147:7-11

7. Sing to Jehovah in thanksgiving, sing psalms to our God upon the harp. [731] **8.** Who covereth the heavens with clouds, prepareth rain for the earth, maketh grass to germinate on the mountains. [732] **9.** Who giveth to the cattle their food, to the young ones of the ravens which cry to him. **10.** Not in the strength of the horse will

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The Hebrew word here is כנור, *kinnor.* It is uniformly translated "harp" by Calvin, and also by the translators of our English Bible. But as is supposed by Calmet and others, it more probably corresponded with the *lyre* of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. In the Septuagint it is usually either thrown into the Greek form κινυρα, *cinyra,* or rendered κιθαρα, *cithara,* one of the various names by which the principal varieties of the ancient lyres were distinguished. And where these are not the words by which it is rendered in that version, it is rendered by other names which the Greeks gave to different forms of the lyre. From this it is evident that the translators of the Greek version believed that כנור *kinnor,* denoted *the lyre,* although from their translating it by different words, each signifying a particular variety of that instrument, they were uncertain as to the particular species of lyre. "The brief intimations in Scripture are in full accordance with this statement; for it is not described as such an instrument — large, heavy, and resting on the ground when played — as the word 'harp' suggests to our minds; but as a light portable instrument, which the player carried in his hand or on his arm, and might walk or dance the while. In fact, Scripture describes the *kinnor* as being used in such a manner and on such occasions as we know the lyre to have been by the ancients, who indeed had not, so far as we know, any harps large and resting on the ground like ours. We speak only of the Greeks and Romans, however, for the Egyptians had large standing harps; from which we shall in a future note take occasion to conclude that such were also known to the Hebrews, while we retain our impression that the lyre is denoted by the *kinnor.*" — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.* The *kinnor* is an instrument of the highest antiquity, being one of those two invented by Jubal before the flood. Genesis 4:21. It was used at an early period on festal occasions, as appears from the next instance in which it is mentioned in Scripture, six hundred years after the deluge, namely, in Laban's words to Jacob, as recorded in Genesis 31:27. It was also used by the prophets in their sacred music, as we learn from the next instance in which it is noticed — in the time of Samuel, 1 Samuel 10:5. The notes of the *kinnor* might be mournful, (Isaiah 16:11;) but they were also cheerful, (Job 21:2; Job 30:31; 1 Samuel 16:23; Psalm 137:2.) This musical instrument was constructed of wood, 1 Kings 10:12; and it no doubt was to be found among the Hebrews of different forms and power, and varying in the number of strings. The ancient lyres were either played with the fingers, or struck with a *plectrum,* an instrument which appears generally to have consisted of a piece of ivory, polished wood, or metal, in the form of a quill.

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"After this clause the Vulgate, the Septuagint, AEthiopic, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon add, 'and herb for the service of man.' It appears that a hemistich or half line has been lost from the Hebrew text, which, according to the above version, must have stood as in Psalm 104:14." — *Dr. Adam Clarke.*

he take pleasure, nor in the legs of man will he delight. **11.** Jehovah delighteth in those who fear him, who hope in his mercy.

7. *Sing to Jehovah in thanksgiving* Again he exhorts to sing the praises of God, intimating at the same time that abundant matter was not wanting, since new proofs still meet our eyes of his power, goodness, and wisdom. First he tells us that *he covers the heavens with clouds,* and this change would awaken our attention, were we not chargeable with so much thoughtlessness. Various as are the marvels to be seen in the heavens above us, were the same serenity always to continue, we would not have so wonderful a display of his power as when he suddenly veils them with clouds, withdrawing the light of the sun, and setting a new face as it were upon the world. He afterwards hints that in this way provision is made for all living creatures, for thus the herbs germinate, and the earth is supplied with the moisture which makes it fertile. Thus in connection with the proofs of his power God sets before our eyes those of his mercy and fatherly consideration for the human family; nay, he shows that he does not overlook even the wild beasts and cattle. Philosophers discover the origin of rain in the elements, and it is not denied that clouds are formed from the gross vapors which are exhaled from the earth and sea, but second causes should not prevent us from recognizing the providence of God in furnishing the earth with the moisture needed for fructification. As the earth chapped with heat shows its thirst by opening its mouth, so God on his part in sending rain distills drink for it. He might in other ways of a more secret kind give it strength to preserve it from failing, but this irrigation is something which passes before our eyes to image forth the continual care which he has over us.

9. *Who gives to the cattle their food* By giving an instance he explains more clearly what he had said, of God's providing food for every living creature. When he speaks of the cattle and the ravens being fed, and not of men, this is to give more emphasis to his argument. We know that it was for man's sake the world was made at all, and endued with fertility and plenty; and in proportion as we are nearer in the scale of existence to God, he shows us the more of his goodness. But if he condescends to notice the brute creation, it is plain that to us he will be a nurse and a father. For the same reason he names *the ravens,* the most contemptible of all birds, to teach us that the goodness of God extends to every part of the world. When he says that their young *cry unto God,* he no doubt refers to their natural cry, but hints at the same time that they own that they must be in want unless God give them meat from heaven. As to the Jewish fable that the ravens desert their young ones as soon as put forth, and that worms are bred in the barks of the trees to feed them, this is one of their customary stories, never scrupling as they do, nor being ashamed, to invent anything, however unfounded, when a difficulty comes in the way. [733] It is enough

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for us to know that the whole system of nature is so regulated by God, that not even the young ravens want their food, when with hoarse outcry they confess that they are in need, and that they cannot have it supplied except by God.

10. *Not in the strength of the horse, etc.* After the Psalmist has shown that there is proof of the divine goodness in every part of the world, he takes particular notice that men have no strength but what is given them from above, and this he adds with the express purpose of checking the pride by which almost all men are inflamed, and which leads them to trust in their own strength. The meaning of the passage is, that let man come in the preparation of his own strength, and with all the assistance's that seem to him most prevalent, this will only issue in smoke and vanity; nay, that in arrogating the very least to himself, this will only be a hindrance in the way of the mercy of God, by which alone we stand. *The strength of the horse* is mentioned by synecdoche to denote any kind of protection. Not that God is displeased with those things in themselves considered which he has given us as helps, but it is necessary that we be withdrawn from a false confidence in them, for very commonly when any resource is at hand, we are foolishly intoxicated and lifted up with pride. He opposes the fear of God therefore to the strength both of men and of horses, and places his hope in his mercy, intimating that it is highly incumbent upon us to show our moderation in worshipping God with reverence and holiness, and depending upon his grace. Hence we learn that he only condemns that strength which would take from God the honor due to him.

Psalm 147:12-14

> **12.** Celebrate Jehovah, O Jerusalem! praise thy God, O Zion! **13.** For he strengthens the bars of thy gates, he blesses thy children in the midst of thee. **14.** Who maketh thy borders peace; with the fatness of the corn he satifieth thee.

12. *Celebrate Jehovah, O Jerusalem!* Having spoken in general of the mercies of God, he again addresses his discourse to the Lord's people, who alone, as we have remarked already, can appreciate them, calling upon them to recognize with thanksgiving the blessings which others riot upon without acknowledgment. Under the name of *Jerusalem,* he comprises the whole Church, for in that place the faithful then held their religious assemblies, and flowed together as it were to the standard of the Lord. Although he will take occasion afterwards again to speak of the government of the world at large, he here commemorates the goodness of God as manifested to his own people, in protecting his own Church, bountifully cherishing it, enriching it

"Car quant a la fable que les Juifs racontent, que les corbeaux laissent leur petits si tost qu'ils sont esclos," etc. — *Fr.*

abundantly with all blessings, and preserving it in peace and safety from all harm. When he says that *the bars of the gates are strengthened by God,* he means that the holy city was perfectly guarded by him from all fear of hostile attack. To the same effect is the other expression which comes after — that *all its bounds were made peace* Enemies were under divine restraint so as to cause no disturbance or confusions. Not that the Church is always in a state of peace throughout its whole extent, and exempt from attack, but that God in a visible manner stretches forth his hand to repel these assaults, and it can securely survey the whole array of its enemies. A more extensive meaning indeed may be given to the term *peace*, which is often taken to signify a happy and prosperous condition. But as mention is made of *bounds*, the former sense seems most appropriate. The blessing of God enjoyed within is next spoken of, consisting in this, that the citizens dwell prosperously and happily in it, and are fed bountifully, even to satiety; which does not mean that the children of God always wallow in abundance. This might be the means of corrupting them, prone as our nature is to wantonness; but it suggests that they recognize the liberality of God in their daily food more clearly than others who want faith, and whom either abundance renders blind, or poverty vexes with deplorable anxiety, or covetousness inflames with a desire that never can be satisfied. God's paternal favor was shown more particularly to our fathers under the law in the abundance of temporal provision, it being necessary to lead them forward to something higher by what was elementary.

Psalm 147:15-20

15. While he sends forth his word to the earth, his word runneth very swiftly. **16.** Who giveth snow like wool, [734] and scattereth the hoar frost as ashes. **17.** He casteth forth his ice like morsels: [735] before his cold who can stand? [736] **18.** He shall send his word, and shall melt them: his breath shall blow, the waters shall flow. **19.** He

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We learn from Chardin in a manuscript note on this passage, as quoted by Harmer in his Observations, that towards the Black Sea, in Iberia and Armenia, and therefore he imagines in other countries also, "the snow falls in flakes as big as walnuts; but not being either hard or very compact, it does no other harm than presently to cover and overwhelm the traveller." The inspired writer had probably seen flakes of equal size on the mountains of Judea; and this would suggest to his mind the strikingly appropriate figure, "He giveth his snow like wool."

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Walford translates, "He casteth down his ice in hail-stones." "The expression, 'like morsels,'" says he, "is a literal version of the Hebrew, but it gives so imperfect and obscure a representation of the meaning, as to induce the substitution which is here found. There can be no doubt but that hail is the thing intended: in this the critics are unanimous. It is most likely that the Hebrew term, which is translated 'morsels,' means small pieces of some substance, which we cannot now determine."

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announces his words to Jacob, his edicts and his judgments to Israel.
20. He hath not done so to every nation, and his judgments he hath not showed them. Hallelujah.

15. *While he sends forth, etc.* He again touches upon some instances of the operation of God, everywhere to be seen in the system of nature. And as the changes which take place in the air, and upon the earth, and which should be considered evidences of his power, may perhaps be regarded by the world as the effect of chance, the Psalmist, before proceeding to speak of the snow, hoar frost, and ice, expressly declares, that earth is governed by his power and control. The *sending forth of his word* is nothing else than the secret influence by which he regulates and governs all things, for without his orders and appointment no movement could take place among the elements, nor could they be borne, now one way and now another, upon their own spontaneous impulse without his foregoing secret decree. He says, that *his word runneth quickly,* because, when once God has intimated his will, all things concur to carry it into effect. If we do not hold fast by this principle, however acutely we may investigate second causes, all our perspicacity will come to nothing. It is thus that Aristotle, for example, has shown such ingenuity upon the subject of meteors, that he discusses their natural causes most exactly, while he omits the main point of all, upon which the merest child, at least having any religion, has the superiority over him. He must have little discernment who, in the sudden snows and hoar-frosts, does not perceive how quickly the word of God runs. If, then, we would avoid a senseless natural philosophy, we must always start with this principle, that everything in nature depends upon the will of God, and that the whole course of nature is only the prompt carrying into effect of his orders. When the waters congeal, when the hail spreads through the air, and hoar frosts darken the sky, surely we have proof how effectual his word is. But if all these wonders produce no effect upon most men, at least the piercing cold which benumbs our bodies, should force us to recognize the power of God. When the heat of the sun scorches us in summer, and again, upon the succession of winter, all things are bound up, such a change as this, which must have appeared incredible had we not been accustomed to it, cries out loudly that there is a being who reigns above.

"The cold is sometimes extremely severe and even mortal in Palestine and the neighboring countries. Fulchirius Carnotensis, as cited by Mr. Harmer, 'saw the cold prove deadly to many. Jacobus de Vitriaco informs us, that the same thing happened to many of the poorer people, engaged in an expedition in which he himself was concerned, against Mount Tabor: they had suffered severely the preceding days by cold; but on the 24th of December it was so sharp that many of the poor people, and of the beasts of burden, actually died. Albertus Acquensis tells us the same thing happened to thirty of the people that attended King Baldwin I., in the mountainous districts of Arabia by the Dead Sea, where they had to conflict with horrible hail, with ice, and unheard of snow and rain.' These citations, as Harmer appositely remarks, may remove our wonder at such passages as that here commented on, in a hymn composed in those warmer climates." — *Mant.*

19. *He announces his words to Jacob, etc.* Here it is another word that is spoken of than what was formerly mentioned; for God speaks in a different way to the insensate works of his hands, which he silently subordinates to his will by secret laws impressed upon them, than he does to men who are endued with understanding, for these he teaches with articulate language, that they may obey him intelligently and with consent. Although the blessings formerly mentioned are not to be depreciated, they fall far short of this, that he has condescended to be the teacher of his chosen people, by communicating to them that religious doctrine which is a treasure of everlasting salvation. How little would it avail the Church that it were filled with the perishing enjoyments of time, and protected from hostile violence, did not its hope extend beyond this world. This, accordingly, is the grand proof of his love, that he has set before us in his word the light of eternal life. On this account it is appropriately mentioned here as the crowning part of true solid happiness. And let us learn from this, that we should not only receive the doctrine of God with reverential and holy obedience, but embrace it with affection, for we can conceive of nothing more delightful and desirable than that God should undertake our salvation, and give testimony of this by stretching out his hand to bring us to himself. For this is the design with which the doctrine has been given to us, that amidst the thick darkness of this world, and the devious errors into which Satan misleads the children of men, the great Father of us all may by it cast a foregoing light upon our path before gathering us to the inheritance of heaven. We are to notice, that the part which was sustained by Moses and the Prophets according to divine appointment is here ascribed to God himself, for we only put due honor upon the doctrine of religion, and estimate it at its proper worth when we rise to the consideration of God, who, in using the instrumentality of men, still claims to be considered our chief and only teacher. Thus its due majesty is assigned to the word from the person of its author. Again, he enhances the mercy shown by stating a comparison, intimating *that this had not been done for other nations* For if it be asked why God preferred one people to others, this pre-eminence will certainly lead us to gratuitous election as its source, since we will find that the children of Israel did not differ from others in any excellency attaching to themselves, but because God passed by others and condescended to adopt them into his favor.

Psalm 148

PSALM 148

The more effectually to express how worthy God is to be praised in his works, he calls upon all creatures from above and below to sing his praises. He begins with angels, but immediately proceeds to address the brute creation and dumb elements, intimating, that there is no part of the world in which the praises of God are not to be heard, inasmuch as he everywhere gives proof of his power, goodness, and wisdom. He then comes to speak of men, whom God has constituted the proper heralds of his praises in this world. But as the unbelieving portion of them is both blind to the consideration of God's works, and dumb to his praises, the Psalmist at the close appeals to the children of Israel, who were privileged with a special discovery of God, as principal witnesses. [737]

Hallelujah.

Psalm 148:1-6

1. Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens, praise him in the heights. **2.** Praise him, all ye his angels; praise him, all ye his armies. **3.** Praise him, ye sun and moon; praise him, ye shining stars. **4.** Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters above the heavens. **5.** Let them praise the name of Jehovah; for he commanded, and they were created. **6.** And he established them for ever; he hath set for them a decree for ever, and it shall not pass beyond.

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Milton, in his Paradise Lost, (Lib. 5. line 53, etc.,) has elegantly imitated this Psalm, and put it into the mouth of Adam and Eve as their morning hymn in a state of innocency.

1. *Praise Jehovah from the heavens* He seems here to include the stars as well as the angels, and, therefore, heaven itself, the air, and all that is gendered in it; for afterwards a division is made when he first calls upon angels, then upon the stars, and the waters of the firmament. With regard to the angels, created as they were for this very end — that they might be instant in this religious service, we need not wonder that they should be placed first in order when the praises of God are spoken of. Accordingly, in that remarkable vision which Isaiah describes, (Isaiah 6:3,) the cherubim cry out — "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts." And in several other places of Scripture the angels are represented as praising God by such ascription's. How, then, can zeal like theirs stand in need of exhortations? Or, if they require to be incited, what can be more unseemly than that we, who are so sluggish in the service, should assume the part of exhorting them to their duty? David, then, who did not equal the angels in zeal, but came far behind them, was not qualified to be an exhorter to them. But neither did this enter into his purpose; he would simply testify that it was the height of his happiness and desire to join in sacred concert with elect angels in praising God. And there is nothing unreasonable that, in order to stir himself up in the praises of God, he should call as companions upon the angels, although these run spontaneously in the service, and are fitter to lead the way. He calls them, in the second part of the verse — *the armies of God;* for they stand always ready to receive his orders. "Ten thousand times ten thousand surround his throne," as Daniel says, (Daniel 7:10.) The same name is applied also to the stars, both because they are remarkable for the order which maintains among them, and because they execute with inconceivable quickness the orders of God. But the angels are here called armies, upon the same account as elsewhere principalities and powers, inasmuch as God exerts his power by their hands.

3. *Praise him, ye sun and moon* This passage gives no countenance to the dream of Plato, that the stars excel in sense and intelligence. Nor does the Psalmist give them the same place as he had just assigned to angels, but merely intimates that the glory of God is everywhere to be seen, as if they sang his praises with an audible voice. And here he tacitly reproves the ingratitude of man; for all would hear this symphony, were they at all attent upon considering the works of God. For doth not the sun by his light, and heat, and other marvelous effects, praise his Maker? The stars when they run their course, and at once adorn the heavens and give light to the earth, do they not sound the praises of God? but as we are deaf and insensible, the Psalmist calls upon them as witnesses to reprove our indolence. By the *heavens of heavens* he no doubt means the spheres. Eclipses, and other things which we observe, plainly show both that the fixed stars are above the planets, and that the planets themselves are placed in different orbits. [738] The excellency of this contrivance the Psalmist justly

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commends, speaking expressly of the heavens of heavens; not as if there were really more heavens than one, but to extol the matchless wisdom which God has shown in creating the heavens; for the sun, moon, and stars are not confusedly mixed together, but each has its own position and station assigned to it, and their manifold courses are all regulated. As under the name of *the heavens* he comprehends the air, or at least all the space from the middle region of the air upwards, he calls rains, *the waters above the heavens* There is no foundation for the conjecture which some have made, that there are waters deposited above the four elements; and when the Psalmist speaks of these waters as being above, he clearly points at the descent of the rain. It is adhering too strictly to the letter of the words employed, to conceive as if there were some sea up in the heavens, where the waters were permanently deposited; for we know that Moses and the Prophets ordinarily speak in a popular style, suited to the lowest apprehension. It would be absurd, then, to seek to reduce what they say to the rules of philosophy; as, for example, in the passage before us, the Psalmist notes the marvelous fact that God holds the waters suspended in the air, because it seems contrary to nature that they should mount aloft, and also, that though fluid they should hang in vacant space. Accordingly it is said elsewhere, that they are held there as enclosed in bottles. (Psalm 33:7.) The Psalmist has borrowed the form of expression from Moses, who says — "that the waters were divided from the waters." (Genesis 1:6.)

5. *Let them praise the name, etc.* As he speaks of things wanting intelligence, he passes to the third person, from which we infer that his reason for having spoken in the second person hitherto, was to make a deeper impression upon men. And he asks no other praise than that which may teach us that the stars did not make themselves, nor the rains spring from chance; for notwithstanding the signal proofs we constantly have before our eyes of the divine power, we with shameful carelessness overlook the great author. He says emphatically — *for He Himself created,* intimating that the world is not eternal, as wicked men conjecture, nor made by a concourse of atoms, but that this fair order of things which we see, suddenly sprang forth upon the commandment of God. And, speaking of the creation, he adds what is even more worthy of observation, that he gave that law to them which remains inviolable. For many, while they grant that the world was made by God, lapse from this into the senseless notion that now the order of nature stands of itself, and that God sits idle in the heavens. The Psalmist very properly insists, therefore, that the works of God above us in the heavens were not only made by him, but even now move forward at his disposal; and that not only was a secret power communicated to them

"Que les estoilles sont plus haut que les planetes, et qu'icelles planetes sont situees en divers cercles ou spheres." — *Fr.*

at first, but while they go through their assigned parts, their operation and ministry to their various ends is dependent upon God.

Psalm 148:7-10

> **7.** Praise Jehovah! ye creatures from the earth, [739] dragons, [740] and all deeps. **8.** Fire and hail, snow and ice, breath of the storm doing his word. **9.** Mountains, and all hills; fruitful tree, and all cedars. **10.** Wild beasts, and all cattle; reptile, and winged fowl.

7. *Praise Jehovah, etc.* He now comes to the lower parts of the world; although deviating at the same time from the exact order, he mixes up such things as are produced in the air — lightning's, snow, ice, and storms. These should rather have been placed among the former class, but he has respect to the common apprehension of men. The scope of the whole is, that wherever we turn our eyes we meet with evidences of the power of God. He speaks first of *the whales*; for, as he mentions the *abysses* or *deeps* immediately afterwards, I have no doubt that by תנינים, *tanninim*, he means fishes of the sea, such as whales. It is only reasonable to think that matter for praising God should be taken from the sea, which is fraught with so many wonders. He then ascends to *hail, snows*, and *storms*, which he says *fulfill the word of God*; for it is not by an effect of chance that the heavens are clouded, or that a single drop of rain falls from the clouds, or that the thunders rage, but one and all of these changes depend upon the secret will of God, whether he will show his goodness to the children of men in irrigating the earth, or punish their sins by tempest, hail, or other calamities. The passage contains instruction of various kinds, as, for example, that when dearth impends, however parched the earth may be by long continued heat, God can promptly send rain which will remove the drought at his pleasure. If from incessant rains, on the other hand, the seed rot in the ground, or the crops do not come to maturity, we should pray for fair weather. If we are alarmed by thunder, we are taught to pray to God, for as it is he who sends it in his anger, so he can still all the troubled elements. And we are not to take up the narrow view of this truth which irreligious men advocate, that things in nature merely move according to the laws impressed upon them from the beginning, while God stands by idle, but are to hold firmly that God watches over his creatures, and that nothing can take place without his present disposal, as we have seen, Psalm 104:4 that

> "he maketh the winds his messengers,
> and his ministers a flaming fire."

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"Laudate Iehovam e terra." — *Lat.* "Louez le Seigneur, vous *creatures* de la terre." — *Fr.*

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"Ou, balenes." — *Fr. marg.* "Or, whales."

Psalm 148:11-14

> **11.** Kings of the earth, and all peoples; princes, and all judges of the earth. **12.** Young men, and also virgins; old men, with children. **13.** Let them praise the name of Jehovah: for exalted is his name only, his praise is above the earth and the heavens. **14.** And he hath exalted the horn of his people: praise is to all his merciful ones, to the children of Israel, a people which is near to him. Hallelujah.

11. *Kings of the earth, etc.* He now turns his address to men, with a respect to whom it was that he called for a declaration of God's praises from creatures, both above and from beneath. As kings and princes are blinded by the dazzling influence of their station, so as to think the world was made for them, and to despise God in the pride of their hearts, he particularly calls them to this duty; and, by mentioning them first, he reproves their ingratitude in withholding their tribute of praise when they are under greater obligations than others. As all men originally stand upon a level as to condition, the higher persons have risen, and the nearer they have been brought to God, the more sacredly are they bound to proclaim his goodness. The more intolerable is the wickedness of kings and princes who claim exemption from the common rule, when they ought rather to inculcate it upon others and lead the way. He could have addressed his exhortation at once summarily to all men, as indeed he mentions *peoples* in general terms; but by thrice specifying *princes* he suggests that they are slow to discharge the duty, and need to be urged do it. Then follows a division according to age and sex, to show that all without exception are created for this end, and should unitedly devote their energies to it. As to *old men*, the more God has lengthened out their lives the more should they be exercised in singing his praises; but he joins *young men* with them, for though they have less experience from continued habit, it will be inexcusable if they do not acknowledge the great mercy of God in the vigor of their lives. In speaking of *girls* or *virgins*, the particle גם, *gam, also*, is not merely expletive, but added to make the words more emphatical, conveying the truth that even the young women who are not so liberally educated as the male sex, being considered as born for domestic offices, will omit their duty if they do not join with the rest of the Church in praising God. It follows that all from the least to the greatest are bound by this common rule.

14. *And hath exalted the horn, etc.* As we saw in the former Psalm, that the perfections of God are to be seen more conspicuously in the Church than in the constitution of the world at large, the Psalmist has added this sentence, as to the Church being protected by the divine hand, and armed with a power against all enemies which secures its safety in every danger. By *the horn*, as is well known, is meant strength or dignity. Accordingly the Psalmist means that God's blessing is apparent in his Church and among his chosen people, inasmuch as it only flourishes and is powerful through

his strength. There is a tacit comparison implied between the Church of God and other hostile powers, for it needs divine guardianship as being exposed on all sides to attack. Hence the Psalmist infers that *praise is to all the merciful ones of God*, for they have ground given them in the singular goodness of his condescension both for self-congratulation and praise. In calling the children of Israel *a people near unto God,* he reminds them of the gracious covenant which God made with Abraham. For how came the nearness, except in the way of God's preferring an unknown despised stranger to all nations? Nor are we to seek the cause of the distinction elsewhere than in the mere love of God. Though all the world equally belongs to God, he graciously discovered himself to the children of Israel, and brought them near to him, strangers as they were from God, even as are the whole race of Adam. Hence the words of Moses —

"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, and distributed the peoples, he stretched forth his line to Jacob." (Deuteronomy 32:8.)

He is to be considered, therefore, as pointing out the cause why God hath extended such signal blessings to a single people, and a people poor and despised — his adoption of them to himself.

Psalm 149

PSALM 149

If we may be allowed to compare this Psalm with the former ones, and the next, which is the last, the only difference is, that while the author of the Psalm, whoever he was, has hitherto spoken of God's special care and protection of his Church in connection with the common providential government of the world, here he speaks of his benefits to the Church exclusively. In the next Psalm mention is only made of the power of God in general.

Hallelujah.

Psalm 149:1-4

1. Sing ye to Jehovah a new song: his praise is in the congregation of the merciful. **2.** Let Israel rejoice in his Maker: let the sons of Zion rejoice their king. [741] **3.** Let them praise his name on the pipe,

741

"The Jewish government was a *Theocracy,* which commenced at the time of the departure from Egypt; and continued in some degree till the coming of Christ, as had been foretold by Jacob, Genesis 49:10." — *Dimock.*

[742] on the timbrel [743] and the harp let them sing psalms to him. **4.** Because Jehovah hath taken pleasure in his people; he will glorify the poor unto salvation.

1. *Sing to Jehovah a new song.* This exordium proves what I have just said, that the exhortation now given is addressed only to God's people; for the singular goodness which is particularly extended to them affords more ample matter of praise. The probable conjecture is, that the Psalm was composed at the time when the people were begun to rejoice, or after they had returned to their native country from the Babylonish captivity. We will see from the context that a promise is given of recovery from their ruined condition. The object, I think, of the Psalmist, is to encourage them to expect the full and complete deliverance, some prelude of which had been suddenly and unexpectedly given in the permission to return. As the Church was not fully restored at once, but was with difficulty and only after a long period brought to a state of vigor, comfort such as this was much needed. The Spirit of God would also furnish a remedy for evils which were afterwards to break out; for the Church had scarcely begun to respire when it was again harassed with various evils, and oppressed by the cruel tyranny of Antiochus, which was followed up by a dreadful dispersion. The Psalmist

742

In our English Bible it is in the text, "in the dance;" and on the margin, "or with the pipe." מחול *machol,* the Hebrew word employed, is often in our authorized version rendered "dance"; but this is not its meaning. It denotes, as Parkhurst states, "some fistular wind instrument of music, with holes, as a flute, pipe or fife, from חל, *chal* to make a hole or opening." "I know no place in the Bible." Says Dr. Adam Clark, "where מחול, *mechol,* and מחלת, *mechalath,* mean *dance* of any kind; they constantly mean some kind of pipe."

743

The Hebrew name for this kind of this musical instrument is תף, *toph.* The timbrel, tympanum, or tambourine, was used chiefly by women, and was employed in choral dances, or occasions of religious or festal processions. Thus we read in Exodus 15:20, 21, "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The principle of the פף, *toph,* or timbrel was that of a prepared skin stretched upon a hoop or frame. There were various kinds or forms of this instrument. "Our common tambourine, with small cymbals inserted in the frame, also appears in some paintings, [of Egyptian and European antiquity,] and is now very common in Western Asia. We are told that the frame was either of metal or wood and that the ass's skin was usually employed for the covering. They were not always played by the naked hand; but were sometimes struck with small batons, or with a knotty whip with many thongs, instead of which, on particular festivals, a sprig of some tree or plant, considered suitable to the occasion, was sometimes employed." — *Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.* The timbrel is evidently of oriental origin. From the reference to it in Genesis 31:27, where תף is translated "tabret," we learn that it was known in the time of Jacob, that is, ages previous to the existence of the great European nations of antiquity; and both the Greeks and Romans confessed that their instruments of this class were derived from Egyptians and Syrians. See volume 3

had good reason therefore for animating the godly to look forward for the full accomplishment of the mercy of God, that they might be persuaded of divine protection until such time as the Messiah should arise who would gather all Israel. He calls this *a new song,* as we have noticed elsewhere, to distinguish it from those with which the saints commonly and daily praised God, for praise is their continued exercise. It follows that he speaks of some rare and unusual benefit, demanding signal and particular thanksgiving. And I am disposed to think that whoever may have been the author of the Psalm, he alludes to that passage in Isaiah, (Isaiah 42:10,) "Sing unto the Lord a new song," when he speaks of the future restoration of the Church, and the eternal kingdom of Christ. In the second clause of the verse there is a promise implied. For though he proceeds to exhort the Lord's people to sing God's praises together, he hints along with this that the Church would coalesce again into one body, so as to celebrate God's praises in the solemn assembly. We know that so scattered were the Israelites, that the sacred songs ceased to be sung, as elsewhere they complain of being called upon to sing —

"How shall we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:4.)

He bids them prepare therefore after this sad dispersion for holding their sacred assemblies again.

2. *Let Israel rejoice in his Maker.* He insists upon the same point, that the Lord's people should rest firmly persuaded that their family had not been chosen out in vain from the rest of the world, but that God would be mindful of his covenant, and not allow the mercies which he had extended to them to fail or become extinct. Although they had been temporarily deprived of the inheritance of the land of Canaan, which was the pledge of their adoption, the Psalmist calls God their *Maker, and king of the sons of Zion,* to remind them that when adopted to a pre-eminency above other nations, this was a species of new creation. So in Psalm 45:6, the Israelites are called "the work of God's hands," not merely because they were like other men created by him, but because he had formed them anew, and distinguished them with a new honor, that, of being separated front the whole human race. The name king has a wider signification, intimating that as this people was at first formed by God, so it was with the view of their being ever governed by his power. The musical instruments he mentions were peculiar to this infancy of the Church, nor should we foolishly imitate a practice which was intended only for God's ancient people. But the Psalmist confirms what has been already mentioned, that their religious assemblies which had been for a time interrupted would soon be restored, and they would call upon the name of the Lord in the due order of his worship.

4. *For God hath taken pleasure in his people.* We have spoken elsewhere of the verb רצה, *ratsah* here it means *free favor,* the Psalmist saying that it was entirely of his good pleasure that God had chosen this people to himself.

From this source flows what is added in the second clause, that God would give a new glory of deliverance to the afflicted. In the Hebrew עניים, *anavim,* means *poor and afflicted ones,* but the term came afterwards to be applied to *merciful persons,* as bodily afflictions have a tendency to subdue pride, while abundance begets cruelty. The Psalmist accordingly mitigates the sadness of present evils by administering seasonable consolation, that God's people, when oppressed by troubles, might look forward with hope to the glorious deliverance which was yet unseen. The sum of the passage is — that God, who had fixed his love upon his chosen people, could not possibly abandon them to such miseries as they now suffered under.

Psalm 149:5-9

> **5.** The merciful shall rejoice in glory; they shall shout for joy upon their couches. [744] **6.** The high praises of God are in their throat [745] and a two-edged sword is in their hand: **7.** To execute vengeance upon the nations, castigations upon the peoples: **8.** To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with iron fetters: **9.** To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor is to all his merciful ones. Hallelujah.

5. *They shall rejoice.* In making mention here of joy, jubilee, and the high praises of God, he shows still more clearly from the effects which it would produce, that he does not speak of a common benefit of God; for had not the deliverance of the people been of a remarkable kind, there would have been no occasion for such joy, and even triumph. And by these expressions he intimates that the people would not be brought back from exile to be immediately dispersed again, but to flourish in the enjoyment of every species of blessing. He on this account makes mention of *couches,* teaching them to expect daily rest under the divine protection. He declares that they would be furnished with arms and power, not only to ward off enemies, but to put them to flight on every side, so as to reduce to subjection kings and nations which formerly ruled over them. By *swords of a double-mouth,* or *two-edged,* are meant such as cut on both sides, for at that time swords had but one edge.

744

The people of the East sat on couches in their private parties, banquets, etc., as well as reposed on them during night. The language here may, therefore, be expressive of the praise they would ascribe to God at their festal banquets and in their private companies. An exhortion has previously been given (Psalm 149:1) to praise God in the public assembly. Green supposes that the reference is to the couches on which they reclines when they partook of the eucharistical sacrifices.

745

"The original is בגרונם, in their throats. It is probable the Hebrew, when a living language, was extremely *guttural,* as the Arabian language now is." — *Fry.*

7. *To execute vengeance, etc.* Both during their exile and after their return from it, this might seem to be altogether incredible. Nor did it take place before the advent of Christ; for though the Machabaei and their posterity reduced the neighboring nations to subjection, this was but a faint prelude and earnest to direct the thoughts of the Lord's people to what was approaching. But as Haggai prophesied that the glory of the second Temple would be greater than of the first, so here there is promised a more prosperous state than had ever existed. (Haggai 2:9.) Reduced as the Jews were in numbers, and low as was the state of things among them, the Psalmist announces to all nations which opposed and troubled them, that they would have the ascendancy. As they were yet tributary, and dwelt at Jerusalem only by sufferance, they were called to exercise faith in a promise which, to the judgment of sense, might appear visionary, and to raise their thoughts to the infinite power of God, which triumphs over all worldly obstacles. The vengeance spoken of is such as the Israelites would take, not under the influence of private resentment, but by commandment of God; and this we mention that none may infer that they are allowed to take vengeance for personal injuries.

The next verse, where mention is made of *kings* and *nobles,* is an amplification; for had he only spoken of peoples and nations, this might have been restricted to the common people and men of low condition. Here is something much greater — that kings and others of noble rank would be dragged to punishment in chains. But it is to be remembered, as I have just hinted, that but a small part of this splendid prospect was realized until Christ appeared; for any small increase of prosperity which the people enjoyed under the Machabaei was not worthy of any consideration, except in so far as by this help God sustained the drooping spirits of the people up to Christ's advent. Here the prediction of Jacob is to be noticed —

"the scepter shall not depart from Judah, until Shiloh come." (Genesis 49:10.)

But the Machabaei sprung from another tribe. We must, infer, therefore, that the regular order was then interrupted, and that to make the prosperous state of the people to have been based upon their victories, is building a castle in the air. And God would appear designedly to have removed the government from the tribe of Judah, lest this success should intoxicate the minds of his people; for most of them, through pride in these signal victories, overlooked the true and substantial deliverance. As the Psalmist treats here of the perfection of the prosperity of the people, it follows that he refers to the Messiah, that their expectation and desire of him might never cease either in their prosperity or adversity.

9. *To perform the judgment, etc.* He qualifies what he had said in the previous verses, in which he might have appeared to arm the Lord's people for deeds of warlike cruelty. At first sight it might appear strange, that they who were called the merciful ones of God, should be sent out with

drawn swords to commit slaughter, and pour out human blood; for what evidence was here of mercy? But when God himself is the author of the vengeance taken, it is just judgment, not cruelty. When mention is made of the *judgment written,* the Psalmist reminds the Jews that they were called to liberty by command of God — to that liberty which had been unjustly wrested from them by' foreigners and tyrants, and that they could not be blamed for executing judgment written. Any exposition of the passage is faulty which does not proceed upon this as being the Psalmist's design, that he would have the Jews to consider the divine mandate, not to proceed under the influence of private resentment, and to throw a rein over passion; saying upon the matter, that God's children may not execute vengeance but when called to it, there being an end of all moderation when men yield themselves up to the impulse of their own spirits. Another question might arise here by way of objection. Christ is said to have come without crying or lifting up his voice, that he might not break the bruised reed, (Matthew 12:20,) and he inculcates the same character upon his followers. The answer is obvious, that Christ is also armed with an iron scepter, by which to bruise the rebellious, and is elsewhere described as stained with blood, as slaying his enemies on every side, and not being wearied with the slaughter of them. (Isaiah 63:2.) Nor is it surprising, considering the obstinacy which universally prevails in the world, that the mercy which is treated with such indignity should be converted into severity. Now the doctrine laid down in the passage admits of being rightly applied to our practice, in this way, that what is here said of the two-edged sword, applies more especially to the Jews, and not properly to us, who have not a power of this kind permitted; except, indeed, that rulers and magistrates are vested by God with the sword to punish all manner of violence; but this is something peculiar to their office. [746] As to the Church collective, the sword now put into our hand is of another kind, that of the word and spirit, that we may slay for a sacrifice to God those who formerly were enemies, or again deliver them over to everlasting destruction unless they repent. (Ephesians 6:17.) For what Isaiah predicted of Christ extends to all who are his members, —

"He shall smite the wicked with the word of his mouth,
and shall slay them with the breath of his lips."
(Isaiah 11:4.)

If believers quietly confine themselves within these limits of their calling, they will find that the promise of vengeance upon their enemies has not been given in vain. For when God calls us, as I have said above, to judgment written, he puts a restraint both upon our spirits and actions, so as that we must not attempt what he has not commanded. When it is said, in

746

"Qui est ici dit du glaive trainchant des deux cotes, appartient specialment aux Juifs, et ne peut pas estre approprie an nous," etc. — *Fr.*

the close of the verse, that *this honor is to all the merciful ones of God,* he not only exhorts to the practice of piety, but gives us a support for our encouragement, lest we should think that we might be losers by exercising mercy and patience, as most men give vent to fury and rage, under the idea that the only way to defend their life is by showing the savageness of wolves. Although God's people, therefore, have nothing of the strength of the giant, and will not move a finger without divine permission, 'and have a calm spirit, the Psalmist declares, that they have an honorable and splendid issue out of all their troubles.

Psalm 150

PSALM 150.

The argument of this Psalm is the same with that of the former. Hallelujah.

Psalm 150:1-6

1. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. **2.** Praise him in, his might; praise him for the plenitude of his greatness. **3.** Praise him with sound of trumpet, [747] praise him with

747

"The trumpets of the last Temple were probably formed after the ancient model; and as these are represented among the spoils of that Temple on the Triumphal Arch of Titus at Rome, we are enabled to see that they were long straight trumpets, of a form which has always been and continues to be common... Trumpets and horns are the only instruments concerning which any directions are given in the law. 'In the infancy of a state,' says Burney, 'a nation has but little leisure for cultivating music any otherwise than as it is connected with religious rites and the military art;' and it is thus that he accounts for the fact, that (with the exception of Miriam's timbrel) no instruments but horns and trumpets are noticed in the Law. And, indeed, it may be said that they are scarcely mentioned as *musical* instruments, but as suited to and employed for making signals, calls, and conveying instructions during the religious solemnities, and in the field of war... It is clear, however, that trumpets and cornets were introduced into the musical choirs in the time of David; while they still continued to be employed in their former service. The following particulars concerning the use of trumpets in the Temple will be useful, and are collected chiefly from Lightfoot's 'Temple Service.' The trumpets were sounded exclusively by the priests who stood not in the Levitical choir, but apart and opposite to the Levites, on the other side of the altar, both parties looking towards it—the priests on the west side, and the Levites on the east. The trumpets did not join in the concert; but were sounded during certain regulated pauses in the vocal and instrumental music "—*Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.*.

psaltry and harp. **4.** Praise him with timbrel [748] and pipe, [749] praise him upon chords, [750] and the organ. [751] **5.** Praise him upon cymbals of sound, praise him upon cymbals of jubilation [752] **6.** Whatsoever breathes, let it praise God. Hallelujah.

1. *Praise God in his sanctuary.* This psalm in general commends the spiritual worship of God, which consists in sacrifices of praise. By the *sanctuary* there is little doubt that heaven is here meant, as is often the case elsewhere. The second clause is exegetical, for the same thing is repeated. But for sanctuary we read רקיע, *rekia,* that is, *the expanse of heaven,* to which is added the epithet of *power,* because there we have a proof of the matchless power of God, so that we cannot look to the heavens without being lost in admiration. As to the interpretation which some give — Praise God, ye angels who inhabit the heavens, and ye men who dwell under the firmament, it is forced and unnatural; for the Psalmist, in order to awaken

748

See footnote 293, Psalm 149:3.

749

See footnote 292, Psalm 149:3.

750

The original word is במנים "This word occurring nowhere else, it is impossible to ascertain what kind of instrument this was, but as Edwards, upon the authority of Rabbi Hannase makes, it a *stringed* instrument, and the word is probably derived from מנה, *to number*, probably it was so called from the extraordinary number of strings which it had; and perhaps it was the *decachord*, mentioned in Psalm 33:2, which, having ten strings, might be called Minim, κατ ἐξοχὴν, as consisting of the greatest number of strings in use among the Jews." — *Dimock.*

751

The Hebrew name is עגב, *ougab.* This instrument is equal in antiquity to the כנור, *kinnor*, both being mentioned in Genesis 4:21, as the invention of Jubal. These are the two first musical instruments the invention of which is recorded in Scripture, and the only ones mentioned before the deluge. Subsequently they are almost always mentioned in connection with each other. The *ougab* was not that complicated instrument which goes by the name of the *organ* in the present day. Calmet supposes it to have been a flute which consisted of a number of pipes, of unequal thickness and length, set close or joined together, which gave harmonious sound when blown into, by moving them successively under the lower lip. Such is the common opinion, and there seems no ground to dispute its correctness. This instrument was the small organ or *syrinx*, or *fistula Panis* of antiquity; its invention having been ascribed to Pan, the great sylvan god, who was usually figured with the instrument in his hands. According to the fable, he formed it of reeds which grew by the river, and played upon it while his goats were feeding on the banks; which shows that it was regarded as properly a pastoral instrument, and as such it seems to be mentioned by Job. (Job 21:11, 12.) The principle of its construction is so simple, that it is among the most widely diffused of musical instruments. It is in common use in the island of New Amsterdam, in the South Seas, as flutes and drums have been found in Otaheite and New Zealand, an uncontestable proof that these are instruments which tribes the most barbarous and the most remote from each other naturally invent. The number of tubes, as represented on ancient monuments, varies from seven to eleven.

752

men who grow languid in God's praises, bids them lift their eyes towards the heavenly sanctuary. That the majesty of God may be duly reverenced, the Psalmist represents him as presiding on his throne in the heavens; and he enlarges upon the same truth in the second verse, celebrating his power and his greatness, which he had brought under our notice in the heavens, which are a mirror in which they may be seen. If we would have our minds kindled, then, to engage in this religious service, let us meditate upon his power and greatness, which will speedily dispel all such insensibility. Though our minds can never take in this immensity, the mere taste of it will deeply affect us. And God will not reject such praises as we offer according to our capacity.

3. *Praise him with sound of trumpet.* I do not insist upon the words in the Hebrew signifying the musical instruments; only let the reader remember that sundry different kinds are here mentioned, which were in use under the legal economy, the more forcibly to teach the children of God that they cannot apply themselves too diligently to the praises of God — as if he would enjoin them strenuously to bring to this service all their powers, and devote themselves wholly to it. Nor was it without reason that God under the law enjoined this multiplicity of songs, that he might lead men away from those vain and corrupt pleasures to which they are excessively addicted, to a holy and profitable joy. Our corrupt nature indulges in extraordinary liberties, many devising methods of gratification which are preposterous, while their highest satisfaction lies in suppressing all thoughts of God. This perverse disposition could only be corrected in the way of God's retaining a weak and ignorant people under many restraints, and constant exercises. The Psalmist, therefore, in exhorting believers to pour forth all

Of the Hebrew musical instrument called צלצל, *tsiltel,* or "cymbal," as Calvin here renders it, and as it is rendered in the Septuagint and Vulgate, two kinds are here mentioned — צלצלים, "*tsiltelim*," or, "cymbals of sound," and "*tsiltelim,*" or "*cymbals* of jubilation." The specific difference between these two sorts of the same instrument is not accurately marked. The latter were probably of a larger size than the farmer, or made of such a shape or of such metals as to emit a louder sound. The former are translated by French and Skinner, "the soft cymbal." The literal translation of the Hebrew is, "cymbals of hearing," i.e., say these critics, "cymbals which when struck do not overpower the voices of the singers." They translate the latter, "the loud cymbals." The ancient cymbals were two convex or hollow plates of brass or other metal, as silver or copper, made in the form of cups, which were held in each hand, and which being struck against each other produced a sharp clanging sound. Some, however, think that the word *tsiltzel* exclusively denotes the *sistrum*, and that cymbals, properly speaking, are denoted by the word שלישים *shalishim*, in 1 Samuel 18:6, which is, equally with the other, rendered *cymbala* by the Septuagint and the Vulgate, and which our authorized version translates "instruments of music." It is difficult to decide as to these two opinions; but it seems admitted on all hands that both cymbals and sistrums were in use among the Jews. The sistrum was a concave plate of sonorous metal, and of an oval configuration, crossed by bars of the same metal with reverted ends. These bars moved freely in the holes through which they passed, and when the instrument was shaken by the handle to which it was fixed, the reverted ends striking upon the body of the instrument produced the sound. It had generally three or four transverse bars. It was much used by the Egyptians in their religious services, and actual specimens of it of an ancient date have been discovered. See volume 3

their joy in the praises of God, enumerates, one upon another, all the musical instruments which were then in use, and reminds them that they ought all to be consecrated to the worship of God.

6. *Whatever breathes, etc.* As the word נשמה, *neshamah,* means *breath,* or *blowing,* and whatever is animate, or breathes, the words may be extended to every kind of living creatures, as we have seen in the preceding psalms that the declaration of God's praises is assigned even to things wanting intelligence. But as men exclusively are often meant under the name of "flesh," so we may very well suppose that the words have reference here to men, who, although they have vital breath in common with the brute creation, obtain by way of distinction the name of breathing, as of living creatures. I am led to think this for the following reason: As yet the Psalmist has addressed himself in his exhortations to the people who were conversant with the ceremonies under the law, now he turns to men in general, tacitly intimating that a time was coming when the same songs, which were then only heard in Judea, would resound in every quarter of the globe. And in this prediction we have been joined in the same symphony with the Jews, that we may worship God with constant sacrifices of praise, until being gathered into the kingdom of heaven, we sing with elect angels an eternal hallelujah.

TRANSLATION: PSALMS 1-35

Translation: Psalms 1-35

PSALMS 1—35

PART FIRST. [753]

PSALM 1

1 Blessed *is* the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly; And in the way of sinners doth not stand; And in the seat of scoffers doth not sit:

2 But in the law of the Lord *is* his delight; And in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree planted near rivers of waters, Which shall yield its fruit in its season, And whose leaf shall not fade; And all that he doeth shall prosper.

4 Not so the ungodly: But they are like the chaff, which scatter doth the wind.

5 Therefore shall not stand the ungodly in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For know doth Jehovah the way of the righteous; But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

PSALM 2

753

According to the Hebrew division, Part 1 extends from Psalm 1 to Psalm 41 inclusive.

1 Why tumultuously rise do the Gentiles, And the peoples murmur in vain?

2 Confederated have the kings of the earth, And the princes have assembled together, Against Jehovah and against his Christ.

3 "Let us break asunder their bonds, "And cast away from us their yoke."

4 He who dwelleth in heaven shall laugh; The Lord shall deride them.

5 Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, And in his hot displeasure he shall vex them.

6 "I have anointed my king, "Upon Zion, the mountain of my holiness."

7 I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said to me, "My Son art thou; I, this day, have begotten thee.

8 "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, "And for thy possession the uttermost parts of the earth.

9 "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;" As the vessel of a potter thou shalt dash them in pieces."

10 And now, O ye kings! understand; Be instructed, O ye judges of the earth!

11 Serve Jehovah with fear, Rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, And ye perish from the way, When shall be kindled in a short time his wrath. Blessed are all who trust in him.

PSALM 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from the face of Absalom his son

1 O Lord! how are my oppressors multiplied! Many rise up against me,

2 Many say to my soul, "There is no help for him in God." Selah.

3 And thou, O Jehovah! art a shield for me; My glory, and he that exalteth my head.

4 With my voice to the Lord have I cried, And he heard me from the mountain of his holiness. Selah.

5 I lay down and slept; I awaked, because the Lord sustains me.

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, Who on all sides have set their camps against me.

7 Arise, O Lord l Save me, O my God! For thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the cheekbone; The teeth of the ungodly thou hast broken.

8 To the Lord belongeth salvation; Upon thy people *is* thy blessing. Selah.

PSALM 4

To the Chief Musician on Neginoth. A Psalm of David

1 When I cry, answer me, O God of my righteousness! In distress thou hast enlarged me; Have pity upon me, and hear my prayer.

2 O ye sons of men! how long my glory will ye try to put to shame? Will ye love vanity, will ye seek after lying? Selah.

3 But know that chosen hath Jehovah the merciful man for himself: Jehovah will hear when I cry unto him.

4 Tremble and ye shall not sin; Discourse in your heart upon your bed, and be silent. Selah.

5 Sacrifice the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the Lord.

6 Many say, "Who will show us good?" Lift thou up on us the light of thy countenance, O Jehovah!

7 Thou hast given joy to my heart More than *theirs* in the time that their corn and their wine are increased.

8 In peace [*as if*] with a multitude I will sleep and take rest, [754] For thou, O Jehovah! in safety hast placed me, [*though*] alone.

PSALM 5

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

1 My words do thou give ear to, O Jehovah! Attend to my speech.

2 Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King and my God! For to thee will I pray.

3 O Jehovah! in the morning do thou hear my voice; In the morning will I direct to thee and will watch.

4 For not a God taking pleasure in wickedness art thou; There shall not dwell with thee evil.

5 There shall not stand the foolish before thine eyes; Thou hatest all that commit iniquity.

6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak falsehood: The man of bloods and the deceitful man abominate shall Jehovah.

7 And I, in the multitude of thy mercy, will enter into thy house; I will worship in thy holy temple in thy fear.

8 O Jehovah! lead me in thy righteousness, because of my adversaries; Make straight before my face thy way.

9 For there is not in their mouth uprightness; Their inward part is deep depravity; A sepulcher that is open is their throat; With their tongues they deal deceitfully.

10 Cause them to err, O God! Let them fall from their counsels; In the multitude of their transgressions destroy them; For they have rebelled against thee.

11 And rejoice let all those who trust in thee, For ever let them exult; and cover thou them, And let those delight in thee that love thy name.

12 For thou shalt bless the righteous, O Jehovah! With thy good will as with a shield thou shalt encompass them.

PSALM 6

754

This line is freely rendered. For the literal translation, see the text as given in the commentary.

To the Chief Musician on Neginoth, upon the Eighth. A Psalm of David

1 O Jehovah! do not in thy anger rebuke me, And do not in thy wrath chastise me.

2 Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah! for I am weak; Heal me, O Jehovah! for affrighted are my bones.

3 And my soul is exceedingly afraid: And thou, O Jehovah! — how long? —

4 Return, O Lord! deliver my soul; Save me for the sake of thy mercy.

5 For there is not in death any remembrance of thee; In the grave who shall acknowledge thee?

6 I have become wearied with my groaning; I make to swim every night my bed; With my tears my couch I water.

7 Waxed dim for vexation hath mine eye; It hath become old among all my persecutors.

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; For heard hath the Lord the voice of my weeping.

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

10 Put to shame and confounded greatly be all my enemies; Let them turn back, and be ashamed suddenly.

PSALM 7

Shiggaion of David, which he sung to Jehovah, upon the words of Cush the Benjamite

1 O Jehovah, my God! in thee do I trust: Save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

2 Lest He seize, as a lion, upon my soul, And tear it in pieces while there is none to deliver it.

3 O Jehovah, my God! if I have done this, If there be iniquity in my hands,

4 If I have rewarded to him that was at peace with me evil, And have not delivered him that afflicted me without cause;

5 Pursue let the enemy my soul and take it, And let him cast down to the earth my life, And my glory in the dust let him hold down. Selah

6 Arise, O Jehovah! in thy anger; Lift up thyself against the fury of my enemies; And awake thou for me to the judgment which thou hast ordained.

7 And the congregation of peoples shall be round about thee: And on account of this, do thou on high return.

8 Jehovah shall judge the peoples: Judge me, O Jehovah! according to my righteousness, And according to the integrity which is in me.

9 Let come to an end, I pray, the malice of the wicked; And direct thou the righteous man: For he proves the hearts and the reins, the righteous God.

10 My shield is in God, Who saves the upright in heart.

11 God judgeth the righteous man, And him who despiseth God, daily.

12 If he turn not, his sword he will whet; His bow he hath bent, he hath made it ready.

13 And for it he hath prepared the instruments of death; He shall make fit his arrows for the persecutors.

14 Behold! he shall travail to bring forth iniquity, And he hath conceived wickedness, And he shall bring forth falsehood.

15 A pit he hath digged, and hollowed it out; And he hath fallen into the ditch which he hath made.

16 Return shall his wickedness upon his own head, And upon his own crown his violence shall descend.

17 I will praise Jehovah, according to his righteousness; And I will sing to the name of Jehovah, Most High.

PSALM 8

To the chief Musician upon Hagittith. A Psalm of David

1 O Jehovah, our Lord! How wonderful is thy name in all the earth, To set thy glory above the heavens!

2 Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast founded *thy* strength, because of thy adversaries, To put to flight the enemy and the avenger.

3 When! see thy heavens, the works of thy fingers; The moon and the stars which thou hast arranged:

4 What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

5 For thou hast made him lower a little than God, And with glory and honor thou hast crowned him.

6 Thou hast set him over the works of thy hands: All things thou hast put under his feet.

7 Sheep and oxen, all of them, And also the beasts of the fields;

8 The fowl of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

9 O Jehovah, our Lord! How wonderful is thy name in all the earth!

PSALM 9

To the chief Musician upon Hagittith. Almuth Laben. A Psalm of David

1 I will praise Jehovah with my whole heart; will recount all thy marvelous works.

2 I will rejoice and exult in thee; I will celebrate in Psalms thy name, O thou Most high!

3 When turned are my enemies backward, They fall and are put to flight at thy presence.

4 For thou hast maintained my judgment and my cause; Thou hast sat upon the throne a righteous judge.

5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen; Thou hast destroyed the ungodly; Their name thou hast blotted out for ever and ever.

6 O thou enemy! come to an end are desolations for ever; And cities thou hast destroyed; Perished has their memory with them.

7 And Jehovah for ever sitteth: His throne for judgment he hath prepared.

8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness; He shall judge the peoples in rectitude.

9 And Jehovah will be a place of defense to the poor, And a protection in seasonable times in trouble.

10 And trust in thee shall those who know thy name: For thou forsakest not those who seek thee, O Jehovah!

11 Sing psalms to Jehovah, who dwelleth in Zion, Proclaim among the peoples his doings;

12 For in requiring blood, it he hath remembered: He hath not forgotten the cry of the poor.

13 Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah! See my affliction from those who persecute me, O thou that liftest me up from the gates of death;

14 That I may recount all thy praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion; That I may exult in thy salvation.

15 Sunk are the heathen into the pit which they have made; In the net which they have hid taken are their own feet.

16 Known is Jehovah by executing judgment: In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. Higgaion Selah.

17 Turned shall be the wicked into hell: All the nations that forget God.

18 For not for ever shall be forgotten the poor; The hope of the humble shall not perish for ever.

19 Arise, O Jehovah! let not man prevail: Let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

20 Put, O Jehovah! fear in them, That the heathen may know that mortal men they are. Selah.

PSALM 10

1 Why, O Jehovah! standest thou afar off? And winkest at seasonable times in trouble?

2 In his pride the ungodly doth persecute the poor; Let them be caught in the devices which they imagine.

3 For praise himself doth the ungodly on account of the desire of his own soul; And the violent man blesseth himself: He despiseth Jehovah.

4 The ungodly, in the pride of his countenance doth not inquire; All his devices say, "There is not a God."

5 Prosperous are his ways at all times; High are thy judgments before him; At all his enemies he puffeth.

6 He saith in his heart, "I shall not be moved from generation to generation," Because he is not in adversity,

7 Of cursing his mouth is full, and of deceit, and of malice: Under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

8 He will sit in the ensnaring places of the villages; In his lurking places will he murder the innocent: His eyes against the poor will take their aim.

9 He will lie in wait in secret, as a lion in his den; He will lie in wait to catch the poor; He will catch the poor by drawing him into his net.

10 He will crouch low, he will cast himself down; Then shall fall by his strengths an army of the afflicted.

11 He hath said in his heart, "Forgotten it hath God; "He hideth his face, that he may not see it for ever."

12 Arise, O Jehovah, God! lift up thy hand: Do not forget the poor.

13 Why do the wicked despise God? He saith in his heart, "Thou wilt not require it."

14 Thou hast seen *it*; For mischief and oppression thou considerest, That thou mayest take them into thy own hand: Upon thee shall the poor leave; To the orphan thou wilt be an helper.

15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man; Thou shalt seek his wickedness, and shalt not find it.

16 Jehovah is King for ever and ever; Perished are the heathen out of his land.

17 The desire of the needy thou hast heard, O Jehovah! Thou wilt direct their heart; Hear shall thine car:

18 That thou mayest judge the fatherless and the poor, That the man *who* is of earth may terrify no more.

PSALM 11

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 In Jehovah do I put my trust: How then say ye to my soul, "Flee ye into your mountain as a bird?"

2 Surely behold! the ungodly shall bend the bow, They have made ready their arrows upon the string, shoot in secret at the upright in heart.

3 Truly, the foundations are destroyed: The righteous, what hath he done?

4 Jehovah is in the palace of his holiness; Jehovah in heaven *hath* his throne; His eyes behold, his eyelids consider the children of men.

5 Jehovah will approve the righteous man; But the ungodly and him who loveth iniquity, hate doth his soul.

6 He will rain upon the ungodly snares, Fire and brimstone, and a storm of whirlwinds: This is the portion of their cup.

7 For the righteous Jehovah loveth righteousness; His countenance approveth the upright.

PSALM 12

To the Chief Musician upon the Eighth. A Psalm of David

1 Save me, O Jehovah! for failed hath the merciful man, For wasted away are the faithful from among the children of men.

2 Deceit doth every one speak with his neighbor; With lips of flatteries, with a double heart do they speak.

3 Let Jehovah cut off all lips of flatteries, The tongue that great things doth speak:

4 Those who have said, "By our tongues we will be strengthened; "Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

5 "Because of the spoiling of the needy, "Because of the groaning of the poor, "Now will I arise," say will Jehovah, "I will set in safety him for whom *the wicked man* layeth snares."

6 The words of Jehovah are pure words; Silver melted in an excellent crucible of earth, purified seven times.

7 Thou, O Jehovah! wilt keep them; Thou wilt preserve him from this generation for ever.

8 On every side the ungodly walk; When they are exalted, reproach is to the children of men.

PSALM 13

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 How long, O Jehovah! wilt thou forget me for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul? And have sorrow in my heart daily? How long exalted shall be my enemy over me?

3 Look upon me, answer me, O Jehovah, my God! Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death;

4 Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him;" And those who afflict me rejoice if I should fall.

5 But as for me, in thy goodness I trust; Exult shall my heart in thy salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

PSALM 14

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm Of David

1 The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God;" They have corrupted [*all good order*,] they have done abominable work. There is none that doeth good.

2 Jehovah from heaven looked down Upon the children of men, To see whether there were any that did understand, And seek after God.

3 Every one of them hath gone aside, Together putrid have they become: There is none that doeth good, not even one.

4 Have they no knowledge all these workers of iniquity? Who eat up my people as they eat bread. Upon the Lord they do not call.

5 There did they tremble with fear, For God is in the generation of the righteous.

6 The counsel of the poor ye deride, Because Jehovah is his hope.

7 Who shall give from Zion salvation to Israel? When turn back shall Jehovah the captivity of his people, Rejoice shall Jacob, and exult shall Israel.

PSALM 15

A Psalm of David

1 O Jehovah! who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Who shall rest in the mountain of thy holiness?

2 He who walketh in integrity and doeth righteousness, And who speaketh truth in his heart,

3 He who detracteth not with his tongue, Who doeth not to his companion evil, And a calumnious report doth not raise up against his neighbor.

4 Despised in his eyes is the off cast; But those who fear the Lord he honoreth; When he hath sworn to his own hurt he doth not change.

5 His money he doth not put out to usury; And a present upon the innocent he doth not accept: He who doeth these things shall not be moved for ever.

PSALM 16

Michtam. A Psalm Of David

1 Keep me, O God! *For* in thee do I trust.

2 Thou shalt say to Jehovah, "My Lord thou art; "My well doing *extendeth* not to thee."

3 To the saints who are on the earth, And to the excellent; all my delight is in them.

4 Multiplied shall be their sorrows who offer to a stranger; I will not taste their libations of blood, Nor will I take their names in my lips.

5 Jehovah is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup; Thou maintainest my lot.

6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant *places*; Yea, an inheritance that is goodly hath fallen to me.

7 I will magnify Jehovah, who giveth me counsel; Even in the nights instruct me do my reins.

8 I have set Jehovah before me continually; Since he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore glad is my heart, rejoice doth my tongue; Also my flesh dwelleth in confidence.

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave; Nor wilt thou make thy Holy One to see the pit.

11 Thou wilt make known to me the way of life; Fullness of joy *is* in thy countenance; Pleasures *are* at thy right hand for evermore.

PSALM 17

A Prayer of David

1 Hear, O Jehovah! my righteousness; Attend to my cry; Hearken to my prayer, which is not in lips of deceit.

2 From the presence of thy countenance let my judgment go forth Let thine eyes behold uprightness.

3 Thou hast proved my heart; Thou hast visited *it* by night; Thou hast examined *it*, thou shalt not find *any thing in it*; My thought shall not pass beyond my mouth.

4 As for the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have taken heed of the ways of the destroyer.

5 Uphold my steps in thy paths, That my footsteps may not slide.

6 I have called upon thee, surely thou wilt hear me, O God! Incline thy ear to me, and hear my speech.

7 Make marvelous thy mercies, O thou Preserver of those who trust [*in thee*,] From those that exalt themselves against thy right hand.

8 Keep me as the apple, the daughter of the eye; In the shadow of thy wings hide me,

9 From the face of the ungodly who endeavor to destroy me — Of my enemies who in my soul besiege me.

10 In their own fat they have enclosed themselves; With their mouth they have spoken haughtily.

11 In our steps they have now encompassed me; eyes they have set to east down to the ground.

12 He is like a lion, he desireth to seize his prey, And like a lion's whelp which lurketh in secret places.

13 Arise, O Jehovah! confront him, lay him prostrate; Deliver my soul from the ungodly man by thy sword

14 From men by thy hand, O Jehovah! — From men who are of long duration, Whose portion is in life, Whose belly thou fillets with thy secret, goods: Filled to the full are their children with them, And their residue they leave to their babes.

15 As for me in righteousness I shall behold thy face; I shall be satisfied when I shall awake with thy likeness.

PSALM 18

To the Chief Musician. Of the servant of Jehovah, David, who spake to Jehovah the words of this song, in the day that Jehovah delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. And he said,

1 I will love thee, O Jehovah! my strength;

2 Jehovah my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; My God, my rock, I will hope in him: My shield and the horn of my salvation, my refuge.

3 Upon the praised Jehovah will I call; And from my enemies I shall be saved.

4 Encompassed me had the cords of death. The torrents of ungodliness had affrighted me.

5 The cords of the grave had encompassed me; Prevented me had the snares of death.

6 In my distress I called upon Jehovah, And to my God I cried: And he heard from his temple my voice, And my cry before him came, [*even*] into his ears.

7 Then shake and tremble did the earth; And the foundations of the mountains were troubled and shaken, Because he was wroth.

8 There ascended smoke out of his nostrils, And fire *proceeding* from his mouth consumed; Coals were kindled by it.

9 And he bowed the heavens and descended; And thick darkness *was* under his feet.

10 And he rode upon a cherub and flew; And was carried upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his hiding place; Round about him his pavilion was dark waters, And the clouds of the skies.

12 At the brightness *which was* before him his clouds passed away, [*There were*] hail-storm, and coals of fire.

13 And thunder in the heavens did Jehovah, And the Most High sent forth his voice; [*There were*] hailstorm and coals of fire.

14 And he sent out his army and scattered them; And lightnings he multiplied, and put them into confusion.

15 And seen were the abysses of the waters, And disclosed were the foundations of the world, At thy rebuke, O Jehovah! At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

16 He sent from on high, he took me; He drew me from waters great.

17 He delivered me from my enemy [*that was*] strong, And from my adversary; Because they were stronger than I.

18 They had prevented me in the day of my calamity; And Jehovah was a support for me.

19 And he brought me forth into a wide place; He rescued me because he wished well to me.

20 Rewarded me hath Jehovah according to my righteousness; According to the purity of my hands he hath repaid me;

21 Because I have kept the ways of Jehovah, And have not impiously departed from my God;

22 Because all his judgments *I have had* before me, And his statutes I have not removed from me.

23 And I have been upright with him, And have kept me from my iniquity.

24 And repaid me hath Jehovah according to my righteousness According to the purity of my hands before his eyes.

25 With the merciful thou wilt deal mercifully, With a man of uprightness thou wilt show thyself upright.

26 With the pure thou wilt be pure, And with the perverse thou wilt deal perversely.

27 For thou the afflicted people wilt save, And the haughty eyes thou wilt east down.

28 For thou shalt light my lamp, O Jehovah! My God shall enlighten my darkness.

29 For by thee I shall break through the wedge of a troop, And by my God I shall leap over a wall.

30 As for God perfect is his way; The word of Jehovah [*is*] refined; A shield is He to all who confide in him.

31 For who is God besides Jehovah? And who is strong except our God?

32 It is God who hath girded me with strength, And hath made perfect my way.

33 He maketh my feet like *those* of hinds, And upon my high places he hath set me.

34 He traineth my hands to the battle, And broken will be a bow of steel by my arms.

35 And thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation, And thy right hand hath sustained me, And thy clemency hath increased me.

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, And my ankles shall not totter.

37 I will pursue my enemies and will seize them; Nor will I return until I have consumed them.

38 I have afflicted them, and they were not able to rise; They have fallen under my feet.

39 Thou hast girded me with might for the battle; Thou hast bowed down my enemies under me.

40 And of my enemies thou hast given me the neck, And [*as for*] my haters I will destroy them.

41 They shall cry aloud, and *there shall be* no Savior *for them*; To Jehovah, but he shall not answer them.

42 And I will bruise them to powder as dust before the wind; As the mire of the streets I will tread upon them.

43 Thou shalt deliver me from the contentions of the people; Thou shalt make me head of the nations; A people whom I have not known shall serve me.

44 At the hearing of the ear they shall obey me; The children of strangers shall lie to me;

45 The children of strangers shall lose courage, And tremble from within their places of concealment.

46 Let Jehovah live and blessed *be* my strength, And let the God of my salvation be exalted:

47 The God who giveth vengeance for me, And subdueth peoples under me.

48 My deliverer from my enemies: Yea, from those who had risen up against me thou hast lifted me up: From the man of violence thou hast rescued me.

49 Therefore will I praise thee, O Jehovah! among the Gentiles, And to thy name will I sing.

50 Who worketh great deliverances for his king, And showeth mercy to his anointed, [even to] David, And to his seed for ever.

PSALM 19

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 The heavens recount the glory of God; And the works of his hands proclaim doth the expanse.

2 Day unto day poureth forth speech; And night unto night publisheth knowledge.

3 There is no speech and no language, Where is not heard their voice.

4 Through all the earth hath gone forth their writing, And to the extremity of the world their words: For the sun he hath set a tabernacle in them,

5 And he as a bridegroom goeth forth from his chamber; He exulteth as a strong man to run *his* course.

6 From *one* extremity of the heavens *is* his going forth, And his circuit to the utmost limits thereof, And no *person* is hidden from his heat.

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of Jehovah is faithful, instructing in wisdom the babes;

8 The statutes of Jehovah *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever; The judgments of Jehovah are truth, they are justified together.

10 More desirable [*are they*] than gold, and much fine gold; And sweeter than honey, and the dropping of honeycombs.

11 Moreover, thy servant is made circumspect by them; And in their observance the reward *is* great.

12 His errors who can understand? From my hidden *sins* cleanse thou me.

13 Likewise from presumptuous sins restrain thou thy servant, That they may not have dominion over me; Then upright shall I be and clean from much wickedness.

14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable Before thee, O Jehovah! my strength and my Redeemer.

PSALM 20

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm Of David

1 May Jehovah hear thee in the day of trouble!

2 May he send help to thee from the sanctuary! And out of Zion sustain thee!

3 May he be mindful of all thy offerings! And thy holocaust may he make flit! Selah.

4 May he give to thee according to thy heart! And all thy counsel may he fulfill!

5 That we may exult in thy salvation, And in the name of our God erect a banner, When Jehovah shall fulfill all thy petitions.

6 Now I have known that Jehovah hath saved his anointed; He will hear him from the heavens of his sanctuary, In the mightiness of the salvation of his right hand.

7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses; But the name of Jehovah our God we will remember.

8 They are bowed down and fallen; But we are risen up and stand erect.

9 O Jehovah! do thou save; Let the King hear us in the day that we call upon him.

PSALM 21

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm Of David

1 O Jehovah! in thy strength rejoice shall the king, And in thy salvation how greatly shall he exult!

2 The desire of his heart thou hast given him, And what he uttered with his lips, thou hast not denied *him.* Selah.

3 For thou shalt prevent him with blessings of good; Thou shalt place upon his head a crown of gold.

4 Life he asked from thee; Thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever.

5 Great *is* his glory in thy salvation: Splendor and beauty thou hast put upon him.

6 For thou hast set him [*to be*] blessings for ever: Thou hast gladdened him with joy before thy countenance.

7 For the king trusteth in Jehovah; And through the goodness of the Most High, he shall not be moved

8 Find out shall thy hand all thy enemies; Thy right hand shall find out thy haters.

9 Thou shalt put them as in a furnace of fire in the time of thy wrath, O Jehova! In his wrath he shall overwhelm them, And consume them shall the fire.

10 Their fruit from the earth thou wilt destroy, And their seed from among the sons of men.

11 For they have spread out against thee evil; They have devised against thee a stratagem which they could not accomplish.

12 For thou wilt set them as a butt; On thy strings thou shalt make ready *thy arrows* against their faces.

13 Be thou exalted, O Jehovah! in thy strength, *Then* we will sing and celebrate in psalms thy power.

PSALM 22

To the Chief Musician. Upon the hind of the morning. A Psalm Of David

1 My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? [*Why art thou*] far from my help, from the words of my roaring?

2 O my God! I cry by day, and thou dost not hear: And in the night, and am not silent.

3 Yet thou art holy, Inhabiting the praises of Israel.

4 In thee trust did our fathers: They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 To thee they cried, and were saved: In thee they trusted, and were not put to shame.

6 But I *am* a worm, and not a man; The reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 All who see me scoff at me: They thrust out the lip, they shake the head.

8 "He hath devolved," *say they*, "upon Jehovah, *his* cause, let him rescue him, "Let him deliver him, since he hath a favor for him."

9 Surely it is thou who didst take me out of the womb, Causing me to confide upon the breasts of my mother.

10 Upon thee I was cast from the womb: From the belly of my mother my God art thou.

11 Depart not far from me, for trouble is near, For there is no helper.

12 Encompassed me have bulls [*that are*] strong, The bulls of Bashan have beset me.

13 They have opened upon me their mouth, As a lion ravening and roaring.

14 Like water I have flowed, [755] And disjointed have been [756] all my bones: My heart hath been [757] like wax, It hath been [758] melted in the midst of my bowels.

755
"I am poured out." — *Fr.*

756
"Are." — *Fr.*

757
"Is." — *Fr.*

758
"Is." — *Fr.*

15 Dried up as a potsherd hath been [759] my strength, And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; And to the dust of death thou hast brought me.

16 For encompassed me have dogs; The assembly of the wicked have surrounded me: They have pierced my hands and my feet.

17 I will count all my bones; As for them they look and gaze upon me.

18 They divide my garments among them; Upon my vesture they cast the lot.

19 And thou, O Jehovah! be not far from me; *Thou who art* my strength, to my aid hasten.

20 Rescue from the sword my soul; From the hand of the dog my only one.

21 Save me from the mouth of the lion, And from the horns of unicorns do thou hear me.

22 I will declare thy name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly will I praise thee.

23 *Saying*, "Ye who fear Jehovah praise him: "All ye the seed of Jacob glorify him: "And stand in awe of him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24 "For he hath not despised nor disdained the poor; "Nor hath he hidden his face from him; "And when he cried to him, he heard him."

25 From thee shall proceed my praise in the congregation great; My vows will I pay before them that fear him.

26 Eat shall the poor, and be satisfied; They shall praise Jehovah who seek him; Your heart shall live for ever.

27 Remember and turn to Jehovah shall all the ends of the earth; And prostrate themselves before his face shall all the tribes of the Gentiles.

28 For Jehovah's is the kingdom, That he may have dominion among the Gentiles.

29 Eat and worship shall all the fat ones of the earth: Before his face shall bow all who are going down to the dust; And he who his own soul doth not quicken.

30 *Their* seed shall serve him, It shall be registered to the Lord for a generation.

31 They shall come and shall declare his righteousness, To a people that shall be born, because he hath done [*this.*],

PSALM 23

A Psalm of David

1 Jehovah is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want any thing.

2 In pastures of grass he maketh me to lie down; To waters gently flowing he leadeth me.

759

"Is." — *Fr.*

3 My soul he restoreth: He leadeth me by the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear evil, because thou art with me; Thy staff and thy crook they comfort me.

5 Thou wilt prepare before me a table in the presence of my persecutors; Thou wilt anoint with oil my head; My cup overfloweth.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for a length of days.

PSALM 24

A Psalm of David

1 Jehovah's is the earth, and the fullness thereof; The world, and those who dwell therein.

2 For he upon the seas hath founded it, And upon the floods he hath arranged it.

3 Who shall ascend into the mountain of Jehovah? Who shall stand in the place of his holiness?

4 He who is clean in hands and pure in heart, Who hath not lifted up to vanity his soul, And hath not sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive blessing from Jehovah, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This is the generation of those who seek him, Of those who seek thy face, O Jacob! Selah.

7 Lift up, O ye gates! your heads, And be ye lifted up, ye doors everlasting! And enter shall the King of Glory.

8 Who is this King of Glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in power. [760]

9 Lift up, O ye gates! your heads, Lift up, I say, ye doors everlasting! *And* enter shall the King of Glory.

10 Who is this King of Glory? Jehovah of armies — He is the King of Glory. Selah.

PSALM 25

Of David

1 To thee, O Jehovah! my soul have I lifted up.

2 O my God! in thee have I hoped: Let me not be put to shame, Let not my enemies rejoice over me.

3 Yea none who wait on thee shall be put to shame: They shall be ashamed who deal perfidiously without cause.

760 In the French version it is "mighty in battle."

4 Thy ways, O Jehovah! make me to know, Thy paths teach thou me.

5 Direct me in thy truth, and teach me; For thou art the God of my salvation; For thee I have waited all the day.

6 Remember thy compassions, O Jehovah! And thy loving-kindnesses; for they have been from everlasting.

7 The transgressions of my youth, and my iniquities do not thou remember According to thy clemency remember thou me, For the sake of thy goodness, O Jehovah!

8 Good and upright *is* Jehovah, Therefore he will teach sinners in the way.

9 He will guide the poor in judgment, And will teach the poor his way.

10 All the ways of Jehovah are mercy and truth, To those who keep his covenant and his testimony.

11 For the sake of thy name, O Jehovah! Be merciful to my iniquity, for great is it.

12 Who is the man that feareth Jehovah? He will teach him in the way which he should choose.

13 His soul in good shall dwell, And his seed shall inherit the land.

14 The counsel of Jehovah is to those who fear him, That he may make known to them his covenant.

15 My eyes are continually towards Jehovah, For he will bring out of the net my feet.

16 Have respect to me, take pity upon me, For solitary and poor am I.

17 The afflictions of my heart are enlarged; Out of my distresses do thou bring me.

18 Behold my affliction and my travail, And take away all my sins.

19 Behold my enemies, for they are multiplied; And with a violent hatred they hate me.

20 Guard my soul, and rescue me, That I may not be ashamed; For I have trusted in thee.

21 Let integrity and rectitude preserve me; Because I have waited for thee.

22 Redeem O God! Israel from all his troubles.

PSALM 26

Of David

1 Judge me, O Jehovah: Because in my integrity I have walked, And in Jehovah have trusted, I shall not stumble.

2 Prove me, O Jehovah! and try me, Examine my reins and my heart.

3 For thy goodness *is* before my eyes; Therefore I have walked in thy truth.

4 I have not sat with men of vanity, And with crafty men I will not go in.

5 I hate the assembly of transgressors, And with the wicked I will not sit.

6 I will wash in purity my hands, And will encompass thy altar, O Jehovah!

7 To cause to be heard the voice of praise, And to tell of all thy marvelous deeds.

8 O Jehovah! I have loved the habitation of thy house, And the place of the dwelling of thy glory.

9 Gather not with ungodly men, my soul, Nor with men of bloods my life.

10 For in their hands *is* maliciousness, And their right hand is full of bribes.

11 But as for me in my integrity I will walk: Redeem me, and have mercy upon me.

12 My foot hath stood in uprightness: In the congregations will I bless thee, O Jehovah!

PSALM 27

Of David

1 Jehovah is my light and my salvation, Whom shall I fear? Jehovah *is* the strength of my life, Of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When approach against me did the wicked, To devour my flesh — My oppressors and my enemies against me — They stumbled and fell.

3 If there should encamp against me a camp, My heart shall not fear: If there should rise against me war, In this shall I have confidence.

4 One thing have I requested from Jehovah — This will I follow after — That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, To survey his temple.

5 For he shall hide me in his pavilion in the day of evil; He shall conceal me in the secret [*recess*] of his tent, Upon a rock he will set me.

6 And now he shall exalt my head Above my enemies who surround me: And I will sacrifice in his tabernacle sacrifices of triumph; I will sing and will celebrate in psalms Jehovah.

7 Hear, O Jehovah! my voice with which I cry; Have mercy upon me and answer me.

8 To thee my heart hath said, "Seek ye my face;" Therefore thy face, O Jehovah! will I seek.

9 Hide not thy face from me; Cast not away in wrath thy servant: My strength thou hast been, do not desert me, And do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

10 When my father and my mother shall forsake me, Jehovah shall receive me.

11 Teach me, O Jehovah! thy way, And lead me in the path of rectitude because of my enemies.

12 Do not deliver me to the desire of my oppressors, For risen up against me have false witnesses, And he who uttereth violence.

13 Unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah, in the land of the living —.

14 Wait thou on Jehovah; Be strong, and he will comfort thy heart, And wait thou on Jehovah.

PSALM 28

Of David

1 Unto thee, O Jehovah! will I cry; O my strength! hold not thy peace from me Lest if thou shouldst be silent to me, I then become like those who descend into the grave.

2 Hear the voice of my prayers when I cry to thee, When I lift up my hands to the sanctuary of thy holiness.

3 Draw me not away with ungodly men, And with the workers of iniquity, Who speak peace [761] with their neighbors, When in their hearts is malice.

4 Give them according to their works, And according to the wickedness of their doings: According to the work of their hands give them, Render their reward to them.

5 Because they do not consider the doing of Jehovah, Nor the work of his hands, Let him destroy them and not build them up.

6 Blessed *be* Jehovah! For he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

7 Jehovah *is* my strength and my shield; In him trusted hath my heart, and I have been helped: Therefore exult shall my heart, And with my song will I celebrate him.

8 Jehovah *is* strength to them, And the strength of the salvations of his Anointed *is* He.

9 Save thy people, and bless thy inheritance; Feed them and exalt them for ever.

PSALM 29

A Psalm of David

1 Ascribe to Jehovah: ye sons of the mighty — Ascribe to Jehovah glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to Jehovah the glory of his name; Worship before Jehovah in the brightness of his sanctuary.

3 The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters; The God of glory thundereth; Jehovah is upon the waters great.

4 The voice of Jehovah is in strength, The voice of Jehovah is in majesty.

5 The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars; Break, I say, doth Jehovah the cedars of Lebanon.

6 And he maketh Lebanon to leap like a calf, And Sirion like the son of the unicorns.

761 *i.e.* Courteously, peaceably.

7 The voice of Jehovah striketh out flames of fire.

8 The voice of Jehovah maketh the desert to tremble. Jehovah maketh to tremble the desert of Kadesh.

9 The voice of Jehovah maketh the hinds to bring forth, And discovereth the forests, And all *meanwhile* in his temple speak his praise.

10 Jehovah over the flood presideth, Preside, I say, doth Jehovah [*as*] King for ever.

11 Jehovah strength to his people will give; Jehovah will bless his people with peace.

PSALM 30

A Psalm of a Song at the dedication of the house of David

1 I will exalt thee, O Jehovah! for thou hast raised me up, And hast not made glad my enemies over me.

2 O Jehovah, my God! I have cried to thee, And thou hast healed me.

3 O Jehovah! thou hast brought up from the grove my soul; Thou hast quickened me from among those who descend into the pit.

4 Sing to Jehovah, O ye his meek ones! And acknowledge the memorial of his holiness.

5 For *there is only* a moment in his anger, *But* life in his favor: In the evening will lodge weeping, And in the morning shall come exultation.

6 But as for me I had said in my tranquillity, "I shall not be moved for ever."

7 O Jehovah! in thy good pleasure Thou hast established strength to my mountain; Thou didst hide thy face, I was confounded.

8 O Jehovah! to thee I cried, And to my Lord I made supplication.

9 What profit shall there be in my blood, When I descend into the pit? Celebrate thee shall the dust? Shall it proclaim thy truth?

10 Hear, O Jehovah! and have mercy upon me; O Jehovah! be thou a helper to me.

11 Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing for me; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, And girded me with gladness.

12 That celebrate thee in psalms may my glory, and not be silent: O Jehovah, my God! for ever will I celebrate thee.

PSALM 31

To the Chief Musician,. A Psalm of David

1 In thee, O Jehovah! have I trusted, Let me not be put to shame for ever: In thy righteousness deliver me.

2 Incline to me thy ear, Speedily do thou rescue me; Be to me for a rock of strength, For a house of defense to save me.

3 For my rock, and my fortress *art* thou: And for the sake of thy name thou wilt direct and guide me.

4 Extricate me from the net, which they have hidden for me, For thou art my strength.

5 Into thy hand I will commend my spirit; For thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah! God of truth.

6 I hate all those who regard lying vanities; But as for me in Jehovah I have trusted.

7 I will exult and rejoice in thy goodness; Because thou hast looked upon my affliction: Thou hast known in distresses my soul:

8 And thou hast not shut me up in the hand of the enemy: *But* thou hast set at large my feet.

9 Have pity upon me, O Jehovah! for trouble is to me: My eye hath consumed away for vexation; my soul and my belly.

10 My life hath riffled through grid; And my years with groaning: My strength hath sunk through my sorrow, And my bones have moldered away.

11 On account of all my enemies I was a reproach, Yea to my neighbors exceedingly, And a terror to my acquaintances; And those who saw me abroad fled from me.

12 I was forgotten as a dead man from the heart; I became like a vessel [*that is*] broken.

13 For I have heard the slander of many: Fear *hath seized* me on every side, While they consult together against me, And to take away my life do devise.

14 But as for me, in thee have I trusted, O Jehovah! I have said, "My God art thou."

15 In thy hand are my times; Rescue me from the hand of my enemies, And from those who persecute me.

16 Cause to shine upon thy servant thy face, Save me in thy goodness.

17 O Jehovah! let me not be put to shame, For I have called upon thee: Let the wicked be put to shame, Let Gem be silent in the grave.

18 Let the lips of lying be put to shame, Which speak against the righteous a hard thing in pride and scorn.

19 How great is thy goodness, Which thou hast hidden for those who fear thee! Which thou hast performed for those who confide in thee, Before the sons of men!

20 Thou shalt hide them in the hidden place of thy presence, From the prides of man; Thou shalt conceal them *as* in a tent, From the strife of tongues.

21 Blessed be Jehovah! For he hath made wonderful his goodness towards me, As in a city fortified.

22 But as for me, I had said in my fear, "I am cast away from before thy eyes:" Yet truly thou hast heard the voice of my supplications, When I cried unto thee.

23 Love Jehovah, all ye meek ones of his! The faithful preserve doth Jehovah, And he repayeth plentifully him who behaveth proudly.

24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, All ye who hope in Jehovah.

PSALM 32

Of David. Giving instruction

1 Blessed are those to whom is remitted iniquity, And whose transgression is covered.

2 Blessed is the man to whom Jehovah doth not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is not guile.

3 When I kept silence, waste away did my bones, And when I wailed all the day.

4 For by day and night heavy upon me was thy hand; Turned into the drought of summer was my greenness. Selah.

5 My sin I have acknowledged to thee, And my iniquity I have not hid. I said, "I will confess against myself my wickedness to Jehovah;" And thou didst remit the guilt of my sin. Selah.

6 On this account, pray to thee shall every *man*, that is meek, In the time of finding thee: So that in a flood of many waters, To him they shall not come near.

7 Thou art a hiding-place to me; From trouble thou shalt preserve me; With songs of deliverance thou shalt encompass me. Selah.

8 I will instruct thee, And teach thee the way wherein thou shouldest walk: I will counsel thee with mine eye.

9 Be ye not like a horse, *or* like a mule, Which have not understanding: With bit and bridle his jaws thou shalt bind, Lest they kick against thee.

10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: But the man who hopeth in Jehovah goodness shall encompass.

11 Rejoice in Jehovah, and exult, ye righteous! Sing all ye *who are* upright in heart.

PSALM 33

1 Exult, ye righteous! in Jehovah: For to the upright comely is praise.

2 Celebrate Jehovah upon the harp; Upon the nablure, [762] and instrument of ten strings, sing psalms to him

3 Sing to him a song that is new; Ardently sing with shouting.

4 For right *is* the word of Jehovah, And all his works are in faithfulness.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: Of the goodness of Jehovah fill is the earth.

6 By the word of Jehovah the heavens were established, And by the breath of his mouth all their host.

762 "La viole." — Fr.

7 He gathered together as an heap the waters of the sea; He laid up as in treasure houses the deeps.

8 Let all the earth fear Jehovah; Of him let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe.

9 For he spake, and it was; He commanded, and it stood.

10 Jehovah scattereth the counsel of the Gentiles, He rendereth fruitless the imaginations of the peoples.

11 The counsel of Jehovah for ever shall stand, The thoughts of his heart from age to age.

12 Blessed is the people to whom Jehovah is their God, The people whom he hath chosen for: in inheritance to himself.

13 From heavens looked down hath Jehovah, He hath beheld all the sons of Adam.

14 From the dwelling place of His throne, He hath looked on all the inhabitants of the earth.

15 He who hath fashioned together their hearts, Who understandeth all their works.

16 There is not a king saved by the multitude of an host, Nor a giant rescued by greatness of strength.

17 Fallacious is a horse for safety, And by the greatness of his strength he will not deliver.

18 Behold! the eye of Jehovah is upon those who fear him, [*Upon those*] who hope in his mercy;

19 To rescue from death their souls, To keep them alive in famine.

20 Our soul waiteth for Jehovah: Our help and our shield is he.

21 Surely in him rejoice shall our heart, Because in his holy name we will trust.

22 Let thy mercy be upon us, O Jehovah! According as we have trusted in thee.

PSALM 34

Of David when he changed his countenance before Abimelech, who expelled him, and he departed

1 I will bless Jehovah at all times: Continually his praise *shall be* in my mouth.

2 In Jehovah make her boast shall my soul: Hear shall the humble and be glad.

3 Magnify? Jehovah with me, And let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought. Jehovah, and he answered me, And from all my fears he delivered me.

5 They shall look to him, and shall flow to him, And their faces shall not he ashamed.

6 This poor man cried,: and Jehovah heard him, And from all his distresses saved him.

7 Encamp doth the angel of Jehovah about those who fear him, And will deliver them.

8 Taste ye and see that good is Jehovah: Blessed is the man who trusteth in him.

9 Fear Jehovah, ye saints of his; For nothing is lacking to those who fear him.

10 The young lions suffer want and are famished: But those who fear Jehovah shall not want any good thing.

11 Come ye children, hearken to me, The fear of Jehovah I will teach you.

12 Who is the man that desireth life, Loving days in which he may see good?

13 Keep thy tongue from evil, And thy lips from speaking deceit.

14 Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it.

15 The eyes of Jehovah *are* upon the righteous, And his ears [*are open*] to their cry.

16 The face of Jehovah is upon those who do evil, To blot out from the earth their remembrance.

17 They cried, and Jehovah heard *them*, And from all their distresses he delivered them.

18 Near is Jehovah to the broken in heart; The contrite in spirit he will save.

19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous; But from them all deliver him will Jehovah.

20 He keepeth all his bones: One of them is not broken.

21 That malice shall slay the wicked, And those who hate the righteous shall be destroyed.

22 Redeem doth, Jehovah the soul of his servants, And they shall not perish who confide in him.

PSALM 35

Of David

1 Plead, O Jehovah! with those who plead with me, Fight against those who fight against me.

2 Lay hold on shield and buckler, And rise up to my aid.

3 Draw out the spear, and stop my ears against my persecutors: Say to my soul, "Thy salvation am I."

4 Let those be confounded and put to shame Who seek my soul, Let those be turned back and be abashed Who devise my hurt.

5 Let them be as chaff before the wind? And let the angel of Jehovah drive them.

6 Let their way be darkness and slipperiness; And let the angel of Jehovah pursue them:

7 For without a cause they have hid for me the pitfall of their net, [763] Without a cause they have digged a pit for my soul.

8 Let there come upon him confusion of which he is not aware; And let the net which he hath hidden catch him; With confusion let him fall into it.

9 And my soul hath exulted in Jehovah, It shall rejoice in his salvation.

10 All my bones shall say, "O Jehovah! who is like to thee, "Rescuing the poor from him who is too strong for him, "The poor and wretched from his spoiler?"

11 Rise up do witnesses [*that are*] violent; Things which I have not known they ask me.

12 They repay me evil for good, To the bereaving of my soul.

13 But as for me, in their sickness my clothing was sackcloth: I afflicted by fasting my soul; And my prayer upon my own bosom was turned.

14 As if he had been a friend, as if a brother to me, I behaved myself *towards him*: As he who mourneth heavily for his mother I humbled myself.

15 But they at my halting rejoiced, they were assembled together: Assembled together, I say, against me, were the abjects whom I had not known: They have torn with their lips and have not been silent.

16 Among perfidious jesters at feasts, They gnash upon me with their teeth.

17 O Lord! how long wilt thou behold it? Rescue my soul from their violence, From the lions my only one.

18 I will celebrate thee in the congregation great: Among people many I will praise thee.

19 Let not those rejoice over me, who unjustly are my enemies; Nor let those who hate me without a cause wink with the eye.

20 For peace they speak not;

21 They have opened against me their mouth; They have said, "Aha! aha! seen *it* hath our eye."

22 Thou hast seen *it also*, O Jehovah: Be not silent, O Lord! be not far from me.

23 Arouse thyself, and awake for my judgment, My God! and my Lord! to my cause.

24 Judge me according to thy righteousness, O Jehovah, my God! And let them not rejoice over me.

25 Let them not say in their heart, "Aha! our soul!" Let them not say "We have destroyed him."

26 Let those be ashamed and confounded together, Who rejoice at my calamity; Let those be clothed with shame and ignominy, Who magnify themselves against me.

763

That is the pitfall in which the net was placed to catch the victim.

27 *But* let those shout and rejoice, who favor my righteousness: And let them say continually, "Magnified be Jehovah! "Who loveth the peace of his servant."

28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness; All the day of thy praise.

TRANSLATION: PSALMS 36-66

Translation: Psalms 36-66

PSALMS 36—66

PSALM 36

To the Chief Musician. Of the servant of Jehovah, [even] of David

1 Ungodliness saith to the wicked man in the midst of my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes.

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, Until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit, He teaseth to understand that he may do good.

4 Iniquity he meditates upon his bed; He setteth himself in a way not good; Evil he doth not abhor.

5 O Jehovah! unto the heavens is thy mercy, Thy truth even unto the clouds.

6 Thy justice is like the great mountains, Thy judgments are a great deep. Man and beast, thou preservest, O Jehovah!

7 How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the sons of men in the shadow of thy wings shall trust.

8 They shall be fully satisfied with the fatness of thy house; And of the river of thy pleasures thou shalt cause them to drink.

9 For with thee is the fountain of life, And in thy light shall we see light.

10 Extend thy mercy to those who know thee, And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

11 Let not the foot of pride come upon me; And the hand of the ungodly let it not remove me.

12 There fallen are the workers of iniquity; They are thrust down and shall not be able to stand. [764]

PSALM 37

Of David

1 Vex not thyself because of the wicked, Nor be envious on account of the workers of iniquity.

2 For like the grass quickly shall they be cut down; And as the green herb they shall wither.

3 Trust thou in Jehovah, and do good; Dwell in the land, and be fed in truth.

4 And delight in Jehovah, And he will grant thee the request of thy heart.

5 Devolve upon Jehovah thy ways, And trust in him, and he will bring it to pass.

6 And he will bring forth as the light thy righteousness, And thy judgments as the noonday.

7 Be silent to Jehovah, and wait for him; Vex not thyself at him who prospereth in his way, At the man who committeth wickedness.

8 Cease from anger, forsake wrath, Vex not thyself so as to commit sin.

9 For the wicked shall be cut off; But those who wait for Jehovah shall inherit the earth.

10 Yet a little while, and the ungodly shall not be; And thou shalt give attention to his place, and shalt not find *him*

11 But the meek ones shall inherit the earth, And shall be delighted in the abundance of peace.

12 Plot doth the ungodly against the righteous, And gnasheth against him with his teeth.

13 The Lord shall laugh at him, For he seeth that coming is his day.

14 *Their* sword draw do the ungodly, And their bow they bend, To lay prostrate the poor and needy, To slay those who are upright in the way.

15 *But* their sword shall enter into their own heart, And their bow shall be broken.

16 Better is a little to the righteous man, Than the wealth of the ungodly who are great.

17 For the arms of the ungodly shall be broken; But Jehovah sustaineth the righteous.

18 Know doth Jehovah the days of the upright, And their inheritance for ever shall be.

19 They shall not be put to shame in the time of adversity; And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

764

In the French version it is “rise.”

20 For the ungodly shall perish, And the enemies of Jehovah like the fattest of lambs shall be consumed; Into smoke they shall be consumed.;

21 Borrow doth the ungodly man, and doth not repay; But the righteous man is compassionate and giveth.

22 For those who are blessed of him shall inherit the earth, And those who are cursed of him shall be cut off.

23 By Jehovah the steps of a man are directed, And his way he will love.

24 When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, For Jehovah putteth under [*him*] his hand.

25 Young I have been, I have also grown old; And yet I have not seen the righteous man forsaken, Nor his seed begging for bread.

26 Daily he is compassionate and lendeth, And his seed is for blessing.

27 Depart from evil and do good, And dwell for ever.

28 For Jehovah loveth judgment, And doth not forsake his meek ones; For ever shall they be preserved: And the seed of the ungodly shall be cut off.

29 The righteous shall inherit the earth, And shall dwell for ever upon it.

30 The mouth of the righteous shall speak wisdom;

31 The law of his God is in his heart; Slide not shall his steps.

32 Watch doth the ungodly the righteous man, And seeketh to put him to death.

33 Jehovah will not leave him in his hand, Nor condemn him when he is judged.

34 Wait for Jehovah, and keep his way, And he shall exalt thee to inherit the earth: When the ungodly shall be cut off thou shalt see it.

35 I have seen the ungodly man robust, [765] And spreading himself like a green bay tree;

36 And he passed away, and to I he was not; And I sought for his place, and he was not found.

37 Mark the perfect man, and consider the upright; For the end of such a man is peace.

38 But transgressors shall be destroyed together: The end of the ungodly shall be cut off.

39 But the salvation of the righteous is from Jehovah: *He will* be their strength in the time of trouble.

40 And help them shall Jehovah, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked: He shall save them, because they trust in him.

PSALM 38

A Psalm of David: to bring to remembrance

765

In French version the word is “terrible,” which is the idea of the original Hebrew term.

1 O Jehovah! do not in thy fury rebuke me, And in thy wrath do not chasten me.

2 For thy arrows go down in me, And descend upon me doth thy hand.

3 There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thy wrath, Nor peace in my bones because of my sin.

4 For my iniquities have passed over my head, Like a burden that is weighty, they are too heavy for me.

5 Putrid [*and*] corrupt have my wounds become, Because of my foolishness.

6 I am bowed down, I am brought low exceedingly; Day by day a mourner I do walk:

7 For my reins are filled with a burning heat; Nor is there soundness in my flesh.

8 I am enfeebled and broken exceedingly: I have roared through the disquietude of my heart.

9 O Lord! before thee is all my desire, And my groaning from thee is not hidden,

10 My heart hath throbbed, forsaken me hath my strength; And the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me.

11 My friends and my companions aloof from my stroke have stood, And my kinsmen afar off have stood.

12 And they have laid snares who sought for my soul; Arid those who sought my hurt have threatened mischiefs; And deceits daily do they meditate.

13 But as for me, like a deaf man I hear not; And *I am* like a dumb man who openeth not his mouth.

14 And I was as a man who doth not hear, And in whose mouth there are no reproofs.

15 For on thee, O Jehovah! do I wait: Thou wilt answer *me*, O Lord, my God!

16 For I said, "Lest they should rejoice over me:" At the slipping of my foot against me they magnified themselves,

17 Surely as for me I am ready to halt; And my sorrow is before me continually.

18 Surely my iniquity I declare; I am in consternation because of my sin.

19 But my enemies are living; [766] they are strong; And those are become mighty who hate me wrongfully.

20 And they who requite me evil for good are against me, Because I follow [*what is*] good.

21 Forsake me not, O Jehovah, my God! Be not far from me.

766

Calvin has inadvertently omitted in his Latin version to translate the word חיים "living." But he translates it in his French version.

22 Hasten to my help, O Lord, my salvation!

PSALM 39

To the Chief Musician, Jeduthun. A Psalm of David

1 I said "I will take heed to my ways, "That I sin not with my tongue: "I will keep my mouth with a muzzle, "While the ungodly man standeth before me."

2 I was dumb not uttering a word; I held my peace [*even*] from good; And my sorrow was stirred.

3 My heart became hot within me; In my musing a fire did burn; I spake with my tongue.

4 Cause me to know, O Jehovah! my end, And the number of my days, That I may know of what duration I am.

5 Behold! as an handbreadth thou hast made my days, And my duration is as nothing before thee: Surely altogether vanity is every mart while he standeth.

6 Surely in a shadow man walketh; [Selah. Surely in vain is he disquieted: They heap together, and know not who shall gather.

7 And now what do I wait for, O Lord? My hope is towards thee.

8 From all my sins deliver thou me: The reproach of the foolish make me not.

9 I was dumb; I will not open my mouth, Because thou hast done it.

10 Remove from me thy stroke: By the blow of thy hand I have failed.

11 With rebukes for iniquity thou chastisest man; And causest to waste away as a moth his beauty: Surely vanity *is* every man. Selah.

12 Hear my prayer, O Jehovah! And to my cry give ear; At my tears be not silent; For a stranger am I before thee, A sojourner like all my fathers.

13 Let me alone, that I may recover strength, Before I depart and be no more.

PSALM 40

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 I have patiently waited for Jehovah, And he inclined to me, and heard my cry.

2 And he drew me out of the roaring pit, Out of the mire of clay, And set upon a rock my feet; He hath established my steps.

3 And he hath put in my mouth a song [that is] new, *Even* praise to our God: See shall many and shall fear, And shall trust in Jehovah.

4 Blessed is the man who maketh Jehovah his confidence, And hath not respected the proud, Nor those who turn aside to lying.

5 Many, O Jehovah, my God! are thy wonderful works which thou hast done; And thy thoughts towards us it is impossible to reckon up in order to thee: I will declare and speak [*of them;*] [But] they are more than can be told.

6 Sacrifice and oblation thou hast not taken pleasure in: *But* my ears hast thou made fit: [767] Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not required.

7 Then I said, "Behold! I come; "In the volume of the book it is written of me,

8 "That I may do thy pleasure, O my God! "I have desired *to do it*, "And thy law is in the midst of my bowels."

9 I have proclaimed thy righteousness in the assembly great: Behold my lips I will not restrain; O Jehovah! thou knowest it.

10 Thy righteousness I have not hidden within my heart; Thy truth and thy salvation I have declared: I have not concealed thy goodness and thy truth in the assembly great.

11 O thou, Jehovah! withhold not thy compassions from me; Let thy goodness and thy truth continually preserve me.

12 For encompassed me have evils innumerable; Laid hold upon me have my iniquities, *yea in so great number* that I cannot see them: They are more in number than the hairs of my head; *And* my heart hath failed me.

13 Let it please thee, O Jehovah! to deliver me; O Jehovah! to my aid make haste.

14 Let them be put to shame and confounded together Who seek after my soul to destroy it; Let them be turned backward and put to shame Who seek after my hurt.

15 Let them be destroyed for a reward of their shame, Who have said to me, "Aha! aha!"

16 Let all those exult and rejoice in thee who seek thee; And let those say continually, "May Jehovah be magnified" — "Those who love thy salvation.

17 But as for me *I am* poor and needy. Jehovah hath regarded me; My help and my deliverer *art thou*: O thou, my God! delay not.

PSALM 41

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 Blessed is he who judgeth wisely of the poor: In the day of evil Jehovah will deliver him.

2 Jehovah will keep him, and preserve him alive: He shall be blessed upon the earth: And thou will not give him up to the desire of his enemies.

3 Jehovah will support him upon the bed of sorrow: All his bed thou hast turned in his sickness.

4 I have said, "O Jehovah! have mercy upon me; " "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee."

5 My enemies have spoken evil of me, "When will he die, and perish shall his name?"

767

In the Latin version it is "aptasti;" and in the French, "tu as perce."

6 And if he come to see me falsely doth he speak; His heart gathereth iniquity to itself': When he goeth abroad he speaketh [*it.*]

7 Together against me do all my haters whisper; Against me do they devise evil for me, [*saying,*]

8 "An evil deed of Belial cleaveth fast to him; "And he who lieth shall not rise again."

9 Even the man of my peace in whom I trusted, Who eateth of my bread, hath lifted up against me the heel.

10 Do thou *then*, O Jehovah! have mercy upon me; Raise me up, and I will recompense them.

11 By this I have known that I have been acceptable to thee, Because my enemy shall not triumph over me.

12 And as for me, in my integrity thou wilt uphold me, And wilt establish me before thy face for ever.

13 Blessed *be* Jehovah, the God of Israel, For ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

PART SECOND. [768]

PSALM 42

To the Chief Musician. A lesson of instruction to the Sons of Korah

1 As the hart crieth for the fountains of waters, So my soul crieth for thee, O God!

2 Thirsted hath my soul for God, for the living God: When shall I come to appear before the face of God?

3 To me have my tears been *for* bread, by day and night, While it is said to me daily, "Where is thy God?"

4 When these things I remember, I pour out within me my soul, Because I had gone with the procession, Leading them even to the house of God, With the voice of exultation and praise, — The multitude dancing for joy.

5 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul! And why art thou disquieted within me? Wait thou for God; for I shall yet give him thanks, [*For*] the salvations of his countenance.

6 O my God! my soul within me is cast down, When I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of Hermonim, From the mountain Mizar.

7 Deep unto deep calleth at the noise of thy waterspouts: All thy waves and all thy billows over me have gone.

8 By day command will Jehovah his loving-kindness, And by night his song *shall be* with me, And prayer to the God of my life.

9 I will say to God, my Rock, "Why hast thou forgotten me? "Why mourning do I go because of the oppression of *my* enemy?"

768

According to the Hebrew division, Part 2 extends from Psalm 42 to Psalm 72 inclusive.

10 [*It is as*] a wound in my bones when my enemies reproach me, Saying to me daily, "Where is thy God?"

11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet give thanks to him, The salvations of my countenance, and my God.

PSALM 43

1 Judge me, O God! and plead my cause: From a people without mercy, from a man deceitful and wicked deliver me.

2 For thou *art* the God of my strength; Why art thou estranged from me? Why mourning do I go because of the oppression of the enemy?

3 Send forth thy light and thy truth; Let them direct me, let them conduct me, To the mountain of thy holiness, and to thy tabernacles.

4 And I will go to the altar of God, To the God of the joy of my rejoicing; And I will celebrate thee upon the harp, O God, my God!

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul! And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet celebrate him, *Who is* the salvation of my countenance and my God.

PSALM 44

To the Chief Musician. Of the sons of Korah. Giving instruction

1 O God! with our ears we have heard, Our fathers have told us, The work which thou hast done in their days, In the days of old.

2 Thou with thy hand hast expelled the heathen, and planted them: Thou hast wasted the peoples and multiplied them:

3 For not by their own sword acquired they the land, And their own arm did not save them; But thy right hand and thy arm, and the light of thy countenance, Because thou wast favorable to them.

4 Thou, even thou, *art* my King; O God! command salvations for Jacob.

5 Through thee our adversaries with the horn we have pushed; In thy name we have trampled under foot those who rise up against us.

6 For not in my bow will I trust, And my sword will not save me.

7 Surely thou hast saved us from our enemies, And our haters thou hast put to shame.

8 In God we will boast all the day, And thy name for ever shall we praise. Selah.

9 Nevertheless thou hast abhorred us and put us to shame, And thou goest not forth *any more* with our armies.

10 Thou hast made us to turn back from him that afflicteth us, And our haters have spoiled *us* for themselves.

11 Thou hast given us as sheep for food; And among the heathen thou hast scattered us.

12 Thou hast sold thy people, and not become rich, And thou hast not increased the price of them.

13 Thou hast made us a reproach to our neighbors, A scorn and derision to those who are round about us.

14 Thou hast made us a byword among the heathen, A shaking of the head among the peoples.

15 Daily *is* my reproach before me, And the shame of my face hath *quite* covered me,

16 Because of the voice of him who reproacheth and revileth, Because of the face of the adversary and avenger.

17 All this is come upon us, and we have not forgotten thee, Nor dealt perfidiously in thy covenant;

18 Not turned back hath our heart, Nor declined have our steps from thy path.

19 Although thou hast crushed us in the place of dragons, And covered us with the shadow of death.

20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, And have spread forth our hands to a God that is strange;

21 Shall not God search out this? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

22 Surely for thy sake we are killed daily; We are accounted as sheep [*appointed*] for slaughter.

23 Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Awake, do not forget *us* for ever.

24 Wherefore thy face dost thou hide? Wilt thou forget our misery and our affliction?

25 For humbled to the dust is our soul; Cleave to the earth doth our belly.

26 Arise for our help, And redeem us for the sake of thy loving-kindness.

PSALM 45

To the Chief Musician. Upon the lilies. Of the sons of Korah. Giving instruction. A Song of loves

1 Boiling over is my heart to speak a goodly theme, Speak shall I myself of my works concerning the King: My tongue is as the pen of a swift writer.

2 Thou art fair above the sons of men; Diffused is grace on thy lips; Because God hath blessed thee for ever.

3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one! With majesty and glory.

4 And in thy majesty prosper thou; Ride forth upon the word of truth, and meekness and righteousness; And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things:

5 Thy arrows *are* sharp (so that the people fall under thee) In the hearts of the enemies of the king.

6 Thy throne, O God! *is* for ever and ever; The scepter of rectitude *is* the scepter of thy kingdom.

7 Thou lovest righteousness and hatest impiety; Because anointed thee hath God, thy God, With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

8 Myrrh, and aloes and cassia [*are*] *in* all thy garments, Out of the ivory palaces, whence they have made thee glad.

9 The daughters of kings [*were*] among thy maids of honor; Stand did thy consort at thy right hand in gold of Ophir.

10 Hearken, O daughter! and consider and incline thy ear; And forget thy people, and the house of thy father.

11 And enamored shall be the King with thy beauty; For he *is* thy Lord, and thou shalt worship him.

12 And the daughter of Tyre [*shall come*] with a present; Thy favor entreat shall the rich among the people.

13 All glorious is the daughter of the King within; Of garments embroidered with gold *is* her clothing.

14 In raiment of needle-work she shall be brought to the King; Her virgins that follow her, her companions shall be brought to thee.

15 They shall be brought with joy and exultation; They shall enter into the palace of the King.

16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children; Thou shalt make them princes in all the earth.

17 I will make thy name to be remembered throughout all generation; Therefore celebrate thee shall the peoples for ever and ever.

PSALM 46

To the Chief Musician. Of the sons of Korah. Upon Alamoth. A Song

1 God is to us a protection and strength; A help in troubles he is found exceedingly.

2 Therefore we will not fear when moved shall be the earth, And fall shall the mountains into the heart of the sea.

3 [*When*] roar and rage tempestuously shall the waters thereof; [*When*] shake shall the mountains with the swelling thereof. Selah.

4 The streams of her river shall make glad the city of God, The Sanctuary of the tabernacles of the Most High.

5 God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: Help her will God at the dawn of the morning.

6 Rage did the peoples, moved were the kingdoms: He uttered his voice, melt did the earth.

7 Jehovah of armies *is* with us; A fortress for us *is* the God of Jacob. Selah.

8 Come ye, consider the works of Jehovah, What desolations he hath wrought in the earth.

9 He maketh to cease battles, even to the ends of the earth; He breaketh the bow, he shattereth in pieces the arms; The chariot he burneth with fire.

10 Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth.

11 Jehovah of armies is with us; A fortress for us *is* the God of Jacob. Selah.

PSALM 47

To the Chief Musician. Of the sons of Korah. Upon Alamoth. A Song

1 O all ye peoples! clap the hand; Shout unto God with the voice of exultation;

2 For Jehovah *is* high, terrible, A great king over all the earth.

3 He hath put in order the people under us, And the nations under our feet.

4 He hath chosen for us our inheritance, The glory of Jacob, whom he hath loved. Selah.

5 Gone up is God with a shout, Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet.

6 Sing psalms to God, sing psalms; Sing psalms to our King, sing psalms;

7 For king of all the earth is God; Sing praises, all ye who understand!

8 The kingdom he hath obtained over the heathen; God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

9 The princes of the peoples are assembled together To the people of the God of Abraham: For to God belong the shields of the earth: He is greatly exalted.

PSALM 48

A Song of a Psalm. Of the sons of Korah

1 Great is Jehovah and to be praised greatly In the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, The mountain of Zion, on the sides of the north, The city of the great King.

3 God in her palaces is known for a defense.

4 For behold! the kings assembled, They passed away together.

5 They themselves saw, so they marveled; They were frightened, they fled precipitately,

6 Fear seized upon them there, Pain as of one in travail.

7 By the east wind thou breakest in pieces the ships of Tarshish.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen In the city of Jehovah of Hosts, In the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah

9 We have waited, O God! for thy mercy In the midst of thy temple,

10 As *is* thy name, O God! So *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth: Of righteousness full is thy right hand.

11 Rejoice shall Mount Zion, Exult shall the daughters of Judah, Because of thy judgments.

12 Encompass Zion, and walk round about her. Number the towers thereof,

13 Set your heart to her walls, Exalt her towers, That ye may make report to the generations to come.

14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.

PSALM 49

To the Chief Musician. Of the sons of Korah. A Psalm

1 Hear this all ye peoples; Give ear all ye inhabitants of the world:

2 Both ye sons of Adam, and ye sons of men, Rich and poor together.

3 My mouth shall speak of wisdoms, And the meditation of my heart is of understanding.

4 I will incline to a parable my ear: I will open upon the harp my enigma.

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil? The iniquity of my heel shall compass me about.

6 They trust in their wealth, And in the multitude of their riches do glory.

7 The brother shall not be able to redeem; None shall give to God the price of his redemption.

8 And precious shall be the redemption of their soul, And *their* continuance for ever:

9 That he should still live for ever, And not see the grave.

10 For he shall see that wise men die, Together the fool and the brutish person shall perish, And leave to strangers their wealth.

11 Their inward thought is [*how to make*] their houses [*to continue*] for ever, Their dwelling-places from generation to generation: They have called out their names upon the earth.

12 And man in honor shall not abide; He hath become like the beasts: they perish.

13 This their way *is* foolishness in them, And their posterity in their saying will acquiesce. Selah.

14 Like sleep in the grave they are laid; Death shall feed them; And have dominion over them shall the upright in the morning, And their strength shall wax old; The grave *shall receive* them from their dwelling.

15 But God shall redeem my soul from the hand of the grave; For he hath taken me up. Selah.

16 Be not thou afraid when a man shall become rich, When increased shall be the glory of his house;

17 For he shall not at his death carry all away: Descend not after him shall his glory:

18 For his soul in his lifetime he will bless, And they shall praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.

19 He shall come to the age of his fathers, Even for ever he shall not see the light.

20 Man *is* in honor, and will not understand: He hath become like the beasts: they shall perish.

PSALM 50

A Song, of Asaph

1 The God of gods, Jehovah hath spoken, And called the earth From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

2 Out of Zion, the Perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

3 Come shall our God, and shall not keep silence; A fire before him shall devour, And round about him a tempest shall rage exceedingly.

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, And to the earth, to judge his people.

5 "Gather together to me my meek ones, (*will he say*), "Those who strike a covenant with me over sacrifices."

6 And declare shall the heavens his righteousness: For God is judge himself. Selah.

7 "Hear, O my people! and I will speak; "O Israel! and I will announce to thee: "God, [*even*] thy God am I.

8 "Not for thy sacrifices will I reprove thee; "And thy burnt-offerings *are* before me continually.

9 "I will not take out of thy house a calf, "*Nor* out of thy folds he-goats:

10 "For mine are all the beasts of the forest, "The cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 "I know all the birds of the mountains; "And the wild beasts of the field are at my command.

12 "If I am hungry, I will not tell thee: "For mine is the world and the fullness thereof.

13 "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, "And the blood of goats will I drink?

14 "Sacrifice unto God praise, "And pay unto the Most High thy vows.

15 "Call upon me in the day of trouble; "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

16 "But unto the wicked said hath God, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, "[*Or*] that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy lips?

17 "Also thou hatest correction, "And castest my words behind thee.

18 "If thou seest a thief, thou wilt run with him, "And with adulterers is thy portion.

19 "Thy mouth thou puttest forth to evil, "And thy tongue frameth deceit,

20 "Thou wilt sit against thy brother; "Thou wilt speak against the sons of thy mother; "Thou wilt set forth slander.

21 "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence; "Thou thoughtest that I would be like thyself': "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

22 "Now consider this, ye who forget God, "Lest I seize upon you and there be none to deliver.

23 "He who sacrificeth praise will glorify me: "And he who ordereth his way to him will I show the salvation of God."

PSALM 51

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba

1 Have pity upon me, O God! according to thy mercy; According to the multitude of thy compassions blot out my iniquities.

2 Multiply to wash me from my sin, And from my wickedness do thou cleanse me.

3 For my sins I know, And my wickedness is before me continually.

4 Against thee, against thee only, have I sinned, And that which was displeasing in thy sight have I done; That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, And be pure in giving judgment.

5 Behold in iniquity I was born, And in sin conceive me did my mother.

6 Behold, truth thou hast loved in the inmost parts, And in secret, wisdom thou hast made me know.

7 Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; And exult shall the bones which thou hast broken.

9 Hide thy face from my sins, And all my iniquities blot out.

10 A heart [*that is*] clean create in me, O God! And a spirit [*that is*] right renew in my inward parts.

11 Cast me not away from thy face, And the Spirit of thy holiness take not from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, And with a free spirit uphold me.

13 I will teach transgressors thy ways, the ungodly to time shall be converted.

14 Deliver me from bloods, O God! O God of my salvation! And sing aloud shall my tongue of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord! my lips do thou open, And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

16 For thou wilt not accept a sacrifice; Though I should give a burnt-offering, it would not please thee.

17 The sacrifices of God are an afflicted spirit: A heart afflicted and contrite, O God! thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion; Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then shalt thou accept the sacrifices of righteousness, The burnt-offering and oblation; [769] Then shall come upon thy altar calves.

PSALM 52

769

In the French Version it is "the whole oblation."

To the Chief Musician. A lesson of instruction of David: when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said to him, that David had come into the house of Abimelech

1 Why dost thou glory in thy wickedness, O mighty man? The goodness of God *continueth* daily.

2 Thy tongue reckoneth up mischiefs, Like a razor [*that is*] sharp working deceitfully.

3 Thou lovest wickedness more than goodness; Falsehood more than to speak righteousness. Selah.

4 Thou lovest all words of deceit, O thou tongue of guilefulness!

5 Likewise God shall destroy thee for ever: He shall lay hold on thee and pluck thee out of thy tabernacle, And root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

6 See it also shall the righteous ones, and shall fear, And at him they shall laugh.

7 Behold! the man who made not God his strength; And trusted in the abundance of his riches, And was strong in his wickedness.

8 But as for me *I shall be* like an olive-tree [*that is*] green in the house of God: I have trusted in the goodness of God for ever and ever.

9 I will celebrate thee for ever, because thou hast done [*it*:] [770] I will wait on thy name, For it is good in the presence of thy meek ones.

PSALM 53

To the Chief Musician, upon Mahalath. A lesson of instruction ofDavid

1 The fool hath said in his heart, "There is not a God:" They have corrupted [*all good order*,] they have done abominable work: There is none who doeth good.

2 God from heaven looked down upon the sons of men, To see if there was any who did understand, Who did seek after God.

3 Every one of them hath gone back; They have all together become corrupt: There is none that doeth good, not even one.

4 Have they no knowledge, all *these* workers of iniquity? Eating my people [*as*] they eat bread: Upon Jehovah they have not called.

5 There were they afraid with fear, where there was not fear; For scattered hath Jehovah the bones of him that encampeth against thee: Thou hast put them to shame because God hath despised them.

6 Who shall give out of Zion deliverance to Israel? When bring back shall God the captivity of his people, Rejoice shall Jacob, exult shall Israel.

PSALM 54

770

In the French Version it is "because thou shalt have executed *this vengeance.*"

To the Chief Musician, on Neginoth. A lesson of instruction of David. When the Ziphims came and said to Saul, "Doth not David hide himself with us?"

1 O God! by thy name save me, And by thy strength judge me.

2 O God! hear my prayer, Give ear to the words of my mouth.

3 For strangers have risen up against me, And terrible ones have sought after my soul: They have not set God before them. Selah.

4 Behold! God is a helper to me; The Lord is with those who uphold my soul.

5 He shall repay evil to my adversaries: In thy truth cut them off.

6 Willingly will I sacrifice to thee; I will celebrate thy name, O Jehovah! for it is good.

7 For out of all trouble he hath delivered me; And [*punishment*] upon my adversaries mine eye hath seen.

PSALM 55

To the Chief Musician on Neginoth. A lesson of instruction of David

1 Give ear, O God! to my prayer, And hide not thyself from my supplication.

2 Attend to me, and answer me: I will wail in my address, and will become tumultuous.

3 By reason of the voice of the enemy — Under the oppression of the ungodly; For they cast upon me iniquity, In wrath they set themselves against me.

4 My heart trembleth within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

5 Fear and trembling are come upon me, And horror hath overwhelmed me.

6 And I said, "Who will give me wings like a dove? "I will fly away and be at rest.

7 "Lo! I will flee far away, "I will repose in the desert. Selah.

8 "I will hasten my escape from the tempestuous whirlwind."

9 Destroy, O Lord! divide their tongue: For I have seen oppression and strife in the city.

10 By day and night they go round it upon the walls thereof: And labor and sorrow are in the midst of it.

11 Wickedness [771] is in the midst of it; And fraud and deceit depart not from the streets thereof.

12 Truly it was not an enemy who reproached me, For [*then*] I could have borne [*it*:] *It was* not an adversary who magnified himself against me, For [*then*] I would have hid himself from him.

771

Literally, "wickedness."

13 But thou, a man according to my own rank, My guide, and my familiar friend.

14 We sweetly exchanged our secret thoughts; Into the house of God we walked in company.

15 Let death seize upon them, Let them descend into the grave alive; For wickedness [772] *is* I, their dwelling, in the midst of them.

16 As for me, to God; will I cry, And Jehovah shall save me.

17 In the evening, and the morning, and at noonday Will I pray, and cry aloud; And he shall hear my voice.

18 He hath redeemed into peace my soul From the battle which was against me: For many were with me.

19 Hear shall God, and shall afflict them, Even he who sitteth from ancient time. Selah. Because they have no changes, And fear not God.

20 He hath set his hands against those who were at peace with him: He hath broken his covenant.

21 Smoother than butter are the words of his mouth, And *in* his heart *is* war; Softer are his words than oil, And [*yet*] they *are* darts.

22 Cast upon Jehovah whatever blessings thou askest from him, [773] And he shall feed thee; He shall not suffer for ever the righteous man to stagger.

23 Thou, O God! shalt cast them into the pit of corruption: The men of blood and deceit shall not live out half their days: But as for me, I will hope in thee.

PSALM 56

To the Chief Musician upon, the silent dove in distant places. Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, For swallow me up doth man; He daily assaulting doth oppress me.

2 Swallow me up do *my* enemies daily: Truly many *strive* to oppress me, *O Jehovah*, Most High!

3 In the day when I was afraid, I in thee did trust.

4 In God I will praise his word; In God have I trusted; I will not fear what flesh can do to me.

5 Every day my words disquiet me; Against me *are* all their thoughts for evil.

6 They assemble together, they hide themselves, My heels they watch, Because they desire my soul.

7 In *their* iniquity *they think* there is escape for them: In *thy* wrath the peoples thou wilt cast down, O God!

772
Ibid

773
A free translation is here given. See the Commentary for the literal rendering.

8 My wanderings thou numbereth, even thou: Put my tears into thy bottle; Are they not in thy register?

9 Then my enemies shall be turned back in the day when I cry: This I know, because God is with me.

10 In God will I praise [*his*] word; In Jehovah will I praise [*his*] word.

11 In God have I trusted; I will not fear what man can do to me.

12 Upon me, O God! are thy vows, I will render praises to thee.

13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: Hast thou not *also delivered* my feet from falling? That I may walk before God in the light of the living.

PSALM 57

To the Chief Musician. Destroy not. Michtam of David. When he fled from the face of Saul in the cave

1 Have mercy upon me, O God! have mercy upon me; For in thee my soul doth trust; And in the shadow of thy wings will I hope, Until iniquity pass away.

2 I will cry to God Most High, Who perfecteth [*his work*] towards me.

3 He shall send from Heaven, And shall save me from the reproach of him who swalloweth me up: Send forth shall God his mercy and his truth.

4 My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie among those who are set on fire, — Among the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, And their tongue a sword [*that is*] sharp.

5 Be thou exalted above the heavens, O God! Above all the earth thy glory.

6 A net they have prepared for my steps: Bowed down is my soul: They have digged before me a pit, *But* they have fallen into it. Selah

7 Prepared *is* my heart, O God! prepared *is* my heart: I will sing, and chant psalms.

8 Awake my tongue, awake nablum [774] and harp: I will awake at dawn of day.

9 I will celebrate thee, among the peoples, O Lord! I will sing psalms to thee among the nation:

10 For great unto the heavens is thy goodness, And unto the clouds thy truth.

11 Be thou exalted, above the heavens, O God! Above all the earth thy glory.

PSALM 58

To the Chief Musician. Destroy not. Michtam of David

774

"Psaltery" in the French version.

1 Do ye indeed, O ye congregation! speak righteousness? Uprightly do ye judge? O ye sons of men!

2 Yea rather in *your* heart wickedness ye plot, On the earth violence your hands weigh out.

3 Estranged are the ungodly from the womb, They have gone astray from their birth speaking falsehood.

4 They have poison like the poison of a serpent, [*They are*] like the deaf adder which stoppeth her ear;

5 Which listeneth not to the voice of the enchanter, — Of him who exerciseth enchantment skillfully.

6 O God! break their teeth in their mouth: The jawbones of the lions break, O Jehovah!

7 Let them melt away like water, let them be gone: Let them bend their bow, and let their arrows be as if broken.

8 Like a snail which melteth away let them vanish; Like the untimely birth of a woman which doth not see the sun.

9 Before your pots can feel the fire of the bramble, *Like* flesh yet raw as a whirlwind he shall carry him away.

10 Rejoice shall the righteous when he seeth the vengeance; His hands he shall wash in the blood of the ungodly.

11 And men [775] shall say, "Truly there is fruit for the righteous, "Truly there is a God who judgeth in the earth."

PSALM 59

To the Chief Musician. Destroy not. Michtam of David. When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him

1 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God! from those who rise up against me set me on high.

2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, And from men of bloods save me:

3 For lo! they have laid snares for my soul; Gathered together against me have the strong men; Not [*for*] my sin, nor [*for*] my wickedness, O Jehovah!

4 Without *any* iniquity *of mine* they have run and prepared themselves. Awake and come to meet me, and behold.

5 And thou, O Jehovah, God of armies! the God of Israel! Awake to visit all the nations; Do not have compassion upon any who transgress wickedly. Selah.

6 They will return at evening; They will make a noise like a dog, And go round about the city.

7 Behold they will prate with their mouth; Swords are in their lips; "For who," *say they*, "will hear?"

775

Literally "man."

8 But thou, O Jehovah! shalt laugh at them; Thou shalt hold in derision all the nations.

9 His strength with thee I will put in trust; For God is my fortress.

10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me; God will make me see my desire upon my enemies.

11 Slay them not, lest my people should forget; Make them to wander by thy power; And bring them down, O Lord, our shield!

12 The sin of their mouth, the words of their lips: Let them be taken in their pride: of cursing and lying let them speak.

13 Consume, in thy fury consume them, that they may be no more; And let men know that God ruleth in Jacob, Even to the ends of the earth. Selah.[776]

14 And they will return at evening; They will bark like a dog, And go round about the city.

15 They will wander up and down for food; If they be not satisfied they will even stay all night.

16 But as for me, I will sing of thy strength, I will praise in the morning thy mercy; For thou hast been a fortress to me, And a refuge in the day of my trouble.

17 My strength is with thee, I will sing psalms; For God *is* my fortress, the God of my mercy.

PSALM 60

To the Chief Musician upon Shushan Eduth. Michtam of David to teach. When he fought against the Syrians of Mesopotamia and against the Syrians of Zobah; and when Joab, having returned, smote of the Edomites in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand

1 O God! thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us; Thou hast been angry, O return to us!

2 To tremble thou hast made the earth; Thou hast caused it to open wide; Heal the breaches thereof for it shaketh.

3 Thou hast showed to thy people a hard thing, Thou hast made us drunk with the wine of stupefaction.

4 Thou hast given to those who fear thee a banner, That it may be displayed before *thy* truth. Selah.

5 That thy beloved ones may be delivered, Save with thy right hand and hear me.

6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, And the valley of Succoth I will measure.

776

In the French version the reading is —
"And let men know even unto the ends of the earth,
That God ruleth in Jacob. Selah."

7 Mine *shall be* Gilead, and mine *shall be* Manasseh; And Ephraim *shall be* the strength of my head; Judah, my lawgiver.

8 Moab *shall be* the pot for my washing; Over Edom will I cast my shoe; O Palestina! triumph thou over me.

9 Who will bring me into the city fortified? Who will lead me into Edom?

10 Wilt not thou, O God! who hadst cast us off? [*thou*] O God! [*who*] didst not go forth with our armies?

11 Grant us relief from trouble, For vain *is* the help of man.

12 Through God we shall do valiantly: And he it is who shall tread down our adversaries.

PSALM 61

To the Chief Musician upon Neginoth. A Psalm of David

1 Hear, O God! my cry, Attend to my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth to thee will I cry, when vexed is my heart: To the rock which is higher than I thou shalt lead me.

3 For thou hast been a hope to me, A tower of strength from the face of the enemy.

4 I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever; I will be safe under the covert of thy wings. Selah.

5 For thou, O God! hast heard my vows: Thou hast given an inheritance to those who fear thy name.

6 Days upon days to the king thou shalt add, His years *shall be* as many generations.

7 He shall dwell for ever in the presence of God: Mercy and truth do thou prepare: thou shalt preserve him.

8 So will I sing unto thy name for ever, That I may perform my vows every day.

PSALM 62

To the Chief Musician upon Jeduthun. A Psalm of David

1 Nevertheless towards God silent is my soul: From him is my salvation.

2 Nevertheless he is my reek and my salvation, My fortress: *therefore* I shall not be moved greatly.

3 How long will ye continue to lay snares against a man? Ye shall be slain all of you: As an inclining wall shall ye be, and a fence that is shaken.

4 Yet from his elevation they consult to east him down: They delight in falsehood: With their mouth they bless, And in their hearts they curse. Selah.

5 Nevertheless towards God be thou silent O my soul: For from him *is* my expectation.

6 Nevertheless he *only is* my rock, and my salvation: My fortress; I shall not fall.

7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength; my hope *is* in God.

8 Hope in him at all times, O ye people! Pour out before his face your hearts: God *is* our hope. Selah.

9 Nevertheless vanity are the sons of Adam; A lie the sons of men: When put all together in a balance they are found lighter than vanity itself. [777]

10 Trust not in oppression and robbery; be not vain: [*Upon*] riches if they abound set not your heart.

11 Once God hath spoken; Twice this I have heard, "That power belongeth to God;" And to thee, O Lord! *belongeth* mercy; Truly thou wilt render to every man according to his work.

PSALM 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judea

1 O God! my God art thou; Early will I seek thee: Thirsted for thee hath my soul, Longed for thee hath my flesh, In this land [*that is*] inhospitable and dry, without water.

2 Thus in the sanctuary have I beheld thee, To see thy power and thy glory.

3 Because better *is* thy mercy than life, My lips shall praise thee.

4 Thus will I bless thee in my life; In thy name I will lift up my hands.

5 As with marrow and farness satisfied shall be my soul, And with lips of rejoicing shall my mouth praise *thee*

6 Surely I will remember thee upon my bed; In the watches *of the night* I will meditate upon thee;

7 Because thou hast been a help to me: And in the shadow of thy wings I will shout for joy.

8 Cleaved hath my soul to [*literally after*] thee; Sustain me shall thy right hand.

9 And they whilst they seek to destroy my soul, Shall go into the lowest parts of the earth.

10 They shall east him down to the edge of the sword: The portion of foxes they shall be.

11 But the king shall rejoice in God, And glory shall every one who sweareth by him: For stopped shall be the mouth of those who speak falsehood.

PSALM 64

777

The free translation of the French version is here adopted. The literal rendering of the Hebrew text is, "In the scales in going up they [*are lighter]* than vanity together." To this Calvin strictly adheres in his Latin version.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 Hear, O God! my voice in my prayer: From fear of the enemy preserve my life.

2 Hide me from the counsel of malignant men — From the assembly of tire workers of iniquity.

3 For they have sharpened as a sword their tongue; They have directed for their arrow a bitter word.

4 To shoot in secret at the innocent man: Suddenly they will shoot and not fear.

5 They encourage themselves in an impious action; They talk together of secretly laying snares; They say, "Who shall see them?"

6 They have searched out iniquities, They have accomplished a searching search: And the inward part of each of them and the heart [*is*] deep.

7 But God shall shoot at them an arrow; Suddenly shall they be wounded.

8 And they shall make their own tongue fall upon themselves, And flee away shall all who see them.

9 And see shall all men, and shall declare the work of God, And his doing they shall understand.

10 Rejoice shall the righteous in Jehovah, and they shall hope in him; And glory shall all the upright in heart.

PSALM 65

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song

1 For thee waiteth praise, O God! in Zion; And to thee performed shall be the vow.

2 O thou who hearest prayer! To thee shall all flesh come.

3 Words of iniquity [778] have prevailed against me: Our crimes thou shalt expiate.

4 Blessed is he whom thou wilt choose, and cause to approach to thee; He shall dwell in thy courts: We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house — Of the sanctuary of thy palace.

5 Terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation! The hope of all the ends of the earth, And of the far off places of the sea.

6 Establishing the mountains by his power, [779] Being girded with might.

7 Stilling the noise of the seas, And the noise of their waves, the tumults of the nations.

8 And afraid shall be the dwellers in the ends *of the earth* at thy signs; The outgoings of the morning and evening thou shalt make to shout for joy.

778

Literally, "iniquities."

779

In the French version it is "by the power."

9 Thou hast visited the earth, and watered her; Thou hast abundantly enriched her: The river of God is full of waters: Thou wilt prepare their corn, For so thou hast prepared her.

10 Her furrows thou dost saturate, Thou makest the rain to fall into her ridges, With showers thou dost moisten her, Her buddings thou dost bless.

11 Thou crownest the year with thy beneficence, And thy paths will drop fatness.

12 They drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness; And with gladness the hills shall be girded.

13 Clothed are the pastures with flocks; And the valleys are covered with corn; They shout for joy, they also sing.

PSALM 66

To the Chief Justice,. A Song of a Psalm

1 Shout joyfully to God all the earth,

2 Sing the glory of his name, Make glorious his praise.

3 Say unto God: "How terrible art thou in thy works! "Through the greatness of thy power shall thy enemies feign submission unto thee.

4 "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing to thee, "They shall hymn thy name." Selah.

5 Come ye, and see the works of God: He is terrible in his doing towards the sons of men.

6 He turned the sea into dry *land*; Through the river [780] they passed on foot; There we were glad in him.

7 He ruleth by his might over the world; [781] His eyes upon the nations are fixed: The rebels shall not exalt themselves. Selah.

8 Bless, O ye people! our God, And resound the voice of his praise.

9 Who hath brought our souls into life, And hath not suffered our feet to fall.

10 For thou hast proved us, O God! Thou hast tried us as silver is tried:

11 Thou hast brought us into the net Thou hast laid restraint upon our loins;

12 Thou hast made man to ride over our heads; We have come into fire and water; And thou hast brought us into a place of abundance.

13 I will come into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows,

14 Which my lips have uttered, And my mouth hath spoken in my affliction.

780

That is, the Jordan. See Joshua 4:23

781

"Dominatur seculo." — *Lat.* "Il domine sur le monde." — *Fr.*

15 Burnt-offerings of fat *lambs* I will offer to thee with incense of rams; I will bring bullocks with goats. Selah.

16 Come, hear, and I will tell all you who fear God, What he hath done for my soul.

17 To him with my mouth I cried, And I have exalted him with my tongue.

18 If I have regarded iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear me.

19 But truly heard me hath God; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer, Nor his mercy from me.

TRANSLATION: PSALMS 67-92

Translation: Psalms 67-92

PSALMS 67—92

PSALM 67

*To the Chief Musician on Neginoth. A Psalm [*or*] Song*

1 May God have compassion upon us, and bless us; May he cause his countenance to shine upon us. Selah.

2 That thy way may be known upon the earth, Among all nations thy salvation.

3 Let the peoples praise thee, O God! Let all the peoples celebrate thee.

4 Let the peoples rejoice and exult, For he shall judge the peoples with rectitude, And the nations upon earth thou shalt guide. Selah.

5 Let the peoples celebrate thee, O God! Let all the peoples celebrate thee:

6 The earth hath given *her* increase; God [*even*] our own God will bless us.

7 God will bless us; And fear him shall all the ends of the earth.

PSALM 68

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm [or] Song of David

1 Arise shall God: scattered shall be his enemies; And flee from before his face shall those who hate him.

2 As smoke is driven away thou shalt drive them away; As wax melteth before the fire, perish shall the ungodly from before the face of God.

3 But the righteous shall rejoice, They shell exult before God, And leap for joy.

4 Sing ye unto God, sing psalms to his name; Exalt him who rideth upon the clouds whose name is Jah, And exult before him.

5 The father of the orphans, and the judge of the widows, *Is* God in the habitation of his holiness.

6 God who causeth the solitary to dwell in a family, Who bringeth forth those who are bound with chains: But rebels shall dwell in a dry land.

7 O God! when thou well test forth before thy people, When thou marchedst through the wilderness; Selah:

8 The earth was moved, Also the heavens dropped at the presence of this God: Sinai at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

9 A liberal rain thou shalt make to fall, O God! upon thy inheritance, And when it is weary thou refreshest it.

10 Thy congregation shall dwell therein: Thou wilt provide in thy goodness for the poor, O God!

11 The Lord shall give the word To the women who announce the great army.

12 Kings of armies shall flee — shall flee; And she who dwelleth within the house shall divide the spoils.

13 Though ye should lie among the pots, *in the ashes*, *Yet shall ye be as* the wings of the dove covered with silver, And *which* behind is *as* fine yellow gold.

14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, It was white in Salmon.

15 The mountain of God, the mountain of Bashan, The mountain of heights, the mountain of Bashan.

16 Why leap ye, ye mountains of heights? The mountain in which it hath pleased God to dwell: Yea dwell *in it* will Jehovah for ever.

17 The chariots of God [*are*] twenty thousand thousands of angels: The Lord *is* among them, In the sanctuary as in Sinai.

18 Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captive captivity; Thou hast received gifts among men; Yea even [*among*] rebels, That Jehovah God might dwell *in the midst of his people*

19 Blessed *be* God day by day: *This* God will load us with deliverances. Selah.

20 Our God *is* the God of salvations; And to Jehovah Lord *belong* the issues of death.

21 Surely God shall wound the head of his enemies, The crown of the hair of him who walketh in his wickedness.

22 The Lord hath said: "From Bashan I will bring back; "I will bring back from the depths of the sea:

23 "That thy foot may be stained with blood, "The tongue of thy dogs even in that of thy enemies."

24 They have seen thy goings, O God!— The goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

25 Before went the singers; [*Then*] followed the players on instruments; In the midst [*were*] the damsels striking the timbrels.

26 In the congregations bless ye God, [*Even*] the Lord, *ye who* are of the fountain of Israel!

27 There *was* little Benjamin their ruler, The princes of Judah in their assembly, The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphthali.

28 Commanded hath thy God thy strength; Strengthen, O God! what thou hast wrought in us.

29 From thy temple upon Jerusalem To thee shall kings bring presents.

30 Destroy the company of spearmen, The assembly of bulls, with the calves of the peoples, Treading with their feet upon pieces of silver: Scatter thou the peoples that in wars delight.

31 Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall speedily stretch forth her hands to God.

32 O ye kingdoms of the earth! sing unto God: Sing psalms to the Lord. Selah.

33 To him who rideth upon the heavens of heavens *which are* of old: Lo! he shall send forth in his voice a voice of strength,

34 Ascribe ye strength to God over Israel; His majesty and his strength [*are*] in the clouds.

35 Terrible art thou, O God! out of thy holy places: The God of Israel himself shall give strength and might to his people. Blessed *be* God!

PSALM 69

To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim. Of David

1 Save me, O God! For entered have the waters even to my soul.

2 I am sunk into deep mire where there is no standing place; I am come into the depths of waters, And the floods of water have overflowed me.

3 I am weary with crying, Hoarse is my throat become therewith; Failed have my eyes with waiting for my God.

4 More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause: Increased are those who desire to destroy me, [*even*] my lying adversaries: That which I took not by violence, then I restored it.

5 O God! thou knowest my foolishness, And my faults from thee are not hidden.

6 Let not those be ashamed in me that wait for thee, O Lord, Jehovah of armies! Let not those be put to shame in me who seek thee, O God of Israel!

7 For on thy account I have suffered reproach; Shame hath covered my face.

8 A stranger I have been to my brethren, And an alien I am become to the children of my mother.

9 For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; And the reproaches of those who reproached thee have fallen upon me.

10 And I wept, my soul fasted; And that was for a reproach to me.

11 And I made my garment sackcloth; And I was to them for a jest.

12 Defame me do those who sit in the gate; And *I am* the songs of those who drink intoxicating liquor.

13 But as for me my prayer [*is*] to thee, O Jehovah! *In the* time of *thy* favor, O God! In the multitude of thy mercy answer me, In the truth of thy salvation.

14 Rescue me from the mire that I may not sink; That I may be delivered from my adversaries, And from the depths of waters.

15 Let not the flood of waters overflow me; And let not the deep swallow me up; And let not the pit dose its mouth upon me.

16 Answer me, O Jehovah! for good *is* thy mercy: In the multitude of thy compassions look upon me.

17 And hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am afflicted: Hasten! answer me!

18 Draw near to my soul, redeem it: On account of my adversaries deliver me.

19 Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion, and my ignominy: Before thee *are* all my adversaries.

20 Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am afflicted; And I looked for some one to show compassion, but there was none; For comforters, but I found *them* not.

21 And they put into my meat gall, And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

22 Let their table be before them for a snare; And their prosperity for a net;

23 Darkened let be their eyes, that they may not see; And cause their loins continually to tremble.

24 Pour out upon them thy wrath; And let the fury of thy indignation take hold of them.

25 Let their palace be desolate; In their tents let there not be a dweller.

26 For him whom thou hast smitten they have persecuted; And to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded they have added.

27 Add iniquity to their iniquity; And let them not enter into thy righteousness.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; And with the righteous let them not be written.

29 But as for me I am poor and sorrowful: Thy salvation shall exalt me.

30 I will praise the name of God in a song, And I will magnify him with thanksgiving.

31 And this will please Jehovah More than a young bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

32 Seen it have the afflicted, And they shall rejoice at it who seek God; And live shall your heart.

33 For hearkened hath Jehovah to the afflicted; And his prisoners he hath not despised.

34 Praise him let heaven and earth; The seas and whatever creepeth in them.

35 For God will save Zion, And will build the cities of Judah; And they shall dwell there, And possess it by inheritance.

36 And the seed of his servants shall inherit it; And they who love his name shall dwell in it.

PSALM 70

To the Chief Musician. Of David. To call to remembrance

1 O God! to deliver me, O Jehovah! to my aid, hasten.

2 Let those be ashamed and confounded who seek after my soul; Let those be turned backward and put to confusion who desire my hurt.

3 Let those be destroyed for a reward of their shame, Who say to me, "Aha! Aha!"

4 Exult and rejoice in thee let all who seek thee; And let those say, "For ever may God be magnified" — Those who love thy salvation.

5 But as for me I am poor and needy: O God! hasten to me: My help and my deliverer art thou: O Jehovah! delay not.

PSALM 71

1 In thee, O Jehovah! do I put my trust, Let me not be put to shame for ever.

2 In thy righteousness deliver me, and rescue me; Incline to me thy ear, and save me.

3 Be thou to me for a rock of strength, Into which I may enter at all times: Thou hast given commandment to save me; For my tower and my fortress art thou.

4 O my God! deliver me from the hand of the ungodly man, — From the hand of the wicked and violent men.

5 For thou art my expectation, O Lord Jehovah! My trust from my youth.

6 Upon thee have I been sustained from the womb; Out of my mother's bowels thou art he who took me: Of thee is my praise continually.

7 As a prodigy I have been to the great ones, And yet thou art my strong confidence.

8 Filled shall be my mouth with thy praise, Daily with thy glory.

9 Cast me not off in the time of my old age: In the declining of my strength forsake me not.

10 For my enemies have spoken concerning me, And those who watch for my soul have consulted together,

11 Saying, "God hath forsaken him; "Follow after him, and ye shall take him; "For there is none to deliver *him*."

12 O God! be not far from me: O my God! to my aid hasten.

13 Let those be put to shame, let those fail who are the adversaries of my soul: Let those be covered with reproach mid shame who seek my hurt.

14 But as for me continually will I hope, And will add to all thy praise.

15 My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness, Daily of thy salvation; For I know not the number *thereof*

16 I will go in the strength of the Lord Jehovah! I will remember thy righteousness alone.

17 O God! thou hast taught me from my youth; And unto this time will I announce thy wonders.

18 And therefore [782] in old age and gray hairs, O God! forsake me not, Until I have declared thy strength to the generation, To all who are to come thy might.

19 And thy righteousness, O God! is very high: For thou hast done great things: O God! who is like to thee?

20 Thou hast made me to see troubles many and grievous, *But* being turned thou wilt quicken me, And from the depths of the earth, being turned thou wilt raise me up.

21 Thou wilt multiply my greatness; And being turned thou wilt comfort me.

22 Moreover, I, even I, will sing to thee on instruments of music; [783] For thy truth, O my God! I will sing psalms to thee upon the harp, O Holy One of Israel!

23 Exult shall my lips, when I sing psalms to thee; And my soul which thou hast redeemed.

24 Also my tongue daily shall declare thy righteousness; For they are put to shame, for they are disgraced, who seek my hurt.

PSALM 72

Of Solomon

1 O God! thy judgments give to the King, And thy righteousness to the son of the King

2 He shall judge thy people in righteousness, And thy poor ones in judgment.

3 Bring forth shall the mountains peace to the people, And the hills in righteousness.

4 He shall judge the poor ones of the people; He shall save the children of the afflicted; And shall break in pieces the calumniator.

782

Literally, "moreover." But see the Commentary.

783

"In organo musico." — *Lat.* "Avec irgyes de musique." — *Fr.* The Hebrew is נבל-בכלי *bichli-nebel,* "which is the instrument of the nebel, *or* psaltery."

5 They shall fear thee with the sun; And before the moon the generation of generations shall fear thee.

6 He shall descend as rain upon the mown grass; As the showers which water the earth.

7 Flourish in his days shall the righteous; And abundance of peace until there be no more moon.

8 And he shall have dominion from sea to sea, And from the river even to the ends of the earth.

9 Before him shall bow the inhabitants of the desert, And his enemies shall lick the dust.

10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles a present shall bring: The kings of Sheba and Seba a gift shall offer *to him*

11 And all kings shall prostrate themselves before him; All nations shall serve him.

12 For he shall deliver the poor who crieth *to him*, And the needy who hath no helper.

13 He will have compassion upon the indigent and the poor one, And the souls of the poor ones he will save.

14 From fraud and violence he will redeem their souls, And precious shall be their blood in his eyes.

15 And he shall live, and there shall be given to him of the gold of Sheba, And prayer shall be made for him continually; Daily shall he be blessed.

16 There shall be *sown* an handful of corn in the earth on the top of the mountains; The fruit thereof shall be shaken like [*that*] of Lebanon. And they shall go forth from the city as a plant of the earth.

17 His name shall be for ever; In presence of the sun propagated shall be his name: And bless themselves in him shall all nations, And blessed they shall call him.

18 Blessed be Jehovah God! the God of Israel! [784] Who doeth wonderful things alone.

19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever; And let all the earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.

20 Finished are the prayers of David, the son of Jesse.

PART THIRD [785]

PSALM 73

[784] In the French versions this line reads — "Blessed be the Lord *God* of Israel, the God of gods."

[785] According to the Hebrew division, Part 3 extends from Psalm 73 to Psalm 89 inclusive

A Psalm of Asaph

1 Yet God is good to Israel, To those who are right in heart.

2 As for me, wellnigh slipped had my feet, My steps were almost gone:

3 For I was envious at the foolish, On seeing the prosperity of the ungodly.

4 For there are no bands to their death, And vigorous is their strength.

5 In the [*common*] trouble of man they are not; And with other men they are not scourged.

6 Therefore encompass them as a chain doth pride; Covered them hath the raiment of violence.

7 Their eye projecteth through fatness; They have passed beyond the thoughts of their heart.

8 They break forth, and talk wickedly of extortion: From on high do they speak.

9 They have set against the heaven their mouth, And their tongue walketh through the earth.

10 On this account his people will return hither, And waters of a full cup will be wrung out to them.

11 And they say, "How doth God know? " "And is there knowledge in the Most High?"

12 Behold these are the ungodly, and [*yet*] they are in quiet for ever: They heap up riches.

13 Surely in vain I have purified my heart, And washed every day my hands:

14 And I have been scourged every day, And my chastisement [*has been*] every morning.

15 If I have said, "I will speak thus," Behold! the generation of thy children: I have transgressed.

16 And although I applied my mind to know this, A pain fill thing it was in mine eyes,

17 Until I entered into the sanctuaries of God, *And* understood their end.

18 Surely in slippery places thou hast set them; Thou shalt east them down into destructions.

19 How have they been destroyed as in a moment! They have perished, they have been consumed with terrors.

20 As it were a dream after a man is awakened; O Lord! in awaking, their image thou wilt render contemptible.

21 For in a ferment was my heart, And in my reins I was pierced.

22 And I myself [*was*] foolish and knew not *any thing*; As the beasts have I been before thee.

23 Nevertheless *I have been* continually with thee; Thou hast held my right hand.

24 With thy counsel thou shalt guide me; And at length to glory thou shalt take me.

25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee*? And another with time I have not desired on the earth.

26 Failed have my flesh and my heart; *But* the strength of my heart and my portion *is* God for ever.

27 For lo! those who depart from thee shall perish: Thou hast destroyed every one who goeth a whoring from thee.

28 As for me, to draw near to God is good for me: I have put in the Lord Jehovah my trust, That I may tell of all thy works.

PSALM 74

An Instruction of Asaph

1 Wherefore, O God! hast thou cast us off for ever? [*Why*] smoketh thy wrath against the flock of thy pastures?

2 Remember thy congregation which thou hast possessed of old; [786] *Which* thou hast redeemed, the rod of thy inheritance, This Mount Zion in which thou hast dwelt.

3 Lift up thy strokes to desolations perpetual, Against every enemy who doeth mischief to the sanctuary.

4 Roared *like lions* have thy adversaries in the midst of thy sanctuaries; They have set up their signs *for* signs.

5 He was renowned as doing an excellent work Who lifted up the axes upon the thick trees. [787]

6 And now the carved works thereof together, With the hatchet and with hammers they break in pieces.

7 They have set on fire thy sanctuaries; Leveling it with the ground, they have polluted the dwelling-place of thy name.

8 They have said in their heart, "Let us destroy them altogether." They have burned all the tabernacles of God in the land.

9 Our signs we see not; There is no longer a prophet, Nor is there with us one who knoweth how long! —

10 How long, O God! shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

11 How long wilt thou withdraw thy hand, and thy right hand? In the midst, of thy bosom consume them.

12 But God *is* my king from the beginning, Working salvations in the midst of the earth.

786

In French version it is, "which thou hast acquired of old."

787

From the obscurity of the literal translation of the Latin version, the free reading of the French version is adopted in these two lines.

13 Thou didst divide [788] by thy power the sea; Thou didst break the heads of dragons in the waters.

14 Thou didst break the head of the leviathan; Thou gavest him *for* food to *thy* people in the wilderness.

15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the torrent: Thou didst dry up mighty rivers.

16 Thine is the day; thine also is the night: Thou hast ordained the light and the sun.

17 Thou hast fixed all the boundaries of the earth: The summer and the winter thou hast made.

18 Remember this: the enemy hath reproached Jehovah; And a worthless people hath done despite to thy name.

19 Give not to the beast the soul of thy turtle dove: The congregation of thy poor ones forget not for ever.

20 Have regard to *thy* covenant; For filled are the dark places of the earth with the abodes of violence.

21 Let not the afflicted one return ashamed; Let the poor and needy one praise thy name.

22 Arise, O God! plead thy own cause: Remember thy reproach, *which is done thee* by the foolish man daily.

23 Forget not the voice of thy adversaries: The tumult of those who rise up against thee ascendeth continually.

PSALM 75

To the Chief Musician. Destroy not. A Psalm of Asaph. A song

1 We will celebrate thee, O God! we will celebrate *thee*; And near is thy name: they will declare thy wonders.

2 When I shall have taken the congregation, I in uprightness will judge.

3 Dissolved is the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof: will establish the pillars of it. Selah.

4 I said to the fools, "Act not foolishly;" And to the ungodly, "Raise not up the horn."

5 Raise not up on high your horn; And speak not with a stiff neck.

6 For neither from the east, nor from the west, Nor from the wilderness are exaltations.

7 For God is judge: tie bringeth low, and he setteth up.

8 For a cup *is* in the hand of Jehovah, and the wine is turbid; It is full of mixture, and he shall pour forth of it. Surely the dregs thereof they shall wring out;. And drink *of it* shall all the wicked of the earth.

9 But as for me I will publish for ever, I will sing psalms to the God of Jacob.

788

Literally "break."

10 And all the horns of the ungodly I will break; But exalted shall be the horns of the righteous.

PSALM 76

To the Chief Musician on Neginoth. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song

1 Known in Judah is God; In Israel great is his name.

2 And in Salem was his tabernacle, And his dwelling-place in Zion.

3 There he broke the arrows of the bow, The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

4 More glorious, more terrible *art* thou Than the mountains of prey.

5 Spoiled were the stout in heart, They slept their sleep: And none of the men of might have found their hands.

6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob! Cast into a deep sleep were the chariot and the horse.

7 Thou *art* terrible [*even*] thou; And who shall stand before thy face when thou art angry?

8 From the heavens thou hast made judgment to be heard: The earth was afraid and was still,

9 When God arose to judgment, To save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

10 Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee, The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain.

11 Vow and pay to Jehovah your God: Let all who are round about him bring a present to the terrible one.

12 He will cut off the spirit of princes: *He is* terrible to the kings of the earth.

PSALM 77

To the Chief Musician upon Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph

1 My voice [*I lifted up*] to God, and I cried; My voice [*I lifted up*] to God, and he heard me.

2 In the day of my affliction the Lord I sought: My hand in the night was stretched out and relaxed not; Refuse consolation did my soul.

3 I will remember God, and will be disquieted; I will meditate, and oppressed with sorrow shall be my spirit. Selah.

4 Thou hast held the watches of my eyes: I am troubled, and will not speak.

5 I have recounted the days of old, The years of ages past.

6 I will call to remembrance my song in the night: With my heart I will meditate, And search diligently shall my spirit.

7 For ever will the Lord east off? And will he be favorable no more?

8 Gone for ever is his mercy? Fail doth his oracle from generation to generation?

9 Forgotten to be merciful hath God? Hath he shut up in anger his compassions? Selah.

10 And I said my disease [*is only for a season*;] The years of the right hand of the Most High [*I will wait for.*]

11 I will remember the works of God; Surely I will remember thy wonders from the beginning.

12 And I will meditate on all thy works, And on thy doings I will muse.

13 O God! in the sanctuary *are* thy ways: What god *is* so great as God?

14 Thou art the God who doest wonders; Thou hast made known among the peoples thy strength.

15 Thou hast redeemed by [*thy*] arm thy people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

16 See thee did the waters, O God! see thee did the waters; They were afraid; also tremble did the deeps.

17 The clouds poured out waters; The heavens gave forth a voice: Also thine arrows went abroad.

18 The voice of thy thunder was in the circuit, The lightnings illumined the world; The earth trembled and was shaken.

19 In the sea are thy ways, And thy paths in the great waters; And thy footsteps are not known.

20 Thou leadest like sheep thy people By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

PSALM 78

A lesson of Instruction [of] Asaph

1 Give ear, O my people! to my law: Incline your ears to the words of my month.

2 I will open in a parable my mouth; I will utter enigmas from ancient Sae.

3 What we have heard and known, And our' fathers have related to us,

4 We will not conceal from their children to the generation to come, Recounting the praises of Jehovah and his might, And the wonders which he hath done.

5 And he established a testimony in, Jacob, And a law he appointed in Israel; For he commanded our fathers To make them known to their children;

6 That the generations to come might know them, *That* the children to be born might arise, And declare *them* to their children.

7 That they might set in God their hope, And not forget the works of God; But that his commandments they might observe,

8 And not be as their fathers, A generation rebellious and provoking; A generation which set not their heart might, And whose spirit was not faithful towards God.

9 The children of Ephraim, armed [*and*] shooting with the bow, Were turned back in the day of battle.

10 They kept not the covenant of God, And in his law they refused to walk.

11 And they forget his works, And the wonders which he had shown them.

12 In the sight of their fathers he wrought marvelously; In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, And made the waters to stand as an heap.

14 And he led them by a cloud in the day; And all the night by the light of fire.

15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, And made them to drink in great deeps.

16 And he brought forth streams from the rock, And made the waters to descend like rivers.

17 Yet they continued still to sin against him, To provoke the Most High in the wilderness.

18 And they tempted God in their heart, By asking food for their soul.

19 And they spake against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"

20 Behold! he smote the reek, and gush out did the waters; And rivers overflowed. "Can he give bread also? "Will he prepare flesh for his people?"

21 Therefore Jehovah heard and was wroth: And a fire was kindled in Jacob: And wrath also ascended against Israel;

22 Because they believed not in God, And trusted not in his salvation.

23 But he had commanded the clouds from above, And the doors of heaven he had opened,

24 And had rained down upon them manna for food, And the corn of heaven he had given them:

25 The bread of the mighty ones man had eaten: Meat he had sent them to the full.

26 He caused to blow an east wind in the heavens; And he raised up by his power the south wind.

27 And he rained upon them flesh as dust, And as the sand of the sea leathered fowl;

28 And he caused *it* to fall in the midst of his camp, Round about his tabernacles.

29 And they did eat and were filled exceedingly, And their desire he brought to them.

30 They were not estranged from their desire: The meat was still in their mouth,

31 When the wrath of God ascended against them, And slew their fat ones, And brought low the chosen of Israel.

32 In all these *things* they sinned still, And believed not his wonders.

33 And he consumed in vanity their days, And their years in haste.

34 When he slew them, they sought him; They returned, and hastened early to God.

35 And they remembered that God was their Rock, And *that* the Most High God was their Redeemer.

36 And they flattered [*him*] with their mouth, And with their tongue they lied to him:

37 But their heart was not right before him, And they were not faithful in his covenant.

38 Yet he *who is* compassionate expiated their iniquity, And did not destroy them: And he multiplied to turn away his anger, And did not stir up all his indignation.

39 And he remembered that they were flesh; A breath that passeth, and returneth not.

40 How often did they provoke him in the desert, [*And*] grieve him in the wilderness!

41 And they returned and tempted God, And the Holy One of Israel they limited.

42 They remembered not his hand In the day that he redeemed them from the oppressor,

43 When he set in Egypt his signs, And his miracles in the field of Zoan.

44 When he turned into blood their rivers; And their streams, that they might not drink of them.

45 He sent among them a mixture which devoured them; And the frog which destroyed them.

46 And he gave to the caterpillar their fruit; And their labors to the locusts. [789]

47 And he destroyed with hail their vine, And their wild fig-trees with hailstones.

48 And he gave lip to the hail their cattle, And their flocks to thunderbolts.

49 He sent upon them the fierceness of his wrath, Fury, anger, and affliction, A mission of evil angels.

50 He made a path for his anger: He kept not from death their soul, And their cattle to the pestilence he shut up.

51 And he smote all the firstborn in Egypt: The beginning of [*their*] strength in the tents of Ham.

52 And he made to go forth like sheep his people, And led them like a flock in the wilderness.

53 And he conducted *them* in safety, and they were not afraid: And their enemies cover did the sea.

54 And he brought them to the border of his holiness, This mountain, *which* his right hand acquired.

789

In the French version it is “to the grasshopper.”

55 And he expelled from before their face the heathen; And made them to fall into the lot of all inheritance; And caused to dwell in their tents the children of Israel.

56 But they tempted and provoked God Most High, And his testimonies they kept not.

57 And they turned back and dealt perfidiously like their fathers: They started aside like a bow that is deceitful.

58 And they provoked him to anger with their high places; And with their graven images they moved him to anger.

59 Hear it did God, and was wroth, And he abhorred exceedingly Israel.

60 And he forsook the habitation of Shiloh, The tabernacle where he dwelt among men.

61 And he gave into captivity his strength, And his beauty into the hand of the enemy.

62 And he shut up to the sword his people, And with his own inheritance was wroth.

63 Their chosen devour did the fire, And their virgins were not applauded.

64 Their priests by the sword did fall; And their widows made no lamentation.

65 But the Lord awoke as one asleep, As a mighty man who crieth out by reason of wine.

66 And he smote his enemies behind; Everlasting disgrace he put upon them.

67 And he rejected the tabernacle of Joseph, And the tribe of Ephraim he chose not:

68 But he chose the tribe of Judah, The mountain of Zion, which he loved:

69 And built like high places his sanctuary, Like the earth which he hath founded for ever.

70 And he chose David his servant, And took him from the folds of sheep:

71 From following the suckling ewes he took him, To feed Jacob his people, And Israel his inheritance:

72 And he fed them in the integrity of his heart, And by the prudence of his hands he guided there.

PSALM 79

A Psalm of Asaph

1 O God! come have the heathen into thy inheritance; They have polluted the temple of thy holiness; They have laid Jerusalem in heaps. [fowls of the heavens;

2 They have given the dead bodies of thy servants for food to the fowls of the heavens; The flesh of thy meek ones to the beasts of the earth.

3 They have shed their blood like water around Jerusalem: And there was not *one* to bury *them*

4 We have been a reproach to our neighbors; A scorn and a derision to those who are around us.

5 How long, O Jehovah! wilt thou be wroth for ever? Burn like fire shall thy jealousy?

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen who have not known thee, And upon the kingdoms which upon thy name do not call:

7 For they have devoured Jacob, And his dwelling they have laid waste.

8 Remember not against us former iniquities: Make haste, let thy compassions prevent us; For we are afflicted exceedingly.

9 Help us, O God of our salvation! for the glory of thy name; And deliver us, and be merciful to our sins, for the sake of thy name.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, "Where is their God?" Let be made known among the heathen in our sight The vengeance of the blood of thy servants which is shed.

11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thy face: According to the greatness of thy arm, Reserve the children of death: [790]

12 And recompense our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom, Their reproach with which they have reproached thee, O Jehovah!

13 And we thy people, and the sheep of thy pastures, Will confess to thee for ever; From generation to generation declaring thy praise.

PSALM 80

To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim Eduth. A Psalm of Asaph

1 O Shepherd of Israel, give ear! Who leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou who sittest between the cherubim, shine forth.

2 Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, Stir up thy strength, and come for our salvation.

3 Turn us again, O God! and cause to shine thy face, And we shall be safe.

4 O Jehovah God of armies! How long wilt thou be incensed against the prayer of thy people?

5 Thou hast fed us with bread of tears; And hast given us tears to drink in great measure.

6 Thou hast made us a strife to our neighbors: And our enemies laugh *at us* among themselves.

7 O God of armies! turn us again, And cause to shine thy face upon us, And we shall be safe.

8 A vine out of Egypt thou hast brought: Thou hast expelled the heathen, and planted it,.

790

"That is," says Jebb, "let there be some spared out of those who are marked out for death by their enemies."

9 Thou hast cleansed *the ground* before it: Thou hast rooted its roots, And it hath filled the land.

10 Covered were the mountains with its shadow, And its branches *were like* the cedars of God.

11 It sent forth its branches to the sea, And to the river its shoots.

12 Why then hast thou broken down its hedges, So that tear it in pieces do all who pass by the way?

13 Wasted it hath the boar out of the forest; And the wild beast of the field hath eaten it up.

14 O God of armies! return, I beseech *thee*, Look down from heaven, and behold, And visit this vine,

15 And the vineyard which planted hath thy right hand, And [*look*] upon the shoot [791] *which* thou hast strengthened for thyself.

16 It is burnt with fire; it is cut down; At the rebuke of thy countenance they perish.

17 Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand, Upon the son of man whom thou hast strengthened for thyself,

18 And we will not go back from thee: Thou shalt quicken us, and upon thy name we will call.

19 O Jehovah, God of armies! turn us again; Cause to shine thy face, And we shall be safe.

PSALM 81

To the Chief Musician upon Gittith. Of Asaph

1 Exult to God our strength: Shout for joy to the God of Jacob.

2 Take a song, and bring forth the timbrel, The harp of pleasantness with the nablum. [792]

3 Sound the trumpet [793] at the new moon; At the time appointed on the day of our sacrifice.

4 For a statute to Israel *is* this, A judgment to the God of Jacob.

5 For a testimony in Joseph he set it, When he went forth over the land of Egypt! A language which I understood not I heard.

6 "I removed from the burden his shoulder: "His hands from the pots were removed.

791

"Shoot" is the rendering in the French version, the word being "provin." In the Latin version it is "filium," "son," the literal translation of the Hebrew text.

792

Psaltery. — *Fr.*

793

We follow here the French version. In the Latin version, instead of "trumpet" it is "harp," which is evidently incorrect.

7 "In trouble thou didst cry, and I rescued thee: "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: "I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

8 "Hear, O my people! and I will protest to thee: "O Israel! if thou wilt hearken to me.

9 "Let there not be in thee a strange god: "Neither worship thou a foreign god.

10 "I *am* Jehovah thy God, "Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt: "Open wide thy mouth, and I will fill it.

11 "But my people hearkened not to my voice, "And Israel would have none of me.

12 "And I gave them up to the hardness of their heart: "They shall walk in their own counsels.

13 "O if my people had hearkened to me! "*If* Israel in my ways had walked!

14 "Soon their enemies I would have brought low, "And against their adversaries I would have turned my hand:

15 "The haters of Jehovah would have lied to him, "And their time should have been for ever:

16 "And I would have fed them with the fat of corn: "And from the rock with honey I would have satisfied thee."

PSALM 82

A Psalm of Asaph

1 God sitteth in the assembly of God: In the midst of the gods he will judge.

2 How long will ye judge unjustly? And the faces of the ungodly will ye lift up? Selah.

3 Judge the poor and the orphan; The helpless and the destitute justify ye.

4 Rescue the poor one and the afflicted one: From the hand of the ungodly ones deliver *them*

5 *But* they know not, neither do they understand *any thing*: In darkness they walk, *Although* moved are all the foundations of the earth.

6 As for me, I have said, "Ye are gods, "And children of the Most High all of you:

7 "Surely as a man ye shall die; "And as one [*of the people*,] O princes! ye shall fall."

8 Arise, O God! judge the earth: For thou shalt inherit all nations.

PSALM 83

A Song [or] Psalm, of Asaph

1 O God! keep not silence with thyself; Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God!

2 For behold! thy enemies make a tumult: And those who hate thee have lifted up the head.

3 Against thy people they have craftily formed a design, And have consulted against thy hidden ones.

4 They have said, "Come and let us cut them off from being a nation; "And let there be no remembrance of the name of Israel any more."

5 For they have consulted with the heart together; Against thee a covenant they have made.

6 The tents of Edom, and of the Ishmaelites; Of Moab and of the Hagarenes.

7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; The Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre.

8 Also Assur is associated with them: They have been an arm to the sons of Lot. Selah.

9 Do to them as to the Midianites, As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook Kishon.

10 They perished at Endor; They became manure for the earth.

11 Make them, [*even*] their princes, like Oreb, and like Zeeb; And like Zebah, and like Zalmunna, all their princes.

12 Who have said, "Let us take in possession for ourselves "The habitations of God."

13 O my God! make them like a whirling ball; Like stubble before the wind.

14 As fire burneth a forest, And as the flame kindleth the mountains,

15 So pursue them with thy tempest, And with thy whirlwind terrify them.

16 Fill their faces with shame; That they may seek thy name, O Jehovah!

17 Let them be ashamed, and terrified for ever; [794] And let them be confounded, and perish.

18 And let them know that thou, even thou, art, thy name Jehovah, Thou alone the Most High over all the earth.

PSALM 84

To The Chief Musician Upon Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah

1 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of armies!

2 Long, yea, even faint doth my soul after the courts of Jehovah: My heart and my flesh leap for joy towards the living God.

3 Also the sparrow hath found a house for herself, And the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may place her young ones: O thine altars! thou Jehovah of armies! my King and my God!

794

In the French version it is "greatly."

4 Blessed *are* those who dwell in thy house: Continually they will be praising thee. Selah.

5 Blessed *is* the man whose strength is in thee; The ways [*are*] in their heart.

6 They passing through the valley of weeping, will together make it a fountain; Also the cisterns the rain will cover.

7 They will journey from strength to strength; Seen will be the God of gods in Zion.

8 O Jehovah, God of armies! hear my prayer: Hearken, O God of Jacob! Selah.

9 Our shield do thou behold, O God! And look upon the face of thy Christ.

10 For better is one day in thy courts than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, Than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

11 For a sun and shield *is* Jehovah God *to us*; Grace and glory give will Jehovah; He will not withhold *any* good from those who walk uprightly.

12 O Jehovah of armies! Blessed *is* the man who confideth in thee.

PSALM 85

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah

1 Thou hast been favorable, O Jehovah! to thy land: Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast taken away the iniquity of thy people: Thou hast covered all their sins. Selah

3 Thou hast turned away all thy anger: Thou hast drawn back the fury of thy indignation.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation! And relax thy anger against us.

5 Wilt thou for ever be angry with us? Wilt thou prolong thy wrath from age to age?

6 Wilt not thou being turned *to us* quicken us? And thy people will rejoice in thee.

7 Show us, O Jehovah! thy mercy; and thy salvation grant unto us.

8 I will hear what God Jehovah will speak: Surely he will speak peace to his people and to his meek ones, And they will not return to folly.

9 Surely near to those who fear him is his salvation, That dwell may glory in our land.

10 Mercy and truth shall meet together; Righteousness and peace shall kiss [*each other.*]

11 Truth out of the earth shall spring up; And righteousness from heaven shall look down.

12 Likewise Jehovah will give that which is good: And our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness before him shall go; And shall set in the way her steps.

PSALM 86

A Prayer of David

1 Incline, O Jehovah, thy ear, answer me; For poor and needy *am* I.

2 Keep my soul, for I am meek: O thou, my God! save thy servant who trusteth in thee.

3 Have compassion upon me, O Jehovah! For to thee do I cry daily.

4 Gladden the soul of thy servant; For to thee, O Lord! my soul I lift up.

5 For thou, O Lord! *art* good, and gracious, Plenteous in mercy to all who call upon thee.

6 Listen, O Jehovah! to my prayer, Attend to the voice of my supplications.

7 In the day of my trouble I will cry to thee: For thou wilt answer me.

8 There is none like unto thee, O Lord! among the gods; And *there* is none [*who can work*] according to thy works.

9 All the nations which thou hast made shall come, And shall worship before thy face, O Lord! And glory they shall give to thy name:

10 For great art thou, And doing wonders, thou God alone.

11 Show me, O Jehovah! thy ways; I will walk in thy truth: Unite my heart to fear thy name.

12 I will celebrate thee, O Lord my God! with my whole heart; And I will glorify thy name for ever;

13 For thy mercy hath been great towards me; And thou hast delivered my soul from the lower grave.

14 O God! the proud have risen up against me, And a company of mighty men have sought after my soul; And they have not set thee before them.

15 And thou, O Lord! [*art*] a God compassionate and gracious; Slow to anger; and plenteous in mercy and truth.

16 Look to me, and have pity upon me: Give thy strength to thy servant, And save the son of thy handmaid.

17 Make with me a sign for good: And see shall my adversaries and be ashamed; For thou, O Jehovah! hast secured me and comforted me.

PSALM 87

A Psalm [or] Song of the sons of Korah

1 His foundations [*are*] in the holy mountains.

2 Love doth Jehovah the gates of Zion More than all the tabernacles of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God! Selah.

4 I will make mention of Rahab, and Babel among those who know me: Behold the Philistines, and Tyre, with Ethiopia, He is born there! Selah.

5 And of Zion it shall be said, "Man and man is born in her; "And the Most High himself will establish her."

6 The Lord will recount when he writeth the peoples, "He is born there." Selah.

7 And the singers as the players upon instruments: All my springs *are* in thee.

PSALM 88

A Song of a Psalm of the sons of Korah. To the Chief Musician, upon Machalath, to make humble. An instruction of Heman the Ezrahite

1 O Jehovah! God of my salvation! By day I cry, by night before thee.

2 Come into thy presence let my prayer; Incline thy ear to my cry;

3 For filled with troubles is my soul; And my life to hell [795] hath drawn near.

4 I am counted with those who go down to the sepulcher, [796] I have been as a man who hath no strength:

5 Free among the dead, As the slain lying in the grave, Whom thou rememberest no more, And who from thy hand are cut off.

6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, In thick darkness, in the deeps.

7 Upon me lieth heavy thy indignation; And with all thy waves thou hast afflicted me. Selah.

8 Thou hast removed my acquaintances from me: Thou hast made me abominations to them: I am shut up that I cannot go forth.

9 My eye mourneth because of my affliction; I invoke thee, O Jehovah! daily: I stretch out to thee my hands.

10 Wilt thou for the dead do a miracle? Shall the dead rising up praise thee? Selah.

11 Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? Thy truth in destruction?

12 Shall thy wonders be known in darkness? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But as for me to thee, O Jehovah! have I cried, And in the morning my prayer shall prevent thee.

14 Wherefore, O Jehovah! wilt thou reject my soul? [*Wherefore*] wilt thou hide thy face from me?

15 Afflicted am I, and ready to die from my youth; I have suffered thy terrors by doubting.

16 Passed over me hath thy fierce wrath: Thy terrors have cut me off.

17 They have encompassed me as waters daily; They have surrounded me together.

795

"To the grave." — *Fr.*

796

"To the pit." — *Fr.*

18 Thou hast removed from me lover and companion; And my acquaintances are darkness.

PSALM 89

An Instruction of Ethan, the Ezrahite

1 The mercies of Jehovah for ever will I sing: From generation to generation will I celebrate thy truth with my mouth.

2 For I have said, For ever Mercy shall be built up: The heavens thou shalt establish; thy truth [*is*] in them.

3 "I have made a covenant with my chosen: "I have sworn to David my servant:

4 "For ever will I establish thy seed, "And I will build up from age to age thy throne." Selah.

5 And celebrate shall the heavens thy wondrous work, O Jehovah! Also thy truth in the congregation of the saints.

6 For who in the clouds can be compared to Jehovah? Who is like unto Jehovah among the sons of the gods?

7 God is terrible exceedingly in the assembly of the saints, And to be feared above all who are around him.

8 O Jehovah, God of armies! who *is* a strong God like thee? And thy truth is round about thee.

9 Thou governest the pride of the sea: When rise up do the waves thereof, thou restrainest them.

10 Thou hast overthrown Egypt as a wounded mail; With the arm of thy strength thou hast scattered thy enemies.

11 Thine are the heavens, thine also is the earth: The world, and the fullness thereof thou hast formed. [797]

12 The north and the south thou hast created: Tabor and Hermon in thy name shall exult.

13 Thou hast an arm of might: Thou wilt strengthen thy hand, Thou wilt exalt thy right hand.

14 Righteousness and judgment *are* the seat of thy throne: Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound! O Jehovah! in the brightness of thy countenance they shall walk.

16 In thy name shall they exult daily; And in thy righteousness shall they glory:

17 For the glory of their strength art thou; And in thy favor exalted shall be our horn.

18 For to Jehovah *is* our buckler; And to the Holy One of Israel *is* our King.

797

In the French version it is "thou hast founded."

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy meek ones, And saidst, "I have laid help upon a Mighty One; "I have exalted one chosen from among the people.

20 "I have found David my servant; "With the oil of my holiness have I anointed him.

21 "Therefore, my hand shall be established with him: "Yea, my arm shall strengthen him.

22 "The enemy shall not exact upon him, "Nor shall the son of iniquity afflict him.

23 "And I will break in pieces before his face his oppressors; "And those who hate him I will smite.

24 "And my truth and my mercy *shall be* with him: "And in my name exalted shall be his horn.

25 "And I will set in the sea his hand, "And in the rivers his right hand.

26 "He shall cry to me, 'My Father art thou, "'My God, the Rock of my salvation.'

27 "Also I myself my firstborn will make him, "Higher than the kings of the earth.

28 "And for ever will I keep for him my mercy, "And my covenant shall stand firm with him.

29 "And I will establish for ever his seed, "And his throne as the days of heaven.

30 "If forsake shall his children my law, "And in my judgments shall not walk;

31 "If my ordinances they shall profane, "And my statutes they shall not keep;

32 "Then will I visit with my rod their transgressions, "And with stripes their iniquity.

33 "But my mercy will I not withdraw from him; "Nor will I be false in my truth.

34 "I will not profane my covenant, "And that which is gone forth from my lips I will not alter.

35 "Once have I sworn by my holiness, "If to David I lie —

36 "His seed for ever shall endure; "And his throne as the sun before me.

37 "As the moon it shall be established for ever, "And [*as*] a faithful witness in the heaven." Selah.

38 But thou, even thou, hast abhorred and rejected *him*; Thou hast been wroth with thy anointed.

39 Thou hast made to cease the covenant of thy servant; Thou hast profaned to the earth his crown.

40 Thou hast broken down all his walls; Thou hast made his fortresses a ruin.

41 Plundered him have all who pass by the way: He hath been a reproach to his neighbors.

42 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his oppressors; Thou hast made glad all his adversaries.

43 Also thou hast blunted the edge of his sword, And hast not made him to stand in battle.

44 Thou hast effaced his splendor, And his throne to the ground thou hast east down.

45 Thou hast shortened the days of his youth; Thou hast covered him with disgrace. Selah.

46 How long, O Jehovah! wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Burn like fire shall thy indignation?

47 Remember how short-lived I am! [798] Wherefore in vain shouldst thou have created all the sons of men?

48 What man shall live, and shall not see death? *And* shall deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

49 Where *are* thy former compassions, O Lord? Thou hast sworn to David in thy truth.

50 Remember, O Lord! the reproach of thy servants: I have sustained in my bosom all *those* [*reproaches*] of the mighty peoples,

51 With which thy enemies have reproached thee, O Jehovah! With which they have reproached the footsteps of thy Messiah.

52 Blessed *be* Jehovah for evermore. Amen and Amen!

PART FOURTH. [799]

PSALM 90

A Psalm of Moses, the man of God

1 O Lord! a dwelling-place thou hast been to us from generation to generation.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, And [*before*] thou hadst formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

3 Thou shalt turn man to destruction, And shalt say, "Return ye sons of Adam."

4 For a thousand years in thy sight *are* as yesterday when it is past, And *as* a watch in the night.

5 Thou overflowest them; [800] they will be a sleep: In the morning as grass he shall grow.

798 Literally, "of what age I am."

799 According to the Hebrew division, Part 4 extends from Psalm 90 to Psalm 106 inclusive.

800 In the French version it is, "Thou carriest them away as do floods of water."

6 In the morning he (*or* it) shall flourish and grow: At the evening he (*or* it) shall be cut down, and shall wither.

7 For we fail by thy anger, And by thy indignation are we affrighted.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, Our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy indignation: We have spent our years as if a thought.

10 In the days of our years *there are* seventy years; And if through strength, eighty years, Yet is their pride [*but*] grief and labor; For it passeth by quickly, and we fly away.

11 Who knoweth the power of thy anger? And according to thy fear is thy wrath.

12 Teach us so to number our days, And we shall apply our heart to wisdom.

13 Return, O Jehovah! how long? Be pacified towards thy servants.

14 Satiate us early with thy goodness, And we will exult and rejoice all our days.

15 Make us joyful according to the days of our affliction; *According* to the years in which we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear towards thy servants, And thy glory upon their children.

17 And let there be the beauty of the Lord our God upon us; And the work of our hands direct thou upon us; Yea, the work of our hands direct thou.

PSALM 91

1 He who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, Under the shadow of the Almighty shall abide.

2 I will say to Jehovah, "*Thou art* my hope and my fortress:" *He is* my God; I will hope in him.

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, From the noxious pestilence:

4 With his wings he shall protect thee; And under his feathers thou shalt be safe; *Thy* shield and *thy* buckler *shall be* his truth.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid at the terror of the night; At the arrow which flieth by day;

6 At the destruction which in darkness walketh: At the pestilence which wasteth at noon-day.

7 There shall fall at thy side a thousand, And ten thousand at thy right hand: To thee it shall not come nigh.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, And the reward of the ungodly thou shalt see.

9 Because thou, O Jehovah! *art* my protection; The Most High thou hast made thy refuge.

10 There shall not befall thee [*any*] evil, And the plague shall not come nigh thy tabernacle:

11 For to his angels he hath given charge concerning thee, To keep thee in all thy ways.

12 Upon their hands they shall bear thee, Lest thou dash against a stone thy foot.

13 Over the lion and asp thou shalt walk; Thou shalt tread upon the young lion and dragon.

14 Because on me he hath reposed, I will deliver him; I will exalt him because he hath known my name.

15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him: With him will I be in trouble; I will deliver him, and will glorify him.

16 With length of days will I satisfy him, And will show him my salvation.

PSALM 92

1 It is good to give thanks to Jehovah, To sing psalms to thy name, O Most High!

2 To proclaim in the morning thy goodness, And thy truth in the night.

3 Upon the psaltery, and upon the nablum, [801] Upon higgaion with the harp. [802]

4 For thou hast made me glad, O Jehovah! in thy works; In the works of thy hands I will exult.

5 How magnificent are thy works, O Jehovah! Exceeding deep are thy thoughts.

6 The man that is foolish shall not know them, Neither shall he who is void of wisdom understand them.

7 When the wicked flourish as the grass, And all the workers of iniquity spring up, [*It is*] that they may perish for ever.

8 But thou *art* exalted for evermore, O Jehovah!

9 For lo! thine enemies, O Jehovah! For lo! thine enemies shall perish; Scattered shall be all the workers of iniquity:

10 But thou shalt exalt my horn like *that* of the unicorn. I am anointed with fresh oil.

11 And mine eye shall see [*ruin*] on my oppressors: [*Of destruction,*] on those who rise up against me — On those who trouble me hear shall my ears.

12 The righteous as the palm tree shall flourish, As the cedar in Lebanon he shall be multiplied.

801

In the French version it is "le manichordion," which Randle Cotgrave translates "an (old fashioned) Clavicord."

802

In the French version this line reads, — "With the song upon the harp."

13 Planted in the house of Jehovah, In the courts of our God, they shall flourish.

14 Still shall they bud forth in old age; Fat and green shall they be;

15 That they may proclaim that upright is Jehovah, my Rock, And *that* there is no iniquity in him.

TRANSLATION: PSALMS 93-118

Translation: Psalms 93-118

PSALMS 93—118

PSALM 93

1 Jehovah hath reigned, He hath put on glory, Put on hath Jehovah strength; He hath girded himself: Also he hath established the world, It shall not be moved.

2 Fixed is thy throne; [*Even as*] from that time [803] thou art, and from eternity. [804]

3 Raised have the floods, O Jehovah! Raised have the floods their voice; Raise shall the floods their waves.

4 By reason of the voices [805] of the great waters Terrible are the waves of the sea: Terrible on high is Jehovah.

5 Thy testimonies are verified exceedingly; To thy house *is* glory; The holiness of Jehovah *is* for length of days.

PSALM 94

803

"From that time," that is, from the creation of the world mentioned in the previous verse.

804

In explaining this verse, Calvin expresses his approbation of a translation somewhat different: —

"As from eternity thou art,
Even so thy throne hath been erected (or prepared) from that time."

805

"A vocibus." — *Lat.* "A cause du bruit." — *Fr.*

1 O Jehovah! God of vengeances! O God of vengeances! shine forth.

2 Lift up thyself; O judge of the earth! Render a reward to the proud.

3 How long shall the ungodly, O Jehovah! How long shall the ungodly triumph?

4 They pour forth, they speak hard things, Extol themselves do all the workers of iniquity.

5 Thy people, O Jehovah! they break in pieces; And thy inheritance they afflict:

6 The widow, and the stranger they slay, And the orphans they put to death.

7 And they have said, "God shall not see, "The God of Jacob shall not know.."

8 Understand, ye stupid among the people! And ye fools! when will ye be wise?

9 He who planted the ear shall not He hear? He who formed the eye, shall not He see?

10 He who chastiseth the nations, shall not He correct? He who teacheth man knowledge?

11 Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of men that they are vain.

12 Blessed *is* the man whom thou hast instructed, O God! And out of thy law hast taught;

13 To give him rest from days of evil, Whilst there is digged for the ungodly [*man*] a pit.

14 Surely Jehovah will not cast off his people, And his inheritance he will not forsake.

15 For return shall judgment unto righteousness, And [*follow*] after him shall all the upright in heart.

16 Who will rise up for me against my adversaries? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

17 Unless Jehovah had been a help to me, My soul had well-nigh dwelt in silence.

18 If I said, "Slidden hath my foot," Thy goodness, O Jehovah! hath sustained me.

19 In the multitude of my thoughts, Within me thy comforts cheer my soul.

20 Shall the throne of iniquities have fellowship with thee, Framing molestation for law?

21 They will gather together against the soul of the righteous, And the blood of the innocent they will condemn.

22 But Jehovah hath been to me for a fortress; And my God for the rock of my confidence:

23 And he shall retribute upon them their own iniquity, And in their wickedness he shall destroy them; Destroy them shall Jehovah our God.

PSALM 95

1 Come let us exult to Jehovah; Let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his face with praise, In psalms let us shout for joy unto him.

3 For a great God *is* Jehovah, And a great King, above all gods.

4 For in his hand *are* the deep places of the earth; And the heights of the mountains are his.

5 For his is the sea, and he made it; And the dry land his hands formed.

6 Come ye, let us worship, and fall down; Let us kneel before the face of Jehovah, our Maker.

7 For he *is* our God, And we [*are*] the people of his pastures, And the flock of his hand; To-day, if his voice ye will hear,

8 Harden not your heart, as in Meribah; As in the day of Massah in the desert,

9 When tempt me did your fathers; They proved me, though they had seen my work.

10 Forty years I strove with this generation, And said, "They are a people erring in heart, "And they have not known my ways."

11 Wherefore I swear in my wrath, "If they shall enter into my rest —"

PSALM 96

1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new, Sing to Jehovah all the earth.

2 Sing to Jehovah, bless his name; Publish from day to day his salvation.

3 Tell among the heathen his glory; Among all the peoples his wonders.

4 For great *is* Jehovah, and to be praised highly; Terrible [*is*] he above all gods.

5 For all the gods of the nations are vanities; But Jehovah made the heavens.

6 Strength and majesty *go* before him; Power and glory *are* in his sanctuary.

7 Ascribe to Jehovah, O ye congregations of peoples! Ascribe to Jehovah glory and strength.

8 Ascribe to Jehovah the glory of his name; Bring an offering, and enter into his courts.

9 Worship before Jehovah in the beauty of the sanctuary; Tremble before his face let the whole earth.

10 Say ye among the heathen, "Jehovah reigneth; "Truly established shall be the world, it shall not be moved: "He shall judge the peoples in righteousness."

11 Rejoice let the heavens, and exult let the earth; Thunder let the sea, and the fullness thereof.

12 Exult let the field, and all that is in it; Shout for joy together let all the trees of the wood

13 Before Jehovah; for he cometh, For he cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world in righteousness, And the peoples in his truth.

PSALM 97

1 Jehovah reigneth: Exult let the earth, Rejoice let the great islands.

2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him; Righteousness and judgment *are* the seat of his throne.

3 A fire before his face shall go, And shall burn up round about his enemies.

4 Enlighten did his lightnings the world; See and tremble shall the earth.

5 The mountains like wax melted at the presence of Jehovah, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

6 Declared have the heavens his righteousness, And seen have all the peoples his glory.

7 Confounded be all those who serve graven images, Who glory in *their* inventions: Worship before him let all the gods.

8 Heard and rejoiced hath Zion; Exulted have the daughters of Judah, Because of thy judgments, O Jehovah!

9 For thou, O Jehovah! *art* high above all the earth: Exceedingly exalted art thou above all gods.

10 Ye who love Jehovah, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of his meek ones; From the hand of the ungodly he will deliver them.

11 Light is sown for the righteous, And for the upright in heart joy.

12 Rejoice, O ye righteous! in Jehovah, And celebrate the memory of his holiness.

PSALM 98

A Psalm

1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new, For marvels he hath done: Salvation wrought for him hath his own right hand, And the arm of his holiness.

2 Made known hath Jehovah his salvation: In the sight of the heathen he hath revealed his righteousness.

3 He hath remembered his goodness and *his* truth towards the house of Israel: Seen have all the ends of the earth the salvation of our God.

4 Exult to Jehovah all the earth; Make a loud noise, and exult, and sing psalms.

5 Sing psalms to Jehovah upon the harp, Upon the harp, and with the voice of song:

6 With trumpets, and the voice of the cornet, Sing psalms before the King, Jehovah.

7 Roar let the sea, and the fullness thereof; The world, and those who dwell therein.

8 Let the floods clap the hand: Together let the mountains exult

9 Before Jehovah: for he cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world in righteousness, And the peoples with rectitude.

PSALM 99

1 Jehovah reigneth; tremble let the people: He dwelleth *between* the cherubim; moved let be the earth.

2 Jehovah in Zion is great; And exalted is he above all nations.

3 They shall acknowledge thy great and terrible name: It is holy.

4 And the strength of the king loveth judgment; Thou hast established rectitude; Judgement and righteousness in Jacob thou hast done.

5 Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at his footstool: He is holy.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, And Samuel among those who call upon his name; They cried to Jehovah and he answered them.

7 In the pillar of the cloud he spake to them: They kept his testimonies And his statutes which he gave them.

8 O Jehovah, our God! thou didst answer them: A God propitious thou wast to them, And [*yet*] taking vengeance upon their works.

9 Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at the mountain of his holiness; For holy *is* Jehovah our God.

PSALM 100

A Psalm for praising

1 Sing aloud to Jehovah, [806] all ye *inhabitants* of the earth.

2 Serve Jehovah with gladness; Come into his presence with exultation.

3 Know that Jehovah He is God; He made us, and not we ourselves: *We are* his people, and the flock of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with praise, his courts with exultation; Celebrate him, [807] bless his name:

5 For good is Jehovah, For ever *endureth* his mercy, And from generation to generation his truth.

PSALM 101

A Psalm of David

1 Of mercy and judgment I will sing; To thee, O Jehovah, will I sing psalms.

806

"Exsultate Jehovae." — *Lat.* "Chanter a haute voix au Seigneur." — *Fr.*

807

In the French it is "give glory to him."

2 I will act wisely in a perfect way, Until thou comest to me; I will walk in the integrity of my heart in the midst of my house.

3 I will not set before my eyes a wicked thing; The work of those who turn aside I hate; It shall not adhere to me.

4 A heart perverse shall depart from me; Evil I will not know.

5 He who slandereth in secret his neighbor, him will I destroy: The lofty in look and the wide in heart him I will not suffer.

6 My eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, That they may dwell with me: He who walketh in an upright way, [*Even*] he shall minister to me.

7 He shall not dwell in the midst of my house, he who worketh deceit; He who speaketh lies shall not be established before my eyes.

8 Early will I destroy all the ungodly of the land; That I may cut off from the city of Jehovah all the workers of iniquity.

PSALM 102

A Prayer for the afflicted when he shall be shut up, and shall pour out his meditation before Jehovah

1 O Jehovah! hear my prayer, And let my cry to thee come.

2 Hide not thy face from me in the day of my afflictions; Incline to me thy ear; In the day when I cry, make haste, answer me.

3 For consumed like smoke are [808] my days, And my bones as a hearth are burnt up.

4 Smitten like grass, and withered is my heart, Because I have forgotten to eat my bread.

5 By reason of the voice of my groaning, Cleave do my bones to my flesh.

6 I am become like a pelican of the desert, I am become as an owl of the solitudes;

7 I have watched and am as the sparrow *Which is* solitary upon the roof of the house.

8 Daily reproach me do my enemies; And those who are mad against me, by me have sworn.

9 For ashes as bread I have eaten, And my drink with weeping [809] I have mingled.

10 Because of thy indignation and thy wrath; For thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.

11 My days *are* as a shadow which declineth; And as grass I am dried up.

808

From verse 3d to verse 11th inclusive, the verbs we have rendered in the present tense are in the preterite in the Latin version, but in this instance we follow the French version in which they are in the present.

809

"Tears" — *Fr.*

12 And thou, O Jehovah! for ever shalt dwell, And thy memorial from generation to generation.

13 Thou thyself shalt arise, thou shalt have mercy upon Zion; For it is time to compassionate her, For come is the appointed time.

14 For take pleasure do thy servants in her stones, And upon her dust they will have compassion.

15 And fear shall the Gentiles the name of Jehovah, And all the kings of the earth thy glory.

16 For Jehovah hath builded Zion, He hath appeared in his glory.

17 He hath regarded the prayer of the solitary, And hath not despised their prayer.

18 This shall be written for the generation to come, And the people [*to be*] created shall praise him.

19 For he hath looked from the high *place* of his holiness, Jehovah from the heavens upon the earth hath looked,

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoners To release the sons of death;

21 That declared in Zion may be the name of Jehovah, And his praise in Jerusalem;

22 When gathered shall be the peoples together, And the kingdoms to serve Jehovah.

23 He hath afflicted in the way my strength, He hath shortened my days.

24 I said, O my God! take me not away in the midst of my days; *For* throughout generations of generations *are* thy years.

25 Aforetime the earth thou hast founded; And the work of thy hands serve the heavens.

26 They shall perish but thou shalt endure; And they all as a garment shall grow old; As a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed.

27 But thou *art always* the same, And thy years shall not fail.

28 The children of thy servants shall dwell, And their seed before thee shall be established.

PSALM 103

Of David

1 Bless, O my soul! Jehovah, And all my inward parts *bless* his holy name.

2 Bless, O my soul! Jehovah, And forget not all his bounties.

3 Who forgiveth all thy iniquities; Who healeth all thy infirmities;

4 Who redeemeth from the grave thy life; Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassions;

5 Who satisfieth with good thy mouth: Renewed as *that* of the eagle shall be thy youth.

6 Execute doth Jehovah righteousness And judgments for all who are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways to Moses, To the children of Israel his doings.
8 Compassionate and merciful *is* Jehovah, Slow to anger and abundant in goodness.
9 He will not always chide; Neither for ever will he keep [*his anger.*]
10 Not according to our sins hath he dealt with us, Nor according to our iniquities hath he recompensed us.
11 For in proportion to the height of the heavens above the earth, Hath been the greatness of his goodness upon those who fear him.
12 As far distant as is the east from the west, So far hath he removed from us our sills.
13 As a father is compassionate towards his children, So is Jehovah compassionate towards those who fear him.
14 For he knoweth of what we are made; He hath remembered that dust are we.
15 Man... as grass *are* his days: As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
16 As soon as the wind passeth over it, it is not; And know it no more shall the place thereof.
17 But the goodness of Jehovah *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him, And his righteousness upon the children's children;
18 To those who keep his covenant, And are mindful of his statutes to do them.
19 Jehovah in the heavens hath established his throne; And his kingdom over all hath dominion.
20 Bless Jehovah, *ye* his angels mighty in strength! Who do his commandment, in hearing the voice of his word.
21 Bless Jehovah, all *ye* his armies! Ye ministers of his, who do his pleasure.
22 Bless Jehovah, all ye his works! In all places of his dominion: Bless, O my soul! Jehovah.

PSALM 104

1 Bless, O my soul! Jehovah: O Jehovah, my God! thou art great exceedingly; With praise and honor thou hast clothed thyself.
2 Being arrayed with light as with a garment; Spreading out the heavens as a curtain;
3 Flooring in the waters his upper rooms; Making the clouds his chariot; Walking upon the wings of the wind:
4 Making the winds his messengers; His ministers a fire that flameth.
5 He hath founded the earth upon its foundations, So that it shall not be moved for ever.
6 With the deep as with a garment he hath covered it: Above the mountains stand shall the waters.
7 At thy rebuke they shall flee; At the voice of thy thunder they shall suddenly pass away.

8 Ascend shall the mountains and descend shall the valleys To the place which thou hast founded for them.

9 A boundary thou hast set, they shall not pass over *it*: They shall not return to cover the earth.

10 Sending out springs by the valleys, *Which* between the hills shall run.

11 Drink *thereof* shall all the beasts of the field: Quench shall the wild asses their thirst.

12 Nigh time the fowl of the heaven shall dwell, From the midst of the branches they shall send out their voice.

13 Watering the mountains from his chambers: From the fruit of thy works satisfied shall be the earth.

14 Making grass to grow for cattle, And herb for the service of mm: That he may bring forth bread out of the earth.

15 And wine cheereth the heart of man, To make *his* face to shine with oil, And bread sustaineth the heart of man.

16 Satiated shall be the trees of Jehovah; The cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted:

17 For there the birds build their nests: [*As for*] the stork, the fir trees are her dwelling.

18 The high mountains *are* for the deer; The rocks a place of shelter for the hedgehogs.

19 He hath made the moon for set times: The sun knoweth his going down.

20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night; Wherein do creep forth all the beasts of the forest.

21 The lions roar after their prey, And in seeking from God their food.

22 Rise shall the sun, and they shall gather themselves together, And in their dens shall lie down.

23 Go forth shall man to his work, And to his labor, until the evening.

24 How magnificent are thy works! O Jehovah! All things in wisdom thou hast made: Filled is the earth with thy riches.

25 This sea great, and wide in extent; Therein are creeping things inntanerable, Beasts both small and great.

26 There the ships go, And the leviathan, which thou hast formed to sport in it.

27 All things on thee do wait, That thou mayest give *them* their food in its season.

28 Thou shalt give it them, they shall gather [*it*:] Thou shalt open thy hand, they shall be satisfied with good.

29 Thou shalt hide thy face, they shall be afraid: Thou shalt take away their spirit, they shall die, and to their dust shall return.

30 Thou shalt send forth thy Spirit, they shall be created: And thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

31 Glory be to Jehovah for ever: Rejoice let Jehovah in his works.

32 He looketh upon the earth, and it trembleth: If he touch the mountains, they shall smoke.

33 I will sing to Jehovah whilst I live: I will sing psalms to my God as long as I have my being.

34 Let my speech be acceptable to him: I will rejoice in Jehovah.

35 Perish let sinners from the earth, And the ungodly till they cease to be any more. Bless, O my soul! Jehovah. Hallelujah.

PSALM 105

1 Celebrate ye Jehovah; invoke his name: Announce among the peoples his works.

2 Sing ye to him: sing psalms to him: Speak of all his wonders.

3 Rejoice ye in his holy name: Rejoice let the heart of those who seek Jehovah.

4 Seek ye Jehovah, and his strength; Seek his face continually.

5 Remember the marvelous works which he hath done; His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.

6 *Ye* seed of Abraham, his servant, The sons of Jacob his chosen one:

7 He *is* Jehovah our God; Through all the earth are his judgments.

8 He hath remembered for ever his covenant, The word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations:

9 Which he made with Abraham, And his oath *which he swore* to Isaac;

10 And established it to Jacob for a law, To Israel for an everlasting covenant:

11 Saying, "To thee will I give the land of Canaan, "The cord of your inheritance."

12 When they were very few in number; And strangers in it;

13 And walked about from nation to nation, From *one* kingdom to another people,

14 He did not suffer men to hurt them; And rebuked for their sake kings;

15 *Saying*, "Touch not my anointed ones, "And to my prophets do no harm."

16 And he called a famine upon the land; All the stall of bread he broke.

17 He sent before them a man, For a slave sold was Joseph.

18 They afflicted in the fetters his feet: The iron entered into his soul:

19 Until the time that his word came: The word of Jehovah tried him.

20 Send did the king and loosed him; Even the ruler of the peoples, and freed him.

21 He made him lord over his house; And ruler over all his substance:

22 To bind his princes at his pleasure; And to teach his elders wisdom.

23 And come did Israel into Egypt; And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

24 And he increased his people exceedingly, He multiplied them above their oppressors.

25 He turned their heart so that they hated his people, And dealt craftily with his servants.

26 He sent Moses, his servant; Aaron, whom he chose.

27 They set among them the words of his signs, And *his* miracles in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; And they were not rebellious against his words.

29 He turned their waters into blood, And killed their fish.

30 Their land brought forth frogs, *Yea even* within the chambers of their kings.

31 He spake and there came a swarm of flies, Lice in all their borders.

32 He gave them for rain, hail, Flaming fire upon their land.

33 And he smote their vines and their fig-trees; And destroyed *every* tree of their border.

34 He spake, and there came the locust, And the caterpillar without number;

35 And they devoured all the herbage in their land, And consumed the fruit of their ground.

36 And he smote all the firstborn in their land, The beginning of all their strength.

37 And he brought them forth with silver and gold: And not one among their tribes was a feeble person.

38 Glad was Egypt at their departure; For fallen upon them had their terror.

39 He spread out a cloud for a covering; And fire to give light by the night.

40 He [810] asked, and brought quails, And with the bread of heaven he filled them.

41 He opened the rock, and there gushed out waters; They ran in the dry *places like* a river.

42 For he remembered the word of his holiness, *Which he had spoken* to Abraham his servant.

43 And he brought forth his people with joy, With exultation his chosen ones.

44 And he gave them the lands of the nations: And the labor of the peoples they inherited.

45 That they might keep his ordinances, And that his law they might observe. Hallelujah.

PSALM 106

[810] In the Commentary, (vol 4, p. 202) we have translated "they asked," by mistake. Calvin seems to understand this as spoken of God.

Hallelujah

1 Celebrate Jehovah, for he is good; For to everlasting *is* his mercy.

2 Who shall express the mighty acts of Jehovah? Who shall declare all his praise?

3 Blessed are they who keep judgment, *Blessed* is he who doeth righteousness at all times.

4 Remember me, O Jehovah! with the good will [*which thou bearest towards*] thy people. Visit me with thy salvation;

5 That I may see the good of thy chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, That I may glory with thy heritage.

6 We have sinned with our fathers, We have acted iniquitously, we have done wickedly.

7 Our fathers in Egypt understood not thy wonders; They remembered not the multitude of thy kindnesses; And they rebelled at the sea, at the Red Sea.

8 Yet he saved them for the sake of his own name, That he might cause to be known his power.

9 And he rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up; And he made them walk in the deeps as in a desert.

10 And he saved them from the hand of the enemy, And redeemed them from the hand of the adversary.

11 And cover did the waters their oppressors: One of them was not left.

12 Then they believed his words; They sang his praise.

13 They made haste, they forgat his works; They did not wait for his counsel;

14 And they lusted greatly in the desert, And tempted God in the wilderness.

15 And he gave them their request; But sent leanness into their souls.

16 And they envied Moses in the camp, And Aaron, the saint of Jehovah.

17 Open did the earth and swallowed up Dathan, And covered over the tent of Abiram.

18 And kindled was a fire in their company, The flame burned up the ungodly.

19 They made a calf in Horeb, And worshipped before the molten image.

20 And they changed their glory Into the likeness of an ox that eateth hay.

21 They forgat God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt;

22 Miracles in the land of Ham, Terrible things at the Red Sea.

23 And he said that he would destroy them, Unless Moses his chosen had stood in the breach before his face, To turn away his wrath, that he might not destroy *them*

24 And they despised the land of pleasantness; They believed not his word;

25 And they mutinied in their tents, They hearkened not to the voice of Jehovah.

26 And he lifted tip his hand against them, To destroy them in the desert:

27 And to scatter their seed among the heathen, And to disperse them throughout the lands.

28 And they joined themselves to Baal-peor, And ate the sacrifices of *things* dead.

29 And they provoked *God* to anger by their works: And break in upon them did the plague.

30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: And stayed was the plague.

31 And *that* was imputed to him for righteousness From generation to generation, even for ever.

32 And they provoked *him* to anger at the waters of strife, And it turned out in to Moses on their account:

33 For they embittered his spirit, And he spake [*rashly*] with his lips.

34 They did not destroy the nations, As Jehovah had commanded them:

35 And they were mingled with the heathen, And learned their works:

36 And they served their idols; Which were to them for ruin.

37 And they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons;

38 And they shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and of their daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And polluted was the land with bloods.

39 And they were defiled in their own works, And were adulterous in their own inventions.

40 Then [811] burn did the wrath of Jehovah against his people, And he abhorred his inheritance;

41 And he delivered them into the hands of the heathen; And those had dominion over them who hated them:

42 And subdue them did their enemies, And they were afflicted under their hand.

43 Many times did he deliver them; But they provoked *him* with their counsels, And were oppressed in their iniquity.

44 Yet he saw when they were in distress, And heard their cry:

45 And he remembered towards them his covenant; And it repented him according to the greatness of his mercies.

46 And he made them to find pity Before all who had led them captive.

47 Save us, O Jehovah, our God! And gather us from among the heathen, That we may celebrate thy holy name, That we may glory in thy praise.

48 Blessed *be* Jehovah, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting; And say let all the people, Amen. Praise ye Jehovah.

811

Literally, "And."

PART FIFTH. [812]

PSALM 107

1 "Celebrate Jehovah, for he is good, "For to everlasting is his mercy."
2 Say *this* let the redeemed of Jehovah, Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the afflicter.
3 Whom he hath gathered from the lands, From the east, and from the west, From the north, and from the south.
4 They wandered from the way in the solitary desert; A city of habitation they found not:
5 Hungry, also thirsty, *So that* their soul within them fainted.
6 Then they cried to Jehovah in their distress, And from their troubles he delivered them.
7 And he directed them by a right way, That they might come to a city of habitation.
8 Let them celebrate before Jehovah his mercy, His marvelous works before the sons of men.
9 For he hath satisfied the soul that longeth, And the soul that is famished he hath filled with good.
10 Those who dwell in darkness, and in the shadow of death, Bound in affliction and iron;
11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, And the counsel of the Most High they despised:
12 And he humbled with trouble their heart; They were afflicted and *there was* none to help *them*
13 They cried to Jehovah in their distress: From their troubles he delivered them.
14 He rescued them from darkness and the shadow of death, And their chains he broke asunder.
15 Let them celebrate before Jehovah his mercy, And his marvelous works before the sons of men.
16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, And the bars of iron he hath shivered.
17 Fools on account of the way of their transgression; And on account of their iniquities are afflicted.
18 All food loathe doth their soul; And they approach the gates of death.
19 Then they cry to Jehovah in their trouble: From their straits he sayeth them.
20 He sendeth his word, and healeth them, And rescueth them from all their corruptions.

812

According to the Hebrew Division, Part 5 extends from Psalm 107 to Psalm 150 inclusive.

21 Let them celebrate before Jehovah his mercy, And his marvelous works before the sons of men.

22 And let them sacrifice sacrifices of praise, And announce his works with exultation.

23 Those who go down to the sea in ships, Trading in the great waters,

24 These men see the works of Jehovah, His wonders in the deep.

25 He speaketh and raiseth the wind of storm, And lifteth high the waves thereof.

26 They mount up to the heavens, They descend into the deeps; Their soul in [813] *their* distress is melted away.

27 They are tossed and stagger as a drunken man, And all their skill is swallowed up.

28 And they cry to Jehovah in their distress, And from their troubles he bringeth them out.

29 He maketh the storm a calm, So that quiet are the waves thereof.

30 And they rejoice because they are stilled; And he leadeth them unto the haven of their desire.

31 Let them celebrate before Jehovah his mercy, And his wonders before the sons of men;

32 And let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, And in the assembly of the elders let them praise him.

33 He turneth rivers into a desert, And springs of water into dryness;

34 A land that is fruitful into saltness, For the wickedness of those who dwell therein.

35 He turneth the desert into a pool of water, And the land of barrenness into springs of water.

36 And there he causeth to dwell the famished, That they may prepare a city of habitation;

37 And sow fields, and plant vineyards, And eat the fruit of increase.

38 And he blesseth them, and they multiply exceedingly; And their cattle he doth not diminish,.

39 Afterwards they are diminished and brought low, By reason of anguish, affliction, and sorrow.

40 He poureth contempt upon princes, And maketh them to wander in the waste where there is no path.

41 And he raiseth the afflicted from *his* misery, And maketh like a flock [*his*] families.

42 See shall the upright ones and shall rejoice: And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

43 Who is wise, and he will observe these things, And they shall understand the loving-kindness of Jehovah?

813

"With" or "from." — *Fr.*

PSALM 108

A Song of a Psalm of David

1 Prepared *is* my heart, O God! prepared is my heart, I will chant and will sing psalms, even with my glory.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp: I will arise at the dawn of day.

3 I will celebrate thee, among the peoples, O Jehovah! And will sing psalms to thee among the nations:

4 For great above the heavens, is thy goodness; And unto the clouds is thy truth.

5 Be thou exalted above the heavens, O God! And above all the earth thy glory:

6 That thy beloved ones may be delivered: Save by thy right hand, and hear me.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, And the valley of Succoth I will measure.

8 Mine *is* Gilead, mine is Manasseh; And Ephraim *is* the strength of my head; Judah my lawgiver.

9 Moab the pot for my washing; Over Edom will I cast my shoe; Over Palestina will I triumph.

10 Who will lead me into the city fortified? Who will lead me even into Edom?

11 Wilt not thou, O God! who hadst cast us off? And [*thou*] O God! [*who*] didst not go forth with our armies?

12 Grant us relief from [814] trouble; For vain is the help of man.

13 Through God we shall do valiantly, And he shall tread down our adversaries.

PSALM 109

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 O God of my praise! be not silent;

2 For the mouth of the ungodly man, and the mouth of deceit upon me are opened; They have talked with me with a tongue of guile:

3 And with words of hatred they have encompassed me, And have fought against me without a cause.

4 [*In return*] for my love they have been my adversaries; But I *set myself* to prayer.

5 And they have requited me evil for good, And hatred for my love.

6 Set thou over him an ungodly man; And let the adversary stand at his right hand.

814

In the French version it is “in.”

7 When he is judged let him go forth condemned, [815] And let his prayer be turned into sin.

8 Let his days be few; His office let another receive.

9 Let his children be fatherless, And his wife a widow.

10 And in wandering let his children wander and beg, [816] And seek [*for bread*] out of their waste places. [817]

11 Catch let the extortioner all which he hath, And let strangers plunder his labor.

12 Let there be none prolonging mercy to him; And let there be none to have compassion upon his orphans.

13 Let his posterity be destroyed; [818] In the generation following let their name be blotted out.

14 Remembered let be the iniquity of his fathers before Jehovah; And the wickedness [819] of his mother let it not be blotted out.

15 Let them be before Jehovah continually, And let him blot out from the earth their memorial;

16 Because he remembered not to do mercy, And persecuted the man [*that was*] wretched and poor, And afflicted in heart, to put *him* to death.

17 He loved cursing, and let it come upon him: He delighted not in blessing, and let it be far from him.

18 And let him be clothed with cursing as with a garment; And let it come as water into his entrails, And as oil into his bones.

19 Let it be to him as a mantle to cover him, And as a girdle with which continually he may gird himself

20 Let this be the recompense [820] of my adversaries from Jehovah, And of those who speak evil against my soul.

21 But thou, O Jehovah, my Lord! deal thou with me for the sake of thy name: Because good *is* thy mercy, deliver me;

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815 Literally, "wicked" or "ungodly."

816 In the French version it is — "And let his children be vagabonds and beg."

817 In the French version it is — "And seek [*for bread*] going out of their waste *or* ruined dwellings."

818 Literally, "be to destruction."

819 In the French version it is "sin."

820 Literally, "work."

22 For poor and needy I am, And my heart is wounded within me.
23 As a shadow when it declineth, I walk about; I am shaken off as the locust.
24 My knees are become feeble through fasting; And my flesh hath fallen away from *its* fatness.
25 But I am become a reproach to them; When they see me they shake their head.
26 Help me, O Jehovah, my God! Save me according to thy mercy.
27 And they shall know that this is thy hand, *That* thou, O Jehovah! hast done it.
28 They shall curse, but thou shalt bless; When they rise up they shall be put to shame; But thy servant shall rejoice.
29 Clothed shall be my adversaries with disgrace, And they shall be covered as with a garment with their own shame.
30 I will praise Jehovah greatly with my mouth; And in the midst of the great I will celebrate him:
31 Because he standeth at the right hand of the poor one, To save from condemnations his soul.

PSALM 110

A Psalm of David
1 Jehovah said to my Lord, "Sit thou at my right hand, "Until I make thy enemies thy footstool."
2 The scepter of thy power send shall Jehovah out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.
3 Thy people *shall come* with voluntary offerings, On the day *of the assembling* of thy army, In beauty of holiness: From the womb as from the morning dawn To thee *has been* the dew of thy youth.
4 Sworn hath Jehovah, and he will not repent: "Thou art a priest for ever "According to the manner of Melchisedek."
5 The Lord at thy right hand Hath crushed in the day of his wrath kings.
6 He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill *all* with ruins; He shall crush the head over a great country.
7 Of the torrent in the way he shall drink, Therefore shall he lift up the head.

PSALM 111

Hallelujah
1 א I will celebrate Jehovah with *my* whole heart, ב In the congregation of the just, and in the assembly.
2 ג Great are the works of Jehovah, ד Sought out of all who have pleasure in them.

3 ה Beautiful and honorable [821] *is* his work; ו And his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 ז He hath made a memorial by his wonderful works: ח Merciful and compassionate *is* Jehovah.

5 ט A portion he hath given to those who fear him: י He will remember for ever his covenant.

6 כ The might of his works he hath proclaimed to his people, ל To give them the heritage of the heathen.

7 מ The works of his hands *are* truth and judgment: נ True *are* all his statutes,

8 ס And established for ever — ע Made in truth and rectitude.

9 פ Redemption he hath sent to his people; ץ He hath commanded for ever his covenant: ק Holy and terrible *is* his name.

10 ר The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Jehovah; ש A good understanding *have* all those who do them: ת His praise endureth for ever.

PSALM 112

Hallelujah

1 א Blessed is the man who feareth Jehovah; ב In his commandments he will delight greatly.

2 ג Mighty on the earth shall be his seed: ד The generation of the upright ones shall be blessed.

3 ה Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house; ו And his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 ז There ariseth in darkness light to the upright ones: ח *He is* merciful and compassionate and righteous.

5 ט A good man showeth pity and lendeth; י He manageth his affairs [822] in uprightness.

6 כ Truly he shall not for ever be moved; ל In everlasting remembrance shall be the righteous one.

7 מ Of evil tidings he shall not be afraid; נ Established is his heart, because he trusteth in Jehovah.

8 ס Sustained *is* his heart, he shall not be afraid, ע Until he see *his desire* upon his adversaries.

9 פ He hath dispersed; he hath given to the poor ones; ץ His righteousness continueth for ever; ק His horn shall be exalted with glory.

10 ר The ungodly one shall see *it*, and be incensed; ש With his teeth he shall gnash and waste away: ת The desire of the ungodly ones shall perish.

821 Literally, "beauty and honour."

822 In the Latin version it is "verba," "words," but Calvin rejects this translation in the commentary. In the French version it is "affairs."

PSALM 113

Hallelujah

1 Praise ye, O ye servants of Jehovah! Praise ye the name of Jehovah.

2 Let the name of Jehovah be blessed, From henceforth and for ever.

3 From the rising of the sun even to his going down, Worthy to be praised *is* the name of Jehovah.

4 High above all nations *is* Jehovah, Above the heavens is his glory.

5 Who *is* like Jehovah our God,

6 Who hath his dwelling on high, [823] Who humbleth himself to behold *that which* is done in heaven and on earth?

7 Who raiseth from the dust the needy one; From the dunghill he lifteth up the wretched one;

8 To make him sit with princes, With the princes of his people.

9 Who causeth the barren woman to dwell with a family, Rejoicing that *she is* a mother of children. Hallelujah.

PSALM 114

1 When Israel went forth from Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people barbarous;

2 [*Then*] was Judah for his holiness, Israel, his dominions.

3 The sea saw, and fled, Jordan was turned backward.

4 The mountains leaped as rams, The hills as the lambs of the flock.

5 What ailed thee, O sea! that thou fleddest? *And thou*, O Jordan! *that* thou wast turned back?

6 Ye mountains, *that* ye leaped like rams; Ye hills, as the lambs of the flock?

7 At the presence of the Lord, tremble, O earth! At the presence of the God of Jacob;

8 Who turned the rock into pools of water, The flinty rock into a fountain of waters.

PSALM 115

1 Not to us, O Jehovah! not to us, But to thy name give glory, On account of thy mercy, on account of thy truth.

2 Why should the heathen say, "Where *is* now their God?"

3 But our God *is* in the heaven: Whatever pleased him he hath done.

4 Their idols *are* silver and gold, The work of the hands of men.

823

Literally, "who exalteth himself to dwell."

5 A mouth have they, [824] and they do not speak: Eyes have they, and they do not see:

6 Ears have they, and they do not hear: Noses have they, and they do not smell:

7 Hands have they, and they do not feel: Feet have they, and they do not walk: They do not speak through their throat.

8 Like to them shall be those who make them, And every one who trusteth in them.

9 O Israel! trust thou in Jehovah: Their help and their shield is He:

10 O house of Aaron! trust in Jehovah: Their help and their shield is he:

11 Ye who fear Jehovah! trust in Jehovah: Their help and their shield *is* He.

12 Jehovah hath remembered us; he will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron.

13 He will bless those who fear Jehovah, The small together with the great.

14 Jehovah will add to you, To you and to your children.

15 Blessed are ye of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.

16 The heavens, the heavens *are* Jehovah's: But the earth he hath given to the sons of men.

17 The dead shall not praise *thee*, O God! Nor any who go down into silence.

18 But as for us we will bless God, From this time, and even for evermore. Hallelujah.

PSALM 116

1 I have loved, because heard hath Jehovah the voice of my prayer;

2 Because he hath inclined his ear to me, When in my straits I called upon him. [825]

3 They encompassed me, the snares of death, And the sorrows of the grave found me: Trouble and grief I found.

4 And on the name of Jehovah I will call: "I beseech thee, O Jehovah! deliver my soul."

5 Merciful *is* Jehovah and righteous; And our God *is* compassionate.

6 Guard doth Jehovah the simple: I was brought low and he saved me.

7 Return, O my soul! to thy rest; For Jehovah hath dealt kindly with thee. [826]

824

In the French version it is "they have mouths."

825

The translation of these two verses is free, being modified by Calvin's Commentary. For the literal translation, see Vol. 4.

826

8 Because thou hast rescued my soul from death My eye from tears, My foot from falling.

9 I will walk before Jehovah in the land of the living.

10 I have believed, for I will speak: "I am afflicted greatly."

11 I said in my fear, "Every man is a liar."

12 What shall I render to Jehovah? All his benefits *are* upon me.

13 The cup of salvation I will take, And upon the name of Jehovah I will call.

14 My vows to, Jehovah I will perform Now in the presence of all his people.

15 Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of his meek ones.

16 Come! O Jehovah! for I, *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, the son of thy handmaid; Thou hast broken my fetters.

17 To thee will I sacrifice the sacrifice of praise, And upon the name of Jehovah will I call.

18 My vows to Jehovah will I perform Now in the presence of all his people,

19 In the courts of the house of Jehovah In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem! Hallelujah.

PSALM 117

1 Praise ye Jehovah, all ye nations! Celebrate him all ye peoples!

2 For great towards us is his mercy, And the truth of Jehovah *continueth* for ever. Hallelujah.

PSALM 118

1 Celebrate ye Jehovah! for *he is* good: For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

2 Let now Israel say: "For [827] to everlasting *endureth* his mercy."

3 Let now the house of Aaron say: "For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy."

4 Let now those who fear Jehovah say: "For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy."

5 In my distress I called upon God; God answered me *by setting me* at large.

6 Jehovah *is* with me: I will not fear what man can do to me.

7 Jehovah *is* with me among those who help me, And I shall see *my desire* upon my adversaries.

8 It is better to hope in Jehovah Than to place confidence in man:

Literally, it is "hath recompensed upon thee."

827

In the French version, in this and the two following verses, it is "that."

9 It is better to hope in Jehovah Than to place confidence in princes.

10 All the nations encompassed me: *But* in the name of Jehovah I will surely cut them off.

11 They encompassed me, yea they encompassed me, *But* in the name of Jehovah I will surely cut them off'.

12 They encompassed me as bees: They were extinguished as a fire of thorns: In the name of Jehovah I will surely cut them off.

13 Thou hast thrust and [828] thrust at me, that I might fall: But Jehovah helped me.

14 My strength and *my* song is God, And he hath become to me salvation.

15 The voice of exultation and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: The right hand of Jehovah hath done valiantly.

16 The right hand of Jehovah is exalted, The right hand of Jehovah hath done valiantly.

17 I shall not die, yea, I shall live, And recount the works of God.

18 Chastised me sorely hath [829] God; But he hath not delivered me up unto death.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; *And* having entered into them, I will celebrate God.

20 This is the gate of Jehovah, The just ones shall enter into it.

21 I will celebrate thee because thou hast heard me, And hast been my salvation.

22 The stone which the builders rejected Is become the head [*stone*] of the corner.

23 By Jehovah hath this been done: It is marvelous in our eyes.

24 This *is* the day which Jehovah hath made; Let us exult and rejoice in it.

25 I beseech thee, O Jehovah! save me; I beseech thee, I beseech thee, O Jehovah! give prosperity I beseech thee.

26 Blessed is he who cometh in the name of Jehovah: We bless you from the house of Jehovah.

27 God *is* Jehovah, and he hath given light to us: Bind ye the lamb with cords, even to the horns of the altar.

28 My God art thou, and I will celebrate thee: My God, I will exalt thee.

29 Celebrate ye Jehovah; for *he is* good: For to everlasting *is* his mercy.

828 Literally, "thrusting thou has thrust."

829 Literally, "chastising hath chastised me."

TRANSLATION: PSALMS 119-150

Translation: Psalms 119-150

PSALMS 119—150

PSALM 119

א [**Aleph**.]
1 א Blessed *are* those who are upright in *their* way, Walking in the law of Jehovah.
2 א Blessed *are* those who keep his testimonies, *Who* with *their* whole heart seek him.
3 א, Surely they do not work iniquity, *Who* in his ways do walk.
4 א Thou hast commanded That thy statutes be kept carefully.
5 א O that my ways may be directed To the keeping of thy statutes!
6 א Then shall I not be ashamed, When I shall have been attentive to all thy commandments.
7 א I will celebrate thee with uprightness of heart, When I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness.
8 א, Thy statutes I will keep: Do not thou forsake me very far.
ב [**Beth**.]
9 ב By what [*means*] shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to thy word.
10 ב With my whole heart have I sought thee; Let me not go astray from thy commandments.
11 ב In my heart I have hidden thy word, That I might not sin against thee.
12 ב Blessed *art* thou, O Jehovah! Teach me thy statutes.
13 ב With my lips have I declared All the judgments of thy mouth.

14 ב In the way of thy testimonies I have taken delight, As much as in all riches.

15 ב Upon thy statutes will I meditate, And I will consider thy paths.

16 ב In thy commandments will I delight myself; I will not forget thy words.

ג [**Gimel**.]

17 ג Do good to thy servant, And I shall live and keep thy word.

18 ג Open mine eyes, And I shall behold the wonders of thy law.

19 ג I am a stranger on the earth: Hide not from me thy commandments.

20 ג Broken is my soul with the desire *it hath* To thy judgments at all times.

21 ג Thou hast destroyed the proud ones; Cursed are those who decline from thy commandments.

22 ג Remove from me reproach and contempt; For thy testimonies I have kept.

23 ג Princes also have sat, against me they have spoken: Thy servant meditated upon thy statutes.

24 ג Also thy testimonies *are* my delights, The men of my counsel.

ד [**Daleth**.]

25 ד Cleave to the dust doth my soul: Quicken me according to thy word.

26 ד I have declared my ways, and thou hast answered me: Teach me thy statutes.

27 ד The way of thy commandments make me to understand, And I will meditate upon thy wonders.

28 ד Drop away doth my soul for grief: Raise me up according to thy word.

29 ד The way of falsehood remove from me, And thy law grant me graciously.

30 ד The way of truth I have chosen; Thy judgments I have set before me.

31 ד I have cleaved to thy testimonies, O Jehovah Let me not be put to shame.

32 ד The way of thy statutes I will run, When thou shalt have enlarged my heart.

ה [**He**.]

33 ה Teach me, O Jehovah! the way of thy statutes, And I will keep it unto the end.

34 ה Make me to understand, and I will observe thy law, And keep it with my whole heart.

35 ה Direct me in the way of thy statutes; For in it is my delight.

36 ה Incline my heart to thy testimonies, And not to covetousness.

37 ה Turn away my eyes from seeing vanity; In thy way quicken me.

38 ה Confirm to thy servant thy word, Who to thy fear *is devoted*

39 ה Remove my reproach which I have dreaded, For thy judgments are good.

40 ה Behold! I have longed after thy commandments: In thy righteousness quicken me.

ו [**Vau**.]

41 ו And let come to me thy mercies, O Jehovah! Thy salvation according to thy word.

42 ו And I will answer a word to him who reproacheth me; For I have trusted in thy word.

43 ו And take not from my mouth the word of truth utterly: Because for thy judgments I wait.

44 ו And I will keep thy law continually, For ever and ever.

45 ו And I will walk at large; For thy statutes I have sought.

46 ו And I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, And will not be ashamed.

47 ו And I will delight myself in thy commandments Which I have loved.

48 ו And I will lift up my hands to thy commandments Which I have loved; And I will meditate upon thy statutes.

ז [**Zain**.]

49 ז Remember thy word to thy servant, Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

50 ז This is my consolation in my affliction; For thy word revives me.

51 ז The proud ones have derided me exceedingly: From thy law I have not declined.

52 ז I remembered thy judgments of old, O Jehovah! And comforted myself.

53 ז Terror hath seized upon me, Because of the ungodly who forsake thy law.

54 ז Thy statutes have been songs to me In the house of my pilgrimage.

55 ז I remembered in the night thy name, O Jehovah! And I will keep thy law.

56 ז This is done to me, Because thy statutes I have observed.

ח [**Cheth**.]

57 ח *Thou art* my portion, O Jehovah! I have said that I will keep thy words. [830]

58 ח I have sought thy face with my whole heart; Have mercy upon me according to thy word.

59 ח I thought upon my ways, And turned my feet to thy testimonies.

60 ח I made haste and delayed not To keep thy commandments.

830

Here the reading in the Latin text is ambiguous. The above is the reading in the French version; and as determined by Calvin in the Commentary.

61 ח The cords of the ungodly have caught hold of me; Thy law I have not forgotten.

62 ח At midnight I will rise to praise thee, Because of the judgments of thy righteousness.

63 ח A companion am I to all who fear thee, And who keep thy statutes.

64 ח Of thy mercy, O Jehovah! the earth is full: Thy statutes teach thou me.

ת [**Teth**.]

65 ת Kindly hast thou dealt with thy servant, O Jehovah! According to thy word.

66 ת Goodness of taste and knowledge teach me; For thy commandments I have believed.

67 ת Before I was brought low I went astray; But now thy word I keep.

68 ת Good *art* thou, and beneficent: Teach me thy statutes.

69 ת Weaved a lie [831] against me have the proud ones; *But as for me* I with my whole heart will keep statutes.

70 ת Fat as grease is their heart; *But as for me* I in thy law do delight.

71 ת *It hath been* good for me that I have been afflicted, That I might learn thy statutes.

72 ת Better to me is the law of thy mouth Than thousands of gold and silver.

י [**Yod**.]

73 י Thy hands have made and formed me; Make me to understand, and I shall learn thy commandments.

74 י Those who fear thee shall see me and rejoice; Because for thy word I have waited.

75 י I have known, O Jehovah! that righteousness are thy judgments; And in truth thou hast humbled me.

76 י To thy word to thy servant.

77 י Let come to me thy compassions, and I shall live; For thy law is my delight.

78 י Ashamed let be the proud, for they have falsely wronged me: As for me I will meditate upon thy precepts.

79 י Let those turn unto me who fear thee, And have known thy testimonies.

80 י Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, That I may not be put to shame.

כ [**Caph**.]

81 כ Fainted for thy salvation hath my soul: For thy word I wait.

82 כ Failed have my eyes [*in looking*] for thy word, While I say, "When wilt thou comfort me?"

831 In the French version it is, "have forged lies."

83 כ For I have been as a bottle in the smoke; *And yet* thy statutes I have not forgotten.

84 כ How many are the days of thy servant? When wilt thou execute judgment on my persecutors?

85 כ The proud have digged pits for me, Which is not according to thy law.

86 כ All thy commandments are truth: Deceitfully do they persecute me; *therefore* help thou me.

87 כ Almost have they consumed me upon the earth; Yet I have not forsaken thy statutes.

88 כ According to thy goodness quicken me; And I will keep the testimony of thy mouth.

ל [**Lamed**.]

89 ל For ever, O Jehovah! Thy word endureth in the heavens.

90 ל From generation to generation *is* thy truth: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

91 ל By thy judgments they continue to this day; For all are thy servants.

92 ל Unless thy law *had been* my delight, Then should I have perished in my affliction.

93 ל Never will I forget thy statutes, For in them thou hast quickened me.

94 ל Thine I am; O save me! For thy statutes I have sought.

95 ל For me wait do the ungodly to destroy me: *But* I consider thy testimonies.

96 ל In all perfection I have seen an end: Broad is thy commandment exceedingly.

מ [**Mem**.]

97 מ O how have I loved thy law! All the day it is my meditation.

98 מ Than my adversaries thou hast made me wiser by thy commandments; Because for ever they are with me.

99 מ Than all my teachers thou hast made me wiser; Because thy testimonies are my meditation.

100 מ Than the aged I have more understanding; Because thy statutes I have observed.

101 מ From every evil path I have restrained my feet, That I may keep thy word.

102 מ From thy judgments I have not declined; For thou thyself hast taught me.

103 מ How sweet to my palate have been thy words! More [*sweet*] than honey to my mouth!

104 מ By thy statutes I have gotten understanding; Therefore I have hated every path of falsehood.

נ [**Nun**.]

105 נ A lamp to my feet is thy word, And a light to my path.

106 נ I have sworn and will make sure, To observe the judgments of thy righteousness.

107 נ I am afflicted exceedingly, O Jehovah! Quicken me according to thy word.

108 נ I Let the freewill *offerings* of my mouth, I pray thee, be pleasing to thee, O Jehovah! And thy judgments teach me.

109 נ My soul *is* in my hand continually; And thy law I have not forgotten.

110 נ Laid have the ungodly a snare for me: Yet from thy statutes I have not erred.

111 נ I have as [*my*] inheritance thy testimonies for ever; For the joy of my heart are they.

112 נ I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes For ever, and even to the end.

ס [**Samech**.]

113 ס *Crooked* thoughts I have hated; But thy law I have loved.

114 ס My hiding-place and my shield art thou: In thy word I have trusted.

115 ס Depart from me, ye wicked men! And I will keep the commandments of my God.

116 ס Sustain me by thy word, and I shall live: And make me not ashamed of my expectation.

117 ס Establish me, and I shall be safe, And I will consider thy statutes continually.

118 ס Thou hast trodden down all who go astray from thy statutes; For falsehood is their deceit.

119 ס *As* dross thou hast made to cease all the ungodly of the earth; Therefore I have loved thy testimonies.

120 ס Tremble [832] for fear of thee did my flesh, And of thy judgments I was afraid.

ע [**Ain**.]

121 ע I have done judgment and righteousness: Give me not up to my oppressors.

122 ע Become surety for thy servant for good, That the proud may not oppress me.

123 ע My eyes have failed for thy salvation, And for the word of thy righteousness.

124 ע Deal with thy servant according to thy goodness, And thy statutes teach thou me.

125 ע Thy servant am I, give me understanding, That I may learn thy testimonies.

126 ע *It is* time [*for thee*] to work, O Jehovah! *For they* have destroyed thy law.

832 "Horruit." — *Lat.*

127 ע Therefore I have loved thy statutes Mere than gold and fine gold.
128 ע Therefore all *thy* commandments I have esteemed *to be* altogether right: Every way of falsehood I have hated:

פ [**Phe**.]

129 פ Marvelous things *are* thy testimonies; Therefore observed them hath my soul.
130 פ The entrance of thy words is light, Giving understanding to the little ones.
131 פ My mouth I opened and panted, Because thy commandments I loved.
132 פ Look upon me and have pity upon me, According to *thy* judgment towards those who love thy name.
133 פ My steps direct thou according to thy word, And let not any iniquity have dominion in me.
134 פ Redeem me from the oppression of men, And I will keep thy precepts.
135 פ Thy face cause thou to shine upon thy servant, And teach me thy statutes.
136 פ Rivers of waters run from my eyes, Because they have not kept thy law.

ץ [**Tsadde**.]

137 ץ Righteous art thou, O Jehovah! And right *are* thy judgments.
138 ץ Thou hast commanded righteousness *in* thy testimonies, And truth exceedingly.
139 ץ Consumed me hath my zeal, Because forgotten thy words have my adversaries.
140 ץ Refined *is* thy word exceedingly: And thy servant hath loved it.
141 ץ Small *am* I, and despised; [*Yet*] thy precepts I have not forgotten.
142 ץ Thy righteousness *is* righteousness for ever, And thy law is truth.
143 ץ Trouble and anguish have come upon me; *But* thy commandments *have been* my delights.
144 ץ The righteousness of thy testimonies *endureth* for ever; Make me to understand, and I shall live.

ק [**Koph**.]

145 ק I have cried with my whole heart; Answer me, O Jehovah! *And* thy statutes I will keep.
146 ק I have called upon thee, save me, And I will keep thy testimonies.
147 ק I have prevented the dawn of the morning, [833] and have cried: To thy word I have looked up.
148 ק Prevented have my eyes the watches *of the night*, To meditate upon thy word.

833

Literally, "I have prevented the twilight." — But see the Commentary.

149 ק My voice hear thou, according to thy mercy, O Jehovah According to thy judgment quicken me.

150 ק Drawn near have the pursuers of malice; From thy law they have departed.

151 ק Near art thou, O Jehovah! And all thy commandments *are* truth.

152 ק From the beginning I have known from thy testimonies, That for ever thou hast founded them.

ר [**Resh**.]

153 ר Behold my affliction, and rescue me; For thy law I have not forgotten.

154 ר Debate my cause, and redeem me; According to thy word quicken me.

155 ר Far from the ungodly is safety; Because thy statutes they have not sought.

156 ר Thy compassions *are* great, O Jehovah! According to thy judgments quicken me.

157 ר Many *are* my persecutors and my oppressors: From thy testimonies I have not declined.

158 ר I saw the perfidious, and chid them; Because thy word they have not kept.

159 ר Behold how thy commandments I have loved: According to thy clemency quicken me.

160 ר The beginning of thy word *is* truth; And to everlasting *is* all the judgment of thy righteousness.

ש [**Shin**.]

161 ש Princes have persecuted me without a cause Yet at thy word afraid hath been my heart.

162 ש Joyful am I over thy word, As he who hath found much spoil.

163 ש Deceit I *have* hated and abhorred; Thy law I *have* loved.

164 ש Seven times a day have I praised thee, Because of the judgments of thy righteousness.

165 ש Much peace have those who love thy law, And they have no stumbling-block.

166 ש I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah! And thy commandments I have done.

167 ש Kept hath my soul thy testimonies, And I have loved them exceedingly.

168 ש I have kept thy commandments and thy testimonies; For all my ways *are* before thee.

ת [**Thau**.]

169 ת Come let my cry into thy presence, O Jehovah! According to thy word give me understanding.

170 ת Come let my prayer into thy presence: According to thy word deliver me.

171 ת Speak shall my lips praise, When thou shalt have taught me thy statutes.

172 ת Speak shall my tongue of thy word; For all thy precepts are righteousness.

173 ת Let thy hand be to succor me; For thy commandments I have chosen.

174 ת I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah! And thy law *hath been* my delights.

175 ת Live let my soul, and let it praise thee; And let thy judgments succor me.

176 ת I have wandered like a lost sheep; Seek thy servant, for thy statutes I have not forgotten.

PSALM 120

A Song of Degrees

1 To Jehovah in my distress I cried, And he answered me.

2 O Jehovah! deliver my soul from the lip of falsehood, From the tongue of deceit.

3 What give thee, and what avail thee Shall the tongue of deceit?

4 The arrows of a strong *man* sharpened, With coals of junipers.

5 Alas for me! that I have been a sojourner in Meseeh, *And* have dwelt among the tents of Kedar.

6 Long dwelt hath my soul with him who hateth peace.

7 I [*am for*] peace; But when I speak, they [*are*] for war.

PSALM 121

A Song of Degrees

1 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains, Whence come shall my help.

2 My help *cometh* from Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.

3 He will not suffer thy foot to stumble; Slumber not shall thy guardian.

4 Behold! slumber not nor sleep Shall the guardian of Israel.

5 Jehovah *is* thy guardian; Jehovah *is thy* defense on thy right hand.

6 By day the sun shall not smite thee, Nor the moon by night.

7 Jehovah shall keep thee from all evil; He shall keep thy soul.

8 Jehovah shall keep thy going out and thy coming in, From this time, and for ever.

PSALM 122

A Song of Degrees Of David

1 I was glad when they said to me, “Into the house of Jehovah we will go.

2 “Our feet shall be standing in thy gates, O Jerusalem!”

3 Jerusalem built as a city, compact in itself together.

4 Thither ascended the tribes, the tribes of God, For a testimony to Israel, To celebrate the name of Jehovah.

5 For there have sat [834] thrones for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray ye for the peace of Jerusalem: Prosper may those who love thee!

7 Peace be within thy bulwark! Prosperity within thy towers!

8 For the sake of my brethren and my neighbors, I will say now, "Peace [*be*] within thee!"

9 For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God, I will seek good for thee.

PSALM 123

A Song of Degrees

1 To thee will I lift up mine eyes, [*O thou*] who dwellest in the heavens!

2 Behold! as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters; As the eyes of a handmaid *look* to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes [*look*] to Jehovah our God, Until he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O Jehovah! have mercy upon us; For we are exceedingly filled with reproach.

4 Exceedingly filled in itself is our soul With the mockery of the rich, With the contempt of the proud.

PSALM 124

A Song of Degrees. Of David

1 "But for Jehovah who was on our side" — Say now may Israel:

2 "But for Jehovah who was on our side, "When men rose up against us;

3 "Then alive had they swallowed us up, "When kindled was their wrath against us;

4 "Then the waters had overwhelmed us, "The torrent had gone over our soul:

5 "Then had gone over our soul the proud waters."

6 Blessed *be* Jehovah, Who gave us not for a prey to their teeth.

7 Our soul as a bird, hath been rescued [835] from the snare of the fowlers; The snare hath been broken, and we have been delivered.

8 Our help *is* in the name of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 125

834 In the French version it is, "for there are set."

835 "Is escaped." — *Fr.*

A Song of Degrees

1 They who confide in Jehovah *are as* mount Zion, *Which* shall not be removed, *but* shall abide for ever.

2 As the mountains *are* about Jerusalem, So Jehovah *is* round about his people, From henceforth, and for ever.

3 For rest not shall the scepter of the ungodly ones upon the lot of the just, Lest the just ones should put forth to iniquity their hands.

4 Do good, O Jehovah! to the good, And to *those who* are upright in their hearts.

5 But those who turn aside into their crooked paths, Jehovah shall make them walk with the workers of iniquity: *But there shall be* peace upon Israel.

PSALM 126

A Song of Degrees

1 When bring back did Jehovah the captivity of Zion, We were like those that dream.

2 Now filled with laughter *shall* be our mouth, And our tongue with exultation: Now shall they say among the heathen, "Great things Jehovah hath done for them."

3 Great things Jehovah hath done for us, *Whereof* we have been made glad.

4 Bring back, O Jehovah! our captivity, As rivers in the South.

5 They who sow in tears In exultation shall reap.

6 Going forth, he shall go and weep, Carrying the price of the seed: Returning he shall return with exultation, Bearing his sheaves.

PSALM 127

A Song of Degrees. Of Solomon

1 Except Jehovah build the house, In vain they labor that build it; Except Jehovah keep the city, In vain watcheth the watchman.

2 Vain *is it* for you early to hasten to rise, To go late to rest, To eat the bread of sorrows: *For* thus will he give to his beloved one sleep.

3 Lo! the heritage of Jehovah are children: The reward *which he bestows* is the fruit of the womb.

4 As arrows in the hand of a strong man, So *are* the sons of youth.

5 Blessed is the man who shall have filled his quiver with them; *For* they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

PSALM 128

A Song of Degrees

1 Blessed *is* the man who feareth Jehovah, Who walketh in his ways.

2 The labor of thy hands when thou shalt eat thou shalt be blessed, And it *shall be* well with thee.

3 Thy wife *shall be* as a vine fruitful on the sides of thy house: Thy children as plants of olives around thy table.

4 Lo! surely, thus blessed shall be the man who feareth Jehovah.

5 Bless thee shall Jehovah from Zion; And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 And thou shalt see thy children's children, *And* peace upon Israel.

PSALM 129

A Song of Degrees

1 "Often have they afflicted me from my youths" Say now let Israel:

2 "Often have they afflicted me from my youth; "Yet they have not prevailed against me.

3 "Upon my back ploughed have the ploughers; "They have made long their furrows.

4 "Jehovah, who is righteous, hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked."

5 Confounded and turned backward shall be all who hate Zion.

6 They shall be as the grass of the housetops, Which before it cometh forth is withered:

7 With which the mower hath not filled his hand, Nor his bosom he who gathereth handfuls.

8 Nor have they said who pass by, "The blessing of Jehovah *be* upon you, "We bless you in the name of Jehovah."

PSALM 130

A Song of Degrees

1 Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Jehovah!

2 O Lord! hear my voice; Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my prayers.

3 If iniquities thou shouldest mark, O God! O Lord! who shall stand?

4 For with thee is forgiveness that thou mayest be feared.

5 I have waited for Jehovah, waited hath my soul; And in his word have I hoped.

6 My soul [*hath waited*] for the Lord Before the watchers of the morning, the watchers of the morning.

7 But [836] hope let Israel in Jehovah; For with Jehovah *there is* mercy, And with him there is plenteous redemption.

8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

PSALM 131

836

This supplement is in the Latin version but not in the French.

A Song of Degrees. Of David

1 O Jehovah! my heart hath not been elated, Nor lifted up have been my eyes, Nor have I exercised myself in great matters, Or in things hidden from me.

2 If I have not framed [*or set*] and quieted my soul, Like one that is weaned from his mother, — [837] Like a child that is weaned is my soul upon me.

3 Hope shall Israel in Jehovah From henceforth, and for ever.

PSALM 132

A Song of Degrees

1 Remember, O Jehovah! David With all his affliction:

2 Who sware to Jehovah, [*Who*] vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:

3 "If I shall enter into the tabernacle of my house, "If I shall go up upon the covering of my bed,

4 "If I give sleep to my eyes, "To my eyelids slumber,

5 "Until I find a place for Jehovah, "Habitations for the mighty God of Jacob," — [838]

6 Lo! we heard of it at Ephratha; We found it in the fields of the wood.

7 We will enter into his habitations, We will worship at his footstool.

8 Arise, O Jehovah! into thy rest, Thou and the ark of thy strength.

9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, And let thy meek ones exult.

10 For the sake of David thy servant Turn not away the face of thy Christ.

11 Sworn hath Jehovah to David in truth, Nor will he turn from it: "Of the fruit of thy belly will I set upon thy throne.

12 "If thy children shall keep my covenant, "And my testimonies, which I will teach them; "Also their children for ever shall sit upon thy throne."

13 For chosen hath Jehovah Zion; He hath desired her for a habitation to himself.

14 "This is my rest for ever; "Here will I dwell, because I have loved her.

15 "Her provision blessing I will bless;" Her poor I will satisfy with bread.

16 "And her priests I will clothe with salvation; "And her merciful ones with exultation shall exult.

17 "There will I make to bud the horn of David: "I have prepared a lamp for my Christ.

837

These two lines which are David's oath are in the abrupt form in which the Jews were accustomed to swear.

838

These two verses have also the abrupt termination characteristic of the Jewish form of swearing.

18 "His enemies will I clothe with shame, "And upon him flourish shall his crown."

PSALM 133

A Song of Degrees. Of David

1 Behold! how good, and how becoming, That brethren should even dwell together!

2 Like the precious oil upon the head, Which descendeth [839] upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, Which descendeth upon the skirt of his garments.

3 Like the dew of Hermon, Which descendeth upon the mountains of Zion: For there commanded hath Jehovah the blessing, Life for evermore.

PSALM 134

A Song of Degrees

1 Behold! bless ye Jehovah, All ye servants of Jehovah! Who stand in the house of Jehovah nightly.

2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, And bless ye Jehovah.

3 May Jehovah bless thee out of Zion, [*Even he*] who hath made heaven and earth.

PSALM 135

Hallelujah

1 Praise ye the name of Jehovah; Praise [*it*] O ye servants of Jehovah!

2 Who stand in the house of Jehovah, [*And ye who stand*] in the courts of the house of our God.

3 Praise God; for good *is* Jehovah: Sing to his name; for it is pleasant:

4 For God hath chosen Jacob to himself, Israel for his own possession.

5 For I know that great is Jehovah, And *that* our God is above all gods.

6 All things which Jehovah pleaseth, he doeth in the heavens and on the earth, In the sea and in all the deeps.

7 Causing the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth: The lightnings for the rain he maketh, Bringing forth the wind out of his secret places.

8 He smote the first born of Egypt, From man even unto beast.

9 He sent signs and wonders in the midst of thee, O Egypt! On Pharaoh and on all his servants.

10 He smote great nations, And slew mighty kings.

11 Sihon, king of the Amorites, And Og the king of Basham, And all the kingdoms of Canaan.

12 And gave their land for an heritage, An heritage to Israel, his people.

839 "Descendit." — *Lat.* "Descend." — *Fr.*

13 O Jehovah! thy name *is* for ever; O Jehovah! thy memorial *is* from generation to generation.

14 For judge will Jehovah his people, And concerning his servants he will repent himself.

15 The images of the nations *are* silver and gold, The work of the hands of man.

16 A mouth have they, and they will not speak; [840] Eyes have they, and they will not see.

17 Ears have they, and they will not hear: Also, there is no breath in their mouth.

18 Like unto them are those who make them, *And* every one who trusteth in them.

19 O house of Israel! bless ye Jehovah; O house of Aaron! bless ye Jehovah;

20 O house of Levi! bless ye Jehovah; O ye who fear Jehovah! bless ye Jehovah.

21 Blessed *be* Jehovah out of Zion, Who dwelleth at Jerusalem. Hallelujah.

PSALM 136

1 Praise Jehovah, for *he is* good, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

2 Praise the God of gods, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

3 Praise the Lord of lords, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

4 Who hath done wonders great alone, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

5 Who hath made the heavens in wisdom, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

6 Who hath stretched out the earth above the waters, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

7 Who hath made the great lights, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

8 The sun for rule by day, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

9 The moon and stars for rule by night, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

10 Who smote the Egyptians in their first born, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

11 And brought out Israel from the midst of them, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

12 With a hand of strength and an arm stretched out, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

840

In the French version the verb for "speak" in this line; and the verbs for "see" and "hear" in the two next lines, are in the present tense.

13 Who divided the Red Sea into divisions, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

15 And cast Pharaoh and his host headlong into the Red Sea, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

16 And led his people through the wilderness, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

17 Who smote great kings, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

18 And slew renowned kings, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

19 Sihon, king of the Arnorites, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

20 And Og, the king of Bashan, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

21 And gave their land for an heritage, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

22 An heritage to Israel his servant, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

23 Who in our humiliation remembered us, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

24 And rescued us from our oppressors, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

25 Who giveth food to all flesh, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

26 Make acknowledgments to the God of heavens, For to everlasting *endureth* his mercy.

PSALM 137

1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, Yea we wept when we remembered thee, O Zion!

2 Upon the willows, in the midst thereof, We hanged our harps.

3 Then they required of us, they who carried us away captive, the words of a song, And, when we were in suspense, mirth, [*Saying*] Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

4 How shall we sing the song of Jehovah, In a strange land?

5 If I shall forget thee, O Jerusalem! Forget let my right hand [*its cunning.*]

6 Cleave let my tongue to my palate, If I do not remember thee, If I do not raise Jerusalem above my highest joy. [841]

7 Remember, O Jehovah! the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem: 'Who said, "Lay it bare — "Lay it bare, even to the foundations thereof."

8 O daughter of Babylon laid waste! Happy he who shall repay thee The retribution with which thou hast retributed us!

9 Happy he who shall take And dash thy little ones against the stones.

841 Literally, "above the head of my joy."

PSALM 138

Of David

1 I will celebrate thee with my whole heart; Before the gods! will sing psalms to thee.

2 I will worship *thee* towards the temple of thy holiness, And sing to thy name for thy mercy and for thy truth; For thou hast magnified above all *things* thy name by thy word.

3 In the day *when*, I cried *to thee*, then thou heardest me, Thou didst abundantly minister to me strength in my soul.

4 Celebrate thee, O Jehovah! let all the kings of the earth; For they have heard the words of thy mouth.

5 And let them sing in the ways of Jehovah, For great is the glory of Jehovah.

6 For high *is* Jehovah; yet the lowly he will regard; And being high will know afar off:

7 If I shall walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me; Against the wrath of my enemies thou wilt put forth thy hand, And save me shall thy right hand.

8 Jehovah will perform in me *his work*, O Jehovah! thy mercy is from everlasting; The works of thy hands thou wilt not forsake.

PSALM 139

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 O Jehovah! thou hast searched me and known *me*

2 Thou hast known my down sitting and my uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 My path and my lying down thou besiegest, And with all my ways thou art acquainted.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue [*But*] lo! O God! thou knowest it altogether.

5 Behind and before thou hast shut me up, And hast laid upon me thy hand.

6 Wonderful is *thy* knowledge above me; It is high, I cannot *attain* to it.

7 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? And whither from thy time shall I flee?

8 If I ascend up into the heavens, there thou art; If I lie down [842] in the sepulcher, behold! thou [*art there.*]

9 Should I take the wings of the morning, That I may dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

10 Even there thy hand shall lead me, And hold me shall thy right hand.

842

"If I make my bed" — *Fr.*

11 If I should say: "At least the darkness shall cover me; " "And the night shall be light for me;"

12 Even the darkness shall not hide from the And the night as the day shall shine, And the darkness as the light.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins; Thou hast covered me in the womb of my mother.

14 I will celebrate thee; for I have been fearfully and wonderfully made: [843] Marvelous are thy works, And my soul shall know them full well.

15 Not hidden is my strength from thee, Which thou hast made in secret: I was woven together in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 My shapelessness see did thine eyes; [844] In thy book all shall be written; They were formed *in many* days, And *there was* not one of them.

17 And towards me how precious are thy thoughts, O God! How great *are* the sums of them!

18 If I should count them; above the sand they shall be multiplied: I am awakened, and still I am with thee.

19 If thou shalt slay, O God! the wicked, Then ye men of bloods depart from me.

20 Who have spoken of thee wickedly: Taken thy name falsely have thy adversaries.

21 Thy haters, O Jehovah! shall not I hate? And with those that rise up against thee shall I not strive?

22 With perfect hatred I have hated them, As my enemies I have held them.

23 Search me, O God! and know my heart: Examine me and know my thoughts.

24 And know whether the way of wickedness be in me, And lead me in the way of this life.

PSALM 140

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David

1 Deliver me, O Jehovah! from the evil man: From the man of injuries do thou preserve me.

2 Who devise mischiefs in *their* heart; Daily do they congregate for wars.

3 Sharpened have they their tongue like a serpent: The poison of an asp is under their lips. Selah.

4 Keep me, O Jehovah! from the hands of the ungodly: From the man of injuries preserve me; Who plot to overthrow my goings.

843

Literally, "for terribly I have been made wonderful."

844

"Thine eyes did see me when I was yet without form." — *Fr.*

5 Laid have the proud a snare for me: And with cords they have spread a net: By the wayside traps have they set for me. Selah.

6 I said, O Jehovah! my God are thou: Listen, O Jehovah! to the voice of my supplication.

7 O Jehovah, my Lord! the strength of my salvation, Thou hast put a covering on my head in the day of arms.

8 Grant not, O Jehovah! the desires of the ungodly man: They have devised, consummate thou not, they shall be exalted. Selah.

9 [*As for*] the head of those who encompass me, Let the mischief of his lips cover him.

10 Fall upon them let coals with fire: He shall cast them into deep pits, They shall not rise again.

11 The man of tongue shall not be established in the earth: The man of violence, evil shall hunt him to banishments.

12 I have known that accomplish will Jehovah the judgment of the poor one, The judgment of the afflicted one.

13 Surely the righteous ones will celebrate thy name, Dwell shall the upright ones before thy face.

PSALM 141

A Psalm of David

1 O Jehovah! I have cried to thee: Haste thou to me: Listen to my voice when I cry to thee.

2 Directed let my prayer be as incense before thy face: [*Let*] the lifting up of my hands [*be*] as the sacrifice of the evening.

3 Set, O Jehovah! a watch to my mouth; Keep a guard upon the door of my lips.

4 Incline not my heart to an evil thing, To commit works of ungodliness with the men who work iniquity; And let me not eat of their dainties.

5 Smite me let the righteous man, [*it shall be*] a kindness; And let him chastise me, [*it shall be*] an oil that is precious, It shall not break my head: For yet also my prayer *shall be* in their calamities.

6 Cast down on stony places have been their judges: And they shall hear my words, for they are sweet.

7 As he who breaketh and cutteth on the earth, Scattered have been our bones at the mouth of the grave.

8 Because to thee, O Jehovah! my Lord! *are* my eyes, In thee I have hoped: do not leave destitute my soul.

9 Keep me from the hands of the snare which they have spread for me. From the nets of those who work iniquity.

10 Fall into his nets let the ungodly ones together, Until I escape.

PSALM 142

Maschil of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer

1 With my voice to, Jehovah I cried; With my voice to. Jehovah I made supplication.

2 I poured out before his face my meditation; My affliction before his face I declare.

3 When perplexed within me was my spirit, And thou knewest my path: In the way wherein I walked, they laid a snare for me.

4 On looking to the right hand, and beholding, None there was who would know me, Perish did refuge from me, [*There was*] no man seeking after my soul.

5 I cried to thee, O Jehovah! I said, Thou *art* my hope, My portion in the land of the living.

6 Attend to my cry, For under affliction I labor exceedingly: Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me.

7 Rescue from prison my soul, That I may celebrate thy name: Crown me shall the righteous ones, For thou shalt recompense me.

PSALM 143

A Psalm of David

1 O Jehovah! hear my prayer; Give ear to my supplication; In thy truth answer me, in thy righteousness.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant, For there shall not be justified in thy sight any living man.

3 For persecuted hath the enemy my soul; He hath prostrated on the earth my life; He hath set me in dark *places*, as the dead of an age.

4 And perplexed within me is my spirit Within me astonished is my heart.

5 I remembered the days of old, I meditated on all thy doings; Upon the work of thy hands I meditated.

6 I spread out my hearts to thee; My soul, as the earth without water, *is* to thee. Selah.

7 Hasten, answer me, O Jehovah! Fail doth my spirit: Hide not thy face from me, Because I shall be like to those who descend into the pit.

8 Cause me to hear in the morning thy mercy, For in thee have I hoped: Show me the way in which I may walk, For to thee have I lifted up my soul.

9 Deliver me from my enemies, O Jehovah! With thee have I hidden [*myself.*]

10 Teach me to do thy will, For thou *art* my God: Let thy good Spirit lead me into the right land.

11 Because of thy name, O Jehovah I thou wilt quicken me: In thy righteousness bring out of trouble my soul.

12 And in thy mercy thou wilt scatter my enemies, And wilt destroy all those who afflict my soul; Because I *am* thy servant.

PSALM 144

Of David

1 Blessed *be* Jehovah, my strength, Who teacheth my hands for the fight, My fingers for the battle.

2 My goodness, and my fortress, My citadel, my deliverer for me, My shield, and in him I have hoped, Who subdueth my people under me.

3 O Jehovah! what is man that thou acknowledgest him? The son of man that thou thinkest of him?

4 Man to vanity is like, His days [*are*] as a shadow that is passing.

5 O Jehovah! bow thy heavens and descend: Touch the mountains and they shall smoke.

6 Thunder forth thunderings and scatter them; Shoot out thy arrows, and destroy them.

7 Send thy hand from on high; Rescue me and deliver me from waters great, From the hand of the sons of the alien.

8 For their mouth hath spoken falsehood, And their right hand is a right hand of deceit.

9 O God! a song that is new I will sing to thee: Upon the nablum, upon the psaltery I will sing psalms to thee

10 Who givest salvation to kings, Who redeemest David his servant from the hurtful sword.

11 Redeem me, and rescue me, From the hand of the sons of the alien, Whose mouth hath spoken falsehood, And their right hand *is* a right hand of deceit.

12 Because our sons *are* as plants Which have grown up in their youth; Our daughters as corners polished After the similitude of a palace.

13 Our recesses full, Supplying all kinds of good things. Our sheep bringing forth thousands, [*Yea*] ten thousands in our streets.

14 Our oxen to the burden accustomed; No breach, nor going out, Nor cry in our streets.

15 Happy the people to whom it is so, To whom Jehovah is their God.

PSALM 145

Praise of David

1 I will exalt thee, my God, *my* King! And will bless thy name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I bless thee, And praise thy name for ever and ever.

3 Great *is* Jehovah, and to be praised greatly, And his greatness is incomprehensible.

4 Generation to generation shall praise thy works, And thy power they shall declare.

5 Upon the majesty of the glory of thy excellence, And upon the words of thy wonders, I will meditate.

6 And the might of thy terrible *works* shall they recount; And thy greatness I will declare.

7 The memory of the greatness of thy goodness they shall speak forth; And of thy righteousness they shall sing.

8 Gracious and compassionate *is* Jehovah, Slow to anger and great in clemency.

9 Good *is* Jehovah to all, And his compassions *are* over all his works.

10 Celebrate thee, O Jehovah! shall all thy works, And thy meek ones shall bless thee.

11 Of the glory of thy kingdom they shall tell, And of thy power they shall speak:

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, And the glory of the beauty of his kingdom.

13 Thy kingdom *is* a kingdom of all ages, And thy dominion is throughout generations of generations.

14 Uphold doth Jehovah all the falling, He raiseth up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all in thee do hope, And thou givest them their food in its season.

16 Thou openest thy hand And satisfiest every living *creature* by thy good pleasure.

17 Righteous *is* Jehovah in all his ways, And merciful in all his works.

18 Near *is* Jehovah to all who call upon him, To all who call upon him in truth.

19 The desire of those who fear him he will perform, And their cry he will hear, told he will save then,.

20 Keep doth Jehovah all who love him, And all the wicked he will destroy.

21 The praise of Jehovah speak shall my mouth: And bless shall all flesh his holy name for ever and ever.

PSALM 146

Hallelujah

1 Praise, O my soul! Jehovah.

2 I will praise Jehovah in my life; I will sing psalms to my God, while I have being.

3 Confide not in princes, *Nor* in the son of man, in whom there is not help.

4 Go forth shall his breath, He shall return to his earth, In that day perish shall his thoughts.

5 Blessed *is* he who hath for his help the God of Jacob; Whose hope is in Jehovah, his God:

6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them: Who keepeth truth for ever:

7 Who doeth judgment for those who are unrighteously oppressed: Who giveth bread to the hungry: Jehovah looseth the prisoners;

8 Jehovah enlighteneth the blind; Jehovah raiseth up those who are bowed down; Jehovah loveth the righteous;

9 Jehovah keepeth the strangers; The orphan and the widow he succoureth; And the way of the ungodly he will destroy.

10 Reign shall Jehovah for ever: Thy God, O Zion, *is* from generation to generation. Hallelujah.

PSALM 147

1 Praise ye God; For it is a good *thing* to sing psalms to our God, For *it is* pleasant, comely *is* praise.

2 Build up Jerusalem doth Jehovah, The dispersed of Israel he will gather.

3 He healeth the contrite in heart; He bindeth their sorrows. [845]

4 He counteth the multitude of the stars: To each of them names doth he give.

5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power, His understanding is infinite.

6 Raise up the afflicted ones doth Jehovah, He casteth down the ungodly ones to the ground.

7 Sing to Jehovah in praise, Sing psalms to our God upon the harp.

8 Who covereth the heavens with clouds, Who prepareth for the earth rain, Who maketh to spring up grass upon the mountains,

9 Who giveth to the cattle their food, To the young ones [846] of the ravens which cry to him.

10 Nor in the strength of the horse will he take pleasure, Nor in the legs of man will he delight.

11 Delight doth Jehovah in those who fear him, [*In those*] who hope in his mercy.

12 Celebrate, O Jerusalem! Jehovah; Praise thy God, O Zion!

13 For he strengtheneth the bars of thy gates; He blesseth thy children in the midst of thee.

14 Who maketh in thy borders peace; With the fatness of wheat he satisfieth thee.

15 When he sendeth forth his word upon the earth, Very swiftly run doth his word.

16 Who giveth snow *white* as wool; The hoarfrost as ashes he scattereth.

17 He casteth forth his ice as morsels: Before his cold who shall stand?

18 He shall send his word: red shall melt them: Blow shall his breath, *and* flow shall the waters.

19 He announceth his words to Jacob, his statutes and his judgments to Israel.

845

"Their wounds." — *Fr.*

846

Literally, "to the sons."

20 He hath not done so to every nation, And his judgments he hath not made known to them. Hallelujah.

PSALM 148

Hallelujah

1 Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens; Praise him in the heights.

2 Praise him, all ye his angels! Praise him, all ye his armies!

3 Praise him, ye Sun and Moon! Praise him, all ye shining stars!

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens! And ye waters above the heavens!

5 Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For he commanded and they were created:

6 And he established them for ever: For ever he hath set for them a decree, and it shall not pass beyond.

7 Praise Jehovah, ye *creatures* from the earth! Dragons, and all deeps!

8 Fire and hail, snow and ice! Wind of storm, executing his word!

9 Mountains, and all hills! The tree bearing fruit, and all cedars!

10 Wild beasts, and all cattle! Reptile, and winged birds!

11 Kings of the earth, and all peoples! Princes, and all judges of the earth!

12 Young men, and also maidens! Old men with children!

13 Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For high is his name alone; His praise is above the earth and heavens.

14 And he hath exalted the horn of his people: Praise *is* to all his merciful ones, To the children of Israel, A people which is near to him. Hallelujah.

PSALM 149

Hallelujah

1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new: His praise *is* in the assembly of the merciful ones.

2 Rejoice let Israel in his Maker; Let the children of Zion exult in their king:

3 Let them praise his name on the pipe: On the timbrel and the harp let them sing psalms to him.

4 For taken pleasure hath Jehovah in his people: He will glorify the poor ones unto salvation.

5 Exult let the merciful ones in glory; Let them shout with joy on their couches.

6 The exaltations of God are in their mouth, And a sword of two edges in their hand;

7 To execute vengeance on the heathen, Chastisements on the nations:

8 To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron:

9 To execute upon them the judgment written. This honor is to all his merciful ones. Hallelujah.

PSALM 150

Hallelujah
1 Praise God in his sanctuary; Praise him in the firmament of his power.
2 Praise him in his might; Praise him for the multitude of his greatness:
3 Praise him with sound of trumpet; Praise him with nablum and harp.
4 Praise him with timbrel and pipe; Praise him with strings and organ.
5 Praise him with cymbals of sound; Praise him with cymbals of shouting.
6 Let every thing that breatheth praise God. Hallelujah.

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