

# The New Psalter

OF PIUS XII IN LATIN AND ENGLISH,  
WITH INTRODUCTIONS, NOTES  
AND SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

*By*

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## PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

We are pleased to present here, with English translation, the text of the New Latin Psalter ordered by His Holiness Pope Pius XII and published with his endorsement and approval, together with Introductions, general and particular, to the Psalms, notes and Spiritual Reflections on each Psalm.

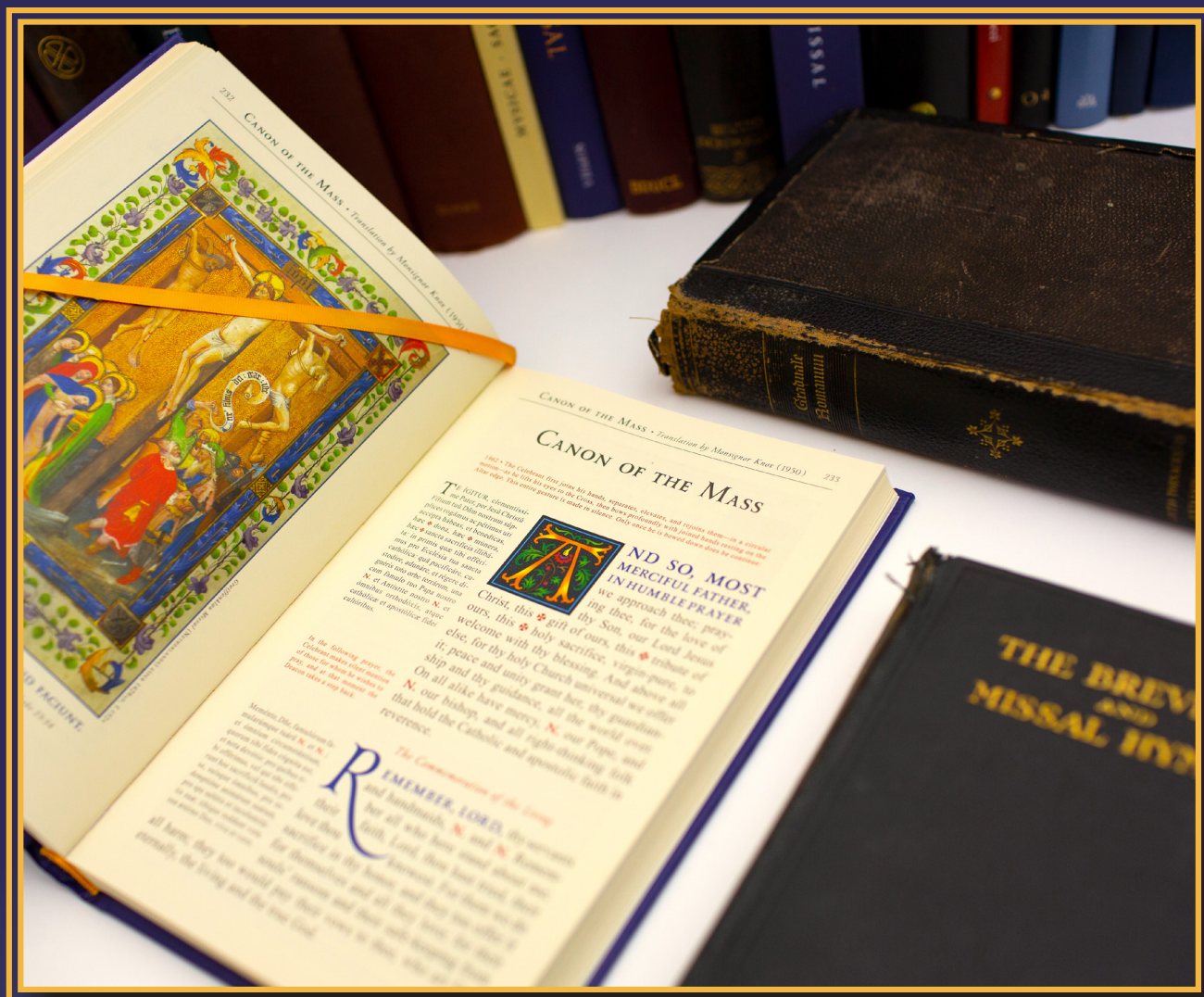
The substitution of the New Psalter for the Vulgate has made necessary many changes in the Introductions and the notes. In other respects the work remains substantially unchanged.

The New Psalter is from the most recent critical edition of the Hebrew Massoretic text, supplemented and corrected by thorough recourse to the best ancient versions, such as the Septuagint, the Peshitta or Syriac version, the Old Latin, the Vulgate, and St. Jerome's own translation of the Psalms from the Hebrew. Hence we now have a Latin text of the Psalms which takes us back to the Hebrew of the second or third century B.C., and which is said to be the best available with our present knowledge.

And this new translation of the Psalter is expressed in remarkably simple, clear Latin, as classical as possible for the subject matter and Scriptural usage. In translating this new text, therefore, we have endeavored to keep as closely to the Latin as good English would seem to permit. The more closely we can keep in translation to a good text of any part of Sacred Scripture, like this New Latin Psalter, the nearer we are to the inspired words that came from the original sacred writer and to the message of God's Holy Spirit; and that, after all, is what every sincere reader of Holy Scripture desires.

C. J. C.





**P**ERHAPS the most beautiful and accessible hand-missal ever published, the **Saint Edmund Campion Missal** stands alone among Extraordinary Form missals, serving as an elegant and dignified congregational book presenting the Traditional Latin Mass. This missal is lavishly designed, with large fonts, beautiful artwork, photographs, and Gregorian chant in just 672 pages. English translations by Father F. X. LASANCE (d. 1946) were scrupulously reproduced, providing a guide as elegant as it is literal. This third edition (2022) includes many improvements to make it more user-friendly, including a reduction in both weight and page count (so it is less bulky to handle). Yet despite the page reduction, important additions were made, such as the inclusion of the **1950 Holy Week** that utilizes a remarkable and recently-discovered English translation by Msgr. Ronald Knox (d. 1957). The **1962 Holy Week** is also included, as well as the ancient Roman Rite verses for Offertory and Communion—praised by Pope Pius XII—which no other handmissal reproduces except this one.

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## THE PSALMS

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Let it be observed from the outset that the purpose of this work is to give to English-speaking priests, students, and intelligent readers generally, all that seems necessary and desirable for a *practically* thorough understanding and appreciation of the Psalms; or at least to enable priests and students, and all others who may use these inspired poems, to perceive more readily something of their rich and varied meaning, their surpassing beauty and enduring wisdom, their endless application to every phase and condition of the spiritual life of men for all time. Purely academic questions and technical discussions, therefore, especially about disputed points and matters of little or no useful importance, have been omitted from this General Introduction and from the Special Introductions to and the Notes on the individual Psalms that follow, those speculative problems and less directly pertinent matters being left to the judgment of the professor in the lecture room and to writers of more exhaustive commentaries. Accordingly, we shall here try to be brief and to the point.

#### 1. The Position of the Psalter in the Canon.

The Psalter, or Book of Psalms, belongs to the third division of the Hebrew Old Testament, called the *Writings* or *Hagiographa*. From very early times the Jewish Church arranged the canonical Books of the Hebrew Bible as follows: (a) *the Law*, that is, the five Books of Moses; (b) *the Prophets*, embracing Josue, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel and the twelve minor Prophets; (c) *the Writings* or *Hagiographa*, which included Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Esdras-Nehemias and the two books of Paralipomenon (Chronicles).

In the time of our Lord the Psalms apparently occupied the first place among the Writings and gave the name to that group of Books, as we gather from Luke 24:44; and this order has been retained in all printed Hebrew Bibles and in the majority of Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible. There is, however, no certain tradition as to the exact position of the



Psalms among the Writings, and in the versions of the Old Testament the Writings themselves frequently change places with the prophetic books. Thus, in the Septuagint (LXX) and Latin Vulgate the Writings are put before the books called the *Prophets*; and, whereas the Psalms are the first of the Writings in the LXX as found in the Vatican manuscript (B), they follow Job in the Vulgate.

## 2. Name and Number of the Psalms.

The word *psalm* means a *song* to be sung to a musical accompaniment. The term is from the Greek *ψαλμός*, which is a fairly accurate rendering of the Hebrew word *mizmor* (signifying *melody*). At an early date the Book of Psalms was called by the Jews *Tehillim* (*Praises*) or *Sepher Tehillim* (*Book of Praises*). St. Jerome calls it *Sephar Thallim*, which he renders in Latin by *Volumen Hymnorum*. In the LXX or Greek Bible the book was known by the title *Ψαλμοὶ* (*Psalms*) or *Ψαλτήριον* (*Psalter*). Following the Greek text, the Latin Vulgate has *Psalmi*, *Liber psalmorum*. The official title given the Book of Psalms by the Council of Trent was *Psalterium Davidicum centum quinquaginta psalmorum* (Sess. IV, Decretum de Can. Script.).

There are 150 canonical Psalms, which, however, have not the same numbering throughout in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Psalter. The Latin Vulgate follows the Greek numbering, which is also reflected in our English Douay Version. The Protestant Authorized and Revised Versions follow the numbering of the Hebrew Psalter. The relations, therefore, of the Greek and Hebrew Psalters are as follows:

Psalms		Psalms
Greek, 1-8	=	Hebrew, 1-8
Greek, 9	=	Hebrew, 9-10
Greek, 10-112	=	Hebrew, 11-113
Greek, 113	=	Hebrew, 114-115
Greek, 114-115	=	Hebrew, 116
Greek, 116-145	=	Hebrew, 117-146
Greek, 146-147	=	Hebrew, 147
Greek, 148-150	=	Hebrew, 148-150

Hereafter in this work at the beginning of each Psalm is given the number of the Psalm as found in the Greek (LXX), Latin (Vulg.) and Douay Versions, with the number of the same Psalm in the Hebrew or Massoretic text and in the Authorized and Revised (R. V.) Versions enclosed in brackets.

## 3. Division of the Psalter.

The Jews divided the Psalter into five Books, the first four of which are terminated with a similar doxology ending, *Fiat, fiat*. Psalm 150 is a grand doxology which terminates the fifth Book and brings the whole Psalter to a fitting close. It is disputed whether or not the fourth doxology is a part of Psalm 105. The division of the books is as follows:

Book I	embraces Psalms	1-40	( 1-41 );
Book II	embraces Psalms	41-71	( 42-72 );
Book III	embraces Psalms	72-88	( 73-89 );
Book IV	embraces Psalms	89-105	( 90-106 );
Book V	embraces Psalms	106-150	( 107-150 ).

According to Jewish tradition, the Psalter was divided into five Books in order to correspond to the five Books of the Law of Moses; but it is far more likely that this division was due to the fact that separate collections of Psalms were made by different editors at different times, and that these various collections were eventually put together. This latter opinion receives special support: (a) from the repetition of certain Psalms in different Books—for example, Psalm 13 of Book I is repeated in Book II as Psalm 52, Psalm 39:14 sqq., appears as Psalm 69 in Book II, Psalm 107 in Book V is a combination of Psalms 56:8-12, and 59:7-14, of Book II; (b) from the end of Vulg. Psalm 71—"Finished are the prayers (or praises) of David"—which indicates a lack of knowledge on the part of the editor regarding the Psalms attributed to David in Books III-V; (c) from distinct groups of similar Psalms, such as the Gradual Psalms (119-133), the Asaphite Psalms (49, 72-82), the Korahite Psalms (41-48, 83-88), etc.; (d) from the incorporation in different Books of certain Psalms which do not belong to any group.

Besides the division of the Psalms into Books, which shows the growth and formation of the Psalter, there are other divisions or classifications which help us to understand the Psalms themselves. Thus, from a literary point of view we may classify the Psalms as follows: (a) *Hymns*, the chief purpose of which is to sing the praises of God and celebrate His glory (e.g., Psalms 8, 18, 23, 28, etc.); (b) *Prayer Psalms*, either of petition or thanksgiving (e.g., Psalms 19, 26, 29, 43, 84, etc.); (c) *Religious Lyrics* in which the Psalmist pours out his soul to God in adoration, or joy, or reverent reflection (e.g., Psalms 51, 83, 90, 121, etc.); (d) *Liturgical Psalms*, which were written for or adapted to the needs of Jewish feasts and services (e.g., Psalms 66, 104, 117, 133-135, 148-150); (e) *Alphabetical or Acrostic Psalms*, in which each verse or group of verses begins with consecutive letters of the Hebrew Alphabet (e.g.,



Psalms 9, 24, 33, 36, 110, 111, 118, 144). This last division is artificial rather than literary, and is intended, perhaps, to aid the memory.

From the viewpoint of their content or subject matter, we can here enumerate only the principal groups into which the Psalms may be divided, so numerous and varied are the themes they treat. Thus, we have: (a) *Nature Psalms*, which extoll the power and majesty of God as revealed in the physical world (e.g., Psalms 8, 18, 28, etc.); (b) *Historical Psalms*, which, dealing with past events in Israel's history, are intended as a means of warning or inspiration to the people (e.g., Psalms 45, 77, 104-106, 113, 134, etc.); (c) *Didactic Psalms*, which afford moral teaching and religious counsel regarding various subjects and problems of life (e.g., Psalms 36, 48, 49, 72, etc.); (d) *Messianic Psalms*, which treat of the Messiah as King, of His universal rule, His priesthood, His sufferings, His glorification, etc., either *directly* (as in Psalms 2, 21, 44, 71, 109, etc.) or *indirectly* (as when they refer immediately to some person, like David or Solomon, but who is a type of the Messiah); (e) *Passion Psalms*, which portray the sorrows and sufferings of the afflicted Messiah (e.g., Psalms 21, 45, 68, 108, etc.); (f) *Imprecatory Psalms*, which contain curses upon the enemies of God and of God's people (e.g., Psalms 34, 51, 53-58, 63, 67, etc.; see Introduction to Psalm 34); (g) *Penitential Psalms*, which express sentiments of sorrow and contrition for sin (e.g., Psalms 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, 142, and many more).

#### 4. The Titles of the Psalms.

In the Hebrew Psalter all the Psalms have titles save thirty-nine, and in the Graeco-Latin Psalter only Psalms 1 and 2 are without title. These superscriptions or titles differ widely as to length and character, and those of the Hebrew text often disagree with the titles in the versions, the Greek, Latin, Syriac or Peshitta, the Targums and the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. Even the titles of the LXX and Vulgate are not always the same. Many titles are so obscure that their meaning can only be conjectured; but as a rule Psalm titles indicate one or more of the following: (a) authorship of the Psalm; (b) historical occasion of the Psalm; (c) musical setting or liturgical use of the Psalm; (d) the kind of poem to which the Psalm belongs.

(a) According to the testimony of the titles more than half the Psalms should be assigned to David as author, and there is no valid reason for rejecting the authority of this testimony, because (i) the titles are all very ancient, being so old that their traditional meaning was often unknown or uncertain to the translators of the Hebrew Psalter into Greek

(LXX) in the third century B.C.; (ii) Jewish and Christian tradition has always understood David to be the author of those Psalms whose titles indicate him as their author; (iii) the Old Testament, apart from the Psalter, affords abundant evidence as to David's skill as a musician and a poet; it shows him to have been a king, a leader of armies, a diplomat and a man whose strong and complex character fitted him to produce the Psalms ascribed to him; (iv) our Lord and the Apostolic Church referred to David as the author of certain Psalms, thus accepting the traditional authority which the titles of those Psalms reflected.

Besides seventy-three Psalms in the Massoretic text and fourteen more in the LXX and Vulgate which bear the name of David, there are many more whose titles give us other proper names. Thus, for example, we find *Moses* in Psalm 89; *Solomon* in Psalms 71 and 126; *Sons of Korah* (*Core*) in Psalms 41-48, 83, 84; *Asaph* in Psalms 49, 72-82; *Heman* in Psalm 87; *Ethan* in Psalm 88, etc.

(b) The historical occasion is indicated in the titles of thirteen Davidic Psalms, of which Psalms 7, 23, 51, 53, 55, 56, 58, 141 refer to the period of David's persecution by Saul; Psalm 17, to the climax of his reign; Psalm 50, to his fall and repentance; Psalm 59, to the Syro-Ammonite war; Psalms 3 and 62, to his flight from Absalom.

(c) Especially obscure are the titles that refer to the musical setting of a Psalm. Thus, for example, we find prefixed to fifty-seven Psalms the Hebrew expression *lamenasseah* (LXX, εἰς τὸ τέλος; Vulg., *in finem*), which most probably means "For the choir-master." It seems to have designated an official collection of songs in charge of the chief singer. Other terms refer to the kind of musical instrument to be used in producing the Psalm; some indicate the character or pitch of the music; still others, by referring to the first words of some well-known song, show the melody to which the Psalm was to be sung.

The Hebrew word *selah* is also a musical term, and, though it does not occur in the titles of the Psalms, it is found seventy-one times in the Hebrew Psalter, nearly always at the divisions of a Psalm, as an interlude before the introduction of some new thought. Its meaning is very uncertain. The word does not appear in the Vulgate.

The liturgical use of Psalms is indicated by a number of titles—such as "A Song of Ascents" in Psalms 119-133, "In commemoration" in Psalms 37 and 69, "A canticle for the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple" in Psalm 29.

(d) Not a few titles indicate the poetic characteristic of a Psalm. Thus, the term *Mizmor* (rendered *psalm*) is found in the titles of fifty-



seven Psalms, and means a song to be sung to the accompaniment of instrumental music. *Shir* (a song) occurs in thirty Psalm titles, and is applied to both sacred and profane songs. In thirteen titles we find *Mas-kil*, which most probably means a *skilful song*, or a *meditation*. Six titles have *Miktam*, which is thought most likely to mean a *golden psalm*, artistic in form and precious in meaning. Psalm 7 has *Shiggayon*, which is derived from a verb that means *to wander*, and seems, therefore to mean a dithyrambic ode with a wild, wandering rhythm. *Tephillah* (a prayer) is the title to five Psalms. *Tehillah* (a praise) is the title of only one Psalm (144).

From the foregoing it is sufficiently clear that the titles of the Psalms are of very great value in helping us to determine the authors, collections, historical occasions, musical settings and liturgical uses of the Psalms. If they were not written by the authors of the Psalms, they at least represent a very venerable Jewish tradition, older than the Septuagint (cfr. Decision of the Biblical Commission, May 1, 1910). They are not, however, given as a part of the Psalms in the Breviary Office, and it is not certain that they are to be regarded as belonging to the inspired Scriptures. On this last point Dr. T. E. Bird in his excellent *Commentary on the Psalms* (vol. I, p. 24) terminates his survey of the question by saying: "It is the Psalms, therefore, that are inspired and not the superscriptions attached to them." Still, it must be admitted that the older Catholic authorities, as a rule, believed the Psalm titles to be a part of the inspired Word of God. In the work that follows here we have given them in Latin and English, referring all further discussion as to their meaning and importance to the professor in the lecture room, or to the articles on "Psalms" and "Psalm-Titles" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vigouroux's *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*, to *The Titles of the Psalms, Their Nature and Meaning Explained* by J. W. Thirtle (New York, 1905), and to the other works on the Psalms cited at the end of this General Introduction.

### 5. The Authorship and Canonicity of the Psalms.

Both Jewish tradition and Patristic and medieval theological authority disagree as to the authorship of the Psalms—whether, namely, they were written all by David or by David and several other authors; but from what has been said above on the titles of the Psalms we are warranted in concluding that David was the principal author of the Psalter. The Church has come to no definite decision as to the exact extent of Davidic authorship in the Psalms, but a Decree of the Biblical Commission of May 1, 1910, makes clear the following points: (a) it is not necessary to main-

tain that David was the sole author of the Psalms; (b) it cannot be prudently denied that David was the principal author of the Psalms; (c) especially it cannot be denied that David was the author of those Psalms, which either in the Old or in the New Testament are cited under his name (such as Psalms 2, 15, 17, 31, 68, 109). In formulating this Decree the Commission has been influenced, as it says, by the following considerations: (a) the not infrequent testimonies of Sacred Scripture to David's natural skill, enlightened by a special gift of the Holy Spirit, for the writing of religious songs; (b) the institutions founded by him for the liturgical singing of Psalms; (c) the attribution to him of Psalms in the Old and New Testaments and in the titles fixed from antiquity to the Psalms; (d) the consensus of opinion among the Jews, the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church.

Besides David, the Psalm titles mention as authors Asaph (Pss. 49, 72-82), the Sons of Korah (Pss. 41-48, 83, 84, 86, 87), Moses (Ps. 89), Solomon (Pss. 71, 126), and Ethan (Ps. 88).

All Christians admit the canonicity of our one hundred and fifty Psalms, and all reject Psalm 151 of the Septuagint as a later and spurious addition to the Psalter.

### 6. The Date and Text of the Psalter.

Modern non-Catholic criticism places the composition of nearly all the Psalms after the Babylonian exile (i.e., after 536 B.C.). Critics who hold this view claim to be guided by internal evidence alone, and for their argumentation they take for granted especially two assumptions that are not at all established beyond dispute: (a) that our Massoretic text is the original diction of the Psalms, and (b) that the Graf-Wellhausen explanation of the composition of the Hexateuch is certain (see Dr. Bird's *Commentary on the Psalms*, I, 39 sqq.).

The best Catholic critics maintain that the great majority, if not all, of the Psalms were written between the time of David (about 1000 B.C.) and some date not quite certain following the exile in Babylon. We are not forbidden to bring this latter date down as far as the Machabean era (167 B.C.) for a few Psalms, though there is no convincing proof that any of the Psalms are Machabean. Certainly, the larger part of the Psalter belongs to the earlier period, as both internal and external evidence proves. But we may freely admit that, saving their inspiration, the Psalms have undergone successive redactions throughout their long history—that some of them have been split up, or joined together, or otherwise slightly changed in order to adapt them to liturgical and other pur-



poses and better fit them to historical circumstances, and that the original text has to some extent inevitably suffered at the hands of copyists and editors.

It may be admitted as practically certain that Hebrew was the original language of the Psalms, but it is inevitable that a great many minor differences must exist between the Massoretic text of the Psalms as we have it today and the original Hebrew in which they were first set down. These differences would be due to the following circumstances:

(a) During the Babylonian captivity the Jews learned the Aramaic language, which was much different from their own Hebrew and was written in the Aramaic or square script, instead of the old Canaanite or Phoenician script in which all their other Scriptures had been written. The result was that they so forgot their original language and method of writing that after the exile, during the time of Nehemias (about 400 B.C.), it was found necessary to transcribe the Scriptures into the Aramaic or square alphabet, and to make Aramaic translations or paraphrases of them for the use of the people in the synagogue services. Now, it is humanly impossible that scribes could have made this elaborate transcription from one alphabet to another without mistakes, especially since there are many letters in both scripts which it is hard to distinguish.

(b) As both the old Canaanite and the Aramaic alphabets consisted of consonants only, no one could read the original Hebrew text who was not familiar with its traditional interpretation. Vowel-points, such as we have in the present Massoretic text, were added only about the sixth or seventh century of our era by the Massoretes; and even these sincere scholars, who did their best to discover and hand down the best traditional reading of the Hebrew text of their time, were after all fallible men and doubtless made many mistakes.

(c) The early Hebrew text was written without any distinction or separation of words or sentences.

These considerations will help us to understand the lack of uniformity in the textual tradition of the Hebrew Psalter in pre-Christian times, the necessity of the work of the Massoretes begun in the second century of our era to produce a critical and fixed text of the Hebrew Bible, and the differences that exist between the Massoretic text and the Septuagint translation of the Psalms. And yet, while the Septuagint translators followed a traditional reading of the Hebrew different from that adopted by the Massoretes, and while the oldest Massoretic manuscript we have does not go back beyond the ninth century of our era, there is no considerable difference between the reading of the Hebrew adopted by the Mas-

soretes as it has come down to us and the Hebrew texts used by St. Jerome, Aquila, Origen and the Targums. Thus, we can say that our existing Massoretic text of the Psalter is practically the same as the Hebrew text of the Psalms that was current in the second century after Christ.

### 7. Versions of the Psalter.

(a) *The Targums*.—As said above, after the return of the Jewish captives from Babylon (about 536 B.C.) Hebrew gradually ceased to be a spoken language in Palestine, though it continued to be used by the scholars and scribes; about 400 B.C., the common people generally could no longer read or understand it. Hence, at the regular reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue it became necessary to have, at first, Aramaic interpreters to explain to the worshippers what was read in Hebrew, and later Aramaic translations or paraphrases of the Scriptures themselves (called *targumim*). This was the origin of the *Targums* or Aramaic Version of the Old Testament. It is rather a paraphrase than a translation.

(b) *The Septuagint*.—As the Targums became necessary after the exile for Aramaic-speaking Jews in Palestine, so at a little later date (towards the end of the fourth century B.C.), when through the conquests of Alexander the Great Greek had become the popular tongue in the Hellenistic world, it was found needful to provide a Greek translation of the Old Testament for the many thousands of loyal Jews outside of Palestine, and especially in Egypt, who spoke and understood only Greek. This work was begun about 250 B.C. by Jewish scholars who also knew Greek, and was completed about 100 B.C. The Greek translation thus produced was called the *Septuagint*, from the unauthentic tradition that it was made in Egypt by seventy-two Jewish scholars imported from Jerusalem, who produced the work in seventy-two days.

Unfortunately, the authors of the Septuagint were masters neither of Greek nor of Hebrew. In fact, they seem at times to be more familiar with Aramaic than Hebrew, and were in many respects ignorant of the elegancies and vast possibilities of expression embodied in the Greek tongue. They aimed at a fidelity and slavish accuracy which, while often doing violence to the genius of both Greek and Hebrew, has the advantage of enabling scholars now to see through their work the Hebrew text which they used. In purely historical and prosaic parts they did well, but when dealing with highly poetical books like the Psalter they were not infrequently seriously at fault. Their greatest failure was perhaps in rendering the Hebrew verb. Unlike Greek, Hebrew has only two tenses, perfect and imperfect—if they can be called tenses at all, since



they do not refer directly to time but to the completeness or incompleteness of action. An action which is regarded as complete, whether in the present, past or future, is expressed in Hebrew by the perfect tense; and, contrariwise, the imperfect has reference to incompleteness of action, whether in the present, past or future. Ignoring this character of the Hebrew verb, the Septuagint writers usually translated the Hebrew perfect by the Greek aorist (indeterminate past), and the Hebrew imperfect by the Greek future. The confusion thus arising is obvious.

Moreover, the Septuagint writers deliberately toned down certain bold expressions in the Hebrew referring to the Deity (such as "rock," "shield," fortress," etc.), and replaced them by words that gave the meaning in what they considered more reverent terms (like "refuge," "helper," etc.). And the personal name of the God of Israel, *Yahweh*, they translated by the general name, *Lord*. But perhaps in this last instance they were simply conforming to a Jewish tradition already existing, according to which *Yahweh* was not pronounced in the reading of the Scriptures, the term *Adonai* (*Lord*) being substituted for it. On the whole, however, the Septuagint text of the Psalter is very good, and superior in many places to the Massoretic text.

(c) *Other Greek Versions*.—Translated into the popular Greek of the period, the Septuagint in time became the Bible of the whole Greek-speaking world and was well known in Palestine, where in the time of our Lord Greek was commonly spoken along with Aramaic. In fact, the Septuagint was also the Bible of the early Christians outside of Palestine, and was the text of the Scriptures chiefly used by the Apostles, as we see from their writings. When, therefore, doctrinal controversies began to arise between Christians and Jews, the latter, noticing the differences that existed between their Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Bible of the Christians, set about producing Greek translations of their own which would be a more faithful rendering of the Hebrew. Thus, from about the beginning of the second century of our era to the first part of the third century several non-Christian Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures were made. The first, by Aquila, a Jewish proselyte, was so slavish that the Hebrew text on which it was based could be easily discovered. Theodotion, a Jew of Ephesus, made the second, which was really nothing more than a revision of the Septuagint in the light of the standardized Hebrew text. A third translation, more free and elegant, was made by Symmachus, an Ebionite. Somewhat later perhaps, but before the time of Origen (A.D. 185-253), three other Greek versions of the Old Testament, in whole or in part, were written, which from the works of Origen are known as the *Quinta*, *Sexta* and *Septima*. We know

nothing further of the *Septima*, and of all those other Greek versions only fragments have come down to us.

The Septuagint in the third century appeared to be greatly in need of revision, and the task was undertaken and completed by Origen. This great scholar, taking the received Hebrew text as his guide, endeavored to bring the Septuagint into harmony with it by a study of all the existing Greek versions. The outcome of his labors was his monumental work known as the *Hexapla*, which contained in six parallel columns: (i) the current Hebrew text; (ii) the Hebrew transliterated into Greek letters; (iii) Aquila's version; (iv) the version of Symmachus; (v) Origen's own revision of the Septuagint; (vi) Theodotion's version. The *Hexapla* was afterwards placed in the library of Pamphilus at Caesarea in Palestine, and was there consulted by St. Jerome in the fourth century. Only fragments of this gigantic work have come down to us.

(d) *The Syriac Version*.—This translation is also known as the *Peshitta*, which means *simple* or *literal*. It seems to have been written at Edessa in the second century A.D., and was a translation from the Hebrew. Its Psalter bears a close resemblance to the Septuagint, with which the Peshitta was corrected.

(e) *Latin Versions*.—The first Latin version of the Old Testament was made from the Septuagint, probably in northern Africa or in Rome about the middle of the second century A.D. and was called the *Old Latin*, *Vetus Itala* or *Vulgate*. The Psalter of this Old Latin Version, of which various copies or recensions appear to have been made, was twice revised by St. Jerome. The first revision, made at the request of Pope Damasus I about 383, was known as the *Roman Psalter*, and was adopted in Rome and used throughout Italy until the time of Pius V (1566-1572). In fact, it is still in use at St. Peter's in Rome; and in our Breviary the *Invitatorium* at Matins, the Antiphons, Versicles and Responses, as well as the Psalm verses in the Missal, are from this Roman Psalter. St. Jerome's second revision of the Old Latin Psalter, made about 387, was adopted in France, and became known as the *Gallican Psalter*. The Vulgate Psalter is according to this second revision. Some years later St. Jerome translated the Psalms directly from the Hebrew, and this work is called the *Psalterium juxta Hebraeos Hieronymi*. It is an excellent work, reflecting a Hebrew text very similar to our Massoretic text, but so far has never superseded in popularity the Gallican Psalter. In our notes on the Psalms we have used Dr. J. M. Harden's splendid edition of this work (Dublin, 1922). As regards the New Latin Psalter of Pope Pius XII, see Preface to this edition of our work.



## 8. The Poetic Form and Beauty of the Psalms.

(a) *Poetic Form*.—Hebrew poetry is very different in nature from the poetry of Western languages. Its rhythm is evident to all, but in what does it consist? It is not in rhyme, for rarely and apparently never of set purpose do the verses of a Psalm end with the same sound. And if there exists any meter in the Psalms, its character is so difficult that scholars are agreed neither as to its presence nor as to its form. It seems more probable that the Psalms possess no definite quantity, or number of syllables, or accent by which their doubtful meter can be determined. Their most obvious characteristic, which everyone can perceive, is a balanced structure or *parallelism*, by which one line is set over against another, the second line either repeating, or reversing, or expanding the thought of the preceding line. As rhyme consists in balancing similar sounds, so parallelism is a balancing of similar thoughts. There are three principal kinds of Hebrew parallelism—*synonymous*, *antithetic* and *synthetic*.

In the first, which is the most frequent, the second line of a verse is an echo in similar words of the first line, for example:

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
And our tongue with exultant joy" (Ps. 125:2).

In antithetic parallelism, the second line reverses the thought of the preceding line:

"They have collapsed and fallen,  
But we stand upright and remain" (Ps. 19:9).

In synthetic parallelism the second part of a verse expands, or explains, or develops the thought conveyed in the first part by a reason that is assigned, or by logical sequence, or by mere constructional connection:

"I cried to the Lord with my voice,  
And He heard me from His holy mountain" (Ps. 3:5).

"Save me, O God,  
For the waters have reached to the neck" (Ps. 68:2).

"The Lord is near to all that call upon Him,  
To all that invoke Him sincerely" (Ps. 144:18).

Parallelism is of great assistance in helping us to understand the meaning of difficult passages or doubtful readings, for example:

"In Salem is His tabernacle,  
And His abode in Sion" (Ps. 75:3).

In the Vulgate the first line has *in peace*, for the Hebrew *Shalom*, but

the parallelism requires a different vocalization of the Hebrew consonants here, so that we shall have *Shalem*, which means *Jeru (salem)*.

The parallelism which is characteristic of verses extends also, to some extent at least, to the strophes or stanzas of Psalms. As verses consist of lines (usually of two, but at times of three or four), so strophes or stanzas are made up of groups of verses, varying in number and length. As a rule, these stanzas can be distinguished either by the difference of the thoughts they embody, or by some external sign (such as *refrains* or the word *selah*), or by an alphabetical arrangement—as in Psalm 118, where strophes of eight lines each begin with different letters in the order of the Hebrew alphabet.

(b) *The Beauty of the Psalms*.—It would be nearly impossible to exaggerate the beauty and grandeur of these spiritual lyrics as a whole. For where else do we find in all the wide range of religious literature such vivid and glowing utterances, such deep and penetrating revelations of the human spirit and of the mysteries of life, such dignified and sublime poetic outbursts, such magnificent outlooks for time and eternity, such pure manifestations of a higher seriousness and a loftier truthfulness? But, like all classics, the Psalms must be read again and again, and slowly, to be appreciated; they must be studied and pondered and reflected on before their wealth of spiritual treasure begins to unfold itself to the soul, and the unearthly voice that speaks through them can be heard. To read them only casually or hurriedly, or without some reverence and understanding, is not only a waste of time, but it comes very near to a profanation; it is trifling with the sweetest, the loveliest, the grandest prayers the Holy Ghost has ever inspired and vouchsafed to the use of mankind.

The Psalms therefore, as might be expected, are an inexhaustible source of devotion and meditation for the individual and the Church. Their range of thought is vast and comprehensive, embracing God and His attributes, man with his duties of love and worship, creation and its marvels, the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, the fishes and the monsters that roam the ways of the sea, all nature animate and inanimate, time and eternity. And this sweep of thought which these inspired poems embody and unfold is equalled by the range of emotions which prompted them in the beginning and which even today they awaken in the heart of the reflecting reader. There is, in fact, no condition of life or state of soul—whether of joy or sorrow, of humiliation or exaltation, of petition or thanksgiving, of repentance or adoration, of profound meditation or exalted aspiration and jubilation—to which these full-toned melodies of the Spirit of God do not adequately re-



spond; there is no pure and noble spiritual emotion known to man which they do not express. Well, therefore, did St. Basil say that the Psalms constitute a complete theology, and that he who meditates on their meaning is sure to make progress in contemplation and spiritual life.

### 9. The Purpose of the Psalter.

Intended primarily for the Chosen People of God as the hymn-book of Israel, the Psalms reflect first of all the religious life and sense of the faithful of the Old Covenant. As in the Law God spoke to His people, so in the Psalter the Chosen People spoke to their God. The Psalms are the Law in meditation. Though many of them were the inspired fruit of personal devotion and experience in the service of God and were used by individuals and families in their private devotions, the Psalter as a whole was employed by the Jews, as it is by the Church today, for public liturgical purposes. Thus, some Psalms were sung, as we know from their titles, at the morning sacrifice; some were set apart for special feasts, like those of Tabernacles and the New Year; the Hallel (Pss. 112-117) was sung during the slaying of the Paschal Lamb, and also at the festivals of Pentecost and Tabernacles; others were used in the synagogue on certain feasts, like the Feast of Purim, the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, etc.

While, therefore, the Psalter as a whole may owe its origin to the needs of the worship of the sanctuary, and may have been used by the Jews—as it is now by the Christian Church—primarily for liturgical purposes, yet it has ever been and must always remain an unfailing and inexhaustible well of prayer for private as for public devotion.

### 10. The Character of the Present Work.

It will be observed that this General Introduction so far and the Particular Introductions given later to individual Psalms are on the whole similar to those which appeared in previous editions of this work. The reason for this repetition has been that those parts have been considered adequate in themselves to the purpose of the work.

The substitution of the New Psalter for the Vulgate text of the Psalms has necessitated many changes in the Introductions and in the Notes, in order to bring them into conformity with the new text. The Spiritual Reflections following each Psalm remain unaltered.

This General Introduction has had as its aim to provide the student and reader with knowledge sufficient for a clear and fairly comprehensive grasp of the meaning and background of the Psalter. Under each of

its headings, of course, much more could be said; but it is thought that more would only swell a work already rather large, and perhaps in the end would not add greatly to what the user of this book can and should endeavor to retain in a general way about the Psalter. As said in the beginning, the whole purpose of this work is to furnish students and intelligent readers with a practically thorough understanding and appreciation of the Psalms. But to attain this end, all the parts of the book must be taken into consideration and studied; that is, this General Introduction, the Particular Introductions to and divisions of individual Psalms, the text and translation of each Psalm, the explanatory Notes, and finally the Spiritual Reflections which follow each Psalm. Here again let it be observed that in both General and Particular Introductions, and also in the Notes, we have avoided indulging in a variety of different opinions and discussions relative to dates, authorship, texts, readings and the like, which serve an academic or a curious rather than a practical purpose and usefulness.

In short, we have tried everywhere in this treatise to give only what seems best and most certain. Thus the Particular Introductions aim to sum up the best conclusions regarding authorship, date, occasion, purpose and division of each Psalm. The translation is based on the New Latin Psalter and aims to keep as closely to it as good English seems to permit. Unlike the Vulgate Psalms, this new Latin text is uniformly so simple and clear that there would seem to be no good reason for departing from it, except as the difference between English and Latin words and idioms requires.

But when all aids to a good translation of the Psalms have been made use of, it often happens, from various causes, that some words or phrases of a Psalm remain obscure or unintelligible to the reader. Then it is that explanatory Notes become necessary. These Notes may be greatly expanded or curtailed in many instances. In the present work we have striven to restrict them to what seems really needful for a clear understanding of the word or passage in question.

Finally, there are the Spiritual Reflections that follow each Psalm. During many years of seminary teaching and experience we have observed that, after a complete explanation of a Psalm has been given, as to authorship, date, historical setting, occasion, analysis, translation, explanatory notes and the like, something seems to be still lacking; somehow those lyric prayers are not yet fully understood and appreciated; they have not yet given up all the wealth and treasures which they contain and which they were intended to bequeath. Stop with the literary and scientific analysis, however thorough, of any Psalm, and the matter seems mostly cold



and purposeless. It is one thing to study all the externals of the Psalms; it is quite another thing to penetrate and explore their inner spiritual riches. It is one thing to be enabled to know them; it is something else and more to be helped to love them.

Hence earnest and intelligent students, after a searching scientific study of the Psalms, are likely to wonder, and perhaps ask themselves or someone else: "What does all this mean for me? What has this to do with life or the world in which we live? Are the Psalms pertinent for today? Have they a message for our generation, and for every generation as it comes along, or were they written and living only for times and peoples of long ago?"

The Reflections are intended to give some answers to questions like these. They essay to draw out and develop something of the rich spiritual messages of the Psalms, and apply them to life—to our individual life and the life of all people of all time. Thus the Reflections are a spiritual interpretation and application of the meaning and teaching of those everlasting religious poems and prayers. They aim to give the Psalms an individual personal significance and relationship. They seek to make them more real as an inexhaustible source of prayer and meditation; they complete one's study of the Psalter, and, it is hoped, will assist the reader to appreciate it as an ever-living, vibrant spiritual book for all mankind.

C. J. CALLAN, O. P.

*Feast of the Assumption,  
August 15, 1948.*

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## THE FIRST BOOK OF THE PSALTER

(Pss. 1-40)

### PSALM 1

#### THE LOT OF THE JUST AND OF THE SINNER

##### INTRODUCTION

The Psalter opens with this didactic Psalm, which embodies a fundamental teaching of the Old Testament, namely, that true happiness is to be found only in knowing and serving God. It is a fact of experience that the wicked frequently seem to prosper in this world, while the righteous suffer; but to find a difficulty in this is to misunderstand the final purpose and outcome of life. For no matter how healthy, or wealthy, or full of pleasure, or powerful the wicked may be in this world, if they die as sinners, their life must be counted a colossal failure; and on the other hand, however miserable may have been the earthly life of the just man, his temporal existence ends in glory and in the possession of every good. This we know by faith.

The author and date of the present Psalm are unknown. It may have been composed as an introduction to the Psalter, and seems to belong to the Davidic age. It is without title, and has two divisions.

##### *The Way of the Just Man (1-3)*

1. Beatus vir, qui non sequitur  
consilium impiorum, et viam pec-  
catorum non ingreditur, et in con-  
ventu protervorum non sedet.

Blessed is the man that follows  
not the counsel of the wicked, and  
walks not in the way of sinners,  
and sits not in the company of the  
violent;

1. This verse marks successive stages in an evil life: (a) the adoption of evil principles of conduct, when one lives according to the counsel of the godless; (b) the persistent imitation of bad example, when one stands in the path of sinners; (c) fellowship with those who openly ridicule the good, when one joins the company of scoffers.

"Beatus." *Blessed* is better than *happy* here. The seat of blessedness is within, based on solid virtue and fellowship with God; whereas happiness is ephemeral, being more dependent on outward, changing circumstances.—"Viam peccatorum." *Via* is a frequent Hebraism in the Psalm, designating a manner of living or acting.



2. Sed in lege Domini voluptas eius est, et de lege eius meditatur die ac nocte.

3. Et est tamquam arbor plantata iuxta rivos aquarum, quae fructum praebet tempore suo, cuiusque folia non marcescunt, et quaecumque facit, prospere procedunt.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields fruit in its season, whose leaves do not wither, and whatsoever he does goes well.

### *The Way of the Sinner (4-6)*

4. Non sic impii, non sic; sed tamquam palea, quam dissipat ventus.

5. Ideo non consistent impii in iudicio, neque peccatores in concilio iustorum.

6. Quoniam Dominus curat viam iustorum, et via impiorum peribit.

Not so the wicked, not so; rather are they like chaff which the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked stand not in the judgment, nor sinners in the council of the just.

Because the Lord cares for the way of the just, but the way of the wicked shall perish.

### REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist here extolls the righteous man as happy, blessed, prosperous; while he pictures the wicked man as a miserable failure who in the end vanishes like dust before the wind.

But from the viewpoint of this world, the situation is often the very opposite; the wicked are prosperous, and the just are failures. And yet the Psalmist is right, for he is speaking of the righteous man; and the man of faith has a happiness unknown to the unbeliever and the sinner. The just man, for example, has the positive happiness of a good conscience, the realization that he is a friend of God, the hope of a blessed eternity. He has also the negative happiness of being free from the scourges of sin which every sinner must suffer, more or less, even in this life. Of course, there is no such thing as perfect happiness for anyone in earthly life; for the complete contentment and satisfaction of our whole being on which perfect happiness depends are not possible here. Crea-

2. "In lege," i.e., the Mosaic Law (Jos. 1:8).—"Domini." Heb. *Yahweh*, i.e., God as revealing Himself to the Jews; *El, Elohim*, who is the same God but considered as the creator of the universe.

3. "Et." The Hebrew equivalent of this conjunction occurs very often in the Psalms, and sometimes means *and*, sometimes *indeed*, sometimes *yea*; and sometimes it need not be translated at all.

tures cannot provide them because creatures are themselves too limited and imperfect at best. Nor can spiritual sources furnish them, since we cannot now enjoy God as He is in Himself, and we are always in fear and in danger of losing Him.

The secret of the blessedness of the just is conformity of their will to the will of God, whatever this may entail; whereas lack of that conformity explains the final emptiness and misery of the wicked life, however active and full of results it may now appear to be. The worldly, godless man fails where the just man succeeds, namely, in developing a spiritual character; and it is character that determines eternal blessedness or wretchedness.

### PSALM 2

#### THE MESSIAH KING OF SION AND OF ALL THE EARTH

#### INTRODUCTION

Here we have a Messianic Psalm. The King spoken of is none other than Christ Himself, to whom was given the sovereignty, not over Israel alone, but over all the nations of the world. The Psalm pictures the rebellion of the kingdoms of earth against Christ and His kingdom, the Church, and shows the final triumph of the latter.

As to the author of this Psalm, we may observe that it is attributed to David in Acts 4:25. The older commentators also considered it to be of Davidic origin, and there is nothing in its literary manner to prohibit such a view. It has no title.

The Psalm is dramatic in form, introducing different persons as speakers.

#### *The Rebellion against God and the Messiah (1-3)*

1. Quare tumultuantur gentes et populi meditantur inania?

Why are the nations in tumult, and the peoples planning vain things?

2. Consurgunt reges terrae et principes conspirant simul adversus Dominum et adversus Christum eius:

The kings of the earth rise up together and the princes conspire at the same time against the Lord and against His Anointed:

2. The Anointed referred to in this verse, on account of the universal power given Him as well as His eternal generation, cannot be David or Solomon or any other king of Israel, but only the Messiah, the eternal Son of God.



3. "Dirumpamus vincula eorum et proiciamus a nobis laqueos eorum!" "Let us break their bonds asunder, and fling away from us their snares!"

*The Reply of God (4-6)*

4. Qui habitat in caelis, ridet, Dominus illudit eis. He who dwells in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.
5. Tum loquitur ad eos in ira sua, et in furore suo conturbat eos: Then He speaks to them in His anger, and confounds them in His fury:
6. "At ego constitui regem meum super Sion, montem sanctum meum!" "But I have placed My king upon Sion, My holy mountain!"

*The Messiah a Universal King (7-9)*

7. Promulgabo decretum Domini. Dominus dixit ad me: "Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te." I will publish the Lord's decree. The Lord said to Me: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.
8. Postula a me et dabo tibi gentes in hereditatem et in possessionem tuam terminos terrae. "Ask of Me and I will give Thee the nations as an inheritance, and the ends of the earth as Thy possession.
9. Reges eas virga ferrea, tamquam vas figuli confringes eas." "Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shatter them like a potter's vessel."

*A Warning (10-12)*

10. Et nunc, reges, intellegite; erudimini, qui gubernatis terram. Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be instructed, you that govern the earth.

3. "Eorum" refers to the Israelites who will make up the army of the Messiah.

6. According to the Hebrew, these words are spoken by God against those who rebel, and the sense is: *Be you subject to Mine Anointed, for I have made Him King, etc.*

Mount Sion is called "holy," because it was the site of the Temple of the Lord; here it stands for Jerusalem, the capital of the Theocratic Kingdom.

7. "Decretum" means the decree of Sonship and worldwide rule.—"Hodie," i.e., the unchanging present duration of eternity, in which the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is ever begotten by the Father.

9. "Reges," "confringes." These words are to be understood in a permissive sense.

11. Servite Domino in timore et exsultate ei; cum tremore (12) praestate obsequium illi, ne irascatur et pereatis de via, cum cito exarserit ira eius. Beati omnes qui confugiunt ad eum. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before Him; show Him obedience with trembling, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath shall suddenly be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him.

REFLECTIONS

The rebellion of the nations against God and the Messiah here pictured is given according to the vigor of Oriental usage. Such a rebellion has never actually and openly occurred in the world in general since the early centuries of the Christian era. It has happened repeatedly in particular places and countries, but not outwardly as a world movement.

But indirectly and secretly there are forces of evil of many kinds everywhere and always at work which are opposed to Christ and His rule and the spiritual welfare of mankind. These evils impede the reign of Christ and do harm to innumerable souls, but their end at long last is destruction. Christ must finally triumph over all evils, as He did in His Resurrection over the particular enemies that put Him to physical death. This complete triumph could be effected in large measure even now, if people everywhere could be induced to embrace Christianity and rule their lives according to its teachings.

It is a sad, baffling mystery that man, whom God has created, should have a nature which inclines him to rebel against his Creator, which makes him so often prefer the futile, fragile and momentary to the infinitely profitable, mighty and eternal. If only the appeal of each of these alternatives were equally strong, how much easier our course and choice would be! Nevertheless, the fact remains that the will of God and of His Christ must finally prevail in spite of all opposition; and we can either lovingly submit to it and be crowned forever, or refuse submission and perish.

12. "Praestate, etc." Heb. and Peshitta (Pesh.): *Kiss the Son*, i.e., render to Him the kiss of homage, which Orientals were accustomed to offer to kings and princes.



## PSALM 3

## A CONFIDENT PRAYER IN THE MIDST OF ENEMIES

## INTRODUCTION

This is a morning prayer of thanksgiving and confidence after a night of repose in the midst of danger. The author without doubt was King David, and the occasion was the insurrection of his son Absalom, as the title in both the Hebrew and the Vulgate bears witness.

Accompanied by a small band of followers, David fled from Jerusalem and, after a night of sleeplessness spent in crossing the Jordan, was blessed by an unexpected night of rest in the neighborhood of Mahanaim (2 Kings 15-18). It was after this night of refreshing sleep that the present morning hymn was composed, in which, remembering past mercies, David disregards the multitude of his foes and the faint-heartedness of his friends, and expresses his confidence in Jehovah's protection and his own final deliverance.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Psalmus. Davidis, cum fugit a filio suo Absalom. | A psalm. Of David, when he fled from his son Absalom. |
|---|---|

*The Psalmist Implores God's Help (2-4)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. Domine, quam multi sunt qui tribulant me, multi insurgunt adversum me! | O Lord, how many are they that trouble me! Many are rising up against me. |
| 3. Multi sunt qui de me dicunt: "Non est salus ei in Deo."                | Many there are that say of me: "There is no salvation for him in God."    |
| 4. Tu autem, Domine, clipeus meus es, gloria mea, qui erigis caput meum.  | But thou, O Lord, art my shield, my glory, who liftest up my head.        |

2. We read in 2 Kings 15:12-13; 16:15, that nearly all Israel had turned away from David to follow after Absalom.

3. Not only David's enemies, but even many of his friends, thought it was useless for him to seek help from God.

*Reflecting, the Psalmist Becomes Confident (5-7)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 5. Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi, et exaudivit me de monte sancto suo. | I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He answered me from His holy mountain.       |
| 6. Ego decubui et obdormivi: exsurrexi, quia Dominus sustentat me.   | I laid me down and slept; I arose, for the Lord supports me.                        |
| 7. Non timebo milia populi, quae in circuitu contra me consistunt    | I will not fear the thousands of people that stand together against me round about. |

*Full of Trust He Prays (8, 9)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 8. Exsurge, Domine! Salvum me fac, Deus meus! Nam maxillam percussisti omnium adversantium mihi, dentes peccatorum confregisti. | Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For Thou hast smitten the jaw-bone of all mine adversaries; Thou hast shattered the teeth of sinners. |
| 9. Penes Dominum est salus: super populum tuum sit benedictio tua!  | With the Lord there is salvation; upon Thy people be Thy blessing.  |

## REFLECTIONS

In the midst of danger, which made others feel that all was lost, David remained unshaken in his faith and confidence in God. Enemies in great numbers encircled him, but more closely still he was encircled by God, who stood between him and his foes. Past experience taught him that as often as he cried to Jehovah for help, his prayer was answered. Not that he had prayed only when in peril, for candid communion with his Lord had been habitual with him. And now, when disaster was almost upon him, he had the strength of good habit to rise above calamity and appeal in confidence to the Almighty. He knew that God would help him, but he knew also that divine help was dependent upon his prayer.

5. Mount Sion is here called holy, because it was the seat of the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol and pledge of Jehovah's presence, and the center from which He exercised His earthly sovereignty over Israel. David in his flight would not allow the Ark to be carried away from Sion.

8. A blow on the cheek was a sign that the enemy was completely conquered.—"Dentes peccatorum, etc." The enemies of David are pictured as wild beasts rushing on their prey, but suddenly deprived of the means and power to inflict injury.

9. "Penes Dominum, etc.," i.e., it belongs to the Lord to give salvation or victory.



## PSALM 4

## A PRAYER OF FAITH AMONG FAITHLESS SINNERS

## INTRODUCTION

This is a confident petition which, according to tradition, David addressed to God shortly after the rebellion of Absalom, when the danger, though less imminent, had not entirely passed away. There is a close resemblance between this and Psalm 3, in language and structure. Psalm 3 is a morning hymn, Psalm 4 an evening song.

1. Magistro chori. Fidibus. For the choir-master. On stringed instruments. A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Asks God's Help (2)*

2. Cum invocavero, exaudi me, Answer me when I call, O God  
Deus iustitiae meae, qui in tribula- of my justice, Thou who hast up-  
tione me sublevasti; miserere mei held me in my trouble; have mercy  
et exaudi orationem meam. on me and answer my prayer.

*He Warns the Adversaries (3-6)*

3. Viri, quousque estis graves O men, how long are you hard  
corde? quare diligitis vanitatem et of heart? Why do you love vanity  
quaeritis mendacium? and seek after falsehood?

4. Scitote: mirabilem facit Know that the Lord marvelously  
Dominus sanctum suum; Dominus favors His holy one; the Lord will  
exaudiet me, cum invocavero eum. answer me when I call to Him.

5. Contremiscite et nolite pec- Tremble with fear and sin not;

2. "Deus iustitiae meae," i.e., God is the heavenly defender of my just cause. This is a common Hebrew construction of a noun in the construct state with an abstract noun following, instead of a noun and adjective which we should use.—"Sublevasti." The Vulgate has: *Dilatasti*. To the Oriental suffering and sorrow are symbolized by narrowness of place and restriction of movement; while a large place and the open plain are symbolic of strength, freedom and gladness.

3. "Viri," i.e., noblemen, powerful ones.—"Graves corde" are those who are not easily moved to admit the truth or to pursue good.

care, recogitate in cordibus vestris, ponder in your hearts upon your  
in cubilibus vestris, et obmutescite. beds, and be silent.

6. Sacrificate sacrificia iusta, et Offer just sacrifices, and hope in  
sperate in Domino. the Lord.

*The Psalmist Asserts His Confidence in God (7-9)*

7. Multi dicunt: "Quis ostendet nobis bona?" Extolle super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine!

Many are saying: "Who will show us good things?" O Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us!

8. Dedisti laetitiam in cor meum, maiorem quam cum abundant tritico et vino.

Thou hast given gladness to my heart, more than when men abound with corn and wine.

9. In pace, simul ac decubui, obdormisco, quoniam tu solus, Domine, in securitate me constituis.

As soon as I lie down, I sleep in peace, for it is Thou alone, O Lord, who makest me to dwell in safety.

## REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist knows that all the good that is in him, or in any man, is from God; and he is confident also that what God has bestowed He will not suffer to be lost. Out of love for him Jehovah has poured upon him favors and lovingkindness, and Jehovah will see to it that these treasures shall be preserved against the efforts of the wicked. Therefore the Lord hears him when he cries for help, when he lifts up his mind and heart in prayer.

Let the timid and the wavering shun sin and put their trust in Jehovah, and they will see, as the Psalmist does, that Jehovah is the only good, pure and complete, which alone can satisfy them, driving out fear and bringing in peace and rest. Pleasant and delightful as are the harvest and the vintage, they are poor beside the riches which Jehovah bestows on His loved ones. The light of His face illumines darkness, gladdens sorrow, dispels want, removes perils, enlarges life, satisfies the soul.

6. According to some, these words are addressed, not to the rebels, but to David's own discouraged followers.

7. "Multi," i.e., the mass of the people, among whom were included some who were of doubtful allegiance, and some discouraged friends of David.

8. The joy of an abundant harvest and vintage was regarded among the Hebrews as one of the greatest blessings (Isa. 9:3; Jer. 47:33).



## PSALM 5

## MORNING PRAYERS OF A JUST MAN SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES

## INTRODUCTION

We have here a morning prayer in which the Psalmist represents himself as a priest who comes to the House of God to offer the morning sacrifice. He reflects that sinners cannot expect to be tolerated by the all-holy God, and yet through the divine goodness and mercy he hopes for a favorable hearing.

1. Magistro chori. Ad tibias. For the choir-master. On flutes.  
Psalmus. Davidis. A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Invokes God (2-4)*

2. Verba mea auribus percipe, O Lord, listen to my words; consider my groaning.  
Domine, attende gemitum meum.  
3. Adverte voci orationis meae, Hearken to the voice of my prayer, my King and my God!  
rex meus et Deus meus! For it is Thou whom I beseech,  
Te enim deprecor, (4) Domine; O Lord; in the morning Thou hear-  
mane audis vocem meam; mane est my voice; in the morning I place  
propono tibi preces meas et ex- before Thee my prayers and wait.  
specto.

*God Hates Sin (5-7)*

5. Tu enim non es Deus, cui For Thou art not a God who de-  
placeat iniquitas, malignus apud lights in wickedness; the ma-  
te non commoratur, (6) neque lignant dwells not with Thee, nor  
impium consistunt coram te. do the godless stand before Thee.  
Odisti omnes qui patrant iniqua, Thou hatest all workers of in-  
(7) perdis omnes qui loquuntur quity; Thou destroyest all that  
mendacium; speak a lie.  
Virum cruentum et dolosum ab- The Lord abhors the bloody and  
ominatur Dominus. the deceitful man.

*God Hears Prayers (8, 9)*

8. Ego autem, pro multitudine gratiae tuae, ingrediar domum tuam,

Prosternar ad templum sanctum tuum in timore tuo, (9) Domine.

Deduc me in iustitia tua propter inimicos meos; complana viam tuam coram me.

But as for me, through the abundance of Thy kindness I will enter Thy house;

In Thy fear, O Lord, I will worship towards Thy holy temple.

Lead me forth in Thy justice because of mine enemies; make smooth Thy way before me.

*God Punishes Sinners (10, 11)*

10. Nam in ore istorum non est sinceritas; cor eorum insidias molitur; sepulcrum patens est guttur eorum; linguis suis blandiuntur.

11. Castiga eos, Deus, excidant consiliis suis; propter crimina eorum multa expelle eos, nam contra te rebelles sunt.

For there is no sincerity in their mouth; their heart plans treachery; their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they speak deceitfully.

Chastise them, O God; let them fail through their own counsels. Because of their many crimes cast them out, for they are rebels against Thee.

*God Favors the Holy (12-13)*

12. Laetentur autem omnes qui confugiunt ad te, in perpetuum exsultent. Et protegas eos et laetentur de te, qui diligunt nomen tuum.

13. Nam tu benedices iusto, Domine: benevolentia, velut scuto, circumdabis eum.

But let all be glad that take refuge in Thee; let them exult for ever. And do Thou protect them, and let those be glad because of Thee that love Thy name.

For Thou wilt bless the just man, O Lord; with kindness as with a shield Thou wilt encompass him.

## REFLECTIONS

About to offer the morning sacrifice, the Psalmist feels his own unworthiness before God and asks that his prayer for purity may be heard. The awful contrast between God's holiness and his sinfulness all but

9. "Viam tuam," i.e., the way in which the Lord would have him walk. The Septuagint and the Vulgate readings have: *Make my way smooth before Thee.*

10. "Linguis suis, etc." Heb.: *They smooth their tongues.*

11. "Excidant," i.e., *Let them fall short of, be foiled.*



appalls him. Nevertheless, having done what he can inwardly to fit himself, he looks to God's mercy for the rest. The Psalmist is vividly aware that personal, internal probity is a supreme requisite to all external service of God and special divine guidance.

Sin is loathsome to God because it is directly opposed to the divine nature, which is holiness, perfect goodness. Hence sin cannot but be hateful to God, though the sinner is ever dear to Him. But if the sinner will not separate himself from his sin, he must suffer and perish with it.

## PSALM 6

### PRAYER OF ONE CHASTISED BY GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

This is the first of the seven Penitential Psalms. The Psalmist is being severely tried by suffering, whether from bodily illness and consequent taunts of foes that he is being punished for his sins, or from persecution by his enemies, or from both sources. He is on the brink of the grave; and hence he earnestly begs God to save his life, for in the underworld—in Sheol—communion with his Maker will be at an end, and the chorus of divine praises forever silent. Suddenly he feels that his prayer is heard, and all his anxiety gives way to confident hope.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Magistro chori. Fidibus. Super octavam. Psalmus. Davidis. | For the choir-master. On stringed instruments. An octave lower. A psalm. Of David. |
|--|--|

#### *The Psalmist Invokes the Mercy of God (2-4)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Domine, noli me arguere in ira tua, nec me corripere in furore tuo.                            | O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, nor chastise me in Thy fury.                   |
| 3. Miserere mei, Domine, quoniam infirmus sum; sana me, Domine, quoniam conturbata sunt ossa mea, | Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. |
| 4. Et anima mea conturbata est valde; sed tu, Domine, quousque . . . ?                            | Yea, my soul is troubled exceedingly; but Thou, O Lord, how long . . . ?             |

3. "Ossa mea" means the whole physical frame.

#### *He Implores Deliverance from Death (5, 6)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 5. Revertere, Domine, eripe animam meam, saluum me fac propter misericordiam tuam, | Return, O Lord, and rescue my soul; save me for Thy mercy's sake,                     |
| 6. Quoniam non est in morte qui recordetur tui: apud inferos quis te laudat?       | For in death there is no one that remembers Thee; in the underworld who praises Thee? |

#### *The Psalmist Describes His Misery (7, 8)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 7. Defessus sum gemitu meo, fletu per singulas noctes rigo lectum meum, lacrimis meis stratum meum perfundo. | I am weary with my sighing; every night I wash my bed with weeping; I water my couch with my tears. |
| 8. Caligat maerore oculus meus, inveterascit propter omnes inimicos meos.                                    | Mine eye is dimmed from grief; it is grown old because of all mine enemies.                         |

#### *Certain that He Will Be Heard, the Psalmist Repels His Enemies (9-11)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 9. Recedite a me omnes qui facitis iniquitatem, quoniam Dominus audivit vocem fletus mei;      | Depart from me all workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.                    |
| 10. Dominus audivit precationem meam, Dominus orationem meam suscepit.                         | The Lord has heard my supplication, the Lord has accepted my prayer.                                       |
| 11. Erubescant et conturbentur vehementer omnes inimici mei; recedant et erubescant velociter. | Let all mine enemies feel shame and be exceedingly troubled; let them fall back and be quickly confounded. |

#### REFLECTIONS

All Old Testament writers looked upon suffering as the result and punishment of sin, and to a great extent they were right; for we hold that original sin lost our glorious inheritance and started our subsequent woe. But our Lord in Chapter 9 of St. John's Gospel corrected the notion that all suffering and affliction are from personal sin. Some of our afflictions

6. "Apud inferos." Heb.: *Sheol*, i.e., the abode of the dead, the underworld, which the ancient Hebrews regarded as a place of darkness and gloom where all external worship of God was impossible. Their revelation about the future life was as yet very scanty.

8. "Caligat, etc." The meaning is that his vision is like that of an old person. He is describing the pain of a soul conscious of sin, and not yet sure of pardon.



and chastisements are for the manifestation of God's glory, some are expressions of God's love for our betterment, some are signs of wrath for our destruction.

The Psalmist here dreaded death because it would interrupt his love, praise and service of God, without which life would not be worth living. To him the future life was but a kind of gloomy, half-conscious, miserable existence, little better than total non-existence. This view is frequently expressed in other Psalms and seems to have been common to the Hebrews generally. And yet in Psalms 15:10, 11; 16:15; 49:16; 72:24-26, we have specimens of spiritual rapture and exaltation, arising from present communion and fellowship with God, which seem to reveal firm faith and clear hope in a future blessed immortality. Generally speaking, however, Old Testament writers lacked the clear revelation of the New Testament about a future life.

As he has done before, to some extent, and as he will do more often and more vehemently in subsequent Psalms, the Psalmist here, in this first of the Penitential Psalms, appeals to God for help in his sufferings and against his enemies. But from these appeals we must not conclude that the Psalmist was wanting in courage and natural strength. He was a fine, sensitive soul, living in a rude age and environment, trying to lead a holy life in the midst of sinners; and he consequently felt the need of calling upon God to supplement his inadequate natural powers. His frequent calls for help spring from a consciousness of spiritual peril and a vividness of faith which are unknown to the earthly and the unbelieving. These latter are often unaware of danger and the need of help until their ruin is complete and hopeless.

## PSALM 7

### AN APPEAL TO GOD AS JUDGE AGAINST FALSE ACCUSATION

#### INTRODUCTION

David is in extreme peril from ruthless enemies. It appears from the title that a certain Chusi (Cush), otherwise unknown to us, had basely slandered him as intriguing against the life of Saul (1 Kings 22:8), with the result that his own life was being desperately sought by the enraged king (cfr. 1 Kings 24, 26). Deeply conscious of his innocence and of

the injustice he is suffering, the Psalmist appeals to the Supreme Judge of the world to vindicate his cause.

The first part of the Psalm (vv. 2-11) is personal, being a prayer that God would intervene on the Psalmist's behalf; the second part (vv. 12-18) is general and deals with God's judgment and the punishment of the wicked.

1. Lamentatio Davidis, quam cantavit Domino propter Cush Beniaminitam.

A Lamentation which David sang to the Lord because of Cush the Beniaminite.

#### *The Psalmist Implores Help against Calumnies (2,3)*

2. Domine Deus meus, ad te confugio; salva me ab omnibus persequentibus me et libera me;

O Lord my God, I take refuge in Thee; save me from all that persecute me and deliver me,

3. Ne quis rapiat ut leo animam meam, discerpat, nec sit qui eripiat.

Lest anyone like a lion snatch away my soul, and tear *me*, while there is none to rescue.

#### *He Protests His Innocence (4-6)*

4. Domine Deus meus, si feci istud, si est iniquitas in manibus meis,

O Lord my God, if I have done such a thing, if there be iniquity in my hands;

5. Si attuli amico meo malum, qui salvavi adversantes mihi iniuste:

If I have brought evil to my friend—I who spared mine unjust adversaries—

6. Insequatur inimicus animam meam et apprehendat, conculcet in terram vitam meam, et honorem meum in pulverem prosternat.

Then let the enemy pursue my soul and take it, let him trample down my life to the ground, and prostrate my honor to the dust.

#### *The Psalmist Invokes the Just Judgment of God (7-10)*

7. Exsurge, Domine, in ira tua, erige te contra rabiem opprimentium me, et surge pro me in iudicio, quod indixisti.

Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger; lift Thyself up against the fury of mine oppressors, and stand up for me in the judgment which Thou hast ordered.

1. "Cush" was probably a servant of Saul.
4. "Si feci istud," that is, the charge stated in the following lines.
5. "Salvavi, etc." means that he was good to his enemies.
7. "In iudicio." Heb.: *Trial*, which is described in the following verse.



8. Et coetus nationum circumdet te, et sede super eum in alto.

9. Dominus iudex est populorum: ius redde mihi, Domine, secundum iustitiam meam et secundum innocentiam, quae est in me.

10. Desinat nequitia impiorum et confirma iustum, scrutans corda et renes, Deus iuste.

*The Psalmist Has Confidence in God, the Just Judge (11-14)*

11. Clipeus mihi est Deus, qui salvat rectos corde.

12. Deus est iudex iustus, et Deus comminans cotidie.

13. Nisi convertantur, acuet gladium suum, tendet arcum et dirigit eum.

14. Et eis parabit tela mortis, sagittas suas faciet ardentes.

*The Punishment of the Enemy and the Salvation of the Psalmist (15-18)*

15. Ecce, concepit iniquitatem et gravidus est malitia et parit dolum.

16. Fossam fodit et excavavit, sed incidit in foveam quam fecit.

17. Convertetur malitia eius in caput ipsius, et in verticem ipsius violentia eius redibit.

18. Ego autem laudabo Domi-

And let the assembly of the nations surround Thee, and do Thou preside over it on high.

The Lord is judge of the peoples; vindicate me, O Lord, according to my justice, and according to the innocence that is in me.

Let the wickedness of sinners cease, and strengthen Thou the just, O righteous God, who searchest hearts and reins.

A shield to me is God, who saves the upright of heart.

God is a righteous judge, yea, a God who threatens every day.

Unless they be converted, He will whet His sword, He will bend the bow and aim it.

And He will prepare for them weapons of death; He will make his arrows fiery.

Behold, *the sinner* has conceived iniquity and is heavy with malice and brings forth deceit.

He dug a pit and hollowed it deep, but he is fallen into the hole which he made.

His malice shall return upon his own head, and his violence shall descend upon his own skull.

But I will praise the Lord for

8. "In alto," that is, above the assembly the Judge is to take His seat, or throne, and pronounce justice in the Psalmist's case.

10. "Corda et renes." In the Old Testament the *heart* is often regarded as the organ of thought and will, while the *reins* are the seat of the affections and emotions.

17. "Et in verticem, etc.," completes the parallelism of the first line.

18. "Altissimi." The title "Most High" (Elyon) is given to God frequently in the Psalms, and occurs in many other parts of the Old Testament.

num pro iustitia eius, et psallam nomini Domini altissimi.

His justice, and I will sing to the name of the Lord Most High.

REFLECTIONS

In contrast to the preceding Psalm, the tone of this one is high and full of courage. Though innocent, the Psalmist refuses to suffer the attacks of his enemies in silence; he appeals to God to vindicate him before all the people. The Psalmist feels that he has a work to do for God in this world, and he is unwilling to let the wicked have their way in frustrating it.

It might be argued that a holy person ought in meekness to bear the evils that befall him without his fault, regardless of their origin: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:5, 10). But this is not always so, for the reason just given above, and for other reasons. In David's case, he was a king and God's representative. He was therefore responsible both to his people and to God; and so, wrongs deliberately inflicted upon him could go far beyond him in doing harm.

Again, many of us are too weak just to suffer; only heroic saints can do that. To keep from being submerged altogether and yielding up the fight, most of us need the encouragement and incentive that come from some positive achievement, some real good that we are able to do, which will help us to endure the unavoidable trials and sufferings that come upon us without anyone's fault. It is therefore this good, which we can do and want to do, that we should not allow the wrongs of others to stop or ruin when we can help it.

The Psalmist finally warns that God, through the laws He has made, punishes sin and that the sinner is his own worst enemy, bringing down punishment upon himself by his transgressions. Sin is a lure which always ends in disappointment. The just man often has much to suffer in this world, but his conscience is good, and he knows that no lasting harm can befall him.

PSALM 8

THE MAJESTY OF GOD AND THE DIGNITY OF MAN

INTRODUCTION

This Psalm was written by David, as the title indicates. Its theme is the glory of God, as shown forth in nature and in man. It was probably a



song of the vintage season, and was sung during a night-watch in the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles.

1. Magistro chori. Ad modum cantici "Torcularia. . . ." Psalmus. Davidis. For the choir-master. To the tune of the song, "The Wine-presses . . ." A psalm. Of David.

*The Greatness of God and the Natural Smallness of Man (2-5)*

2. Domine, Domine noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra, qui extulisti maiestatem tuam super caelos. O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name over all the earth, Thou who hast exalted Thy majesty above the heavens!
3. Ex ore infantium et lactentium parasti laudem contra adversarios tuos, ut compescas inimicum et hostem. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast prepared praise against Thine adversaries, that Thou mayest silence the enemy and the foe.
4. Cum video caelos tuos, opus digitorum tuorum, lunam et stellas quae tu fundasti: When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast established,
5. Quid est homo, quod memores eius? aut filius hominis, quod curas de eo? What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou carest for him?

*The Glory and Power to Which God Has Raised Man (6-10)*

6. Et fecisti eum paulo minorem Angelis, gloria et honore coronasti eum; Yet Thou hast made him a little less than Angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor;
7. Dedisti ei potestatem super opera manuum tuarum, omnia subiecisti pedibus eius: Thou hast given him dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet:
8. Oves et boves universos, insuper et pecora campi, All sheep and oxen, yea, even the beasts of the field;

2. "Domine." Heb.: *Yahweh*, the God of revelation.—"Nomen" stands for the nature or being of God.
3. "Compescas," that is, reduce to silence atheists who deny God.
5. "Filius hominis" means the same as "homo," to which it is parallel.
6. "Minorem Angelis." St. Paul in Heb. 2:6-9 applies this text to Christ, in whom it is eminently fulfilled.
7. "Omnia subiecisti, etc." In 1 Cor. 15:27 these words are applied to Christ.

9. Volucres caeli et pisces maris: quidquid perambulat semitas marium. The birds of heaven and the fishes of the sea, whatsoever goes through the paths of the seas.
10. Domine, Domine noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra! O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name over all the earth!

REFLECTIONS

The beauty and glory of God are proclaimed by all nature, by the far-off bright stars and other heavenly bodies, but especially by man. To the writers of the Bible the contemplation of both nature and man begins and ends with God, and hence we find the name of God at the opening and at the closing of this nature Psalm.

The material bodies of the universe excel by their magnitude and grandeur. Compared to them thus considered man is less than a grain of sand or a speck of dust. But in his spiritual nature man surpasses them all. The glory and honor which gleam from his soul and brain far outshine all the reflection of God's glory which blazes in the depths of the sparkling heavens. For the soul of man, like the angels, is spiritual; and were it not so, we should know no more about the magnificence of the material world above and around us than do the brute animals. It is by reason of his soul and spiritual powers that man is the finite lord of the universe.

Moreover, since man is spiritual and can understand, God naturally is "mindful of him," and thinks about him; and "has visited him," speaking to him in special ways. How absurd to think that God would make man able to hear and understand Him, and then remain dumb to him, except for the cold voice of a material world!

PSALM 9A:1-21 (Heb. 9)

ACT OF THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY OVER THE HEATHEN

INTRODUCTION

We have here a song of praise and intercession. In the Hebrew this Psalm is divided into two, the thanksgiving verses (2-21) being called Psalm 9, and the remaining intercessory verses (22-39) forming Psalm 10. The reasons for dividing the Psalm thus are based on differences of



tone and theme. The first part—or Psalm 9 of the Hebrew—is concerned with God's sovereign righteousness in defeating and destroying foreign enemies of Israel; whereas the second part—or Psalm 10 of the Hebrew—is a complaint and a prayer to God provoked by the godlessness that prevails within the nation on the part of pitiless tyrants who are oppressing the helpless. The Septuagint, Vulgate and Old Latin, however, reckon this as a single Psalm, on account of the striking resemblances of form and language. Throughout we have the same alphabetic or acrostic structure; and the same phrases, expressions and terminations point to oneness of composition. Furthermore, there is no title to the second part, which would be contrary to the general rule of Book I of the Psalms, if that part were an independent poem.

There seems no reason for rejecting the traditional view, which ascribes the authorship of this Psalm to David; and as occasions for its composition we may consider David's victories over the heathen peoples round about, especially the Philistines and Jebusites, as well as the internal disorders against which he had to contend (see 1 Kings 22:1, 2; 2 Kings 3:1, 22; 4:2; 15:2 sqq.)

1. Magistro chori. Ad modum canticum "mût labbèn." Psalmus Davidis. For the choir-master. To the tune of the song, "mût labbèn." A psalm. Of David.

#### *The Destruction of the Enemy (2-4)*

2. Celebrabo te, Domine, toto corde meo, enarrabo omnia mirabilia tua. I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Thy wonderful works.

3. Laetabor et exultabo de te, psallam nomini tuo, Altissime, I shall be glad and shall exult in Thee; I will sing to Thy name, O Most High,

4. Quia cesserunt inimici mei retrorsum, corruerunt et perierunt a facie tua. Because mine enemies have turned back; they have fallen and have perished from before Thy face.

#### *Judgment against the Heathen (5-7)*

5. Nam suscepisti iudicium meum et causam meam, sedisti super solium, iudex iustus. For Thou hast undertaken my trial and my cause; Thou hast taken Thy seat upon the throne, a just judge.

6. Increpasti gentes, perdidisti impium, nomen eorum delesti in aeternum.

7. Inimici defecerunt, in ruinas sempiternas acti, et urbes destruxisti: periit memoria eorum.

Thou hast rebuked the nations, Thou hast destroyed the wicked, Thou hast blotted out their name for ever.

The enemies have failed, having been driven to everlasting ruins; and *their* cities Thou hast destroyed; the very remembrance of them has perished.

#### *God Is the Judge and the Protector of the Oppressed (8-11)*

8. Dominus autem in aeternum sedet, stabilivit ad iudicandum solium suum.

9. Et ipse iudicabit orbem cum iustitia, ius dicet populis cum aequitate.

10. Et erit Dominus refugium oppresso, refugium opportunum temporibus angustiae.

11. Et sperabunt in te qui non verunt nomen tuum, quia non derelinquis quaerentes te, Domine.

But the Lord sits enthroned for ever; He has established His seat for judgment.

And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will administer justice to the peoples with equity.

Yea, the Lord will be a haven for the oppressed, a timely refuge in seasons of distress.

And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee, for Thou, O Lord, dost not forsake those that seek Thee.

#### *Joy over Help Received (12-13)*

12. Psallite Domino qui habitat in Sion, annuntiate in populis opera eius,

13. Quia ultor sanguinis recordatus est eorum, non est oblitus clamoris pauperum.

Sing to the Lord who dwells on Sion, declare among the peoples His works;

For the avenger of blood has remembered them; He has not forgotten the cry of the poor.

6. "Gentes," that is, the heathen nations bordering on Palestine.

8. "Sedet," i.e., on His regal throne.

12. There is a notable parallelism between vv. 12-17 of this section and vv. 2-7 of the previous section of this Psalm.—"Qui habitat in Sion." Mount Sion was the special earthly abode of Jehovah from the time the Ark, the symbol of His presence, was placed there by David. It was from thence that His power manifested itself in behalf of His people.—"Opera," that is, Jehovah's mighty works on behalf of his people.



*The Psalmist Restates His Plea (14-21)*

14. Miserere mei, Domine: vide afflictionem quam patior ab inimicis meis, extollens me de portis mortis,

15. Ut annuntiem omnes laudes tuas in portis filiae Sion, et exultem de auxilio tuo.

16. Demersae sunt gentes in foveam quam fecerunt, laqueo, quem absconderunt, captus est pes eorum.

17. Manifestavit se Dominus, iudicium fecit; operibus manuum suarum irretitus est peccator.

18. Recedant peccatores ad inferos, omnes gentes quae oblitae sunt Dei.

19. Neque enim in perpetuum oblivioni dabitur pauper, fiducia miserorum non peribit in aeternum.

20. Exsurge, Domine: ne praevalcat homo; iudicentur gentes in conspectu tuo.

21. Incute, Domine, terrorem eis; sciant gentes se homines esse.

Have mercy on me, O Lord; see the affliction which I suffer from mine enemies, lift me up from the portals of death,

That I may declare all Thy praises at the gates of the daughter of Sion, and exult in Thy help.

The nations are engulfed in the pit which they made; their foot is caught in the trap which they hid.

The Lord has made Himself known, He has executed judgment; the sinner is entangled in the works of his own hands.

Let sinners depart to the underworld, all nations that forget God.

For the poor shall not always be forgotten, nor shall the hope of the needy perish for ever.

Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail; let the nations be judged in Thy sight!

Strike them with terror, O Lord, that the heathen may know they are but men.

## PSALM 9B:22-39 (Heb.10)

*The Psalmist Complains about the Oppression of the Godly (22-32)*

1(22). Quare, Domine, distas procul, abscondis te temporibus angustiae,

Why, O Lord, dost Thou stand afar off? *why* hidest Thou Thyself in times of distress,

14. "De portis mortis," that is, from imminent danger of death, from its very entrance.

15. "In portis filiae Sion." The city gates in the Orient were the places for public gatherings and the transaction of business, like the Agora of Greece and the Forum of Rome. Jerusalem is here spoken of poetically, as "the daughter of Sion," because Mount Sion was the most conspicuous part of the city and the Temple seat.

16. "Demersae sunt gentes, etc." There is a likeness here drawn from two methods of capturing game, one by pits into which they were to fall, another by traps in which they were caught.

18. "Ad inferos," that is, the Heb. *Sheol*, the underworld, or grave.

2(23). Dum superbit impius, vexatur miser, capitur dolis quos ille confinxit?

3(24). Nam peccator gloriatur de cupidine sua, et rapax blasphematur, Dominum spernit.

4(25). Ait impius in superbia mentis: "Non vindicabit; non est Deus": haec est omnis cogitatio eius.

5(26). Prosperae sunt viae eius omni tempore; longe distant iudicia tua a mente eius; omnes adversarios suos contemnit.

6(27). Dicit in corde suo: "Non commovebor: a generatione in generationem non ero infelix."

7(28). Maledictione os eius plenum est et fraude et dolo, sub lingua eius labor et vexatio.

8(29). Sedet in insidiis prope vicos, in occultis occidit innocentem; oculi eius pauperem speculantur.

9(30). Insidiatur in latebris sicut leo in spelunca sua; insidiatur ut rapiat miserum: rapit miserum trahitque in rete suum.

10(31). Incurvatur, prosternit se humi, et violentia eius pauperes cadunt.

11(32). Dicit in corde suo: "Oblitus est Deus, avertit faciem suam, non videt unquam."

3(24). "De cupidine sua." Two explanations may be given: (a) the sinner makes shameless and open boast of his selfish greed; (b) the sinner boasts that he obtains all that he desires.

From this verse to the end of the present section the alphabetical structure disappears.

4(25). "Non est Deus." Such are all his thoughts and plannings.

9(30). The wicked man is here compared first to a lion in his lair, and then to a hunter with his snare.

While the wicked is puffed up, the poor man is made to suffer *and* is caught in the deceits which the other devised?

For the sinner glories in his desires, and the greedy blasphemes, he scorns the Lord.

The wicked man says in arrogance of mind: "He will not avenge, there is no God"; this is his sole thought.

His ways are always prosperous; Thy judgments are far from his mind; he holds in contempt all that oppose him.

He says in his heart: "I shall not be moved; from generation to generation I shall not know misfortune."

His mouth is full of cursing, fraud and deceit; under his tongue lie mischief and trouble.

He hides in ambush near villages; in secret places he kills the innocent; his eyes watch for the poor.

He lurks in secret like a lion in his den; he lies in wait to catch the unfortunate; he seizes the unhappy man and drags him into his net.

He crouches *and* prostrates himself on the ground, and by his violence the needy fall.

He says in his heart: "God has forgotten, He turns away His face, He never sees."



*The Psalmist Implores the Help of God (33-36)*

12<sup>(33)</sup>. Exsurge, Domine Deus, extolle manum tuam! noli pauperum oblivisci!

13<sup>(34)</sup>. Quare spernit impius Deum, dicit in corde suo: "Non vindicabit"?

14<sup>(35)</sup>. Tu autem vides: tu laborem et maerorem consideras, ut ponas ea in manibus tuis. Tibi se pauper committit, orphano tu es adiutor!

15<sup>(36)</sup>. Contere brachium peccatoris et maligni: vindicabis malitiam eius, nec subsistet.

Arise, O Lord God, lift up Thy hand! forget not the poor!

Why does the wicked despise God, saying in his heart: "He will not avenge"?

But Thou seest, Thou dost consider labor and sorrow, to take them into Thine own hands. To Thee the poor man entrusts himself; Thou art the helper of the orphan.

Break Thou the arm of the sinner and the wicked; Thou wilt avenge his malice, and it shall not abide.

*The Psalmist Is Certain of Triumph (37-39)*

16<sup>(37)</sup>. Dominus rex est in saeculum saeculi, perierunt gentes de terra eius.

17<sup>(38)</sup>. Desiderium miserorum audisti, Domine, confirmasti cor eorum, aurem prae buisti,

18<sup>(39)</sup>. Ut ius tuearis orphani et oppressi, neque ultra terrorem in cutiat homo terrenus.

The Lord is king for ever and ever; the nations have perished from His land.

Thou hast heard the desire of the wretched, O Lord; Thou hast strengthened their heart, and hast given ear,

So as to do justice to the orphan and the oppressed, that earthly man may no longer strike *them* with terror.

12<sup>(33)</sup>. The alphabetical arrangement of this Psalm is resumed here.

14<sup>(35)</sup>. "Laborem et maerorem." These words may be understood in two ways: (a) the mischief and violence of the sinner; or (b) the suffering and grief of the oppressed.

15<sup>(36)</sup>. "Contere, etc." Various interpretations are offered: (a) destroy the sinner himself; (b) take away his power of sinning; (c) so punish his crime that it shall not be repeated.

16<sup>(37)</sup>. "Perierunt gentes," may be understood as referring: (a) to the future, as a confident anticipation of the destruction of foreign oppressors of Israel and of all the godless; or (b) more likely to the past, perhaps to the repulse of the heathen spoken of at the beginning of the Psalm, as a ground of hope for the future.

## REFLECTIONS

As the Psalmist often complains of his sufferings and appeals to God for his needs, so he never forgets to praise and thank God for favors received. He recounts with joy and gratitude all the Lord has done for him. Not only that, but he is grieved over the poverty and oppression of the lowly among the people, and he prays with confidence that God will avenge the wrongs they suffer.

The Psalmist, therefore, looks beyond his own needs and troubles to the needs and troubles of others. In this he is a model for us all, and provides one of the best and surest means of relieving our own distresses.

The picture of the wicked man and his doings in the second part of this Psalm (verses 22-39, or Psalm 10 of the Hebrew) is a terrible one, referring to some dark period of Israel's history. It is oppressive, and shows the depths of degradation to which human nature, when godless, can fall.

Great and uncontrolled evils, whether in individuals or among nations, start from small beginnings; unless they are checked quite soon, they are apt to spread and increase like a pestilence, and before long they are out of hand. But virtue, likewise, and noble character also take their rise from single and often simple acts; and when encouraged and strengthened by frequent repetition and aided by divine grace, their progress is remarkable, even to the climbing of the heights of Heaven. It is the beginning of deliberate actions that we need to watch, repressing the bad ones and fostering the good.

## PSALM 10 (Heb. 11)

## THE JUST MAN'S UNSHAKEN TRUST IN GOD

## INTRODUCTION

This Psalm teaches a moral lesson of confidence in God in the midst of extreme dangers. The title attributes it to David. It expresses very well the conditions of David's life at the court of Saul.

Owing to his achievements David became an object of extreme jealousy to the king. So much so that at length the king plainly expressed his wish to be rid of him (1 Kings 19:1), and, had it not been for the unusual popularity of David, he would have been openly put to death. But, since the central authority of the nation was opposed to David, the danger of secret murder was very real, and hence his faint-hearted friends coun-



selling flight to the hills. The young hero, however, felt that he had a duty to perform at the court which he could not well abandon (1 Kings 18: 13, 16, 30), and so, putting his faith in Jehovah's protection, he resolutely decided to face the danger.

1. Magistro chori. Davidis. For the choir-master. Of David.

*The Lord Is the Psalmist's Refuge (1-3)*

Ad Dominum confugio; quomodo dicitis animae meae: "Transvola in montem sicut avis!"

2. Ecce enim peccatores tendunt arcum, ponunt sagittam suam super nervum, ut sagittent in obscuro rectos corde.

3. Quando fundamenta everuntur, iustus quid facere valet?"

In the Lord I take refuge; how say you to my soul: "Flee as a bird to the mountain!"

"For behold, sinners bend their bow; they place their arrow upon the bowstring, to shoot in the dark the upright of heart.

"When the foundations are overturned, what can the just man do?"

*God in Heaven Will Punish the Sinner and Reward the Just (4-7)*

4. Dominus in templo sancto suo; Dominus—in caelo sedes eius. Oculi eius respiciunt, palpebrae eius scrutantur filios hominum.

5. Dominus scrutatur iustum et impium; qui diligit iniquitatem, hunc odit anima eius.

6. Pluet super peccatores carbones ignitos et sulphur; ventus aestuans pars calicis eorum.

7. Nam iustus est Dominus, iustitiam diligit; recti videbunt faciem eius.

The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord—His throne is in heaven. His eyes behold, His eyelids search the sons of men.

The Lord searches the just and the wicked; he that loves iniquity, this one his soul hates.

Upon sinners He will rain burning coals and sulphur; a scorching wind *shall be* the portion of their cup.

For the Lord is just and loves justice; the upright shall behold His face.

1. "Animae meae," i.e., *mibi, to me*.

The defenseless small birds, which find safety from the arrows of the hunters only in the caves and forests of the mountains, appropriately illustrate the condition of the victims of unjust persecution to whom flight is a source of safety.

3. "Fundamenta, etc." The meaning is that when the foundations of society, such as justice, law and order, are overturned, what is there left for a just man to do, save to flee?

6. "Carbones, etc.," that is, chastisements, into which they will fall through their own fault.—"Pars calicis." This refers to the Hebrew custom according to which the head of the house poured into the cup of each member of the family at table his due portion of wine.

REFLECTIONS

David in this Psalm puts duty above present convenience and safety. The danger to his life was great and imminent, but, as he felt himself to be in the hands of God, he was unwilling to sacrifice spiritual and eternal benefits for any temporal advantage. He knew that his life here was short and passing, at best or at worst, and that the life to come was without end for better or for worse. David acted according to true wisdom, and so even his temporal life was spared.

In the face of duty it is cowardly and base to listen to the whisperings of fear, or sloth, or present ease. Far better to fall at our post, and before the eyes of men apparently to fail, than to escape for the moment and then endure the tortures of a wounded conscience.

The eyes of the just man are fixed on a heavenly vision before which all earthly perils seem dim and small. The upright man looks up to God and God looks down upon him, and in the blessedness of that mutual gaze fears vanish, hope is ever more enkindled and the heart remains calm and assured in the midst of storms and alarms.

PSALM 11 (Heb. 12)

AGAINST DECEITFUL AND PROUD ENEMIES

INTRODUCTION

At a time when hypocrisy, treachery and deceit are characteristic of society, the Psalmist utters a cry for help to the Lord, and prays for the destruction of his arrogant foes. Though godlessness seems for the moment to prevail, he is confident that Jehovah's pure word of promise to help the righteous will not fail.

This poem was perhaps written by David while he was at the court of Saul, for there he was surrounded by intrigue and was the object of bitter hate and envy (cfr. 1 Kings 23:11, 19 sqq.; 26:19).

1. Magistro chori. Super octavam. Psalmus. Davidis. For the choir-master. An octave lower. A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Laments Deceit and Implores Divine Help (2-5)*

2. Salva, Domine! Nam deficiunt pii, desiit fidelitas inter filios hominum. Save, O Lord! for the godly have vanished; faithfulness has ceased among the sons of men.



3. Fallacia loquuntur unusquisque ad proximum suum, labiis dolosis loquuntur et duplici corde.

4. Exstirpet Dominus omnia labia dolosa, linguam magniloquam,

5. Eos qui dicunt: "Lingua nostra fortes sumus; labia nostra pro nobis sunt: quis nobis est dominus?"

They speak falsely, every one to his neighbor; with deceiving lips and a double heart they speak.

May the Lord root out all deceitful lips and every boastful tongue,

Those that say: "We are powerful with our tongue; our lips are for ourselves; who is lord over us?"

### *The Divine Reply; the Confidence of the Psalmist (6-9)*

6. "Propter afflictionem humilium et gemitum pauperum, nunc exurgam," dicit Dominus: "conferam salutem ei qui desiderat eam."

7. Eloquentia Domini sunt eloquia sincera, argentum probatum, separatum a terra, purgatum septies.

8. Tu, Domine, servabis nos, custodies nos a generatione hac in aeternum.

9. In circuitu impii ambulant, cum se extollunt vilissimi hominum.

"Because of the affliction of the lowly and the sighing of the poor, now will I arise," says the Lord; "I will give salvation to him that desires it."

The words of the Lord are sincere words, as silver tried, cleared of all dross, seven times refined.

Thou wilt preserve us, O Lord, and keep us from this generation for ever.

The godless walk on every side, while the worst of men exalt themselves.

### REFLECTIONS

All too often in this world wickedness prevails and seems to triumph, while God seems to ignore the cause of the just and the innocent. What can be done about it?

To find satisfaction in the thought that sinners will be punished and will have to suffer hereafter is a poor and an unchristian solution of a distressing difficulty. An enlightened Christian hates evil in all its forms,

3. Cfr. Deut. 25:13; Prov. 20:10.

6. "Qui desiderat eam." A doubtful text. Others render: "Eum in quem saeviunt."

7. "Eloquentia sincera," i.e., without false admixture.—"Separatum a terra," i.e., cleared of dross.—"Purgatum septies," that is, perfectly purified. Seven was regarded as a perfect number.

and rejoices in no one's suffering here or elsewhere; he never forgets the innate frailty and perversity of human nature, and its hopeless condition unless repaired and supplemented by the special help of God.

A better way therefore out of our difficulty is first to make sure that the supposed innocent and just have done all in their power, by resolute appropriate action and shining example, to remove the evils from which they suffer, and then to make a merit of necessity, committing the final issue to the goodness and mercy of God. As Christians, our aim and effort must always be directed to the cessation and destruction of sin, and the salvation of the sinner.

### PSALM 12 (Heb. 13)

#### THE LAMENT OF A JUST ONE WHO TRUSTS IN GOD

##### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is almost in despair over the extremity of his plight and Jehovah's apparent indifference to him. But he turns to prayer and begs that the Lord hear him before he sleeps the sleep of death and his enemies rejoice at his failure. Prayer brings comfort and confidence of deliverance.

Many authors think this Psalm belongs to the later period of David's persecution by Saul (cfr. 1 Kings 18:29; 27:4).

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. For the choir-master. A Psalm. Davidis. Of David.

#### *The Psalmist Complains to God and Implores Help (2-4a)*

2. Quousque, Domine? oblivisceris mei omnino? quousque abscondes faciem tuam a me?

How long, O Lord, wilt Thou forget me altogether? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?

3. Quousque volvam dolores in anima mea, maerorem in corde meo cotidie?

How long shall I revolve sorrows within my soul, grief in my heart every day?

4. Quousque se extollet inimicus meus super me? respice, exaudi me, Domine, Deus meus!

How long will mine enemy exalt himself over me? Look, and answer me, O Lord my God!



*With Confidence He Asks Divine Aid (4b-6)*

5. Illustra oculos meos, ne obdormiam in morte, ne dicat inimicus meus: "Devici eum";

6. Ne exsultent adversarii mei, quod corruerim: cum confisus sim in misericordia tua. Exsultet cor meum de auxilio tuo; cantem Domino, qui bona tribuit mihi.

Enlighten mine eyes, lest I begin to sleep in death, lest mine enemy say: "I have conquered him";

Lest mine adversaries exult that I have fallen, although I trusted in Thy mercy. Let my heart exult because of Thy help; let me sing to the Lord, who has given me good things.

## REFLECTIONS

Fervent prayer is always a comfort, if we can make it. It is hard in times of great affliction to pray as we should, unless we have accustomed ourselves to such prayer at other seasons when all seems well with us. Many persons turn to God and think of prayer only when in serious trouble, and then they are surprised and deeply grieved if their prayers are not speedily answered. The gift of fervent prayer is not something we can use or neglect at our convenience. It is a habit, strengthened by many repeated acts and nourished by the grace of God.

During periods of peace we should prepare and strengthen our souls for times of war in the spiritual as well as in the material world. Then when strain is put upon us, we shall have some hope of being able to bear it.

## PSALM 13 (Heb. 14)

## GENERAL CORRUPTION AND ITS PUNISHMENT

## INTRODUCTION

This ethical Psalm describes human corruption and its punishment, and calls on God for rescue. If the Psalmist is not referring to the disorders of the primeval world—at the time of the flood, at Babel and in Sodom—and to the oppression of the Hebrews in Egypt, his words at least recall to our minds those dreadful events.

It is probable, however, that the Psalmist is describing the depravity

of his own age and country, and some special intervention of God against godless enemies.

According to the title this is a Psalm of David; but some think the last verse is a liturgical addition made at the time of the Babylonian exile. This Psalm appears later as Psalm 52, the chief differences between the two poems being substitution of Elohim in Psalm 52 for the Yahweh or Jehovah of Psalm 13, and a wide divergence of verse 6 of Psalm 52 from verses 5 and 6 of the present Psalm. The section between verses 3 and 4 of this Psalm in the Vulgate is not added in Psalm 52 and does not belong here, being an interpolation taken from Romans 3:13-18.

1. Magistro chori. Davidis.

For the choir-master. Of David.

*The Psalmist Deplores the Universal Corruption, and Predicts Divine Chastisement (1-6)*

Dicit insipiens in corde suo: "Non est Deus."

Corrupti sunt, abominanda egerunt; non est, qui faciat bonum.

2. Dominus de caelo prospicit super filios hominum, ut videat, num sit, qui intellegat et quaerat Deum.

3. Omnes simul aberraverunt, depravati sunt: non est qui faciat bonum, non est nec unus.

4. Nonne resipiscunt omnes qui faciunt iniquitatem, qui devorant populum meum, sicut comedunt panem? Dominum non invo-

The fool says in his heart: "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they have done abominable things; there is none that does good.

The Lord looks down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there be anyone that may understand and seek God.

They have all gone astray together, they are depraved; there is none that does good, there is not even one.

Will not all workers of iniquity come to their senses, who devour my people just as they eat bread? They have not called

1. "Insipiens" refers here to a class of men, and not to an individual; it stands for a Hebrew term which designates not mere ignorance or stupidity, but moral perversity.—"Dicit in corde," that is, he draws a deliberate conclusion in his mind and acts upon it in practice. He ignores the use of reason, the voice of conscience and the book of nature, all of which tell him there is a God.

2. "Intellegat" is the antithesis of "insipiens," and means one who puts God before him in his life and actions.

4. "Qui devorant, etc." According to some, the reference here is to powerful Israelites who oppressed the just among their brethren. More likely, "my people" refers to Israel as a nation, and the oppressors are foreign enemies, likely the Egyptians. "My people" is the usual expression for Israel.



caverunt; (5) tum trepidabunt on the Lord; then shall they timore, quoniam Deus cum generatione iusta est. tremble with fear, for God is with the just generation.

6. Consilium miseri vultis confundere: sed Dominus est refugium eius. You seek to confuse the counsel of the unfortunate, but the Lord is his refuge.

*May Help Come to Israel (7)*

7. Utinam veniat ex Sion salus Israel! cum verterit Dominus sortem populi sui, exultabit Iacob, laetabitur Israel. O that salvation for Israel may come from Sion! When the Lord shall have changed the fortune of His people, Jacob will exult and Israel will be glad.

REFLECTIONS

The widespread corruption about which the Psalmist here complains was radically due, in his judgment, to a practical denial, by society in general, of the existence of a divine being. Not that men bothered to teach formal atheism, but that they never called on God, they did not think of Him, they acted in their daily life as if He did not exist. It was this moral perversity which at length produced the deluge of evil—putrid, rotting, smelling to Heaven, until the voice of God was finally heard decreeing judgment; and then a panic of sudden terror seized upon the souls of the workers of iniquity.

Sin and wickedness, when persisted in, dull the mind and harden the heart against God and the spirit world. They bind and enslave the soul ever more and more to the material and perishable world, and make their victims insensible to their dreadful state.

As human nature strongly inclines to evil of many kinds, constant effort and divine aid are required to lift it up to the love and pursuit of the spiritual. It is true that sin brings its own punishment, here and now, and this fact is a deterrent, but it is not enough. The positive help of God is necessary to lead a virtuous life.

5. "Tum trepidabunt." This may also mean that the godless had reason to fear when the just had none, as in the plagues of Egypt, or in some other event of which we have no knowledge. Others think the meaning is: the wicked who did not fear the living God trembled before idols from whom there was nothing to fear.—"Cum generatione iusta" means the Lord is with and protects His elect.—Other explanations are: (a) the fool sought to frustrate the plans of the lowly; (b) through their own plans against the lowly the fools were brought to confusion; (c) if you would frustrate the counsel of the afflicted, remember the Lord is his refuge.

7. "Cum verterit, etc." The Hebrew here may mean either the bringing back of the nation from captivity, or the restoring of its fortunes after some trial. Hence, it is not necessary to see a reference to the Babylonian captivity in this verse.

PSALM 14 (Heb. 15)

WHO IS WORTHY TO APPEAR BEFORE THE LORD

INTRODUCTION

We have here a Didactic Psalm in which the question is asked and answered as to what is required for entrance into the house of the Lord. According to the title the Psalm was written by David, and there is nothing in its contents to cause us to reject the Davidic authorship. It is very similar to Psalm 23, and may have been composed at the same time. According to the general opinion, Psalm 23 was written by David for the translation of the Ark to the tent he had prepared for it on Mount Sion (Kings 6:17). Such an occasion would have been a most appropriate one for the composition of the present Psalm, which treats of the virtues necessary in those who would enter into the presence of the all-holy God in His Tabernacle.

1. Psalmus. Davidis.

A psalm. Of David.

*The Question Is Proposed (1)*

Domine, quis commorabitur in tabernaculo tuo, quis habitabit in monte sancto tuo?

Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell on Thy holy mountain?

*The Reply Gives Ten Conditions (2-5b)*

2. Qui ambulat sine macula et facit iustitiam et cogitat recta in corde suo; (3) nec calumniatur lingua sua;

He that walks without stain, and works justice, and thinks right things in his heart, that slanders not with his tongue;

Qui non facit proximo suo malum, neque opprobrium infert vicino suo;

He that does no evil to his friend, nor brings reproach to his neighbor;

1. "Quis commorabitur, etc." Some take this question as referring only to the ministers of the Sanctuary, but the question doubtless has a much wider range, and includes all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and in a spiritual sense even all who will draw near to God.—"In tabernaculo tuo" might mean, metaphorically, "in Thine abode"; but as it stands here paralleled by "Thy holy mount," the reference seems to be to the tent which David pitched for the Ark on Mount Sion.



4. Qui contemptibilem aestimat improbum, timentes vero Dominum honorat;

5. Qui, etsi iuravit cum damno suo, non mutat; pecuniam suam non dat ad usuram neque accipit munera contra innocentem.

He that holds as worthless the wicked man, but honors them that fear the Lord;

He who, though he has sworn to his own hurt, changes not; who gives not his money for usury, nor takes bribes against the innocent.

### *The Reward (5c)*

Qui facit haec, non movebitur in aeternum.

He that does these things shall never be moved.

### REFLECTIONS

Prayer is converse with God. It is placing ourselves in the divine presence, and then speaking to God as a child to its good and loving father, as a friend to a friend. But such a holy action must be prepared for by us; first, by freedom from sin as far as possible, or, in case of sin, by a faith and a confidence born of the habit of prayer and general good living; secondly, by making the effort of mind and heart which every earnest action requires.

We prepare ourselves before meeting and conversing with the great ones of earth. How much more, then, should we prepare ourselves—by recollection, attention, humility, resignation, fitting posture and the like—before appearing in prayer before God!

Hebrew morality stressed negative qualities of conduct and exterior acts; the just man must abstain in daily life from the prevailing evils around him, and he must also fulfill the requirements of the Law. Christianity does all this and more; it prescribes the external as a means of enforcing the internal and giving good example, and it looks to Christ as the model of perfect behavior, whose teachings were fulfilled in His own manner of living. Though Christ was God and we are only human, He has left us the means by which we can become God-like.

5. "Qui, etsi iuravit, etc." This meaning is that even if he takes a rash oath disadvantageous to himself, he does not hesitate to keep it, as the law required: "If a man swear, he must accomplish his oath" (Lev. 5:4).—"Ad usuram." The law forbade the taking of interest from fellow-countrymen, but not from foreigners (Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 23:19, 20). The circumstances of modern society have made the taking of reasonable interest on money perfectly lawful.—"Munera contra innocentem." Bribery has always been one of the curses of Oriental countries.

## PSALM 15 (Heb. 16)

### GOD IS THE SUPREME GOOD, THE SOURCE OF RESURRECTION AND OF ETERNAL LIFE

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm may have been written by David during his outlaw life, when deprived of his share in the inheritance of Jehovah and in danger of apostasy; or it may have been prompted by the sight all around of Israelites who had abandoned the true God and turned to idol worship. Whatever the occasion, the Psalmist is sustained in the hour of distress by the thought that God Himself is the fair portion of his inheritance, the real source of his happiness, the one worthy object of his worship. In the possession of such a lot he rejoices and feels secure against all perils. The Lord will not forsake him, nor suffer him to experience lasting destruction, but will in the end take him to Himself and delight him with His own divine presence evermore. The closing verses seem unquestionably to point to a future state of blessed immortality, whether the full meaning of his inspired, ecstatic words was realized by the writer or not.

The Messianic character of the Psalm is certain. The Messiah is speaking through the Psalmist, especially in the last verses, which were quoted by St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost and by St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia as a prophecy of Christ's Resurrection (cfr. Acts 2:25-28; 13:35).

1. Miktam. Davidis.

A miktam. Of David.

### *God Our Highest Good (1-6)*

2. Conserva me, Deus, quoniam confugio ad te, dico Domino: "Dominus meus es tu; bonum mihi non est sine te."

Preserve me, O God, for to Thee I flee for refuge; I say to the Lord: "Thou art my Lord; there is no good for me without Thee."

3. In sanctos, qui sunt in terra eius, quam mirabilem fecit omnem affectum meum!

How wonderful He has made all my love toward the holy that dwell in His land!

4. Multiplicant dolores suos qui sequuntur deos alienos. Non libabo sanguinem libationum eo-

They multiply their sorrows who follow strange gods. I will not pour out the blood of their

3. "Sancti," here, as in other psalms, are people devoted to God, devout, pious persons.

4. "Sequuntur" means to show favor, to venerate.



rum, nec pronuntiabo nomina eorum labiis meis.

5. Dominus pars hereditatis meae et calicis mei: tu es qui tenes sortem meam.

6. Funes ceciderunt mihi in amoena; et hereditas mea perplacet mihi.

drink-offerings, nor take their names upon my lips.

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; it is Thou that holdest my lot.

The measuring lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, mine inheritance delights me much.

*The Presence of God Is an Assurance to the Psalmist that He Will Have Part in the Future Resurrection and Eternal Happiness (7-11)*

7. Benedico Domino, quod dedit mihi consilium, quod vel per noctem me monet cor meum.

8. Pono Dominum in conspectu meo semper; quoniam a dextris meis est, non commovebor.

9. Propter hoc laetatur cor meum et exultat anima mea, insuper et caro mea requiescet secure,

10. Quia non relinques animam meam apud inferos, non sines sanctum tuum videre corruptionem.

11. Ostendes mihi semitam vitae, ubertatem gaudiorum apud te, delicias ad dexteram tuam in perpetuum.

I bless the Lord that He has given me counsel, that even through the night my heart admonishes me.

I keep the Lord always in my sight; as He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul exults, and even my flesh will rest secure,

For Thou wilt not leave my soul in the underworld, nor suffer Thy holy one to see corruption.

Thou wilt show me the path of life, the richness of joys *that are* with Thee, the delights at Thy right hand for evermore.

#### REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist here looks beyond the limitation of time and creatures, and the woes of life, to the infinite, all-perfect God of Heaven; and he rejoices in the thought that his real inheritance, his true goal, is God and eternity and not creatures or this world. Were it otherwise, he would find life on earth unbearable.

The singer regards God as the source and fountain of every good, the ocean of all beauty and all delights, the one and only object that can

6. "Funes," i.e., the lines by which the land was measured and distributed.

fill to overflowing his entire capacity and satisfy his every desire and longing. Creatures are not enough for him, because at best and fairest they are but glimpses and faint images of God. At most they can satisfy only in part and for the moment. The Psalmist knows he was made for God, because he has a nature and capacity which only God can fill and satisfy.

If we would take such a view of God and of the present life, and could keep it before us at all times, how much more easily could we bear our sufferings and our trials! All the more so, since out of the fiery furnace of this life and world are to come our golden crowns and eternal rewards.

We know that everything of value in the present world must be purchased at a price; and the greater the value, the greater the price. Labor, sacrifice, suffering, sorrow, tears, rightly borne, are the price of eternal delights. For us there is no other way. It is the way which Christ Himself chose.

#### PSALM 16 (Heb. 17)

#### AN INNOCENT MAN IMPLORES GOD'S HELP AGAINST POWERFUL ENEMIES

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is a prayer of David for help, probably against the persecution of King Saul. The occasion may have been Saul's pursuit of David into the wilderness of Maon. David and his men were on the point of being surrounded and captured, when a sudden eruption of the Philistines caused Saul to desist from his attack (1 Kings 23:25 sqq.). The whole context of the Psalm corresponds to this historical setting, although some modern critics are inclined to place it after the exile.

There are many points of resemblance between this and Psalm 15, and both seem clearly to imply in their closing verses the doctrine of immortality. The text of the present Psalm is in bad condition.

1. Precatio. Davidis.

A prayer. Of David.

*The Psalmist Cites the Innocence of His Life, and Invokes the Judgment of the Omniscient God (1-5)*

Audi, Domine, iustam causam, Hear, O Lord, a just cause, attende clamorem meum, auribus attend to my cry, give ear to



percipe orationem meam ex labiis non dolosis.

2. A conspectu tuo iudicium de me prodeat: oculi tui vident quae recta sunt.

3. Si scrutaris cor meum, si visitas nocte, si igne me probas, non inuenies in me iniquitatem.

Non est transgressum os meum (4) hominum more; secundum verba labiorum tuorum ego custodivi vias legis.

5. Firmiter inhaesit gressus meus semitis tuis, non titubarunt pedes mei.

*The Psalmist Implores God's Help against His Enemies (6-9a)*

6. Ego te invoco, quoniam exaudies me, Deus; inclina aurem tuam mihi, audi verbum meum.

7. Mirabilem ostende misericordiam tuam, qui ab adversantibus salvas confugientes ad dexteram tuam.

8. Custodi me ut pupillam oculi, sub umbra alarum tuarum absconde me (9) a peccatoribus, qui vim inferunt mihi.

*The Psalmist Describes the Attacks of His Enemies (9b-12)*

Inimici mei cum furore me circumveniunt, (10) crassum cor su-

my prayer from lips without guile.

Let judgment upon me come forth from Thy sight; Thine eyes discern what things are right.

If Thou examinest my heart, if Thou visitest by night, if Thou provest me by fire, Thou wilt not find iniquity in me.

My mouth has not transgressed after the custom of men; according to the words of Thy lips I have kept the ways of the law.

Firmly my step has adhered to Thy paths, my feet have not wavered.

I call upon Thee, for Thou wilt answer me, O God; bend Thine ear to me, hear my word.

Show Thy wondrous mercy, Thou who dost save from adversaries those that flee for refuge to Thy right hand.

Guard me as the apple of the eye, under the shadow of Thy wings hide me from sinners who do violence to me.

Mine enemies surround me with fury, they shut up their gross

3. "Si scrutaris, etc." The Psalmist is here protesting his innocence as far as his persecutors are concerned, that he is altogether sinless in the sight of God.—"Si visitas, etc." These words may mean: (a) the night is the special time for wicked plottings, but not even then has the Psalmist been found guilty by God; (b) while men behold the Psalmist only during the day, the Lord sees him even during the night, and yet finds no wickedness in him.

7. "Ad dexteram tuam." The right hand stands for the authority and power of God. The sense of the Hebrew here is: "Who savest from Thine adversaries those who fly to Thy right hand."

8. "Pupillam oculi." The apple of the eye is the symbol of that which is tenderest and dearest.

10. "Crassum cor." In Hebrew, fatness signifies insensibility or want of heart.

um praecludunt, ore suo loquuntur superbe.

11. Passus eorum nunc me circumdant, oculos suos intendunt, ut in terram prosternant,

12. Similes leoni, qui inhiat praedae, et catulo leonis, qui in abditis sedet.

heart; with their mouth they speak arrogantly.

Their steps now encompass me, they set their eyes to beat me to the ground,

They are like a lion gaping for prey and the lion's cub that crouches in hidden places.

*The Psalmist Again Implores God's Judgment upon Enemies Whose Thoughts Are of This World, and Asserts His Confidence of Seeing the Face of God (13-15)*

13. Exsurge, Domine, occure illi, prosterne eum, eripe a peccatore animam meam gladio tuo, (14) manu tua ab hominibus, Domine: ab hominibus, quorum portio est haec vita, et quorum ventrem imples opibus tuis; quorum filii saturantur et relinquunt, quod eis superest, parvulis suis.

15. Ego autem in iustitia videbo faciem tuam, satiabor, evigilans, aspectu tuo.

Arise, O Lord, confront him, strike him down; from the sinner snatch my soul with Thy sword, from men with Thy hand, O Lord; from men whose portion is this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy gifts, whose sons abound, and leave their surplus to their children.

But I in justice shall see Thy face, I shall be satisfied, upon awakening, with sight of Thee.

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist appeals to God for help against bitter enemies. He cites his own innocence and the wickedness of his foes. But in the end he is calmed by a consideration of the contrast between his final lot and theirs. United to God in mystic love, and thus elevated high above the transient scenes of earth, he could not envy, but rather pity, worldlings who prefer "the gross and partial satisfactions of sense-bound lives to the calm,

15. "Satiabor, etc." Heb.: *I shall be satisfied, in the awakening, with Thy likeness.* Various explanations: (a) I shall be satisfied, when Thou awakest to help me, with the vision of Thy benign countenance; or (b) when I awake from the night of calamity in which I now am, I shall experience the delight of Thy protection; or (c) when I awake from the sleep of death, I shall behold Thy countenance in the world beyond, being transfigured in Thy likeness. This last is the common explanation of the passage. The doctrine of future immortality and blessedness is certainly implied in this and in similar Psalm texts; but whether this doctrine was clearly apprehended by the Psalmist is a matter of dispute. See Boylan, *The Psalms*, vol. I, p. 18, on verse 6, and the references there given. See also Gruenthaner, "The Future Life in The Psalms," in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, January, 1940, pp. 57 sqq.



permanent, full delight of communion with God." This latter condition and state is a foretaste of immortality and an assurance of it.

Often our sufferings are the natural results of our own faults and limitations; often too they come from the wrongs of others. In the first case we can only blame ourselves, or the circumstance of the poor nature we have inherited, the evils and temptations of the world in which we live, the accidents of birth, environment, education or the lack of it, etc. But even so, it is our duty to make every reasonable effort to overcome these native and involuntary obstacles. The struggle against adversity has produced many of the finest characters and greatest people the world has had. What so many others have done we also can do, at least in our own measure and way.

In the second case, after trying to fortify ourselves against those other evils as best we can, we should, like the Psalmist, humbly and confidently resign ourselves to God, who satisfies some of His children with the passing goods of earth, while reserving for His chosen ones the delights of His own divine presence, here and hereafter, now and forever.

## PSALM 17 (Heb. 18)

### KING DAVID'S THANKSGIVING FOR SAFETY AND VICTORY

#### INTRODUCTION

This is a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving, and one of the most sublime in the Psalter. That it had David as its author is clear from the title, and from both internal and external evidence. The poet is a general and a king, who has had to contend with domestic and foreign foes, who has suffered from a ferocious persecutor, but who has been rescued from every peril and has triumphed over his enemies and received the submission of surrounding nations. These characteristics point indisputably to King David. This same poem, with a few variations, is found also in 2 Kings 22, as a poem of David. The compiler of 2 Kings embodied it in his work "as at once the best illustration of David's life and character, and the noblest specimen of his poetry" (Kirkpatrick).

It is not entirely certain when this Psalm was composed; but from the title and contents it seems most probable that it was written towards the middle of David's reign, when he was at the zenith of his prosperity, when the struggles of earlier years had given way to peace, and before the sorrows of later times had darkened his days.

This Psalm has rightly been regarded by the Fathers as Messianic, for

many of its figures and expressions seem too lofty and solemn to be descriptive of the career of any merely earthly king.

1. Magistro chori. Davidis, servi Domini, qui locutus est ad Dominum verba huius cantici, quando Dominus eum liberaverat e potestate omnium inimicorum suorum et e manu Saul. (2) Dixit igitur:

For the choir-master. Of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this canticle to the Lord after the latter had delivered him from the power of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said, therefore:

#### *The Psalmist Praises God for His Aid (2-4)*

Diligo te, Domine, fortitudo mea, (3) Domine, petra mea, arx mea, liberator meus, Deus meus, rupes mea, in quam confugio, clipeus meus, cornu salutis meae, praesidium meum!

I love Thee, O Lord, my strength—O Lord, my rock, my citadel, my deliverer, my God, my crag to which I flee for refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!

4. Laudabilem invocabo Dominum, et ab inimicis meis salvus ero.

I will call upon the Lord who is worthy of praise, and I shall be safe from mine enemies.

#### *The Psalmist Describes the Dangers that Threatened Him (5-7)*

5. Circumdederunt me fluctus mortis, et torrentes perniciosi terruerunt me;

The waves of death enveloped me, and torrents of destruction dismayed me;

6. Funes inferni circumplexi sunt me, invaserunt me laquei mortis:

The cords of Sheol surrounded me, the snares of death beset me;

7. In tribulatione mea invocavi Dominum, et ad Deum meum clamavi; et audivit de tem-

In my trouble I called upon the Lord, and I cried to my God; and from His temple He heard

2, 3. "Petra mea, rupes mea." The imagery is taken from the features of the country in which David was a fugitive during the persecution of Saul, a rugged region in which were many caves and cliffs and natural strongholds.—"Cornu salutis meae." The image is from the horns by which animals defend themselves, or from the summit of hills to which one may flee for safety.

4. "Invocabo . . . salvus ero." Although the verbs here are future, the sense may also be rendered: (a) I praise the Lord now, because in past times He saved me; (b) whenever I call upon the Lord, He helps me.

5. "Fluctus mortis." The corresponding text of 2 Kings 22:5 has "billows of death," with its parallel of the next line, "floods of iniquity."

6. Death and Sheol, the mysterious underworld, are personified as hunters seeking to ensnare David; the meaning is that he was very near to death.



plo suo vocem meam, et clamor meus introivit in aures eius. my voice, and my cry entered into His ears.

*In Poetic Language, after the Manner of a Theophany, the Psalmist Describes How God Rescued Him from Peril (8-20)*

8. Et concussa est et contremuit terra, fundamenta montium conturbata sunt et concussa sunt, quia flagrabat ira.

9. Ascendit fumus e naribus eius, et ignis ex ore eius consumens, carbones ab eo succensi.

10. Et inclinavit caelos et descendit, et atrum nubilum erat sub pedibus eius.

11. Et vectus est super Cherub et volavit, et ferebatur super alas venti.

12. Induit tenebras ut velamentum, ut tegumentum aquam tenebrosam, nubila densa.

13. Ob fulgorem in conspectu eius exarserunt carbones igniti.

14. Et intonuit de caelo Dominus, et Altissimus emisit vocem suam,

15. Et misit sagittas suas et

And the earth was shaken and trembled, the foundations of the mountains were convulsed and quaked, because He was ablaze with anger.

Smoke rose from His nostrils, and a consuming fire from His mouth, blazing coals enkindled by Him.

And he bent the heavens and came down, and a black cloud was under His feet.

And He was carried upon a Cherub and He flew, and He was borne on the wings of the wind.

He put on darkness as a cloak, dark water and thick clouds as a covering.

At the light in His countenance burning coals burst aflame.

And the Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High sent forth His voice,

And He dispatched His arrows

8-16. We have here perhaps an account of the dispersion of David's enemies by a thunderstorm on some particular occasion; or, more likely, the Psalmist pictures through a storm Jehovah's intervention in his behalf in general, without special reference to any single instance. For similar descriptions, see Exod. 19:16-18; Wis. 5:22 sqq. The storm is described in orderly succession: we have first the trembling of the earth (v. 8), the gathering clouds with distant flashes of lightning (v. 9), the deepening darkness (vv. 10-12), and finally the bursting of the storm in all its fury (vv. 13-16).

10-12. Jehovah is represented as descending from heaven, with the clouds like a pavement under His feet, and with darkness encircling Him like a tent, while He Himself is concealed within, enthroned on the wings of cherubim, as in the Tabernacle He rested over the two cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant. Or the cherubim here may mean the clouds, the flying steeds of Jehovah's chariot of war.

13. "Ob fulgorem." The meaning may also be that the lightnings which pierced the clouds from time to time were flashes from the brilliancy of the divine glory which blazed within.

dissipavit eos, fulgura multa, et profligavit eos.

16. Et apparuerunt alvei maris et nudata sunt fundamenta orbis terrarum ab increpatione Domini, a flatu spiritus irae eius.

17. Extendit manum ex alto, prehendit me, extraxit me de aquis multis.

18. Eripuit me de inimico meo fortissimo, et ab osoribus meis, qui erant me validiores.

19. Invadebant me die mihi funesto, sed Dominus factus est praesidium mihi,

20. Et eduxit me in campum spatiosum, salvum me fecit, quia diligit me.

*The Psalmist's Preservation Was Due to the Integrity of His Life (21-31)*

21. Rependit mihi Dominus secundum iustitiam meam, secundum puritatem manuum mearum retribuit mihi,

22. Quia custodivi vias Domini nec peccando recessi a Deo meo,

23. Quia omnia mandata eius prae oculis habui, et praecepta eius a me non removi,

24. Sed fui integer coram eo, et a culpa servavi me.

and scattered them, many lightnings, and discomfited them.

And the depths of the sea were revealed and the foundations of the world were laid bare at the rebuke of the Lord, by the breath of the spirit of His wrath.

He put forth a hand from on high, He grasped me, He drew me forth from many waters.

He rescued me from my most powerful enemy, and from my haters who were stronger than I.

They attacked me on the day of my calamity, but the Lord became a fortress for me,

And He led me forth into a broad field; He saved me because He loves me.

The Lord has repaid me according to my justice; according to the purity of my hands He has rewarded me,

Because I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not by sin departed from my God,

Because I have kept all His commands before mine eyes, and have not put His precepts away from me,

But I have been blameless before Him, and have preserved myself from fault.

16. "Fundamenta orbis terrarum." The earth is represented as founded on the bed of the sea. The storm, raising the waters on high, brings into view the bottom of the ocean.

17. "De aquis multis." Many or great waters are often a symbol in Scripture of great danger or trouble.

18. The strong enemies here referred to are probably Saul and his partisans.

20. "In campum, etc." Largeness of space is symbolic of freedom and happiness, just as constraint implies sorrow.

21. "Secundum puritatem manuum mearum." Cleanness of hands signifies moral integrity.



25. Et retribuit mihi Dominus secundum iustitiam meam, secundum puritatem manuum mearum coram oculis eius.

26. Erga virum pium ostendis te pium, erga integrum integre agis,

27. Erga purum te monstras purum, erga versutum te praebeas prudentem.

28. Nam tu populum humilem salvum facis, oculos autem elatos affligis.

29. Nam tu splendere facis lucernam meam, Domine; Deus meus, illuminas tenebras meas.

30. Nam per te incurro in turmas hostiles, et per Deum meum transilio murum.

31. Dei via est integra, eloquium Domini igne probatum; ipse clipeus est omnibus confugientibus ad eum.

*Description of the Individual Favors Which God Had Granted to the King (32-35)*

32. Quisnam est deus praeter Dominum? aut quae petra praeter Deum nostrum?

33. Deus, qui praecinxit me

And the Lord has repaid me according to my justice, according to the purity of my hands in His eyes.

Towards the pious man Thou showest Thyself pious, towards the sincere Thou dealest sincerely,

Towards the pure Thou showest Thyself pure, towards the wily Thou showest Thyself prudent.

For Thou dost preserve a humble people, but strikest down arrogant eyes.

For Thou makest my lamp to shine, O Lord; my God, Thou dost light up my darkness.

For through Thee I assail hostile throngs, and through my God I leap across a rampart.

The way of God is faultless, the saying of the Lord is proved by fire; He is a shield to all that flee to Him for refuge.

Who is god save the Lord? Or what rock is there save our God?

God, who has girded me with

25. A repetition of verse 21.

26, 27. "Erga virum pium, etc." The meaning here is that the man who is godly, dutiful, gracious and merciful, will receive from God a treatment similar to that which he shows to others. He cannot complain if the Lord treats him according to the habits he has freely acquired.

29. In Oriental houses a lamp was kept continually burning. The burning lamp was a natural symbol of the continuance of life and happiness.

30. There seems to be a reference here to two memorable events in David's life—his successful pursuit of a raiding troop of Amalecites (1 Kings 30) and his easy victory in the attack on Sion, which had been considered impregnable (2 Kings 5: 6-8).—"Transilio murum," to scale a wall, and take a city by storm.

33-35. In these verses David mentions the qualifications for warfare with which God had gifted him—strength, swiftness of foot, skill—and the care God exercised in removing obstacles from his path and providing him with secure fortresses.—"Et ad arcum aereum, etc." The meaning may be that David had the strength and art to bend a bow of brass.

fortitudine et fecit integram viam meam,

34. Qui celeres fecit pedes meos ut pedes cervarum, et super excelsa statuit me,

35. Qui exercuit manus meas ad proelium, et ad arcum aereum tendendum brachia mea.

strength and has made my way blameless,

Who has made my feet swift as the feet of deer, and has set me upon high places,

Who has trained my hands for battle, and mine arms to bend the brazen bow.

*God Lent His Powerful Assistance in Battle, and Drove the Enemies into Flight (36-46)*

36. Et dedisti mihi clipeum tuum salvantem, et dextera tua sustentavit me, et sollicitudo tua grandem me fecit.

37. Latam fecisti viam gressibus meis, nec vacillarunt pedes mei.

38. Insequebar inimicos meos et apprehendebam illos, nec revertebar donec confeceram eos.

39. Confregi illos nec poterunt surgere, ceciderunt sub pedibus meis.

40. Et praecinxisti me fortitudine ad proelium, et resistentes mihi sub me curvasti,

41. Et inimicos meos in fugam vertisi, et, qui oderunt me, disperdidisti.

42. Clamaverunt — neque erat qui salvos faceret; ad Dominum — neque eos audivit.

43. Et disieci eos ut pulverem ante ventum, ut lutum platearum contudi eos.

44. Eripuisti me de contentionibus populi, caput nationum me constituisti.

And Thou has given me Thy saving shield; Thy right hand has sustained me, and Thy care has made me great.

Thou hast broadened the way for my steps, and my feet have not wavered.

I pursued mine enemies and seized them, nor returned until I had made an end of them.

I crushed them, nor were they able to rise; they fell under my feet.

And Thou hast girded me with strength for the battle, and hast bent under me those that resisted me.

And Thou didst turn mine enemies into flight, and scattered those that hated me.

They cried aloud—nor was there anyone to save them; to the Lord—and He heard them not.

And I scattered them like dust before the wind; like the mire of the streets I crushed them.

Thou has rescued me from the quarrels of the people, Thou hast made me head of the nations.



Populus, quem non noveram,  
servivit mihi, (45) ad primum  
auditum oboedivit mihi;

Alienigenae blanditi sunt mihi,  
(46) alienigenae palluerunt, exi-  
erunt trementes ex arcibus suis.

*Brief Summary of God's Favors and Thanksgiving (47-51)*

47. Vivat Dominus, et bene-  
dicta sit Petra mea, et laudibus ex-  
tollatur Deus, salvator meus,

48. Deus qui dedit ultionem  
mihi et populos mihi subiecit;

49. Qui liberasti me ab inimi-  
cis meis, et super resistentes mihi  
extulisti me, a viro violento me  
eripuisti.

50. Propterea celebrabo te in  
nationibus, Domine, et nomini  
tuo psalmum dicam:

51. Qui magnas victorias de-  
disti regi tuo et misericordiam fe-  
cisti uncto tuo, David et semini  
eius in aeternum.

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist is here full of praise and gratitude to God for divine deliverance from many and great perils. This deliverance is a sure sign to him that God loves him dearly, and that fact in turn fills his heart and soul to overflowing with love of so good a Father.

No one of us has in this world all he wants and would like to have. But we all have received, and continue to receive, many favors, either in the natural or the supernatural order, or in both. Moreover, we all have doubtless been rescued from many perils in the past, and have been spared many evils which have afflicted others and might have befallen us.

49. "A viro violento" probably refers to Saul.

51. "Uncto tuo," i.e., to King David.

A people that I had not known  
has served me; on first hearing it  
obeyed me.

Foreigners fawned on me, for-  
eigners grew pale; trembling they  
went forth from their strong-  
holds.

May the Lord live, and blessed  
be my Rock, and extolled with  
praises be God, my Saviour,

God who has avenged my  
wrongs, and subjected the peoples  
under me;

Thou who hast delivered me  
from mine enemies, who hast  
lifted me above those that resisted  
me, and rescued me from the  
violent man.

Therefore will I praise Thee  
among the nations, O Lord, and  
chant a hymn to Thy name:

Who hast given great victories  
to Thy king and hast shown mercy  
to Thine anointed, to David and  
his seed for ever.

If we thus count up our blessings and reflect on some of the misfortunes we have escaped, we shall always have much for which to praise and thank God, as well as many reasons for praying for other poor mortals who have been less highly favored than we have been.

And, although we have had many blessings and have escaped many evils, how many of us can lay claim to the innocence and the worthiness of the Psalmist? God, like a loving father who pities his frail children, is good to us in spite of our badness. But how much more would He do for us if we really made an effort to please Him and give Him first place in our lives!

PSALM 18 (Heb. 19)

PRAISE OF GOD THE CREATOR AND LAWGIVER

INTRODUCTION

This Psalm was also written by David, according to the testimony of its title. In Psalm 8 the inspired singer described the magnificence of the natural world as seen by night, and in the present poem he is portraying the majesty of nature as disclosed by the light of day. The brilliancy and warmth of the sun which lightens up and vivifies the material world reminds the Psalmist of that other sun, the holy law of God, which illuminates the mind and quickens the soul. After having spoken in touching accents of all the law is, of all it does and all it promises, the Psalmist, reflecting on his own life, concludes with a prayer for pardon, for protection against the godless and for acceptance of the words of his song.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. For the choir-master. A psalm.  
Davidis. Of David.

*The Starry Heavens and the Firmament Proclaim Aloud Everywhere  
the Praise of God (2-7)*

2. Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei,  
et opus manuum eius annuntiat  
firmamentum.

The heavens tell the glory of  
God, and the firmament proclaims  
the work of His hands.

3. Dies diei effundit verbum,  
et nox nocti tradit notitiam.

Day unto day imparts the mes-  
sage, and night unto night hands  
on the knowledge.



4. Non est verbum et non sunt sermones, quorum vox non percipiat:

5. In omnem terram exit sonus eorum, et usque ad fines orbis eloquia eorum.

Ibi posuit soli tabernaculum suum, (6) qui procedit ut sponsus de thalamo suo, exultat ut gigas percurrrens viam.

7. A termino caeli fit egressus eius, et circuitus eius usque ad terminum caeli, nec quidquam subtrahitur ardori eius.

There is no word and there are no tidings, the voice of which is not perceived.

Into every land their sound goes forth, and even to the ends of the earth their words.

There He has set his tent for the sun, which advances like a bridegroom from his bridal chamber, *and* exults like a giant running his course.

From the end of heaven is his going forth, and his circuit is even to the term of heaven, nor is anything withdrawn from his heat.

#### *God's Law Is Perfect Everywhere (8-11)*

8. Lex Domini perfecta recreans animam; praescriptum Domini firmum, instituens rudem;

9. Praecepta Domini recta, delectantia cor; mandatum Domini mundum, illustrans oculos;

10. Timor Domini purus, permanens in aeternum; iudicia Domini vera, iusta omnia simul,

11. Desiderabilia super aurum et obryzum multum et dulciora melle et liquore favi.

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul; the ordinance of the Lord is firm, instructing the ignorant;

The precepts of the Lord are upright, delighting the heart; the command of the Lord is spotless, enlightening the eyes;

The fear of the Lord is holy, abiding for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, altogether just,

Desirable above gold and much refined gold, and sweeter than honey and the juice of the honeycomb.

4. According to the Hebrew, the meaning here is that the heavens and the spheres sing this hymn of praise silently, without sound of voice or use of words.

5. Cfr. Rom. 10:18, where St. Paul applies these words to the preaching of the Gospel.

6. "Ibi posuit, etc." The poet pictures the sun as passing each night in his tent in the heavens, and as coming forth from it each morning in freshness to repeat his course around the earth.

8. "Lex," that is, the whole teaching of the Torah—doctrinal, moral, religious, ceremonial. Cfr. Psalm 118.

10. "Timor Domini" here means the total observance of the divine law.

#### *The Psalmist Will Serve God by the Faithful Observance of His Precepts (12-15)*

12. Etsi servus tuus attendit illis, in iis custodiendis sedulus est valde,

13. Errata tamen quis animadvertit? a mihi occultis munda me.

14. A superbia quoque prohibe servum tuum, ne domine-tur in me. Tunc integer ero et mundus a delicto grandi.

15. Accepta sint eloquia oris mei et meditatio cordis mei coram te, Domine, Petra mea et Redemptor meus.

Though Thy servant heeds them, *and* is truly zealous in keeping them,

Yet, who perceives his trespasses? From my hidden faults cleanse me.

From pride also restrain Thy servant; let it not be master within me. Then shall I be perfect and cleansed from great sin.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer!

#### REFLECTIONS

Spiritually minded people see glimpses and images of God and His attributes everywhere in the world—in all that is great and good, lovely and true. And while there is nothing here below which so perfectly reflects God as the supernatural qualities of human personality and character, yet there is nothing which so fills us with a sense of the power and majesty of the Divinity as the contemplation of the heavens—of the sun, the planets and the stars. These vast objects of the outer world around us inspire feelings of admiration, awe, fear; but they do not comfort and console us as do the manifestations of divine love and mercy, so often experienced in our own lives, and seen in the lives of others.

The life, warmth and cheer provided from without by the material sun of heaven reminded the Psalmist of similar effects produced within the soul by the law of God which governs our moral and religious life. He cannot but extol the divine law. When, however, he compares his life and conduct with the requirements of God's holy law, he is moved to sorrow by the disharmony which he discovers, and he humbly asks pardon of his sins.

Since the law of God is a reflection of the divine nature, human beings, in their frailty, can never attain to its perfect fulfillment short of

13. "Errata" and "occulta" are inadvertent faults against the Law, but the former were afterwards remembered, the latter remained unknown.



special divine help, as in the case of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For most of us, therefore, there will always remain plenty of reasons for sincere confession and heartfelt contrition.

## PSALM 19 (Heb. 20)

### PRAYER FOR THE KING BEFORE BATTLE

#### INTRODUCTION

We have here a prayer for victory when the king is about to go forth to battle against powerful enemies. As a preparation for the struggle solemn sacrifices are offered in the Sanctuary, and this Psalm was sung partly during and partly after the sacrificial ceremony.

The enemy relies on material forces, but Israel confides in the strength of Jehovah. In the Syriac Version the title refers this Psalm to David's war with the Ammonites. The Psalm consists of two stanzas and a concluding verse. The first stanza was sung by the whole assembly—or by a choir of priests and Levites on behalf of the congregation—during the sacrifice; the second was sung afterwards by a priest or prophet, who declared the acceptance of the sacrifice and the certainty of the coming victory.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. For the choir-master. A psalm. Davidis. Of David.

*The People Pray that God Will Assist the King, Who Is About to Set Out for Battle (2-6)*

2. Exaudiat te Dominus die tribulationis, protegat te nomen Dei Iacob. May the Lord answer thee in the day of tribulation, may the name of the God of Jacob protect thee!

3. Mittat tibi auxilium de Sancto, et de Sion te sustentet. May He send thee aid from the Sanctuary, and from Sion sustain thee!

4. Memor sit omnium oblationum tuarum, et holocaustum tuum habeat gratum. May He be mindful of all thine oblations, and hold pleasing thy holocaust!

2. "Nomen Dei, etc.," that is, the power which the name represented.

4. "Habeat gratum." If the sacrifice was fat, it was more pleasing to God, as representing greater religious devotion on the part of the offerer.

5. Tribuat tibi quae optat cor tuum et impleat omne consilium tuum.

May He grant thee thy heart's desire, and fulfill thine every decision!

6. Laetemur de victoria tua, et in nomine Dei nostri extollamus vexilla; impleat Dominus omnes petitiones tuas!

May we be glad for thy victory, and lift aloft the standards in the name of our God; may the Lord fulfill all thy petitions!

*The Psalmist Declares His Firm Confidence that God Will Aid the King (7-9)*

7. Iam novi Dominum tribuisse victoriam uncto suo, exaudisse eum de caelo sancto suo fortitudine victricis dexteræ suæ.

Now I know that God has given victory to His anointed one, that from His holy heaven He has answered him with the power of His victorious right hand.

8. Illi curribus et isti equis, nos autem nomine Domini, Dei nostri, fortes sumus.

Some in chariots and others on horses, but we in the name of the Lord, our God, are strong.

9. Illi collapsi sunt et ceciderunt, nos vero stamus et permanemus.

They have collapsed and fallen, but we stand upright and remain.

*The People Repeat the Prayer (10)*

10. Domine, victoriam tribue regi et exaudi nos, quo die te invocamus.

O Lord, give victory to the king, and answer us on the day that we invoke Thee.

#### REFLECTIONS

The king about to go forth to battle, for whose victory the Psalmist here prays, had doubtless neglected no material means necessary for his success; he had done all in his own power to make victory sure. He did not presume to expect someone else to do for him what he could and should do for himself. But that was not enough for him, a man of faith. Hence he sought also the help of God, in whose hands lie the destinies of individuals and of nations alike.

It is true that the godless often succeed in their plans, good and bad. God permits this for His own purposes, which we frequently do not understand. But many a time in the history of our race the vanity and failure of all human calculations and preparations, which have left out

7. "Fortitudine victricis, etc.," that is, with deeds of power done by His right hand.



God, have been only too sadly realized and manifested. And even when men do succeed in this life without considering or calling upon God, there awaits them another world in which their present faithless achievements can avail them nothing. He is a wise man who builds not only for time, but also and especially for eternity.

### PSALM 20 (Heb. 21)

## THANKSGIVING AND PRAYERS ON BEHALF OF THE KING

### INTRODUCTION

As the preceding Psalm was a prayer of petition for the success of the king in a battle about to be fought, this present one is a prayer of thanksgiving for the victory won. The two Psalms are, therefore, closely related as to contents and time of composition. In both the king is the prominent figure, as at once the representative of Jehovah and of the people. Both are prophetic and Messianic in aspect, as pointing to Him of whom the earthly king was the type and figure.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. For the choir-master. A psalm. Davidis. Of David.

*The People Thank God for Having Granted Help, Strength, Life and Joy to the King (2-8)*

2. Domine, de potentia tua laetatur rex, et de auxilio tuo quam vehementer exultat!

O Lord, the king is glad because of Thy power, and how vehemently he exults because of Thine aid!

3. Desiderium cordis eius tribuisti ei, et petitionem labiorum eius non denegasti.

Thou hast given him the desire of his heart, and the request of his lips Thou hast not denied.

4. Nam benedictionibus faustis praevenisti eum, imposuisti capiti eius coronam de auro puro.

For Thou didst anticipate him with auspicious blessings, Thou hast placed on his head a crown of pure gold.

5. Vitam petit a te: tribuisti ei longitudinem dierum in saeculum saeculi.

He sought from Thee life; Thou hast given him length of days for ages of ages.

6. Magna est gloria eius auxi-

Great is his glory through

4. "Coronam." Perhaps the reference is to the precious crown captured from the city of Rabbath during the Ammonite war. Cfr. 2 Kings 12:30; 1 Par. 20:2.

5. "Longitudinem dierum, etc." David's kingdom was to remain forever, through the Messiah. Cfr. 2 Kings 7:13, 16.

lio tuo, maiestatem et decorem posuisti super eum.

Thine aid; majesty and beauty Thou hast bestowed upon him.

7. Etenim fecisti eum benedictionem in saeculum, laetificasti eum gaudio in conspectu tuo.

For Thou hast made him a blessing for ever, Thou hast gladdened him with joy in Thy sight.

8. Nam rex confidit in Domino, et propter gratiam Altissimi non commovebitur.

For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the favor of the Most High he shall remain unshaken.

*Addressing the King, the People Wish Him Complete Victory over the Enemy (9-14)*

9. Superveniat manus tua omnibus inimicis tuis; dextera tua inveniat eos qui te oderunt.

May thy hand come upon all thine enemies; may thy right hand find out those that hate thee!

10. Pone eos ut in fornace ignis, cum apparuerit facies tua. Dominus in ira sua consumat eos, et ignis devoret eos.

Place them as in a furnace of fire, when thy face appears. May the Lord consume them in His anger, and may fire devour them!

11. Prolem eorum perde de terra, et semen eorum e filiis hominum.

Destroy their offspring from the land, and their seed from among the sons of men.

12. Si intentaverint in te malum, moliti sint dolum, non praevalerunt;

If they have threatened evil against thee, if they have practised guile, they shall not prevail;

13. Nam in fugam convertes eos, tendes arcum tuum in faciem eorum.

For thou shalt turn them round into flight, thou shalt aim thy bow at their face.

14. Exsurge, Domine, in potentia tua! canemus et celebrabimus fortitudinem tuam.

Arise, O Lord, in Thy power! We shall sing and celebrate Thy might.

### REFLECTIONS

The prayer of confident faith which prompted the preceding appeal for victory in a coming battle has been answered, and here a public act of thanksgiving is sung by alternate choirs. Looking far beyond any present king or victory the singer gives a prophetic sketch of the rule and triumph of the Messiah, who alone received and possessed the transcendent gifts here described.

Gratitude for favors received is both an act of good breeding, highly

9. It is disputed whether David or God is addressed in vv. 9-13.



esteemed even among men, and an assurance of future benefits, especially when dealing with God. If we who are so frail are disposed to be generous towards those who are truly grateful, how much more will God be inclined to help His children who show thankfulness for His gifts!

### PSALM 21 (Heb. 22)

#### EXTREME SUFFERING OF THE MESSIAH AND ITS FRUIT

##### INTRODUCTION

This pathetic song is the first and the greatest of the Passion Psalms. The opening words were spoken by our Lord on the Cross (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), and verse 19 is quoted by St. John (19:24) as a prophecy fulfilled in the partition of Christ's garments. In fact, the whole first part of the Psalm (vv. 2-22) is a graphic description of our Saviour's crucifixion and agony. Verse 23 is applied to Christ by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (2:12).

The poem may be safely accepted as Davidic, but scholars are variously divided as to the occasion and the subject or person described. (a) Some regard the Psalm as a record of personal experience, and think of David, or Ezechias, or Jeremias; (b) others see Israel in her dejection and exile described; (c) still others believe we have here outlined the ideal righteous sufferer in this world; (d) finally, there is the opinion, the most probable of all, which regards this Psalm as Messianic in its literal sense, that is, as descriptive, first and last, of the passion and glory of Christ. Of course, the other opinions do not exclude the Messianic character of the Psalm in a secondary or typical sense. The sufferer, they say, whoever he was, foreshadowed in his sorrows and trials the sufferings of Christ; and, in his glorious hopes for the future, the triumph of the Saviour.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. For the choir-master. A psalm. Davidis. Of David.

*Mental Sorrows of the Messiah: He Complains He Is Forsaken by God and Deprived of the Hope and Aid Lent to the Fathers (2-6)*

2. Deus meus, Deus meus, quare me dereliquisti? Longe abes a precibus, a verbis clamoris mei. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Thou remainest far away from my prayers, from the words of my cry.

3. Deus meus, clamo per diem, et non exaudis, et nocte, et non attendis ad me.

4. Tu autem in sanctuario habitas, laus Israel.

5. In te speraverunt patres nostri, speraverunt et liberasti eos;

6. Ad te clamaverunt et salvi facti sunt, in te speraverunt et non sunt confusi.

My God, I cry throughout the day, and Thou dost not answer, and in the night, and Thou dost not heed me.

Yet, Thou dwellest in the sanctuary, the praise of Israel.

In Thee our fathers hoped; they hoped, and Thou didst deliver them;

To Thee they cried and were saved, in Thee they hoped and were not confounded.

*The Messiah Must Bear the Insults and Mockery of Men, and So He Invokes the Help of God (7-12)*

7. Ego autem sum vermis et non homo, opprobrium hominum et despectio plebis.

8. Omnes videntes me derident me, diducunt labia, agitant caput:

9. "Confidit in Domino: liberet eum, eripiat eum, si diligit eum."

10. Tu utique duxisti me inde ab utero; securum me fecisti ad ubera matris meae.

11. Tibi traditus sum inde ab ortu, ab utero matris meae Deus meus es tu.

12. Ne longe steteris a me, quoniam tribulor; prope esto: quia non est adiutor.

But I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the scorn of the people.

All seeing me, mock me; they part their lips, they shake their heads:

"He trusted in the Lord! Let Him deliver him, let Him rescue him, if He loves him!"

Thou indeed didst lead me forth from the womb; Thou didst make me secure at my mother's breasts.

To Thee was I entrusted from birth, from my mother's womb Thou art my God.

Stand not aloof from me, for I am troubled; be Thou near, for there is none to help.

*Corporal Sufferings of the Messiah (13-19)*

13. Circumstant me iuveni multi, tauri Basan cingunt me. Many young oxen surround me; bulls of Bashan encircle me.

4. "In sanctuario." The sense of the Hebrew is that God is the Holy One who is enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

13. Bashan was famous for its rich pastures and cattle, and was situated in the north of the East Jordan country; it included a part of Galaad.



14. Aperiant contra me os suum, sicut leo rapax et rugiens.

15. Sicut aqua effusus sum, et disiuncta sunt omnia ossa mea: Factum est cor meum tamquam cera, liquescit in visceribus meis.

16. Aruit tamquam testa guttur meum et lingua mea adhaeret faucibus meis, et in pulverem mortis deduxisti me.

17. Etenim circumstant me canes multi, caterva male agentium cingit me.

18. Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos, dinumerare possum omnia ossa mea.

19. Ipsi vero aspiciunt et videntes me laetantur; dividunt sibi indumenta mea, et de veste mea mittunt sortem.

*The Sufferer Renews His Appeal for God's Help (20-22)*

20. Tu autem, Domine, ne longe steteris: auxilium meum, ad iuvandum me festina.

21. Eripe a gladio animam meam, et de manu canis vitam meam;

22. Salva me ex ore leonis, et me miserum a cornibus bubalorum.

*Fruits of the Passion: The People of Israel Shall Thank and Praise God for Their Redemption (23-27)*

23. Enarrabo nomen tuum fratribus meis, in medio coetu laudabo te.

24. "Qui timetis Dominum, laudate eum; universum semen

They open their mouth against me, like a ravenous and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjointed. My heart is become like wax, it melts within me.

My throat is dry as pottery, my tongue sticks to my jaws, and into the dust of death Thou hast brought me.

For many dogs surround me, a band of evil-doers encircles me.

They have dug my hands and my feet, I can number all my bones.

But these look on, and seeing me they are glad; they divide my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.

But Thou, O Lord, stand not aloof; my Helper, make haste to succor me.

Rescue my soul from the sword, and my life from the power of the dog.

Save me from the mouth of the lion, and me wretched from the horns of wild oxen.

I will publish Thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee.

"You that love the Lord, praise Him; all the seed of Jacob, cele-

Iacob, celebrate eum; timete eum, omne semen Israel.

25. Neque enim sprexit nec fastidivit miseriam miseri; neque abscondit faciem suam ab eo et, dum clamavit ad eum, audivit eum."

26. A te venit laudatio mea in coetu magno, vota mea reddam in conspectu timentium eum.

27. Edent pauperes et saturabuntur, laudabunt Dominum, qui quaerunt eum: "vivant corda vestra in saecula."

*All Nations Shall Adore the True God (28-30)*

28. Recordabuntur et convertentur ad Dominum universi fines terrae; et procumbent in conspectu eius universae familiae gentium,

29. Quoniam Domini est regnum, et ipse dominatur in gentibus.

30. Eum solum adorabunt omnes qui dormiunt in terra, coram eo curvabuntur omnes qui descendunt in pulverem.

*The Messiah Himself Shall Live and Proclaim the Glory of God (31, 32)*

31. Et anima mea ipsi vivet, semen meum serviet ei.

32. Narrabit de Domino generationi venturae, et annuntiabunt iustitiam eius populo, qui nascetur: "Haec fecit Dominus."

brate Him; fear Him, all the seed of Israel.

"For He has neither spurned nor despised the need of the wretched; nor hidden His face from him, but when he cried to Him, He heard him."

From Thee is my praise in the great assembly; I will pay my vows in the sight of those that fear Him.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: "May your hearts live for ever."

All the ends of the earth shall remember and return to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall prostrate themselves in His sight.

For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations.

All that sleep in the earth shall adore Him alone, before Him shall bow all that descend into the dust.

And my soul shall live for Him, my seed shall serve Him.

They shall speak of the Lord to the coming generation, and shall proclaim His justice to people yet to be born: "These things the Lord has done."

REFLECTIONS

In this greatest of the Passion Psalms we have a clear prophetic description of the sufferings of our Lord, in His passion and death, and of

27. "Edent pauperes, etc." Literally: *The poor shall eat and be satisfied.*



His glorification and triumph, in His Resurrection and thereafter. This Psalm is also a graphic picture of what takes place, to a greater or less degree, in the life of every faithful follower of the Master. It thus becomes at once a description and a history of the devout way through the present world to Heaven, of the steep, weary climb that leads up to Calvary and the glory of the Resurrection morning.

Other ways of redeeming mankind than by suffering our Lord could have chosen, but a more perfect way there was none, as St. Augustine has said. For there was no other way that would have shown the same degree of self-denial and self-abasement; that would have rendered to the Eternal Father so complete a sacrifice of satisfaction; that would have shown so plainly the Eternal Father's extreme love for human souls and their preciousness in His sight; that would have conformed so closely to the inescapable earthly lot of men, which now, by association with the way of the Master, has become a royal road whose end is the fadeless glory and endless bliss of Heaven.

## PSALM 22 (Heb. 23)

### GOD OUR SHEPHERD AND OUR HOST

#### INTRODUCTION

This most beautiful of shepherd songs describes Jehovah's loving care of the Psalmist, and also, in a secondary sense, of Israel whom the Psalmist represents. The Lord is pictured first under the figure of a good shepherd who tends and guides and protects his sheep (vv. 1-4); and secondly, under the symbols of a bountiful host entertaining the Psalmist as his guest (vv. 5, 6).

1. Psalmus. Davidis.

A psalm. Of David.

*The Lord Supplies Us with Food and Drink, Protects and Guides Us*  
(1-4)

2. Dominus pascit me: nihil mihi deest; in pascuis virentibus cubare me facit.

The Lord shepherds me: nothing is wanting to me; He makes me to lie down in green pastures.

3. Ad aquas, ubi quiescam, conducit me; reficit animam meam.

He leads me to waters where I may rest; He refreshes my soul.

Deducit me per semitas rectas propter nomen suum.

He guides me along straight paths for His name's sake.

4. Etsi incedam in valle tenebrosa, non timebo mala, quia tu mecum es. Virga tua et baculus tuus: haec me consolantur.

Even if I shall walk in a dark valley, I shall fear no evils, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, these comfort me.

*The Lord Prepares an Abundant Table for Us, and Receives Us into His House* (5, 6)

5. Paras mihi mensam spectantibus adversariis meis; inungis oleo caput meum; calix meus uberrimus est.

Thou preparest a table for me in the sight of mine adversaries; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup is overflowing.

6. Benignitas et gratia me sequentur cunctis diebus vitae meae, et habitabo in domo Domini in longissima tempora.

Thy kindness and favor will follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days.

#### REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist is describing in this exquisite little poem what God means to him and his personal life. He knows from God's revelation of Himself and from his own experience that his heavenly Father is the Lord of love and abundant provision to all His children; and so he can think of no greater joy, no sweeter repose, than to dwell in the house of his Lord forever.

The picture here drawn of Jehovah, of the God who revealed Himself in a special manner to the Jews of old, corresponds quite favorably with the revelation of the eternal Father made by our Lord in His humanity. If we would know God, we must turn to Christ and study His life and deeds as recorded in the New Testament. Our Lord was a clear, concrete manifestation to the world and to men of the Father in Heaven who has made the world and all His human children who are in it.

Therefore when the Apostle Philip said to our Lord, "Lord, show us the Father," the Master replied: "Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known me? Philip, he that sees me sees the Father also. How sayest thou: Show us the Father?" (John 14: 8, 9).

We need ever to strive to keep before our minds this true picture of God and of our heavenly Father, in spite of all warring opinions and discussions about the Supreme Being, and of all the tragedies and disasters of life and the world in which we have to pass our earthly years.

The Christian here feasts at a more abundant spiritual table than that

4. "Virga tua, etc." The staff was used to help the shepherd over rough places and to guide the sheep, the rod to defend them against wild animals.



which was spread before the Psalmist; but it is still a pilgrim's feast, and foes are in sight. He looks forward therefore in hope and high anticipation to another, eternal banquet to come, at which we shall all at length sit down together in joy and peace, and from which we shall go out no more.

### PSALM 23 (Heb. 24)

#### SOLEMN ENTRANCE OF THE LORD INTO HIS SANCTUARY

##### INTRODUCTION

After the conquest of the Promised Land the Ark of the Covenant, the most precious treasure of the Jews, was kept in various places until the accession of King David, who in solemn procession transferred it to the Tabernacle which he had specially prepared for it on Mount Sion in Jerusalem, the capital of his kingdom. For this unique occasion, the greatest day in David's life, the present Psalm appears to have been written and sung for the first time.

1. Davidis. Psalmus.

Of David. A psalm.

#### *He Who Enters Is the Creator and Lord of the World (1, 2)*

Domini est terra et quae replent eam, orbis terrarum et qui habitant in eo.

The earth is the Lord's and the things that fill it, the world and the inhabitants thereof.

2. Nam ipse super maria fundavit eum, et super flumina firmavit eum.

For He has founded it upon the seas, and upon the floods has He established it.

#### *Only Those That Lead Innocent Lives Shall Ascend to Him (3-6)*

3. Quis ascendet in montem Domini, aut quis stabit in loco sancto eius?

Who shall ascend to the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?

4. Innocens manibus et mundus corde, qui non intendit mentem suam ad vana, nec cum dolo iuravit proximo suo.

The innocent of hand and the pure of heart, who has not set his mind on vain things, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor.

2. The Hebrews conceived the earth as established or founded upon water (Gen. 7:11). The Psalmist wishes to say that only an almighty power could firmly fix the world on so unstable a basis.

4. "Innocens manibus, etc.," that is, he who sins neither by deed nor thought.

5. Hic accipiet benedictionem a Domino et mercedem a Deo Salvatore suo.

Such a one shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and a reward from God his Saviour.

6. Haec est generatio quaerentium eum, quaerentium faciem Dei Iacob.

This is the generation of those that seek Him, of those that seek the face of the God of Jacob.

#### *Solemn Entrance of the Lord of Hosts (7-10)*

7. Attollite, portae, capita vestra, et attollite vos, fores antiquae, ut ingrediatur rex gloriae.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be you lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may enter.

8. "Quis est iste rex gloriae?" "Dominus fortis et potens, Dominus potens in proelio."

"Who is this King of Glory?" "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

9. Attollite, portae, capita vestra, et attollite vos, fores antiquae, ut ingrediatur rex gloriae!

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be you lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may enter.

10. "Quis est iste rex gloriae?" "Dominus exercituum: ipse est rex gloriae."

"Who is this King of Glory?" "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

##### REFLECTIONS

The absolute faith in God of the pious Hebrew and his reverence for the divine would put many a good Christian to shame. The Jew loved and revered the Ark of the Covenant because it was a symbol of the special presence of God on earth. In itself the Ark was only a chest or box of acacia-wood two-and-one-half cubits long, and one-and-one-half cubits in height and breadth. But it was a precious object: it was covered with gold, it contained the Tables of the Law, and, in the beginning, also the budding rod of Aaron (Num. 17:10) and the golden urn with manna (Exod. 16:32 sqq.; Heb. 9:4); and over it, like a cover, was the *Kapporeth*, the *Propitiatory*, or *Mercy Seat*, made of finest gold, where God often appeared to Moses and to others later in a bright cloud, called the *Shechinah*, which means the dwelling-place or presence of God.

The *Propitiatory*, never to be separated from the Ark, was the great Sanctuary of the Israelites, from which the Lord watched over His people, where He was to be appeased and propitiated, and where the High Priest could consult Him and receive His answers.

The Ark of the Covenant was a figure and a type of the Christian



tabernacle, where our Lord dwells as our Eucharistic God. Are Christians as full of faith and fervor towards Christ in the tabernacle as the believing Jews were towards the Ark, which was only a symbol of the divine presence? Are they, before receiving our Lord in Holy Communion, as eager for that entire purity and holiness of soul and body which the Psalmist here demands as a necessary condition for entering into the presence of the Ark?

### PSALM 24 (Heb. 25)

#### PETITION FOR PARDON AND DELIVERANCE FROM EVERY DISTRESS

##### INTRODUCTION

According to the Septuagint and Vulgate numbering of the Psalms, this is the second of the acrostic or alphabetical Psalms (9, 24, 33, 36, 100, 111, 118, 145), that is, Psalms in which each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The acrostic arrangement is somewhat irregular, however, in several verses of this present poem, due perhaps to a corruption of the text.

In this Psalm the author prays for protection, guidance and pardon, relying on the revealed character of Jehovah, and for deliverance from distress and pain. Verse 22 is a concluding prayer for Israel, and does not belong to this Psalm; it was doubtless a liturgical addition.

1. Davidis.

Of David.

##### *Introductory Prayer (1-7)*

Ad te attollo animam meam,  
Domine, (2) Deus meus.

In te confido: ne confundar! ne  
exsultent de me inimici mei!

3. Etenim universi, qui sperant  
in te, non confundentur; confun-  
dentur, qui fidem temere frangunt.

4. Vias tuas, Domine, ostende  
mihi et semitas tuas edoce me.

To Thee I lift up my soul, O  
Lord, my God.

In Thee I trust, let me not be  
confounded! let not mine enemies  
exult over me!

For none of those that trust in  
Thee shall be confounded; con-  
founded shall be they that wantonly  
break faith.

Show me Thy ways, O Lord, and  
teach me Thy paths.

5. Dirige me in veritate tua et  
doce me, quia tu es Deus salvator  
meus: et in te spero semper.

6. Reminiscere miserationum tu-  
arum, Domine, et misericordiarum  
tuarum, quae a saeculo sunt.

7. Peccata iuventutis meae et  
delicta mea ne memineris; secun-  
dum misericordiam tuam memento  
mei tu, propter bonitatem tuam,  
Domine.

Guide me in Thy truth and teach  
me, for Thou art God my Saviour,  
and I hope in Thee always.

Remember Thy compassions, O  
Lord, and Thy mercies which are  
of old.

The sins of my youth and my  
offenses remember not; according  
to Thy mercy be Thou mindful of  
me, for the sake of Thy goodness,  
O Lord.

##### *God's Goodness to the Upright (8-15)*

8. Bonus et rectus est Dominus:  
propterea peccatores edocet viam.

9. Dirigit humiles in iustitia,  
docet humiles viam suam.

10. Omnes semitae Domini  
gratia et fidelitas iis qui observant  
foedus et praecepta eius.

11. Propter nomen tuum, Do-  
mine, dimittes peccatum meum:  
grande est enim.

12. Quis est vir, qui timet Domi-  
num? docet eum, quam viam eligat.

13. In bonis morabitur ipse, et  
semen eius possidebit terram.

14. Familiaris est Dominus ti-  
mentibus eum, et foedus suum  
manifestat eis.

15. Oculi mei semper ad Domi-  
num quia ipse eruet de laqueo pedes  
meos.

The Lord is good and righteous;  
therefore, He teaches sinners the  
way.

He guides the humble in justice;  
He teaches the simple His way.

All the paths of the Lord are  
grace and faithfulness to those that  
keep His covenant and His pre-  
cepts.

For Thy name's sake, O Lord,  
Thou wilt remit my sin; for it is  
great.

Who is the man that fears the  
Lord? He teaches him what way to  
choose.

He shall dwell among good  
things, and his seed shall possess  
the land.

The Lord is friendly to those  
that fear Him, and He reveals His  
covenant to them.

Mine eyes are ever towards the  
Lord, for He will rescue my feet  
from the snare.

12. "Qui timet, etc.," *who reveres, worships the Lord. To fear Yahweh* often means to pay Him religious respect, to reverence Him.



*The Psalmist Prays for God's Mercy, Deliverance from Distress, and Protection against His Enemies (16-22)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 16. Respice in me et miserere mei, nam solus et miser sum ego.           | Look upon me and pity me, for I am alone and wretched.                                |
| 17. Alleva angustias cordis mei, et de anxietatibus meis erue me.        | Relieve the distresses of my heart, and from my cares deliver me.                     |
| 18. Vide miseriam meam et laborem meum, et dimitte universa delicta mea. | See my wretchedness and my labor, and forgive all my faults.                          |
| 19. Respice inimicos meos: sunt enim multi, et odio violento oderunt me. | See mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with a violent hate.            |
| 20. Custodi animam meam et eripe me, ne confundar quod confugi ad te.    | O guard my soul and rescue me, lest I be confounded for having sought refuge in Thee. |
| 21. Innocentia et probitas me tueantur quoniam spero in te, Domine.      | May innocence and uprightness protect me, for I hope in Thee, O Lord!                 |
| 22. Libera, Deus, Israel ex omnibus angustiis eius.                      | O God, deliver Israel from all her distresses.  |

REFLECTIONS

For mysterious reasons God made man frail and capable of sin. He further permitted our first parents to fall, and us to inherit the consequences of their sin. And all sin, which is a breaking of law, inevitably brings chastisement or punishment of some kind; it upsets established order, and so deserves to be punished. Of course, God cannot be expected to suspend, for the sake of sinners, the laws which govern the world and creation. The only difficulty therefore is in trying to explain why God made man so weak as to fall so dismally in Adam, and to become so prone to evil thereafter.

If human frailty were not, as far as we can see, often so disastrous to man for time and eternity, we could say that God loves us the more for our very weakness, as with us frailty and dependence make a loved one more dear to a strong and tender lover. However this may be, our proneness to wrong, as well as our endless needs, creates the ever-present necessity of appealing for help and pardon to our Father in Heaven who has revealed Himself as a God of love and mercy. These characteristics of the divine Being, on the one hand, and our utter frailty and needs,

on the other, make it impossible that our yearning petitions to and desires for the only God should be in vain.

PSALM 25 (Heb. 26)

AN INNOCENT MAN, FALSELY ACCUSED, INVOKES GOD AS HIS JUDGE

INTRODUCTION

In this Psalm we hear an innocent and saintly soul, who has shunned the company of the godless and has found his delight in the service and in the Sanctuary of Jehovah, pleading that the Searcher of hearts would vindicate his cause and save him from the untimely fate of the impious and bloodthirsty around him. He is conscious of his own integrity, as God must also be, and therefore he concludes with the confident hope that his prayer is heard, and resolves to offer public thanksgiving.

- |             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Davidis. | Of David. |
|-------------|-----------|

*The Psalmist Invokes the Judgment of God, Who Was Witness of His Innocence (1, 2)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Ius redde mihi, Domine, quoniam ego in innocentia mea ambulavi, et, in Domino confisus, non vacillavi. | Give me justice, O Lord, for I have walked in mine innocence, and, having trusted in the Lord, I have not wavered. |
| 2. Scrutare me, Domine, et proba me; explora renes meos et cor meum.                                   | Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; search my reins and my heart.  |

*The Psalmist Affirms His Fidelity to God, His Aversion from All Evil, and His Zeal for the Worship of God (3-8)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 3. Nam benignitas tua est ante oculos meos, et ambulo in veritate tua. | For Thy kindness is before mine eyes, and I walk in Thy truth.           |
| 4. Non sedeo cum viris iniquis, nec convenio cum dolosis.              | I sit not with wicked men, nor do I assemble with the deceitful.         |
| 5. Odi conventum male agentium et cum impiis non consido.              | I have hated the company of evil-doers and consort not with the impious. |



6. Lavo in innocentia manus meas et circumceo altare tuum, Domine, I wash my hands in innocence and go around Thine altar, O Lord,

7. Ut palam annuntiem laudem et enarrem universa mirabilia tua. To proclaim Thy praise in public and relate all Thy wonders.

8. Domine, diligo habitaculum domus tuae et locum tabernaculi gloriae tuae. Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place of the tabernacle of Thy glory.

*The Psalmist Begs that He Be Not Condemned with Sinners, and Promises to Make a Public Thanksgiving (9-12)*

9. Noli auferre cum peccatoribus animam meam, et cum viris sanguinum vitam meam, Take not away my soul with sinners, nor my life with men of blood,

10. In quorum manibus scelus est, et quorum dextera plena est muneribus. In whose hands is crime, and whose right hand is full of bribes.

11. Ego autem in innocentia mea ambulo: redime me et miserere mei. But I walk in mine innocence; redeem me and have mercy on me.

12. Pes meus stat in via plana, in conventibus benedicam Domino. My foot stands on the smooth way; in the assemblies I will bless the Lord.

#### REFLECTIONS

The suffering of the innocent and the just in this world, especially at the hands of the wicked, constitutes one of the severest trials of faith, at least at first sight and from a short view. There is no great mystery about the pains and sorrows of sinners whose evil deeds have either reacted upon their perpetrators or have lost for them the right to special protection from their offended Father in Heaven. But that God's dear friends, without any fault on their part, should be actually hunted out and made to suffer by the godless must always remain one of the hidden secrets of divine Providence.

And yet sufferers of this kind have profound reasons for spiritual joy and gladness; first of all, because they belong to the majestic company of the saints and martyrs of all time, at whose head stand the Divine Saviour Himself and His Virgin Mother. If the heavenly Father has not

6. "In innocentia." The priests washed their hands and feet before ministering at the altar, as a sign of innocence and moral cleanness.

8. "Locum, etc.," that is, where Jehovah manifested Himself above the Ark.

exempted these, His most precious ones, how can others expect to be spared? If it was not wrong that they were permitted to suffer, how can we argue that it is wrong when we have to suffer? If the sufferings of those who are dearest to God are not a sign that He does not love them, why should we think that God does not love us when He permits us to suffer?

In the second place, innocent sufferers should know that they are being tried and purified as gold by fire. Thirdly, their sufferings should cause them to rejoice because of the inconceivable rewards they are thus laying up for immortality.

These innocent souls, above all others, must keep in mind and often repeat the assuring words of St. Paul: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

#### PSALM 26 (Heb. 27)

#### FEARLESS CONFIDENCE IN GOD

##### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm has two distinct parts, the first of which (vv. 1-6) is replete with a confidence that knows no fear in the midst of danger because of Jehovah's protecting care. In the second part (vv. 7-14) all is quite changed; joy and confidence give way to sorrow and anxious pleading.

The marked difference between the two parts of this poem has led many authors to conclude that we have here two separate Psalms written either by different authors or by the same author at different times and under different circumstances, but later joined together, perhaps by the hand of an editor. Taken as a whole, the Psalm sounds like the song of some exiled and oppressed Israelite who, in the first verses, is reflecting on the joy and security he aforesaid experienced as Jehovah's guest in His earthly House, and who in the rest of the poem is longing for a renewal of those happy privileges.

1. Davidis.

Of David.

*The Psalmist Declares His Unshakable Confidence in God (1-3)*

Dominus lux mea et salus mea: quem timebo? The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The



praesidium vitae meae: a quo trepidabo?

2. Cum invadunt me maligni, ut edant carnem meam, hostes mei et inimici mei, labuntur et cadunt.

3. Si steterint adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum; si surrexerit contra me bellum, ego confidam.

*In God's Temple the Psalmist Will Be Secure from All His Enemies (4-6)*

4. Unum peto a Domino; hoc requiro: ut habitem in domo Domini cunctis diebus vitae meae, ut fruor suavitate Domini, et aspiciam templum eius.

5. Etenim abscondet me in tentorio suo die malo, occultabit me in abdito tabernaculi sui, in petram extollet me.

6. Et nunc caput meum erigitur super inimicos qui circumstant me, et immolabo in tabernaculo eius hostias exultationis, cantabo et psallam Domino.

*The Psalmist Prays Urgently that God Will Not Forsake Him (7-12)*

7. Audi, Domine, vocem meam qua clamo, miserere mei et exaudi me.

8. Tibi loquitur cor meum; te quaerit facies mea; faciem tuam, Domine, quaero.

9. Noli abscondere faciem tuam a me, noli repellere in ira servum

Lord is the protection of my life—at whom shall I tremble?

When malignant men attack me to devour me, mine enemies and my foes, they flounder and fall.

Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, my trust shall endure.

One thing I beg of the Lord; this I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I may enjoy the sweetness of the Lord, and behold His temple.

For He will hide me within His tent in the evil day, He will conceal me in the recess of His tabernacle, He will set me aloft on a rock.

And now my head is lifted above the enemies that surround me, and I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle, I will sing and make music to the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, my voice when I call; have mercy on me and answer me.

My heart speaks to Thee, my face seeks Thee; Thy face, O Lord, I seek.

Hide not Thy face from me; repel not Thy servant in Thy wrath.

2. "Ut edant, etc.," i.e., to destroy me altogether.

8. To seek God's face is to serve Him loyally, and so gain His favor; and this invitation was repeated throughout revelation. The Psalmist's heart recalled this divine command.

tuum. Auxilium meum es tu; ne abieceris me, neve dereliqueris me, Deus, salvator meus.

10. Si pater meus et mater mea dereliquerint me, Dominus tamen me suscipiet.

11. Doce me, Domine, viam tuam, et deduc me in semita plana propter adversarios meos.

12. Ne tradideris me desiderio inimicorum meorum, quoniam insurrexerunt in me testes mendaces et qui violentiam spirant.

*The Psalmist Declares Anew His Confidence (13, 14)*

13. Credo visurum me bona Domini in terra viventium.

14. Exspecta Dominum, esto fortis, et roboretur cor tuum, et exspecta Dominum.

Thou art my help; cast me not off, nor forsake me, O God my Saviour.

Though my father and my mother should forsake me, yet will the Lord welcome me.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord; and lead me along a smooth path because of mine enemies.

Surrender me not to the desire of mine enemies, for false witnesses have risen up against me, and those that breathe out violence.

I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let thy heart take courage and wait for the Lord.

#### REFLECTIONS

The spiritual life is an ever-changing, fitful warfare. At one time, when buoyed up by a vivid consciousness of the divine presence and fellowship, we feel that we shall never be shaken, never again be troubled or fearful, that we are ready for any foe or test; but at other times, when the divine countenance seems turned away and darkness gathers all around, we see how frail we really are and how hopeless without the special help of God. And to make the battle worse, the periods of darkness and desolation are sometimes more frequent and endure much longer than the periods of light and joy.

But we know very well that this is not the harvest but the seeding time, the earth is not the Heaven we seek, that this is not the time for rest but for labor. And so, in times of deepest spiritual gloom and privation, however prolonged, we find consolation and help in reflecting on past blessings, on the holy joy that perhaps once was ours and that will surely be ours again, and in far greater measure, if only we can wait for it in faith and patience. It is God who has implanted in our

13. "In terra viventium," i.e., before he dies.



souls a yearning and a thirst which none but He can satisfy, and the divine character forbids that we should be finally disappointed, unless we knowingly and deliberately choose to frustrate His plan for us.

### PSALM 27 (Heb. 28)

#### SUPPLICATION AND THANKSGIVING

##### INTRODUCTION

David probably wrote this Psalm during his flight from Absalom. He pleads that his prayer be heard (vv. 1, 2) to the end that he may be saved from sharing in the fate of evil-doers, and that they may receive the reward their works deserve (vv. 3-5). Suddenly faith flashes to him assurance that his prayer will be answered, and he concludes with the petition that the Lord will protect and bless His people (vv. 6-9).

This Psalm is very similar in tone and content to Psalm 25, only the Psalmist's peril is greater here; and there he assigned his own innocence, here the wickedness of the godless, as a reason for discriminating between him and them.

1. Davidis.

Of David.

*The Psalmist Begs God to Defend Him against Malicious and Impious Foes (1-5)*

Ad te, Domine, clamo; Petra mea, ne surdus fueris mihi, ne, si non audieris me, similis fiam descendentibus in foveam.

2. Audi vocem obsecrationis meae, dum ad te clamo, dum attollo manus meas ad templum sanctum tuum.

3. Noli me abripere cum peccatoribus et cum facientibus iniquitatem, qui loquuntur pacem cum proximis suis, sed malum in animo habent.

4. Da eis secundum acta eorum et secundum malitiam facinorum

To Thee, O Lord, do I cry; my Rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if Thou ignore me, I become like those that go down into the pit.

Hear the voice of my plea, as I cry to Thee, as I lift up my hands towards Thy holy temple.

Snatch me not away with sinners, and with the workers of iniquity, who speak of peace with their neighbors, but have evil in their mind.

Recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the

ipsorum. Secundum opus manuum eorum tribue illis, facta eorum redde ipsis.

5. Quia non attendunt ad acta Domini et ad opus manuum eius, destruat eos nec restituat eos.

malice of their offenses. According to the work of their hands render to them, do to them as they themselves have done.

Since they have paid no heed to the deeds of the Lord and the work of His hands, may He destroy them and restore them no more!

*Certain of Being Heard, the Psalmist Offers Thanks for Obtaining Safety, and Pleads for the Safety of the King and People (6-9)*

6. Benedictus Dominus, quia audivit vocem obsecrationis meae, (7) Dominus, robur meum et clipeus meus!

In ipso confisum est cor meum, et adiutus sum; ideo exultat cor meum, et cantico meo laudo eum.

8. Dominus robur est populo suo, et praesidium salutis uncto suo.

9. Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic hereditati tuae, et pasce eos, et porta eos usque in aeternum.

Blessed be the Lord, for He has heard the voice of my supplication, the Lord, my strength and my shield!

In Him has my heart trusted, and I have been helped; wherefore, my heart exults, and I praise Him in my song.

The Lord is the strength of His people, and a fortress of safety for His anointed.

Preserve Thy people, O Lord, and bless Thine inheritance; feed them, and bear them up for ever.

##### REFLECTIONS

Like the Psalmist here, we are often in perils which threaten our lives. But our view of death is very different from his. To him, with his scanty revelation, death meant the end of all that made life worth living; it was an interruption and a termination of divine praise and fellowship. Not that man ceased to be when he died, but that the familiar, loving intercourse with God which the devout Hebrew experienced here on earth, especially in the Temple worship, could not continue in the underworld. Hence the Psalmist here prays that he be not carried off, like sinners, by an untimely death.

The good Christian, however, knows that for him death is the gateway

5. "Acta Domini" are the works of creating and sustaining the world, which atheists do not admit.



to life—to real, abundant, overflowing, eternal life. And therefore he is willing to stay here only as long as God wants him to stay, only as long as he can add to the glory of his heavenly Father, the sanctification of his own soul, and the good of his neighbor and of those who depend upon him. Apart from these holy motives and purposes, the present life and world have no strong hold on a true follower of Christ; the true Christian knows that he was made for better things, and he yearns for them.

### PSALM 28 (Heb. 29)

## THE MAJESTY OF GOD APPEARS IN THE STORM

### INTRODUCTION

The power and majesty of God as revealed in the thunderstorm is the theme of this Psalm. The configuration of Palestine, with its mountains, valleys, plains, seas and desert, affords a theatre especially suited for violent and impressive storms; and as all nature spoke to the pious Israelite of its Creator and his Lord, it was only natural that he should see in the storm a manifestation of divine power and glory, and hear in the rolling thunder the powerful voice of God. Thus does the Psalmist describe a thunderstorm in the present poem, concluding that the Lord who, through the phenomena of nature is reflected as mighty and terrible, can and will give security and peace to His people.

1. Psalmus. Davidis.

A psalm. Of David.

### *Invitation to Praise God (1, 2)*

Tribuite Domino, filii Dei, tribuite Domino gloriam et potentiam!

Give to the Lord, you sons of God, give to the Lord glory and power!

2. Tribuite Domino gloriam nominis eius, adorate Dominum in ornatu sacro.

Give to the Lord the glory of His name, worship the Lord in holy attire.

1. The heavenly court is invited to praise Jehovah. "Filii Dei" are here the angels, as we learn from the Targums.

2. "In ornatu sacro." *In holy array*, a description of the dress of the ministering angels in Heaven.

### *Description of the Storm Which, with God's Mighty Voice (the Thunder), Strikes Sea and Land (3-9)*

3. Vox Domini super aquas! Deus maiestatis intonuit: Dominus super aquas multas!

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters! The God of majesty has thundered, the Lord is upon many waters!

4. Vox Domini cum potentia! vox Domini cum magnificentia!

Mighty is the voice of the Lord, majestic is the voice of the Lord!

5. Vox Domini confringit cedros, Dominus confringit cedros Libani,

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon,

6. Facit subsilire, ut vitulum, Libanum, et Sarion, ut pullum bubalorum.

He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, and Sarion like a young wild ox.

7. Vox Domini elicit flammam ignis,

The voice of the Lord calls forth flames of fire,

8. Vox Domini concutit desertum, Dominus concutit desertum Cades.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness, the Lord shakes the wilderness of Cades.

9. Vox Domini contorquet quercus et decorticat silvas: et in templo eius omnes dicunt: Gloria!

The voice of the Lord twists the oaks, and strips bare the forests: while in His temple all are saying: Glory!

### *The Lord, King from All Eternity, Blesses the People (10, 11)*

10. Dominus super diluvium sedit, et Dominus sedebit rex in aeternum.

The Lord sat enthroned above the flood, and the Lord will sit as King for ever.

11. Dominus fortitudinem populo suo dabit, Dominus benedicet populo suo cum pace.

The Lord will give strength to His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace.

### REFLECTIONS

To the reflecting and penetrating mind, and especially to those who are mystically inclined, all the works and phenomena of creation speak of their Creator, and in particular of His power and wisdom. Nothing short

6. *Sarion* is the old Sidonian name for Mount Hermon. Instead of Sarion, the Vulgate has *dilectus*, which probably refers to Sion, and means that the storm makes Sion dance or shake like a young wild ox.

8. "Cades," or Kadesh, was to the extreme south, near the border of Edom.

9. "Gloria." While the storm rages on earth all in heaven are praising God.



of omnipotence and a supreme mind could have called into being and arranged in such order and harmony all that we see and know of the world in which we live.

But the attributes of God which are reflected in the natural world, such as power, wisdom, independence, immutability, eternity, while filling us with admiration and awe and a sense of our own frailty and nothingness, do not satisfy the cravings of our nature. They make known to us the existence of an almighty Creator who has brought us into being and who can as easily destroy us, if He will; but these thoughts leave us only trembling and cold.

It is that other aspect of God, which Christ has revealed, that satisfies us—of a God who is our Father, full of love and mercy and tenderness for all His weak and dependent children, of a Father who, while He must hate our faults and sins, yet loves us with an everlasting love and has proved His love by dying for us and all mankind in the incarnate person of His own divine Son.

These more lovable attributes of God, so clearly and constantly revealed in the person and life of our Lord, are characteristics and aspects of the divine Being which give us peace, casting out fear and foreboding from our troubled souls.

## PSALM 29 (Heb. 30)

### THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

#### INTRODUCTION

We have here a song of thanksgiving for deliverance from what threatened to be a fatal illness. The Psalmist has been snatched, as it were, from the very jaws of death and rescued from the yawning grave. Hence, he calls upon the holy to join in his thanksgiving and give praise to the God who loves to show mercy. In his days of prosperity he was proud, not reflecting that his plenty and happiness were from above, until God hid His face and trouble came. Then he turned to his Maker and pleaded that his life be spared so that he might devote it to singing the divine praises, which would be impossible in the grave. The Lord heard his prayer and turned his sorrow into joy; forever, therefore, will he hymn the praises of his bountiful Lord.

Some authors think this Psalm is referring to the perils and sorrows of Israel as a nation rather than to those of an individual; but the personal

note running through the poem is so strong that such a view cannot be easily maintained. Of course, the experience of the individual was frequently repeated in the nation, and vice versa. The title is composite, and seems to indicate that the Psalm was used for the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (1 Mach. 4:48, 49; John 10:22).

1. Psalmus. Canticum festi dedicationis templi. Davidis.

A psalm. A canticle for the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple. Of David.

#### *Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death (2-6)*

2. Praedicabo te, Domine, quoniam liberasti me, nec laetificasti de me inimicos meos.

I will exalt Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast delivered me, and hast not let mine enemies rejoice over me.

3. Domine, Deus meus, clamavi ad te, et sanasti me;

O Lord, my God, I called to Thee, and Thou hast healed me;

4. Domine, eduxisti ab inferis animam meam; salvasti me ex descendentibus in foveam.

O Lord, Thou hast brought my soul up from the depths; Thou hast saved me from those that go down into the pit.

5. Psallite Domino, sancti eius; et gratias agite nomini sancto eius.

Sing to the Lord, O you His saints, and give thanks to His holy name.

6. Nam momento durat ira eius, per totam vitam benevolentia eius, vespere advenit fletus, et exsultatio mane.

Because His anger lasts for a moment, His benevolence through all of life. In the evening come tears, but jubilation in the morning.

#### *The Psalmist Sinned through Rash Self-Confidence but Had Recourse to Humble Prayer (7-11)*

7. Ego autem dixi in confidentia mea: "Non movebor in aeternum."

But I in my self-confidence said: "I shall never be moved."

8. Domine, in favore tuo praestitisti mihi honorem et potentiam; cum abscondisti faciem tuam, factus sum conturbatus.

O Lord, in Thy good will Thou hast given me honor and power; when Thou didst conceal Thy countenance, I was thrown into confusion.

8. "Praestitisti." The meaning is that the Lord has given the Psalmist real external prosperity.



9. Ad te, Domine, clamo, et misericordiam Dei mei imploro:

10. "Quid lucri erit ex sanguine meo, ex descensu meo in foveam? An laudabit te pulvis, aut praedicabit fidelitatem tuam?"

11. Audi, Domine, et miserere mei; Domine, esto adiutor meus.

To Thee, O Lord, I cry, and implore the mercy of my God:

"What profit will there be from my blood, from my descent into the pit? Will the dust praise Thee, or proclaim Thy faithfulness?"

Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; O Lord, be Thou my helper.

#### *Thanksgiving for Safety* (12, 13)

12. Convertisti planctum meum in chorum mihi; solvisti saccum meum, et cinxisti me laetitia:

13. Ut psallat tibi anima mea nec taceat. Domine Deus meus, in aeternum laudabo te.

Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing for me; Thou hast removed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness:

So that my soul may sing to Thee and be not silent. O Lord my God, I will praise Thee for ever.

#### REFLECTIONS

It is natural to dread poverty and pain, and to desire riches and health. We regard the first as preventing or opposing, the second as securing or contributing to, our happiness and well-being. And it is a matter of experience that extreme and prolonged adversity of any kind is generally bad, and makes few people better. The spiritual life, at easiest, is a steep climb, a warfare, a constant battle; and when to its intrinsic difficulty are added other excessive burdens, it is in danger of becoming a losing fight.

But, on the other hand, it is also a fact, amply borne out by experience, that an abundance of this world's goods, such as vigorous health, great possessions, high position, honor, fame and the like, seem often, if not as a rule, to lead away from God and religion. These temporal blessings too frequently prove to be a curse. It is one of the sad characteristics and perversities of human nature that when all is well with it in the temporal order, it is inclined to forget the principal source of all its gifts, and becomes proud and self-sufficient, thinking it can never be moved. But sometimes, not always, when loss and trouble come and cruelly set up their sway where before plenty and security had reigned, a soul suddenly awakens to a realization of its own utter frailty and absolute dependence on God for all it has or can ever hope to have.

When such a salutary awakening occurs and the soul in desperation

turns to God for help, we can surely credit the change and the conversion to divine grace. And then God, like a true Father, receives, as with open arms, the troubled spirit and saves it from itself, turning its sorrow into joy.

#### PSALM 30 (Heb. 31)

### SUPPLICATION AND THANKSGIVING OF AN AFFLICTED MAN

#### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is in great distress; but, recalling past favors and mercies, he is emboldened to pray and hope for relief. And yet, as he remembers happier days, sorrow deepens, and he yields to a long pathetic description of his woes. Time passes, and in God's own season floods of divine mercy and goodness overrun and fill his soul. Therefore, he concludes with an exhortation to all holy souls to serve the Lord with fidelity and loyalty.

The tone of dejection which pervades the middle section of this Psalm, and at first sight seems to distinguish it sharply from the first and third parts, as well as its similarity to the complaints of Jeremias, has induced some authorities to regard it as composed by that prophet, and consequently not an original part of this Davidic poem. If, however, we allow an interval for the addition of the concluding section (vv. 20-25), the whole Psalm can easily be considered as the work of the same author, probably David when in the wilderness of Maon (1 Kings 23:26), as the older commentators believe.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. For the choir-master. A psalm. Davidis. Of David.

#### *Beset with Plots and Trials, the Psalmist Invokes God* (2-7)

2. Ad te, Domine, confugio: ne confundar in aeternum; in iustitia tua libera me!

3. Inclina ad me aurem tuam, festina, ut eripias me. Esto mihi

To Thee, O Lord, do I flee for refuge; let me not be confounded for ever; in Thy justice deliver me!

Incline Thine ear to me, make haste to rescue me. Be Thou a rock



petra refugii, arx munita, ut salves me.

4. Nam tu es petra mea et arx mea, et propter nomen tuum deduces me et diriges me.

5. Educes me e reti quod absconderunt mihi, quia tu es refugium meum.

6. In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum: liberabis me, Domine, Deus fidelis.

7. Odisti eos qui colunt idola vana; ego autem in Domino confido.

*Languishing in Extreme Distress, the Psalmist Commits His Lot to God (8-19)*

8. Exultabo et laetabor de miseratione tua, quoniam respexisti miseriam meam, adiuvisti in angustiis animam meam,

9. Nec tradidisti me in manum inimici, sed statuisti in loco spatioso pedes meos.

10. Miserere mei, Domine, quia in angustiis sum: maerore tabescit oculus meus, anima mea et corpus meum.

11. Etenim aerumna consumitur vita mea, et anni mei gemitu. Defecit in afflictione robur meum, et ossa mea tabuerunt.

12. Omnibus inimicis meis factus sum opprobrium, vicinis meis ludibrium, et terror notis meis; qui foris vident me, aufugiunt a me;

of refuge to me, a fortified citadel, that Thou mayest save me.

For Thou art my rock and my citadel, and for Thy name's sake Thou wilt conduct me forth and guide me.

Thou wilt lead me out of the snare which they have hidden for me, for Thou art my refuge.

Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Thou wilt deliver me, O Lord, faithful God.

Thou hatest those that worship vain idols, but I trust in the Lord.

I shall exult and be glad because of Thy mercy, for Thou hast regarded my misery, Thou hast helped my soul in distresses,

Nor hast Thou delivered me into the hand of the enemy, but hast set my feet in a spacious place.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in distress; mine eye languishes with grief, my soul and my body.

For my life is consumed with hardship, and my years with sighing. My strength has failed in affliction, and my bones have wasted away.

To all mine enemies I am become a reproach, to my neighbors a laughing-stock, and to my friends a terror; those that see me outside, flee from me.

9. "In loco spatioso," i.e., out of the narrowness of distress.

11. "Ossa mea," i.e., my whole frame.

13. Oblivione excidi ex corde, quasi mortuus, factus tamquam vas confractum.

14. Etenim audivi sibilum multorum—terror est undique! convenientes simul contra me, vitam meam auferre meditati sunt.

15. Ego autem in te confido, Domine; dico: "Deus meus es tu."

16. In manu tua sortes meae: eripe me de manu inimicorum meorum et a persequentibus me.

17. Serenum praebe vultum tuum servo tuo, salva me in misericordia tua.

18. Domine, ne confundar, quia invocavi te; confundantur impii, conticescant, acti ad inferos.

19. Muta fiant labia mendacia, quae loquuntur contra iustum insolenter in superbia et contemptu.

*Certain of Being Heard, the Psalmist Praises the Goodness of God, and Exhorts All Pious People to the Love of God and Fortitude of Soul (20-25)*

20. Quam magna est bonitas tua, Domine, quam reservasti timentibus te, quam praestas confugientibus ad te, in conspectu hominum.

21. Protegis eos protectione vultus tui a conspiratione virorum, occultas eos in tentorio a iurgio linguarum.

22. Benedictus Dominus, quia mirabilem praebeuit mihi misericordiam suam in urbe munita.

13. "Ex corde." The heart in the Old Testament was regarded as the seat of memory and of the inner man generally.

Cut off from the heart by oblivion, as if dead, I am become as a broken vessel.

For I have heard the hissing of many—terror is everywhere! Assembling together against me, they have plotted to take away my life.

But I trust in Thee, O Lord; I say: "Thou art my God."

In Thy hand are my fortunes; rescue me from the hand of mine enemies and from those that persecute me.

Show Thy face serene to Thy servant, save me in Thy mercy.

O Lord, let me not be confounded, for I have called on Thee; let the impious be confounded, let them be silenced, driven to Sheol.

Silenced be lying lips, which in pride and scorn speak insolently against the just man.

How great is Thy goodness, O Lord, which Thou hast reserved for those that fear Thee, which Thou showest to those that take refuge in Thee, in the sight of men!

Thou guardest them with the protection of Thy countenance from the conspiracy of men, Thou hidest them in a tent from the strife of tongues.

Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown me His wonderful mercy in a fortified city.



23. Ego autem dixi in trepidatione mea: "Abscissus sum a conspectu tuo": tu vero audisti vocem obsecrationis meae, cum clamarem ad te.

24. Diligite Dominum, omnes sancti eius! fideles conservat Dominus, sed retribuit abundanter agentibus superbe.

25. Confortamini et roboretur cor vestrum, omnes, qui speratis in Domino.

But I said in my dismay: "I am cut off from Thy sight." But Thou hast heard the voice of my plea, when I cried to Thee.

Love the Lord, all you His holy ones! The Lord preserves the faithful, but He makes return in full to those that act proudly.

Be strengthened and let your heart take courage, all you that hope in the Lord.

#### REFLECTIONS

We should be helped much in times of great suffering and depression, if we could remember better days. The trouble is that when affliction overtakes us, and especially when it is prolonged, we think that it will never pass, that we shall never be well or happy again. This very fact and state of mind make our distress much worse and tend to bring about the fixed condition which we fear. After clouds, the sun will shine again; after the storm, the calm will come; after winter, summer. And this hope of a return of happier days is like a tonic to our weakness, like a light in a dark place.

But there are many persons whose life has been one long sorrow or affliction of some kind. They have never known anything better than the suffering, or poverty, or slavery, or other tragedy, which has darkened all their years. For these there is no happiness to recall. Perhaps their parents and ancestors, as far as known, fared no better. What is their prospect? What joy, or happiness, or hope beckons to them?

While a change is always possible, for better as well as for worse, as long as life lasts, the only sure comfort for the persons just described is faith in a future, better world. If this is a hard recourse, it is the only certain one. After all, our life on earth is not forever; compared with the eternal years it is but a breath, a flash of the lightning, a break of the wave.

God will bestow the gift of faith on those who do what they can to get it; and once possessed and practised, it is the solution of all our difficulties, the key to all riddles, the passport to joys unseen, ineffable and everlasting.

#### PSALM 31 (Heb. 32)

#### HAPPINESS OF THE MAN WHOSE SIN IS FORGIVEN

##### INTRODUCTION

This is the second of the Penitential Psalms, and was most likely written by David some time after his adultery with Bethsabee and the murder of Urias (2 Kings 12). It was a favorite Psalm with St. Augustine. In it the Psalmist is extolling the peace and blessedness of him whose sin has been forgiven. He had sinned grievously, and for a time refused to confess his guilt, with the result that he was tortured day and night in soul and body until he acknowledged his transgression. But no sooner had he broken his guilty silence than relief came, and hence he exhorts every pious soul to turn to God in due time and have peace. Professing his trust in Jehovah, he receives the divine promise of guidance and instruction. Let men take warning from the fate of the godless, and so have part in the joy and happiness of the just.

1. Davidis. Maskil.

Of David. A maskil.

#### *Remission of Sin Brings Happiness (1, 2)*

Beatus cuius remissa est iniquitas, cuius obiectum est peccatum.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2. Beatus homo cui Dominus non imputat culpam, et in cuius spiritu non est dolus.

Blessed the man to whom the Lord does not impute fault, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

#### *Unacknowledged Sin Tortured the Psalmist, but Its Confession Brought Its Remission, and So He Urges All in Distress to Seek God (3-7)*

3. Quamdiu tacui, tabuerunt ossa mea inter gemitus meos assiduos.

As long as I kept silent, my bones wasted away amid mine unceasing moanings.

4. Etenim die noctuque gravis erat super me manus tua, consumebatur robur meum velut ardoribus aestivis.

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, my strength was consumed as by summer heats.

3. "Tacui," i.e., I refused to confess my sin; or, I did not respond to the grace calling me back to God.

4. The vital sap of life was dried up in his body by the burning fever within.



5. Peccatum meum confessus sum tibi, et culpam meam non abscondi; dixi: "Confiteor iniquitatem meam Domino," et tu remisisti culpam peccati mei.

6. Propterea orabit ad te omnis pius in tempore necessitatis. Cum irruent aquae multae, ad eum non pervenient.

7. Tu es refugium mihi, ab angustiis me servabis, gaudio salutis meae circumdabis me.

I confessed my sin to Thee, and my fault I did not conceal; I said: "I confess mine iniquity to the Lord," and Thou didst remit the guilt of my sin.

Wherefore, every pious man will pray to Thee in time of need. When floods of water rush in, they shall not reach him.

Thou art a refuge to me, Thou wilt preserve me from distresses, Thou wilt encompass me with the joy of my salvation.

*God Admonishes Men Not to Be Recalcitrant, Like Irrational Animals (8, 9)*

8. Erudiam te, et docebo viam, qua ambules; instruam te, firmans super te oculos meos.

9. Nolite esse sicut equus et mulus sine intellectu, quorum impetus camo et freno constringitur; secus ad te non appropinquant.

I will instruct thee and teach the way thou shalt walk; I will counsel thee, fixing Mine eyes upon thee.

Be not as the horse and the mule, not understanding, whose wildness is restrained by the bit and rein; else they come not near thee.

*Hope in God Is the Fountain of Joy (10, 11)*

10. Multi sunt dolores impiorum; sperantem autem in Domino misericordia circumdat.

11. Laetamini in Domino et gaudete, iusti; et exultate, omnes recti corde.

Many are the sorrows of the godless, but mercy envelops him that hopes in the Lord.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just; and exult, all you that are upright of heart.

#### REFLECTIONS

God, who made our nature, knows our frailty, our proneness to evil. He knows that, left to ourselves, we can do little good, even in the natural order, and none at all in the supernatural order, which is necessary for holiness here and for happiness hereafter. On the contrary, He is perfectly aware that, without His special help, we shall go wrong and do much evil on our journey through life, and in the end lose our souls.

But God, who made us, also wishes to save us. And hence, to this end, He has given constant and strong aid; namely, (a) the law of right and wrong, of good and evil, written on each man's heart; (b) His invisible grace, especially to those who do the best they know; (c) a special knowledge of Himself and the promise of a Saviour to the Patriarchs of old; (d) the fuller revelation of the Old Testament; (e) the perfect manifestation of Himself and the means of salvation in Christ and the Church of the New Dispensation.

But while these many and gracious aids to salvation must be made use of by each individual person, according to his time and need, they must never be allowed to become a source of presumption, an excuse for laxity and the indulgence of our evil propensities with the hope of recovering God's favor later. Rather, when we have had the misfortune of falling into sin, we should, as soon as possible, have recourse to the fountains of divine help, and with heartfelt sorrow confess our faults, make sure our purpose of amendment, perform our penance and thank God for having provided strength for our weakness.

#### PSALM 32 (Heb. 33)

#### PRAISE OF THE POWER AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD

##### INTRODUCTION

We have here a song of praise and thanksgiving for some national deliverance from foreign invasion, perhaps by the Assyrians. By this signal intervention in behalf of His people Jehovah has proved to all the world that He alone is God and worthy to be praised.

The Psalmist therefore invites all the righteous everywhere to praise the Lord for His faithfulness, justice, mercy; for the almighty power by which He brought the universe into being and for His rule over all nations. He it is who has created all and surveys all, and it is vain to trust in other strength than His. Such a description of Jehovah's character evokes on the part of the people a concluding prayer of trust and hope. This Psalm is without title.

*The Psalmist Invites Men to Praise the Powerful, Just and Good God (1-5)*

1. Exultate, iusti, in Domino: Exult in the Lord, you just:  
rectos decet collaudatio. praise befits the upright.



2. Celebrate Dominum cithara,  
psalterio decachordo psallite ei.

3. Cantate ei canticum novum,  
bene canite ei cum clangore.

4. Nam rectum est verbum  
Domini, et omne opus eius fidum.

5. Diligit iustitiam et ius: gratia  
Domini plena est terra.

Praise the Lord on the lyre,  
make music to Him on the ten-  
stringed harp.

Sing to Him a new canticle, sing  
skilfully to Him with resounding  
song.

For God's word is righteous,  
every deed of His is faithful.

He loves justice and right; the  
earth is filled with the bounty of  
the Lord.

*God Created the World by His Word, and Governs All Peoples (6-12)*

6. Verbo Domini caeli facti  
sunt, et spiritu oris eius omne ag-  
men eorum.

7. Congregat quasi in utre aquas  
maris: ponit in receptaculis fluctus.

8. Timeat Dominum omnis ter-  
ra: ipsum vereantur omnes incolae  
orbis.

9. Nam ipse dixit et facta sunt;  
ipse mandavit et exstiterunt.

10. Dominus dissipat consilium  
nationum; irritas facit cogitationes  
populorum.

11. Consilium Domini in aeter-  
num manet: cogitationes cordis  
eius in generationem et genera-  
tionem.

12. Beata gens, cuius Deus est  
Dominus: populus quem elegit in  
hereditatem sibi.

By the Lord's word were the  
heavens made, and all their host  
by the breath of His mouth.

He gathers the waters of the sea  
as in a leathern vessel; He puts the  
waves into receptacles.

Let every land fear the Lord;  
let all the inhabitants of the world  
revere Him.

For He spoke, and they sprang  
into being; He commanded, and  
they came to be.

The Lord brings to naught the  
counsel of the nations; He renders  
void the schemes of the peoples.

The counsel of the Lord remains  
for ever; the designs of His heart  
from generation to generation.

Blessed is the nation whose God  
is the Lord, the people whom He  
has chosen as His own inheritance.

3. "Canticum novum," in response to new favors.

4. "Verbum Domini," that is, God's ancient promise, implied in the name Yah-  
weh, to be ever present to assist Israel.

6. "Omne agmen eorum," i.e., the sun, moon and stars.

*God's Knowledge Embraces All Things (13-15)*

13. De caelis respicit Dominus:  
videt omnes filios hominum.

14. De loco habitationis suae  
prospectat omnes qui habitant ter-  
ram:

15. Qui omnium eorum corda  
finxit, qui attendit ad omnia opera  
eorum.

The Lord looks down from the  
heavens; He sees all the sons of men.

From the place of His abode He  
scans all the inhabitants of the  
earth,

He who has fashioned the hearts  
of every one of them, who observes  
all their works.

*God Gives Victory and Safety through His Power (16-19)*

16. Non vincit rex multo exer-  
citu: bellator non se salvat magno  
robore.

17. Fallax est equus ad victori-  
am, et magnitudine roboris sui non  
salvat.

18. Ecce oculi Domini super  
timentes eum: in eos qui sperant  
gratiam eius,

19. Ut eruat a morte animas  
eorum et alat eos in fame.

The king does not conquer by  
his great army; the warrior does not  
save himself by his great strength.

Vain is the horse for victory, nor  
does he save by his abundant power.

Behold, the eyes of the Lord are  
upon those that fear Him, upon  
those that hope for His favor,

That He may rescue their souls  
from death and feed them in time  
of famine.

*We Should Place Our Trust in God (20-22)*

20. Anima nostra exspectat  
Dominum: adiutor et clipeus nos-  
ter ipse est.

21. In illo ergo laetatur cor nos-  
trum, in nomine sancto eius con-  
fidimus.

22. Fiat misericordia tua, Do-  
mine, super nos, quemadmodum  
speramus in te.

Our soul waits upon the Lord:  
He is our helper and our shield.

Our heart therefore is glad in  
Him, and we trust in His holy  
name.

May Thy mercy, O Lord, be  
upon us, even as we hope in Thee.

REFLECTIONS

The thought of God as the almighty maker and builder of the uni-  
verse, who holds the world in the palm of His hand, and can destroy  
it all as easily as He called it into being, is a comfort for the innocent



and gentle, the sinless and the humble. For who can fear that has the Eternal One as a friend? What lasting harm can come to him whose life is in the keeping of such a mighty Being? Though buffeted and often engulfed by the waves and billows of adversity, and blown about as dust by rude blasts of misfortune, the friend of God is really invulnerable and ultimately secure.

But how full of terror is Omnipotence for those who abide not in the divine favor! How appalling the thought that enmity is possible between man and God, between Father and son, and that this estrangement can lead to personal and eternal ruin! Who, unmoved, can contemplate these dreadful possibilities!

There is, however, comfort and solace in the further thought that the All-Powerful is also the All-Merciful. He it is who has made us frail as we are, and who knows that we are dust. As a mother loves and pities the weak child of her womb, so must the God who made and endowed all mankind, love and pity infinitely more every human being whom He has brought into a hard and sinful world.

We must never cease to praise God and thank Him for all His greatness and goodness to ourselves and to all mankind. What we wish for ourselves we should also wish in due measure and proper order for each and all of our human brethren; we should love our neighbor as ourselves.

### PSALM 33 (Heb. 34)

#### FEAR OF GOD AND ITS REWARD

##### INTRODUCTION

An alphabetical song of praise and thanksgiving for the care and protection of Jehovah. The Psalmist has but lately been delivered from great affliction, and hence he calls on others, who in their turn have been likewise favored, to join in his grateful song of praise to the mercy and goodness of God.

From the title it would seem that this Psalm was written by David upon his escape from the wrath of Saul at Geth (Gath), the home of Goliath in Philistia, whither he had fled after Saul's massacre of the priests of Nobe (1 Kings 21:11-14). As in the acrostic Psalm 24, the letter *vau* is wanting here in verse 6, and the last verse seems to be a liturgical addition.

1. Davidis, quando se mente Of David, after he had simulated  
alienatum simulavit coram Abi- madness in the presence of Abi-

melech et, dimissus ab illo, melech, and being dismissed, went  
abiit. his way.

#### *The Psalmist Invites All to Praise God (2-4)*

2. Benedicam Domino omni I will bless the Lord at all times,  
tempore; semper laus eius in ore His praise shall be ever in my  
meo. mouth.

3. In Domino gloriatur anima In the Lord let my soul glory;  
mea: audiant humiles, et laetentur. let the humble hear and be glad.

4. Magnificate Dominum me- Magnify the Lord with me; let  
cum; et extollamus nomen eius us exalt His name together.  
simul.

#### *Since God Is Good, We Should Trust Him (5-11)*

5. Quaesivi Dominum, et ex- I sought the Lord and He an-  
audivit me; et ex omnibus timori- swered me, and from all my fears  
bus meis eripuit me. He rescued me.

6. Aspicite ad eum, ut exilare- Look to Him, that you may be  
mini, et facies vestrae ne erubes- made joyful and your faces may  
cant. not blush for shame.

7. Ecce, miser clamavit, et Dom- Behold, the wretched man cried  
inus audivit, et ex omnibus angus- out, and the Lord heard, and saved  
tiis eius salvavit eum. him from all his distresses.

8. Castra ponit angelus Domini The angel of the Lord sets his  
circa timentes eum, et eripit eos. camp around those that fear Him,  
and rescues them.

9. Gustate, et videte, quam Taste and see how good is the  
bonus sit Dominus; beatus vir qui Lord; blessed the man that flees to  
confugit ad eum. Him for refuge.

10. Timete Dominum, sancti Fear the Lord, you His holy  
eius, quia non est inopia timentib- ones, for there is no want for those  
us eum. that fear Him.

11. Potentes facti sunt pauperes Powerful men have become poor  
et esurierunt; quaerentes autem and gone hungry, but they that seek  
Dominum nullo bono carebunt. the Lord shall lack no good.

#### *The Blessings that Come from Faithful Service (12-23)*

12. Venite, filii, audite me; ti- Come, children, hear me; I will  
morem Domini docebo vos. teach you the fear of the Lord.



13. Quis est homo qui diligit vitam, desiderat dies, ut bonis fruatur?

14. Cohibe linguam tuam a malo, et labia tua a verbis dolosis.

15. Recede a malo, et fac bonum; quaere pacem, et sectare eam.

16. Oculi Domini respiciunt iustos, et aures eius clamorem eorum.

17. Vultus Domini adversatur facientes mala, ut deleat de terra memoriam eorum.

18. Clamaverunt iusti, et Dominus exaudivit eos; et ex omnibus angustiis eorum eripuit eos.

19. Prope est Dominus contritis corde, et confractos spiritu salvat.

20. Multa sunt mala iusti; sed ex omnibus eripit eum Dominus.

21. Custodit omnia ossa eius: non confringetur ne unum quidem.

22. In mortem agit impium malitia, et qui oderunt iustum, puniuntur.

23. Dominus liberat animas servorum suorum, neque punietur, quicumque confugerit ad eum.

Who is the man that loves life, that desires length of days, to enjoy good things?

Restrain thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from deceitful words.

Keep from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord regard the just, and His ears their pleading.

The face of the Lord turns away from those that do evil things, to obliterate their memory from the earth.

The just have cried and the Lord has answered them, and from all their distresses He has rescued them.

The Lord is near to the crushed of heart, and saves the broken in spirit.

Many are the evils of the just man, but out of them all the Lord rescues him.

*The Lord* guards all his bones; not a single one of them shall be broken.

Malice drives the godless man to death, and they that hate the just man shall be punished.

The Lord delivers the souls of His servants, and no one that flees to Him for refuge shall be punished.

#### REFLECTIONS

The author of this Psalm was doubtless speaking out of the fullness of much experience. A recent deliverance by divine aid only reminds him of many similar instances of the past; for he knows that the trials of the just are many, and that out of them all the Lord at length delivers His faithful ones (verses 20, 21).

The wicked have trials, too, trials from which there is no escape—the many common woes to which flesh is heir and the scourges which their sins bring upon them; but, if they repent not, they suffer to no purpose, they pine in vain.

Many godless persons are rich in material ways. They have money in plenty and all the good things that money can buy; but their souls are empty and in want, their lives are aimless and purposeless, they are objects of divine displeasure, and their end is dreadful misery. Not so the just, whose lives are rich in faith, in hope, in love of God and their fellow-man, and in an abundance of good works; whose days and years are passed in the smile of Heaven, who regard not the things that are seen, which are temporal, but the things that are not seen, which are eternal.

Let us pray often that God may give us to know, to love and to do the things that are pleasing in His sight, that are good for our souls. These are favors far above our nature and all its powers; and so, unless God grants them to us, we shall never have them. But what nature cannot presume to, earnest, humble and persevering prayer can obtain.

#### PSALM 34 (Heb. 35)

#### PETITION FOR AID AGAINST UNJUST AND UNGRATEFUL PERSECUTORS

#### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist appeals to the Lord to save him from relentless and malicious foes, who heap all manner of evils upon him without reason; nay, in return for good he has done them. May Jehovah arm Himself as a warrior in his behalf, and rout those merciless enemies, making their own evil designs to recoil upon themselves, and he in song will extol the justice of his merciful Lord. These ungrateful persecutors have returned evil for good, mockery and hatred for sympathy and kindness. If the Lord will only rescue him from their cruel clutches, the Psalmist will render Him public thanksgiving. Jehovah must take up the Psalmist's cause and turn to defeat the schemes of his foes, lest they boast of the triumph of evil. All the just will rejoice over the divine intervention in behalf of righteousness, and the Psalmist will praise the Lord ever more. Each division closes with a promise of praise and thanksgiving.



The Fathers regarded this as a Messianic Psalm, and our Lord applied to His own case the last part of verse 19: "They have hated me without cause" (John 15:25). It has points of resemblance with Psalms 21, 30, 39 and 68.

This is also one of the principal Imprecatory or Cursing Psalms—Psalms which in vehement and passionate language invoke evil upon the Psalmist's enemies, the godless and sinners. We shall be assisted in understanding how prayers, apparently so unchristian in tone as are these Cursing Psalms, could have come from an inspired writer by the following considerations:

(a) We are dealing here with poetical language which, by its very nature, is often passionate, exuberant and extravagant in its use of words.

(b) These poems reflect the spirit of their age and of the Old Law, which was based on the principle of retaliation, and not on the Gospel principle of love.

(c) Hebrew modes of thought were always concrete, and so did not distinguish between evil and its subject, between man and his sin; but rather considered the one as identified with the other.

(d) The Psalmist was not speaking as a private person, but as the representative of God, whose cause was his own. His enemies were God's enemies.

(e) Many of these Psalms do not express wishes, but predictions; they are prophetic of evils that are to come upon the sinner.

(f) Those that are wishes desire, not the punishment of man as such, but rather the vindication of God's justice in punishing wrong.

1. Davidis.

Of David.

*The Psalmist Invokes the Aid of God for the Confusion of His Enemies*  
(1-6)

Certa, Domine, contra certantes mecum, impugna impugnantes me.

O Lord, fight against those that fight against me, assail those that assail me.

2. Apprehende clipeum et scutum, et exsurge in auxilium meum.

Take buckler and shield and rise up to help me.

3. Vibra lanceam et cohibe persequentes me, dic animae meae: "Salus tua ego sum."

Brandish the spear and restrain those that persecute me; say to my soul: "I am thy salvation."

2. "Clipeum et scutum." The first was a round shield of smaller size, the second larger and stronger.

4. Confundantur et erubescant qui quaerunt vitam meam, cedant restrorsum et afficiantur pudore qui cogitant mihi mala.

Confounded and put to shame be those that seek my life; turned back and disgraced be they that devise evils against me!

5. Sint velut palea ante ventum, cum angelus Domini pellet eos.

Let them be as chaff before the wind, when the angel of the Lord shall drive them!

6. Sit via illorum tenebrosa et lubrica, cum angelus Domini insectabitur eos.

Let their way be dark and slippery, when the angel of the Lord shall pursue them!

*Under Various Images the Psalmist Describes the Persecution Launched against Him* (7-12)

7. Nam sine causa tetenderunt mihi rete suum, sine causa foderunt foveam vitae meae.

For without cause they have stretched their net for me, without cause thy have dug a pit for my life.

8. Veniat illis interitus improviso et rete, quod tetenderunt, capiat ipsos; in foveam quam foderunt, ipsi cadant.

May destruction come upon them unawares, may the net they have stretched catch themselves, may they themselves fall into the pit they have dug!

9. Anima autem mea exsultabit in Domino, laetabitur de auxilio eius.

But my soul shall exult in the Lord, and shall be made glad by His aid.

10. Omnes vires meae dicent: "Domine, quis similis tibi, qui eripis miserum a praepotente, miserum et pauperem a praedatore?"

All my strength shall say: "O Lord, who is like to Thee, who dost rescue the wretched man from him that is too strong, the wretched and poor from the spoiler?"

11. Surrexerunt testes violenti: quorum non eram conscius, a me quaerebant.

Violent witnesses have risen up; they questioned me about things I knew not of.

12. Retribuebant mihi mala pro bonis: desolationem animae meae.

They repaid me with evils for benefactions, to the desolation of my soul.

8. "Veniat illis." The transition from plural to singular is frequent and sudden in Hebrew; but sometimes, as perhaps here, the individuals are taken collectively, or else the leader is singled out.



*The Psalmist Implores the Aid of God More Urgently (13-28)*

13. Ego autem, cum illi aegrotarent, induebar cilicio, affligebam ieiunio animam meam et preces intra me fundebam.

14. Velut pro amico, pro fratre meo, incedebam tristis, velut qui luget matrem, maestus incurvabar.

15. Sed cum vacillarem ego, laetati sunt et convenerunt, convenerunt contra me percutientes inopinantem.

16. Dilaniabant me neque cessabant, tentabant me, irridebant mihi frendentes contra me dentibus suis.

17. Domine, quamdiu aspicies? Eripe animam meam a rugientibus, a leonibus vitam meam

18. Gratias agam tibi in coetu magno, in populo multo te laudabo.

19. Ne gaudeant de me inimici mei iniuste; ne oculis annuant qui me oderunt sine causa.

20. Neque enim quae pacis sunt loquuntur, et contra quietos terrae fraudes meditantur.

21. Et dilatant contra me os suum, dicunt: "Vah! Vah! oculis nostris vidimus!"

22. Vidisti, Domine! Noli silere, Domine, noli esse procul a me!

23. Expergiscere et evigila ad defensionem meam, Deus meus et Dominus meus, pro causa mea!

But I, whenever they were sick, put on haircloth; I afflicted my soul with fasting, and poured forth prayers within me.

As if for a friend, for my brother, I walked in sadness; as one who mourns for a mother, I was bent with grief.

But when my footsteps wavered, they were glad and banded together; they banded together against me, striking me unawares.

They tore me without ceasing, they attacked me, they mocked me, gnashing their teeth against me.

O Lord, how long wilt Thou look on? Rescue my soul from those that roar, my life from the lions.

I will give thanks to Thee in the great assembly, I will praise Thee amid the throng of the people.

Let not them that are unjustly mine enemies rejoice over me; let not them that hate me without cause look on approvingly,

For they speak not things that are of peace, and devise treacheries against the meek ones of the land.

And they open their mouth against me, saying: "'Tis well! 'Tis well! We have seen with our eyes!"

Thou hast seen, O Lord! Be not silent, O Lord, be not far from me!

Rouse Thyself, and be alert in my defense, my God and my Lord, in behalf of my cause!

24. Iudica me secundum iustitiam tuam, Domine; Deus meus, ne laetentur de me!

25. Ne cogitent in corde suo: "Vah! Quod desideravimus!" ne dicant: "Devoravimus eum."

26. Confundantur et erubescant omnes simul, qui laetantur de malis meis; induantur confusione et ignominia, qui se extollunt contra me.

27. Exsultent et laetentur qui favent causae meae, et dicant semper: "Magnificetur Dominus, qui favet saluti servi sui."

28. Et lingua mea enuntiabit iustitiam tuam, perpetuo laudem tuam.

Judge me according to Thy justice, O Lord; O my God, let them not rejoice over me.

Let them not think in their heart: "'Tis well! Just what we wished!" Let them not say: "We have swallowed him up!"

Let those be confounded and put to shame all together that rejoice in my woes; let those be clothed with dishonor and disgrace that behave insolently to me!

Let those exult and be glad that favor my cause, and may they say continually: "The Lord be magnified, who favors the welfare of His servant!"

And my tongue shall declare Thy justice, *and* Thy praise unceasingly.

## REFLECTIONS

The difference between the religion of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament is often one of emphasis, rather than of omission and supplement. The Old Law stressed the qualities of justice and fear, whereas in the New Law the virtues of love and mercy are the prevailing characteristics. Through many long centuries, by rude, material elements and slow degrees, fallen man had to be educated and lifted up to the high spiritual plane of the Gospel.

In God's dealings with His rational creatures both justice and mercy must have their part, but on account of the innate frailty of our nature there is always more reason for the display of mercy than of justice. Hence we are so often reminded, even in the Old Testament, that "the mercies of the Lord are above all His works."

It is consoling therefore to know that God is our merciful Lord and kind Father, that of His very nature He is disposed to deal gently with us now and in the judgment to come. But we need also to know and to realize that He has made it a necessary condition of the mercy He wishes to show us individually that we, on our part, give mercy preference and



predominance in our dealings with our fellow human beings; as we measure to them, so God in turn will measure to us.

The Psalmist pleads with God to rescue him, not to let evil triumph, not to disappoint the just who look to Him for vindication of the wrongs they suffer; and for a favorable answer to his prayer he promises abundant thanksgiving.

We have a right to appeal to God for the help we need, but we cannot reasonably expect Him to come to our aid unless we also summon to action all the natural faculties with which He has endowed us and the many natural helps and resources with which He surrounds us. If we do for ourselves and others what we can and are supposed to do, we can safely leave the rest to God. We must never presume on God to supply for our own neglect, either in the natural or the supernatural order.

### PSALM 35 (Heb. 36)

#### HUMAN DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

##### INTRODUCTION

In this Psalm the sacred singer is contrasting the principles and conduct of the wicked man with the boundless goodness and kindness of God; and he prays that his eternal Benefactor may ever continue to show him favor and protection from the godless.

Here, as often in the Psalms, the transition from one member of the antithesis (vv. 2-5) to the other (vv. 6-10) is very sudden and abrupt, but this is due to the Hebrew fondness for contrast.

1. Magistro chori. Davidis, For the choir-master. Of David,  
servi Domini. servant of the Lord.

#### *Human Depravity, Forgetful of the Divine Vengeance, Halts at No Crime (2-5)*

2. Loquitur iniquitas ad impium in corde eius; non est timor Dei ante oculos eius. Iniquity speaks to the godless man within his heart; the fear of God is not before his eyes.

3. Etenim in mente sua blanditur sibi. For in his mind he flatters himself.

2. "Iniquitas," personified as speaking to the sinner in his heart.

3. "Blanditur sibi." The sinner tries to deceive himself into thinking that his sin will not be discovered and punished by God.

tur sibi non deprehendi culpam suam neque abhorreri.

4. Verba oris eius iniquitas et dolus, desiit sapere et agere bene.

5. Iniquitatem meditatur in cubili suo, consistit in via non bona, malum non aversatur.

self that his fault will not be detected nor abhorred.

The words of his mouth are iniquity and guile; he has ceased to be wise and to do well.

In his bed he plans iniquity, he has set out on a course that is not good, evil he does not avoid.

#### *Divine Providence, the Fount of All Security, Joy and Life (6-10)*

6. Domine, caelum contingit misericordia tua, fidelitas tua ipsas nubes.

7. Iustitia tua sicut montes Dei, iudicia tua sicut mare profundum: homines et iumenta salvas, Domine.

8. Quam pretiosa est gratia tua, Deus: filii hominum sub umbram alarum tuarum confugiunt;

9. Satiantur pinguedine domus tuae, et torrente deliciarum tuarum potas eos.

10. Etenim apud te est fons vitae, et in lumine tuo videmus lumen.

O Lord, Thy mercy reaches to heaven, Thy faithfulness to the very skies.

Thy justice is as the mountains of God, Thy judgments as the deep sea. Thou dost save men and beasts, O Lord.

How precious is Thy kindness, O God; the sons of men seek refuge under the shadow of Thy wings;

They are filled with the abundance of Thy house, Thou givest them to drink of the stream of Thy delights.

For with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we see light.

#### *The Psalmist Begs God to Give Him Grace and Protect Him against the Wicked (11-13)*

11. Serva gratiam tuam iis qui te colunt, et aequitatem tuam iis qui recto sunt corde.

12. Ne superveniat mihi pes superbi, et manus peccatoris ne moveat me.

13. Ecce corruerunt qui patrant iniquitatem: deiecti sunt nec surgere possunt.

O continue Thy favor to those that worship Thee, and Thy justice to the upright of heart.

Let not the foot of the proud man overtake me, nor the hand of the sinner disturb me.

Behold, the workers of iniquity are fallen; they are thrust down and cannot rise.

7. "Montes Dei," i.e., the highest mountains.



## REFLECTIONS

Human nature, as we know it and find it now, in a fallen state, inclines strongly to evil. So often it is much easier to do wrong than to do right. Good things are hard; evil requires small effort. What is bad can always be attained by natural power, while the good frequently lies beyond the reach of our unaided strength.

These are grim facts of doleful experience in the history of our race. And since they are so, we need to fortify ourselves against them by all available, reasonable means from our earliest years. Free, individual actions may seem trivial and insignificant for the most part; but often repeated, they form habits or mostly fixed ways of acting, habits become a second nature and shape the character, and character, left to itself, determines the destiny. Thus by simple, free actions we enter upon roads that naturally lead to final success or to ultimate ruin.

Of course God who made us all must care for us, must love us, as a father his offspring. He cannot rejoice or be pleased over the loss of a single soul whom He has brought into life. On the contrary, His love and kindness, His power and justice, reach beyond the skies and are vaster than the sea; they embrace all of time and stretch from eternity to eternity. These attributes of the Divine Being are our only sure hope. They can never fail us, if we put our firm trust in them without falling into the sin of presumption.

## PSALM 36 (Heb. 37)

## THE LOT OF GOOD AND EVIL MEN

## INTRODUCTION

An alphabetical Psalm, intended to console the just, who, in their trials, are tempted to murmur at the sight of the prosperity of the wicked. The Psalmist admonishes the righteous not to be disturbed by the apparent triumph of sin and evil-doers, because the success and happiness of the latter are but temporary at best, while enduring rewards and joy are in store for all the godly (vv. 1-11). God does not fail to take account either of the life and doings of the sinner, or of the works and sufferings of the just, and in due time both the one and the other shall be recompensed (vv. 12-24). It is a matter of experience with the Psalmist that the good are always finally rewarded (vv. 25-31). He contrasts the retribu-

tion meted out to the sinner with the recompense of the just man (vv. 32-40).

The Psalmist expects the reward and punishment of which he is speaking to occur in this world. Not indeed that they are always experienced immediately and visibly by the individuals concerned; but that sooner or later, if not in their own persons then in their posterity, the virtuous shall be recompensed and the sinful punished. In the Psalmist's view, one of the greatest chastisements of the wicked is to be deprived of offspring in whom his name and family are perpetuated. To him and to the people of his age a man lived on in his family and posterity.

The author of Psalm 72 is struggling with the same problem as the writer of the present Psalm; but while here the Psalmist has unshaken faith in the ultimate visible reward and punishment of the just and the wicked respectively, there he teaches that the just man's highest joy and perfection are to be found in the friendship and fellowship of his Lord, of which sinners are deprived.

## 1. Davidis.

## Of David.

*The Prosperity of the Wicked Is Passing, Whereas the Reward of the Just Abides (1-11)*

Noli excandescere propter male agentes, neque invidere facientibus iniquitatem;

Be not inflamed because of evil-doers, nor envy those that work iniquity;

2. Nam sicut faenum velociter decident et sicut herba viridis marcescent.

For they shall quickly droop like grass, and wither like the green herb.

3. Spera in Domino, et fac bonum, ut habites terram et fruaris securitate.

Hope in the Lord and do good, that thou mayest dwell in the land and enjoy security.

4. Delectare in Domino et dabit tibi quod petit cor tuum.

Make the Lord thy delight, and He will grant thee what thy heart seeks.

5. Committe Domino viam tuam, et spera in eo, et ipse aget.

Commit thy lot to the Lord and hope in Him, and He will provide.

6. Et oriri faciet sicut lumen iustitiam tuam, et ius tuum sicut meridiem.

And He will make Thy justice to rise as the light, and thy cause as the noonday.

7. Acquiesce in Domino, et spera in eo. Noli excandescere de

Rest in the Lord and hope in Him. Be not inflamed about him

3. "Ut habites terram, etc." The meaning is that the oppressed Israelites should not yield to the temptation to seek better conditions in foreign countries.



eo qui prospere procedit in via sua, propter hominem machinantes mala.

8. Desiste ab ira et depone furorem; noli excandescere, ne mala agas.

9. Etenim male agentes destruentur; sed qui sperant in Domino, possidebunt terram.

10. Et modicum, et non erit impius; et si attendes ad locum eius, iam non erit.

11. Sed mansueti possidebunt terram, et delectabuntur multitudine pacis.

*In Due Time God Will Act, Rewarding the Just and Punishing the Sinner (12-24)*

12. Mala molitur impius iusto et rendit contra eum dentibus suis.

13. Dominus irridet illi, quia videt diem eius venturum.

14. Gladium evaginant impii et tendunt arcum suum, ut prosternant miserum et pauperem, ut trucident eos qui recta via incedunt.

15. Gladius eorum penetrabit in corda ipsorum, et arcus eorum confringentur.

16. Melius est modicum, quod habet iustus, quam opulentia impiorum magna;

17. Nam brachia impiorum confringentur, iustos autem sustentat Dominus.

18. Dominus curat de vita proborum, et hereditas eorum in aeternum erit.

that prospers in his way, because of him that schemes evil things.

Cease from anger and put aside rage; be not inflamed, lest thou do evil.

For the workers of evil shall be destroyed; but they that hope in the Lord shall possess the land.

Just a little while and the godless man shall not be; and if thou observe his haunts, he shall no longer be there.

But the meek shall possess the land, and shall delight in an abundance of peace.

The godless man devises evils against the just one, and gnashes his teeth at him.

The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day will come.

Godless men unsheathe the sword and bend their bow, to strike prostrate the wretched and the poor, to kill those that walk in the straight path.

Their sword shall pierce their own hearts, and their bows shall be broken.

Better is the little of the just man than the great wealth of the godless.

For the strength of the godless shall be broken, but the Lord sustains the just.

The Lord cares for the life of the virtuous, and their inheritance shall last for ever.

19. Non confundentur tempore calamitatis, et diebus famis saturabuntur.

20. Impii vero peribunt, et inimici Domini ut decor pratorum marcescent, quemadmodum fumus evanescent.

21. Mutuatur impius et non reddit, iustus autem miseretur et donat.

22. Nam, quibus benedixerit, possidebunt terram, et quibus maledixerit, destruentur.

23. A Domino gressus hominis firmantur, et viam eius acceptam habet.

24. Etsi ceciderit, non prosternitur, quia Dominus sustinet manum eius.

*Experience Witnesses to the Reward of the Just (25-31)*

25. Puer fui, et iam sum senex, et non vidi iustum derelictum, nec semen eius mendicans panem.

26. Omni tempore miseretur et commodat; et semini illius benedicetur.

27. Recede a malo, et fac bonum, ut maneat in sempiternum.

28. Nam Dominus diligit iustitiam, et non derelinquit sanctos suos; improbi destruentur, et semen impiorum excindetur.

They shall not be dismayed in time of calamity, and in days of famine they shall be filled.

But the godless shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall fade as the beauty of the meadows; like smoke they shall vanish.

The godless man borrows and pays not back, but the just man shows compassion and gives.

For they that *the Lord* will bless shall possess the land, and those that He will curse shall be destroyed.

A just man's steps are made firm by the Lord, and He holds his life acceptable.

Even though he should fall, he is not prostrated, for the Lord sustains his hand.

I was a boy, and now am old, and I have not seen the just man forsaken, nor his children begging bread.

At all times he shows compassion and lends; and his seed shall be blessed.

Shun evil and do good, that thou mayest remain for ever.

For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His holy ones; the wicked shall be destroyed, and the posterity of the godless shall be cut off.

23. "Viam eius, etc." Two explanations are offered: (a) Yahweh delights in the way of the just man; or (b) the just man delights in the way of Yahweh.

25. "Et non vidi, etc." The Psalmist is speaking of what he himself has observed.

27. "Ut maneat," i.e., in the Promised Land of Canaan.



29. Iusti possidebunt terram, et habitabunt in sempiternum super eam.

30. Os iusti eloquitur sapientiam, et lingua eius effatur rectum.

31. Lex Dei eius in corde ipsius, et non vacillant gressus eius.

*Final Contrast between the Just and the Wicked (32-40)*

32. Observat impius iustum, et studet occidere eum.

33. Dominus non derelinquet eum in manu illius, nec condemnabit eum, cum iudicabitur.

34. Confide in Domino, et viam eius observa; et provehet te, ut possideas terram; excidium impiorum laetus videbis.

35. Vidi impium superbientem et sese expandentem ut cedrum frondosam.

36. Et praeterii, et ecce non erat; et quaesivi eum, et non est inventus.

37. Observa probum et considera iustum: nam posteritas est viro pacifico.

38. Peccatores autem extirpabuntur omnes, posteritas impiorum excindetur.

39. Salus iustorum a Domino est; refugium eorum est tempore tribulationis.

40. Et adiuvat eos Dominus et liberat eos; liberat eos ab impiis, et servat eos, quia confugiunt ad eum.

The just shall possess the land, and shall dwell upon it for evermore.

The mouth of the just man speaks wisdom, and his tongue utters what is upright.

The law of God is in his heart, and his steps do not waver.

The godless spies on the just man, and seeks to kill him.

The Lord will not leave him in the hand of that man, nor will He condemn him when judgment is passed upon him.

Trust in the Lord and keep His way; and He will carry thee forward to possess the land; thou shalt see with satisfaction the destruction of the godless.

I saw a godless man in his pride, expanding himself like a leafy cedar.

And I passed by, and lo! he was not; and I sought him and he was not found.

Observe the upright man and contemplate the just; for offspring belongs to the man of peace.

But sinners shall be exterminated, every one of them; the offspring of the godless shall be cut off.

The salvation of the just is from the Lord; He is their refuge in time of trouble.

And the Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the godless, and saves them, because they seek refuge in Him.

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist's problem here is the age-old contrast between the temporal sufferings of the just and the material prosperity of the wicked. So often the righteous are in poverty, sickness and sorrow; while the godless abound in riches, health and all the comforts and happiness that money can procure.

It must be admitted that this is a perplexing fact and situation, too frequently borne out by experience. Nevertheless, the sacred singer here exhorts his hearers and readers to persevere in their faith and fervor, assuring them that in due time, even during this earthly life, the lots of the good and the bad shall be reversed. Whether the individuals at once concerned may live to see the change or not, it will surely come.

The Psalmist's solution of this problem had more force for him and his people than it has for us. Considering primarily, and almost exclusively, the present life as the goal of existence and putting far greater stress on the solidarity of his race and the part to be played by posterity than we do, the Jew was forced to find and could find some explanation here and now which would vindicate the justice of God in dealing with mankind. Surely there could be no just and all-powerful God to whom the universe is subject and responsible, if evil were forever to triumph over good. It was this conviction that lay at the root of the Psalmist's answer, and his argument was as strong as the light he possessed could make it.

Whether moved or not by the Psalmist's argument based on experience in the present life, our difficulty is less serious in view of our greater knowledge of the world and the life to come beyond the grave. Even though many injustices are never righted here, we know they will be hereafter. For us this life is only the first act in the great drama of our existence.

It also needs to be observed, first, that not all the righteous are deprived of the material goods of this life, nor are all the wicked prosperous; quite the contrary in many instances for both classes. Secondly, whether people are rich or poor, sick or well, very often depends chiefly upon themselves, upon their use or neglect of the natural gifts, talents and opportunities which they have freely received along with others of their kind. And moreover, it may well be asked whether he is really a righteous person who neglects natural means ready at hand for his temporal betterment, while otherwise passing as dutiful and religious. We must not expect God to do for us what we can and should do for ourselves.



## PSALM 37 (Heb. 38)

## APPEAL OF A SINNER AFFLICTED BY GOD

## INTRODUCTION

This is the third of the Penitential Psalms, in which is described the pitiable condition of a sick person who is grievously tortured in body and mind, who is deserted by his friends and neighbors and cruelly persecuted by enemies, and who, feeling that his sins are the cause of his sufferings, pleads to God for pardon and deliverance. The belief that sin is the cause of sickness and sorrow pervades all Semitic literature.

The strong personal note running through the Psalm is at once a proof that the Psalmist is recording his own experience, and a refutation of the view of many modern critics that he is speaking, not for himself, but for the nation—suffering Israel. The marked resemblance between this Psalm and Psalms 6, 38, 72 and 87 should be noted.

1. Psalmus. Davidis. Ad commemorationem.

A psalm. Of David. In commemoration.

*The Psalmist Confesses that He Is Suffering for His Sins, and Implores God's Mercy (2-5)*

2. Domine, noli me arguere in ira tua, nec me corripere in furore tuo.

O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, nor chastise me in Thy wrath.

3. Etenim sagittae tuae infixae sunt mihi, et descendit super me manus tua.

For Thine arrows are sunk deep in me, and Thy hand is fallen upon me.

4. Nihil sani est in carne mea ob indignationem tuam, nihil integri in ossibus meis propter peccatum meum.

There is no health in my flesh because of Thine indignation, there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.

5. Nam culpa meae supergressae sunt caput meum, sicut onus grave gravant me nimis.

For my faults have mounted above my head; like a crushing burden they weigh me down too much.

*The Psalmist Describes His Misery (6-13)*

6. Foetent, tabescunt livores mei propter insipientiam meam.

My sores are foul and festering because of my folly.

7. Inclinator, incurvatus sum valde, toto die maestus incedo.

I am bent, bowed down grievously; all day long I walk sorrowful.

8. Nam lumbi mei pleni sunt inflammatione, nec quicquam est sani in carne mea.

For my loins are full of inflammation, and there is no health in my flesh.

9. Elangui, contritus sum valde, rugio propter fremitum cordis mei.

I am become weak, I am grievously bruised; I cry out because of the groaning of my heart.

10. Domine, coram te est omne desiderium meum, et gemitus meus te non latet.

O Lord, my every desire is before Thee, and my sighing is not hidden from Thee.

11. Cor meum palpitat, dereliquit me robur meum, et ipsa lux oculorum meorum deficit me.

My heart beats quickly, my strength is gone, and the very light of mine eyes fails me.

12. Amici mei et sodales mei procul a plaga mea subsistunt, et propinqui mei stant e longinquo.

My friends and my companions stand aloof from mine affliction, and my neighbors keep far off.

13. Et laqueos tendunt qui insidiantur vitae meae, et qui quaerunt mihi malum, perniciem minantur et fraudes omni tempore moliantur.

And they that plot against my life stretch snares; and they that wish me evil threaten ruin and frame deceits all the time.

*The Psalmist Keeps Silent, and Trusts in God Alone (14-17)*

14. Ego autem, tamquam surdus, non audio, et sum velut mutus non aperiens os suum.

But I, as if deaf, hear not; and as if dumb, I open not my mouth.

15. Et factus sum sicut homo qui non audit, et qui non habet responsum in ore suo.

And I am become like a man that hears not, and that has no answer in his mouth.

16. In te enim, Domine, confido: tu exaudies, Domine, Deus meus.

For in Thee, O Lord, do I trust; Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.

17. Etenim dico: "Ne laeten-

For I say: "Let them not re-

6. "Insipientiam," which in the Old Testament is the same as *peccatum*.



tur de me; dum labitur pes meus, joice over me; when my foot  
ne superbiant contra me." slips, let them not boast against  
me."

*Again Confessing His Guilt, the Psalmist Implores the Help of God*  
(18-23)

18. Ego enim lapsui proximus  
sum, et dolor meus coram me est  
semper.

For I am near to slipping, and  
my grief is ever before me.

19. Etenim culpam meam con-  
fiteor, et ob peccatum meum sum  
anxius.

Truly I confess my guilt, and I  
am uneasy because of my sin.

20. Sed qui sine causa adver-  
santur mihi, potentes sunt, et  
multi, qui oderunt me iniuste;

But they that oppose me with-  
out cause are powerful, and many  
are they that hate me unjustly;

21. Et qui retribuunt malum  
pro bono, infestant me, quia bo-  
num sector.

And they that return evil for  
good, harass me because I pursue  
the good.

22. Noli me derelinquere, Do-  
mine, Deus meus, noli procul dis-  
tare a me!

Forsake me not, O Lord; O my  
God, be not far away from me!

23. Festina in auxilium meum,  
Domine, salus mea!

Make haste to help me, O  
Lord, my salvation!

#### REFLECTIONS

Our Lord refuted the theory, so prevalent among Orientals in His day, that one's personal sufferings and afflictions are always the result of one's own sins, or of the sins of one's parents (John 9). The Saviour asserted that some afflictions are permitted in order that the glory of God may be manifested through their cure or removal, as in the case of the man born blind and of the death of Lazarus. And indeed we know that all human sufferings, of whatever origin, may be turned to the same glorious account, if, with the help of God, we are able to bear them after the manner in which Christ and the great saints bore theirs. This is what St. Augustine meant when, citing the words of St. Paul (Rom. 8:28), he said that to those who love God all things work together for their good, even their sins.

It must be conceded, however, that all of the miseries of our earthly existence, both moral and physical, are the consequence, direct or indirect, of sin, actual or original or both—of our own sins or of others' sins. If

sin and its tragic consequences could be eliminated from our present life, we should be nearly in Paradise. Of course it is true that, even if all formal sin were excluded from the world, material faults and defects would normally remain as a natural result and effect of human and creature limitations. Actions follow the nature, and all created nature of itself is necessarily limited and defective.

We find ourselves therefore born into a world in which evils and suffering abound, for many of which we are not responsible, many of which we cannot avoid. Worst of all, the poor nature we have often inclines us powerfully to the very misdeeds that bring upon us our deepest woe. Life at best, then, is a bitter warfare in which the odds are naturally against us; and consequently for our own dearest interests, present and future, we have every reason to walk circumspectly, avoiding all the evils we can and praying to God for help against those we cannot escape and for which we are not responsible.

#### PSALM 38 (Heb. 39)

#### LAMENTS AND PRAYERS OF ONE SERIOUSLY ILL

##### INTRODUCTION

The similarity between this and the two preceding Psalms is striking. The Psalmist is in much the same desperate physical condition as in Psalm 37, and he is confronted with the same problem as in Psalm 36, namely, the prosperity of the godless as contrasted with the sufferings of the just. As he contemplates this vexing question, he is tempted to murmur but resolves to keep silence, lest he sin with his tongue. But this self-repression only makes the fire within him burn the more, and so he is forced to speak, but now in a prayer that he may know how short is his life and how vain all that is human. Reflecting thus on the transitoriness of man's earthly existence and the futility of earthly riches, he turns to God as his only hope, asking pardon for his sins and preservation of his life.

In order to enter fully into the thought of this and similar Psalms, we must bear in mind that the ancient Hebrews looked upon death as interrupting the external worship of God and as putting an end to devout fellowship with Him. All these Psalms are pursuing the same line of thought as the Book of Job, but at times failing, as in the present Psalm,



to recognize as Job does that in the divine plan earthly life is only one act in the great drama of human existence.

1. Magistro chori, Iduthun. For the choir-master, Iduthun.  
Psalmus. Davidis. A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Strives to Bear His Pain in Silence (2-4)*

2. Dixi: "Custodiam vias meas, I said: "I will guard my ways,  
ut non peccem lingua mea; fre- lest I sin with my tongue. I will  
num apponam ori meo, dum im- put a bridle on my mouth, while  
pius est coram me." the godless man is before me."  
3. Obmutui silens, bono ca- I became dumb and silent,  
rens, sed dolor meus recrudit. stripped of consolation, but my  
grief broke out anew.  
4. Incaluit cor meum intra me; My heart became inflamed  
cum consideravi, exarsit ignis: lo- within me; when I reflected, a  
cutus sum lingua mea. fire blazed forth; I spoke with  
my tongue.

*The Psalmist Complains of the Brevity of Life, but Hopes to Obtain from God Pardon and Relief from Evil (5-9)*

5. Notum fac mihi, Domine, Make known to me, O Lord,  
terminum meum, et quae men- mine end, and what is the measure  
sura sit dierum meorum, ut sciam, of my days, that I may know how  
quam caducus sim ego. frail I am.  
6. Ecce paucorum palmorum Behold, Thou hast made my  
fecisti dies meos, et vita mea quasi days a few hand-breadths, and my  
nihil est coram te: ut halitus tan- life is as nothing before Thee;  
tum stat omnis homo. every man stands only as a breath.  
7. Ut umbra tantum pertransit Man passes like a mere shadow,  
homo, inaniter tantum tumultu- his turmoil is only in vain; he  
atur; coacervat nec scit quis per- accumulates *goods* and knows not  
cipiat ea. who is to have them.  
8. Et nunc quid exspecto, Do- And now what do I await,  
mine? fiducia mea est in te. O Lord? My trust is in Thee.

1. "Iduthun," a Levite cantor in the time of David to whom the Psalm was given to be sung.

2. "Custodiam vias meas," i.e., I will faithfully observe the commands of God. —"Dum impius, etc.," may mean: (a) that the sight of the prosperity of the wicked was a temptation to him; or (b) that he feared to complain in the hearing of the godless lest they ridicule him.

3. "Bono carens," i.e., deprived of happiness.

6. "Paucorum palmorum," expressing the extreme brevity of his life.

9. Ab omnibus iniquitatibus From all my transgressions de-  
meis libera me, opprobrio stulti liver me, hand me not over to the  
ne tradideris me. gibe of the fool.

*The Psalmist Prays that God Will Spare Him and Preserve His Life (10-14)*

10. Obmutui, non aperio os I have become dumb, I open  
meum: tu enim fecisti. not my mouth; for Thou hast  
done it.  
11. Remove a me plagam Remove Thy chastisement from  
tuam: impetu manus tuae ego me: I am consumed under the force  
consumor. of Thy hand.  
12. Correptione culpae castigas By rebuke for his fault Thou  
virum: dissolvīs, ut tineā, pretiosa dost chasten a man; like a moth,  
eius: halitus tantum est omnis Thou dost dissolve what is pre-  
homo. cious to him; only a breath is every  
man.  
13. Audi orationem meam, Hear my prayer, O Lord, and  
Domine, et clamorem meum aus- hearken to my cry; be not deaf to  
culta, ad lacrimas meas ne fueris my tears. For I am Thy passing  
surdus. Hospes enim sum apud guest, a sojourner, like all my  
te, peregrinus, sicut omnes patres fathers.  
mei.  
14. Averte oculos a me, ut res- Turn away Thine eyes from me  
pirem, priusquam vadam et non that I may breathe again, before  
sim. I depart and be no more.

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist here is furious; he is nearly exasperated at the thought of the good things enjoyed in this world by the wicked, and the evils which the just are forced to endure. Whether, in his experience and observation, this situation was a rule, or that he was reminded of it only by his own and many similar cases, the fact is that he was at the point of desperation. He does not dare to open his mouth, lest he might rebel and curse life as he finds it; he does not care to speak even about good things, so unappealing and inadequate have they become, at least for the time being, in view of the prevalence of evils.

But rebellious silence only makes the sufferer worse; there is no satisfaction in repressed indignation. What can he do? The condition he hates

14. "Et non sim," i.e., in this world. The Psalmist is not speaking or thinking about a future existence in another world.



is beyond his power to change. Like many another sufferer, his needs are doubtless manifold. He craves for relief from pain and poverty, for surcease from pressing woes, for the silencing of ten thousand natural voices which in vain cry out within him day and night demanding the food for which they were made. Who can help him, deliver him, quiet him, satisfy him? No one but God.

The Psalmist feels instinctively, without understanding the how or the where, that it is only the God who made him and placed him here on earth and gave him his nature with its vast capacities, its unrealized hopes, its innumerable appetites and cravings—only He can comfort him and give him all he needs. Hence in prayer he turns to the Lord as his sole hope and pleads for deliverance from present evils and for the complete satisfaction which he requires both in body and soul. He is confident that he will be heard and answered.

### PSALM 39 (Heb. 40)

#### THANKSGIVING AND PETITION FOR CONTINUED HELP

##### INTRODUCTION

This is a sequel to the preceding Psalm, and it gives the solution of the perplexing question there discussed. In that Psalm the writer had no other answer for the problem of human suffering than a blind trust in the goodness of God. But now his prayer has been answered, relief has come and new light has been vouchsafed him—all of which will increase the hope and confidence in God's goodness of those who, remaining faithful, have witnessed what God has done for the Psalmist.

The Psalmist, therefore, first extols the wondrous works of God. And then, seeking a way to express his gratitude, he is told that the legal sacrifices are not required, as being insufficient, but that the Lord would have him make a complete sacrifice of his whole being to the eternal will. The Psalmist will continue in the future, as in the past, to publish the mercies of the Lord in the great assemblies of the faithful. But he knows that this sacrifice of his being which his Master now exacts of him will imply extreme suffering and trials which he cannot bear alone, and hence he pleads for divine assistance, and faith assures him that it will be granted.

So different are the two main parts of this Psalm (vv. 2-11 and 12-18) that many critics believe we have here two distinct poems written by dif-

ferent authors, or perhaps by the same author but on occasions widely contrasted. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:1-10) put verses 7-9 here into the mouth of our Lord, and hence we are assured of their Messianic import. Verses 14-18 of this Psalm form a separate poem in Psalm 69.

1. Magistro chori. Davidis. For the choir-master. Of David.  
Psalmus. A psalm.

#### *The Psalmist Acknowledges the Help Received from God (2-4)*

2. Speravi, speravi in Domino, I have hoped, I have hoped in  
et inclinavit se ad me, et exaudivit the Lord, and He bent down to me  
clamorem meum. and answered my cry.

3. Et extraxit me de fossa in- And He drew me forth from  
teritus, de luto caeni, et statuit the pit of destruction, from the  
super petram pedes meos, firma- filthy mire; and He set my feet  
vit gressus meos. upon a rock, He strengthened my  
steps.

4. Et posuit in ore meo canti- And He put in my mouth a  
cum novum, carmen Deo nostro. new canticle, a song to our God.  
Videbunt multi, et verebuntur, Many shall see and revere, and  
et sperabunt in Domino. shall hope in the Lord.

#### *Number and Magnitude of the Favors God Has Granted Him (5,6)*

5. Beatus vir, qui posuit in Blessed the man that has placed  
Domino spem suam, nec sectatur his hope in the Lord, and shuns  
idolorum cultores et declinantes the worshippers of idols and  
ad falsa. those that incline to the false.

6. Multa fecisti tu, Domine, Many are the wondrous works  
Deus meus, mirabilia tua, et con- Thou hast done, O Lord, my  
siliis erga nos nemo est similis God, and in Thy designs for us  
tibi. there is no one like Thee.

Si ea voluerim narrare et eloqui, Should I wish to recount and  
plura sunt, quam quae numerari declare them, they are more than  
possint. can be numbered.

2. "Speravi, speravi." A Hebrew idiom expressing intensity of feeling or action.

3. The *pit* and the filthy mire are symbols of misery and peril; whereas the *rock* stands for security and confidence.

6. "Consiliis," i.e., God's providence and care of us.



*Obedience to the Precepts of God Is the Proper Form of Thanksgiving*  
(7-11)

7. Sacrificium et oblationem noluisti, sed aures aperuisti mihi.

8. Holocaustum et victimam pro peccato non postulasti: tunc dixi: "Ecce venio; in volumine libri scriptum est de me:

9. Facere voluntatem tuam, Deus meus, me delectat, et lex tua est in praecordiis meis."

10. Annuntiavi iustitiam in coetu magno; ecce labia mea non cohibui; Domine, tu nosti.

11. Iustitiam tuam non abscondi in corde meo; fidelitatem tuam et auxilium tuum narraui.

Non occultavi gratiam tuam et fidelitatem tuam coetui magno.

Sacrifice and oblation Thou hast not desired, but Thou has opened ears to me.

Holocaust and oblation for sin Thou hast not demanded. Then I said: "Behold, I come! In the roll of the book it is written of me:

"My delight, O my God, is to do Thy will, and Thy law is deep in my breast."

I have proclaimed Thy justice in the great assembly; behold, I have not restrained my lips; Lord, Thou knowest.

I have not hidden Thy justice in my heart; I have made known Thy faithfulness and Thine aid.

I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness and Thy faithfulness from the great assembly.

*The Psalmist Implores Aid in a New Affliction* (12-18)

12. Tu, Domine, ne prohiberis miserationes tuas a me; gratia tua et fidelitas tua semper me conservent.

13. Nam circumdederunt me mala, quorum non est numerus, comprehenderunt me culpae meae, ut non possim videre. Plures sunt quam capilli capitis mei, et animus meus me defecit.

14. Placeat tibi, Domine, ut

Mayest Thou, O Lord, not withhold Thy mercies from me; may Thy lovingkindness and Thy faithfulness ever preserve me!

For evils unnumbered have surrounded me, my faults have overtaken me so that I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my spirit has failed me.

Be pleased, O Lord, to rescue

7. "Sed aures, etc." Heb.: *Ears Thou hast dug* (or pierced) *for me*; but LXX: *A body Thou hast fashioned for me*. This last reading was followed by the author of Hebrews, and makes the text more clearly prophetic of the sacrifice of the Body of Christ. Sacrifices are not required all the time, but obedience always.

8. "In volumine libri, etc." The reference is to the Law of Moses, or to Deuteronomy or to the Old Testament in general as a prophetic book. The parchment was wound around rollers; hence, a "roll" was a book, and the projection of the rollers made the head (*caput*) of the book (Dr. Bird).

eripias me; Domine, ad adiuvandum me festina.

15. Confundantur et erubescant omnes, qui quaerunt vitam meam, ut auferant eam. Cedant retrorsum et pudore afficiantur, qui delectantur malis meis.

16. Obstupescant confusione operti, qui dicunt mihi: "Euge, euge!"

17. Exsultent et laetentur in te omnes, qui quaerunt te et dicant semper: "Magnificetur Dominus," qui desiderant auxilium tuum.

18. Ego autem miser sum et pauper: sed Dominus sollicitus est mei.

Adiutor meus et liberator meus es tu; Deus meus, ne tardaveris.

me; O Lord, make haste to help me.

Confounded and ashamed be all that seek my life, to take it away! Turned back and disgraced be they that delight in my misfortunes!

Bewildered and covered with confusion be they that say to me: "'Tis well! 'Tis well!"

May all that seek Thee exult and be glad in Thee, and may they that desire Thine aid always say: "The Lord be magnified!"

But as for me, I am wretched and poor; but the Lord is solicitous for me.

Thou are my helper and my redeemer; O my God, tarry not.

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist's blind trust in the goodness of God, expressed in Psalm 38, brought a favorable answer to his prayer for relief. He is now full of cheerful hope and confidence in his bountiful Lord, and he wants to give adequate expression to his gratitude. His first thought would naturally be of the legal sacrifices as an outward sign of his thankfulness, but light from above shows him that God wants more than that. His heavenly Father will be satisfied with nothing less than the Psalmist's heart and whole being, a complete subordination and dedication of himself to the divine will.

The Psalmist understands clearly now what God wants and demands of him, and he also realizes the enormity of the sacrifice required. Being human and frail, he fears for his strength to bear the load placed upon him. To give himself wholly to God without reserve, to subordinate all his desires and wishes to the divine good pleasure, to surrender into the hands of his Maker his inborn tendencies to self-preservation and self-development, to make his entire life and being a holocaust on the altar of God—all this is beyond mere human power or the potentialities of all creatures put together, to do or even to desire. And yet, this must be, whether or not he fully understands the reasons why. These reasons are,



first, that God demands it; and secondly, that only so can he attain to the perfect and complete satisfaction for which his whole nature craves: he must surrender all to gain all, he must lose his life to find it, he must trample under his feet every earthly obstacle in order to reach the heights of Heaven for which he was made and destined.

Therefore the Psalmist calls upon God to hasten to his help, to give him strength against all foes from within or from without that would obstruct or impede the task before him and the surpassing rewards that await him.

### PSALM 40 (Heb. 41)

#### CONFIDENCE AND PRAYERS OF A SICK MAN

##### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is suffering from an almost fatal illness, from which he begs the Lord to deliver him on the ground that in the past, when he was well, he was always merciful to the sick and suffering. In virtue, therefore, of the compassion he has exercised towards others in their need, he feels confident that Jehovah will now restore him to health (vv. 2-4). He describes his plight as pitiable; his enemies are calumniating him and rejoicing in the thought that he will soon be dead; and, worst of all, there is one among them who formerly was his friend (vv. 5-10). Nevertheless, he is confident that the Lord will hear and restore him (vv. 11-13). Verse 14 is a doxology, marking the close of Book I of the Psalter.

With many of the Fathers we may regard this whole Psalm as Messianic. The poor sufferer is the Redeemer in His passion, betrayed by the traitor Judas (v. 10), triumphing in His Resurrection and Ascension (v. 13). Therefore, the Psalmist begins by declaring that man blessed who meditates on this destitute and suffering One.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. For the choir-master. A psalm. Davidis. Of David.

##### *The Merciful Shall Receive Mercy (2-4)*

2. Beatus qui cogitat de egeno et paupere: die malo salvabit eum Dominus. Blessed is he that has concern for the needy and the poor; the Lord will save him in the evil day.

3. Dominus custodiet eum, et vivum servabit eum, et beatum faciet eum in terra, nec tradet eum voluntati inimicorum eius.

4. Dominus opem feret illi in lecto doloris: totam infirmitatem eius auferet in morbo eius.

The Lord will guard him and preserve his life, and make him happy in the land, and deliver him not to the will of his enemies.

The Lord will give him relief on his bed of sorrow; He will take away all his infirmity in his illness.

##### *No Hope Can Be Rested in Men (5-10)*

5. Ego dico: "Domine, misere-re mei; sana me, quia peccavi tibi."

Inimici mei malum de me dicunt: "Quando morietur et peribit nomen eius?"

7. Et qui venit, ut invisat, loquitur inania; cor eius iniqua colligit sibi, foras egressus eloquitur.

8. Simul contra me susurrant omnes qui me oderunt; cogitant contra me quae sunt mihi mala:

9. "Pestis maligna immissa est ei," et "Qui decubuit, non amplius resurget."

10. Etiam amicus meus cui fesus sum, qui panem meum comedit, contra me calcaneum movit.

I say: "O Lord, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against Thee."

Mine enemies speak evil of me: "When will he die, and his name perish?"

And he who comes to visit me speaks vain things; his heart is gathering evil things within him, and having gone forth he talks.

All that hate me whisper together against me; they ponder things that are evil for me:

"A malignant plague has been sent to him," and "He that has lain down, shall rise no more."

Even my friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has turned his heel against me.

##### *From God Alone the Psalmist Seeks Health and Victory over His Enemies (11-13)*

11. Tu autem, Domine, misere-re mei, et erige me, ut retribuam eis.

But do Thou, O Lord, have mercy on me, and lift me up that I may requite them.

4. The meaning seems to be that God will change his bed of sickness into one of health.

7-9. A description of the pretended sympathy of adversaries.

10. In John 13:18 our Lord applies the words of this verse to Judas Iscariot. Some authors apply them in the literal sense to Achitophel, the perfidious counselor of David, who therefore would be a type of Judas, as David was a type of the suffering Christ.



12. Inde cognoscam te favere mihi, quod non exultabit de me inimicus meus.

13. Me autem incolumem sustentabis, et pones me in conspectu tuo in aeternum.

By this I shall know that I enjoy Thy favor, that mine enemy shall not exult over me.

But Thou wilt keep me unharmed, and set me in Thy sight for ever.

*Doxology Closing Book I of Psalms (14)*

14. Benedictus Dominus, Deus Israel, a saeculo in saeculum. Fiat, fiat.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from age to age! So be it, so be it!

REFLECTIONS

Being inspired by the Holy Ghost, the Psalmist often did not understand the full meaning of the words he used. He was, after all, only the secondary author of his message; the Holy Spirit was the primary author. The Psalmist was therefore frequently a type of one to come, a prophet of future events, and he did not know it. Often for his sufferings, persecutions and calamities he had no other reason to assign than his own sins, though in reality they were but a part of a large providence and served unseen, spiritual ends and purposes. In his darkest and most dismal days he was unshaken in his faith and hope of light and relief to come, though he was often wrong in seeming to think of them as physical and temporal.

The revelation which the Psalmist himself perceived did not go beyond his time and capacity to receive it, even when, as we can see now, it pointed to a far distant future and to things altogether spiritual. He prayed for physical, material, temporal favors, and promised them to others, but in many instances these must have been realized only spiritually. Thus his strong faith and confidence were often anchored, perhaps unconsciously, in spiritual rather than in material realities, and his triumph over temporal sufferings and foes, like that of the Sufferer whom he typified, was spiritual and supernatural. We must not miss the spiritual lesson which the Psalmist's experience teaches.

## THE SECOND BOOK OF THE PSALTER

(Pss. 47-71)

### PSALMS 41 and 42 (Heb. 42 and 43)

#### LONGING FOR GOD AND HIS HOLY TEMPLE

##### INTRODUCTION

In the opinion of most modern commentators these two Psalms were originally but one poem, which was later divided for liturgical purposes. The same spirit, language and situation are to be found in both; each ends with the same refrain; and the first is incomplete without the second. Hence we shall treat the two as one Psalm.

The author was apparently a priest or Levite whose happy lot it had been to lead pilgrimages up to Jerusalem for the joyous feasts of the Temple; but who, when he wrote this poem, was alone among taunting, heathen strangers, far from the Sanctuary, perhaps in the district of Mount Hermon east of the source of the Jordan (v. 7), and unable to escape. Yearning to return to the Temple worship, he is grievously tormented and his faith is sorely tried, as, on the one hand, he listens in his distress to the heartless heathen taunt, "Where is your God?" and recalls, on the other hand, the joy of days that are gone. But his faith does not fail him, and he is confident that soon he will again go up to Jerusalem and renew his part in the glorious feast of his God.

The similarity in thought, language and structure between this poem and Psalm 83 is so striking that both can be safely ascribed to the same author, but under different circumstances; the tone of the latter is as happy as that of the former is sad.

1. Magistro chori. Maskil. Filiorum Core.

For the choir-master. A maskil. Of the sons of Core.

*In Exile through the Machinations of the Wicked, the Psalmist Longs to Revisit the Temple (41:2-6)*

2. Quemadmodum desiderat cervam rivos aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea te, Deus.

As the deer longs for streams of water, so does my soul long for Thee, O God.



3. Sitit anima mea Deum, Deum vivum: quando veniam et videbo faciem Dei?

4. Factae sunt mihi lacrimae meae panis die ac nocte, dum dicunt mihi cotidie: "Ubi est Deus tuus?"

5. Illud recordor et effundo animum meum intra me: quomodo incessem in turba, praecesserim eos ad domum Dei, inter voces exultationis et laudis, in coetu festivo.

6. Quare deprimeris, anima mea, et tumultuaris in me?

Spera in Deum: quia rursus celebrabo eum, salutem vultus mei et Deum meum.

*Oppressed with Grief, and Ridiculed by His Enemies for His Faith in God, the Psalmist Prays Day and Night (41:7-12)*

7. In me ipso anima mea deprimitur; ideo recordor tui ex terra Iordanis et Hermon, ex monte Misar.

8. Gurges gurgitem vocant cum fragore cataractarum tuarum: omnes fluctus et undae tuae super me transierunt.

9. Per diem largiatur Dominus gratiam suam, et nocte canam ei, laudabo Deum vitae meae.

10. Dico Deo: "Petra mea, cur

My soul is athirst for God, the living God: when shall I come and see the face of God?

My tears are become bread for me day and night, while they say to me daily: "Where is thy God?"

That *taunt* I remember, and I pour forth my soul within me, *remembering*: how I used to go with the throng, and preceded them to the house of God, amid the sounds of exultation and praise in the festive assembly.

Why art thou downcast, O my soul, and troubled within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the salvation of my countenance and my God.

My soul is downcast within me; therefore I remember Thee from the land of the Jordan and Hermon, from the mountain Misar.

Deep calls to deep with the roar of Thy cataracts; all Thy waves and billows have swept over me.

May the Lord impart His favor throughout the day, and in the night I shall sing to Him, I will praise the God of my life.

I say to God: "My Rock, why

7. "In me ipso," *within me*, that is, the Psalmist is downcast.—"Terra Iordanis," in the neighborhood of Dan or Caesarea Philippi.—"Misar," which was some smaller mountain, probably near Caesarea Philippi, close to the source of the Jordan, and from which the Psalmist could almost see the distant hills of Sion and hear the roar of the Jordan cataracts rushing down from snowy Hermon. The desolation of the country and the roar of waters are symbols of the Psalmist's state of soul.

oblivisceris mei? quare tristis incedo, ab inimico oppressus?"

11. Ossa mea fraguntur, dum insultant mihi adversarii mei, dum dicunt mihi cotidie: "Ubi est Deus tuus?"

12. Quare deprimeris, anima mea, et tumultuaris in me?

Spera in Deum: quia rursus celebrabo eum, salutem vultus mei et Deum meum.

*The Psalmist Implores God to Defend Him and Bring Him Back to the Temple (42:1-5)*

1. Ius redde mihi, Deus, et age causam meam adversus gentem non sanctam; ab homine doloso et iniquo libera me,

2. Quia tu es, Deus, fortitudo mea: quare me reppulisti? quare tristis incedo, ab inimico oppressus?

3. Emitte lucem tuam et fidelitatem tuam: ipsae me ducant, adducant me in montem sanctum tuum et in tabernacula tua.

4. Et introibo ad altare Dei, ad Deum laetitiae et exultationis meae, et laudabo te cum cithara. Deus, Deus meus!

5. Quare deprimeris, anima mea, et tumultuaris in me?

Spera in Deum; quia rursus celebrabo eum, salutem vultus mei et Deum meum.

dost Thou forget me? Why do I go sorrowful, oppressed by the enemy?"

My bones are being broken, while mine adversaries scoff at me, while they say to me daily: "Where is thy God?"

Why art thou downcast, O my soul, and troubled within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the salvation of my countenance and my God.

Render me justice, O God, and urge my cause against a nation that is not holy; from the deceitful and godless man deliver me.

For Thou, O God, art my strength; why hast Thou cast me off? Why do I go sorrowful, oppressed by the enemy?

Send forth Thy light and Thy faithfulness; may they bring me and lead me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles.

And I will go in to the altar of God, to the God of my joy and exultation. And I will praise Thee with the harp, O God, my God!

Why art thou downcast, O my soul, and troubled within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the salvation of my countenance and my God.

#### REFLECTIONS

Mankind was made for God, and can never be perfectly satisfied and happy until it possesses and enjoys God clearly, distinctly and com-



pletely, as far as each person's limited human nature can do so. And what is more, human beings are always seeking God, though often not clearly or wisely, often out of order, and in ways that are perverse and bad.

Men and women may not know that they were made for God, nor that they are always striving to lay hold on Him and possess Him; but they do know they have within themselves a ceaseless craving for satisfaction and completion which they do not find and cannot find, which no one has ever found, here on earth in any or in all creatures; that they have a capacity for love and knowledge which in vain they are ever trying to fill. They know also that—if their nature is not a delusion and a snare, a grievous lie at the core—there must be something somewhere which can satisfy them and their cravings, and give them rest. It is this great something, the endless desire and quest of every rational being, which we call God.

Thus, although human kind may know little about what God is in Himself, and though few may reflect that He is the first cause and primal source of all the good and lovely things they desire and seek, yet all are well aware of their own ever-present biting hunger and parching thirst for something which they can never find here below. It is only God who possesses and can provide all that our nature craves.

Therefore, knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly, correctly or incorrectly, we are all—every one of woman born—yearning and pining for God; and perfect happiness we can never know unless and until we possess and enjoy to the full of our capacity that infinite divine Being for whom we were made.

This is why we are now often sad and cast down. Like the Psalmist, far away from the earthly Sanctuary of his Lord and from the special symbol of the divine presence here on earth, who could be consoled only by the thought and hope of a coming return and reunion with the object of his soul's desire, so we find our earthly pilgrimage and exile bearable only in view of a hope of a fullness of joy yet to be realized in the presence of our Lord and our God.

#### PSALM 43 (Heb. 44)

#### FORMERLY PROTECTED BY GOD, BUT NOW REPUDIATED, THE PEOPLE PRAY FOR HELP

##### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is here pleading for Israel in bondage, following some national disaster, at what precise period we do not know, but most likely during the Monarchy or in the Machabean age. As a preparation for his

plea the poet recalls Israel's past history and describes her present misery. God, who of old did so much for His people, can and will deliver them now. It was God who first planted Israel in Canaan, driving away the heathen enemies. He is still the faithful King of His people, and they can therefore take courage in their present distress. Their situation is terrible, for their enemies hold them in bondage, deriding and mocking them all the time. And why all this suffering? Has it been occasioned by some unfaithfulness on their part? No, on the contrary, they are being persecuted for God's sake. Wherefore, the Psalmist sounds Israel's battle cry, bidding the Lord to arise and deliver His humiliated and dejected people.

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Magistro chori. Filiorum | For the choir-master. Of the |
| Core. Maskil.               | sons of Core. A maskil.      |

#### *Israel Recalls the Happy Time When God Was Her Leader and Preserved Her from Enemies (2-9)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. Deus, auribus nostris audivimus, patres nostri narraverunt nobis opus quod operatus es diebus eorum, diebus antiquis. | O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, the work Thou didst do in their days, in the days of old. |
|--|---|

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 3. Tu, manu tua, gentibus expulsi, plantasti eos attritis nationibus, dilatasti eos. | Thou didst establish them, having driven out the heathen with Thy hand; Thou didst spread them, having crushed the nations. |
|--|---|

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4. Neque enim gladio suo occupaverunt terram, nec brachium eorum salvavit eos, sed dextera tua et brachium tuum et serenitas vultus tui, quoniam dilexisti eos. | For not by their own sword did they win possession of the land, nor did their own arm save them, but Thy right hand and Thine arm, and the favor of Thy countenance, because Thou didst love them. |
|---|--|

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 5. Tu es rex meus, Deus meus, qui tribuisti victorias Iacob. | Thou art my King, my God, who gavest victories to Jacob. |
|--|--|

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 6. Per te adversarios nostros reppulimus, et in nomine tuo calcavimus insurgentes in nos. | Through Thee we have repulsed our foes, and in Thy name we have trampled on those that rose against us. |
|---|---|

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 7. Neque enim in arcu meo | For neither have I trusted in my |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|

5. "Rex meus, Deus meus." The Psalmist is speaking in the name of his people.



confisus sum, nec gladius meus salvavit me.

8. Sed tu salvasti nos ab adversariis nostris, et eos, qui oderunt nos, confudisti.

9. In Deo gloriabamur omni tempore, et nomen tuum perpetuo celebrabamus.

*Israel Is Now Repulsed by God, Conquered by the Enemy, Sold into Slavery, and a Mockery to All (10-17)*

10. Nunc vero reppulisti et confudisti nos, et non egrederis, Deus, cum exercitibus nostris.

11. Cedere nos fecisti adversariis nostris, et qui oderunt nos, praedati sunt sibi.

12. Tradidisti nos velut oves mactandas, et inter gentes dispersisti nos.

13. Vendidisti populum tuum pretio nullo, nec multum lucratus es venditis illis.

14. Fecisti nos opprobrium vicinis nostris, irrisiōem et ludibrium his, qui nos circumdant.

15. Fecisti nos fabulam inter gentes, populi caput movent de nobis.

16. Perpetuo coram me est ignominia mea et confusio operit faciem meam,

17. Propter vocem exprobrantis et conviciantis, propter inimicum et hostem.

*Misfortunes Have Overtaken the People, Not because of Their Infidelity, but because They Have Been Faithful to God (18-23)*

18. Haec omnia venerunt super nos, etsi tui non sumus

bow, nor has my sword saved me.

But Thou hast saved us from our foes, and hast confounded those that hated us.

In God we gloried all the time, and we praised Thy name unceasingly.

But now Thou hast repulsed and confounded us, and Thou dost not go forth, O God, with our armies.

Thou hast made us yield to our foes, and our haters have plundered us for themselves.

Thou hast delivered us as sheep to be slaughtered, and hast dispersed us among the heathen.

Thou hast sold Thy people without setting a price, and hast not gained much by their sale.

Thou hast made us a disgrace to our neighbors, a scorn and laughing-stock to those around us.

Thou hast made us a byword among the Gentiles; the peoples wag their heads about us.

My disgrace is ever before me, and shame covers my face,

At the voice of the taunter and reviler, because of the enemy and the foe.

All these things have come upon us, although we have not

obliti, nec violavimus foedus tuum,

19. Nec retro cessit cor nostrum nec gressus noster deflexit a semita tua,

20. Quando contrivisti nos in loco afflictionis, et caligine nos operuisti.

21. Si obliti essemus nomen Dei nostri, et expandissemus manus nostras ad deum alienum:

22. Nonne Deus explorata haberet ista? ipse enim novit abscondita cordis.

23. Sed propter te trucidamur omni tempore, aestimamur velut oves mactandae.

*The Psalmist Urgently Implores the Help of God (24-27)*

24. Exspargiscere: quare dormis, Domine? evigila! noli repellere in perpetuum!

25. Quare faciem tuam abscondis? oblivisceris miseriae nostrae et oppressionis nostrae?

26. Nam prostrata est in pulverem anima nostra, in terra iacet venter noster.

27. Exsurge in auxilium nobis, et libera nos propter misericordiam tuam.

forgotten Thee, nor been false to Thy covenant;

Our heart has not gone backward, nor our step deviated from Thy path,

When Thou didst crush us in the place of affliction, and cover us with gloom.

If we had forgotten the name of our God, and stretched out our hands to a strange god,

Would not God have found these things out, for He knows the secrets of the heart?

But it is for Thy sake that we are killed all the time, that we are reckoned as sheep to be slaughtered.

Arouse Thyself: Why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Awake! reject us not for ever.

Why dost Thou hide Thy face? Dost Thou forget our misery and our oppression?

For our soul is prostrated to the dust, our body lies flat on the ground.

Arise and help us, and deliver us for the sake of Thy mercy.

#### REFLECTIONS

Generally speaking, it is doubtless true that many, if not most, of our actual troubles and misfortunes in this world are due to ourselves. We have all received from God many blessings, natural and supernatural. What these are or have been we individually know best, if we will but take the trouble to reflect and consider them. Of course no one can have



everything, and all of us are different; but normally and regularly each one has had a share of the gifts that have flowed from the divine bounty. This is true above all in countries so richly blessed as the Americas.

But failure and grief have come to many here, as elsewhere in the world, because of the abuse or the neglect of gifts possessed or ready at hand. Physical and mental endowments; opportunities for work, education and improvement; the benefits of society and environment; lights and inspirations of grace—when these and similar blessings, commonly enjoyed by all of us in some degree, have been neglected or misused how can we, in the main, blame our plight on anyone but ourselves?

It is true that along with the gifts received, of whatever kind, there have also been, as a rule, some and perhaps many handicaps, natural and acquired, which tend to impede and defeat our betterment and progress. And besides personal disadvantages and impediments there are the many obstacles created by the misdeeds and mistakes of others which interfere and harass us throughout life.

But we are insisting now on the need to use all our advantages. This is the positive side of the question, which is always more important than the negative side. When we actually misuse or fail to use what we have, it is unreasonable and absurd to be stressing our difficulties and hindrances, whatever their source.

Not infrequently it happens to the virtuous, as with the Psalmist here, that they have to suffer for their very goodness. Often no other reason can be given for what they are made to endure. Nor is the explanation of the fact hard to find. Their life and deeds are a silent reproach to the wicked, they are unable to subscribe to the principles and practices of worldlings, they consequently seem queer and out of harmony with the majority of their fellows, and so they become objects of dislike and persecution.

But when this occurs the just have indeed reason to rejoice. Again they have assurance that they are in the company of the Lord and His saints. They are being purified for Heaven in the furnace of trial. They may, and they should, call upon God for deliverance, as the Psalmist did, and for His sustaining grace, lest at any time their own weakness betray them; but this done, interior peace and joy should flood their souls in view of the spiritual and eternal prospect before them.

## PSALM 44 (Heb. 45)

## NUPTIAL SONG OF THE MESSIAH KING

## INTRODUCTION

This nuptial song was composed to celebrate a royal wedding, perhaps that between Solomon and the daughter of the King of Egypt (3 Kings 3:1). But so extraordinary are the thoughts unfolded and the language employed regarding the monarch in question, that they could only be fully realized in the divine King in relation to His Church. Hence it is that the Messianic character of this Psalm has been universally recognized. Indeed, many authors understand this poem to refer to Christ even in its literal sense, and so regard it as an allegory, like the Cantic of Canticles. In the Messianic sense, therefore, whether literal or typical, we must understand the bridegroom as representing the Messiah, and the bride as the Church of the Old Testament which was brought to its perfection by its union with Christ.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Magistro chori. Secundum<br>"Lilia. . . ." Filiorum Core. Mas-<br>kil. Canticum amoris. | For the choir-master. Accord-<br>ing to the tune, "The Lilies. . . ." Of<br>the sons of Core. A maskil. A<br>canticle of love. |
|--|--|

*Dedication of the Solemn Ode to the King (2)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. Effundit cor meum verbum<br>bonum: dico ego carmen meum<br>regi; lingua mea stilus est scribae<br>velocis. | My heart utters a good theme:<br>I recite my poem to the king; my<br>tongue is like the pen of a rapid<br>scribe. |
|---|---|

*The Psalmist Addresses the King, Praising His Beauty, Strength, Justice and Magnificence (3-10)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 3. Speciosus es forma prae filiis<br>hominum, diffusa est gratia super<br>labia tua: propterea benedixit tibi<br>Deus in aeternum. | Thou art fair beyond the sons<br>of men, graciousness is poured<br>forth upon thy lips: therefore has<br>God blessed thee for ever. |
| 4. Cinge gladium tuum super<br>femur, potentissime, decorem tu-<br>um et ornatum tuum!   | Gird thy sword on the thigh,<br>O most powerful one, thy beauty<br>and thine ornament.  |

4-6. These verses describe the king as he goes forth as a warrior to battle.



5. Feliciter evehere pro fide et pro iustitia, et praeclara gesta doceat te dextera tua.

6. Sagittae tuae acutae, populi tibi subduntur, deficient corde inimici regis.

7. Thronus tuus, Deus, in saeculum saeculi; sceptrum aequitatis sceptrum regni tui.

8. Diligis iustitiam et odisti iniquitatem: propterea unxit te Deus, Deus tuus, oleo laetitiae prae consortibus tuis.

9. Myrrha et aloe et cassia fragrant vestimenta tua; ex aedibus eburneis fidium sonus laetificat te.

10. Filiae regum obviam veniunt tibi, regina adstat ad dexteram tuam ornata auro ex Ophir.

*The Psalmist Addresses the Queen, and Describes the Splendor of Her Entrance, Accompanied by Maidens (11-16)*

11. Audi, filia, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam, et obliviscere populum tuum et domum patris tui.

12. Et concupiscet rex pulchri-

Ride forth auspiciously for faith and for justice, and may thy right hand teach thee illustrious deeds!

Thine arrows are sharp, peoples are brought under thy subjection, the enemies of the King lose heart.

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.

Thou lovest justice and hatest iniquity; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Myrrh and aloes and cassia perfume thy garments; out of ivory palaces the sound of strings delights thee.

The daughters of kings come forth to meet thee; the queen stands on thy right hand adorned with gold from Ophir.

Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear, and forget thine own folk and thy father's house.

And the king shall greatly de-

7, 8. These verses are quoted by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:8) as words of God the Father to the Son, and as a proof of Christ's divinity.—"Thronus tuus, Deus." Unlike the heathen, the Israelites never addressed their kings as *God*.

9, 10. Here the king is described as he appears for the marriage. At his right hand stands his spouse in her wedding array.—"Myrrha et aloe et cassia." *Myrrh* was a product of Arabia; *stacte* or *aloes* was the perfumed wood of an Indian tree; *cassia* means either a species of cinnamon, or the Indian costus, the fragrant root of a Kashmir plant often used for incense.—"Ex aedibus eburneis." The Vulgate would seem to make the perfumes proceed from the ivory palaces, as well as from the garments of the king; whereas the Hebrew makes the music come from the ivory palaces.—"Filiae regum," i.e., attendants of the bride.—"Auro ex Ophir," *gold of Ophir* (i.e., the most precious gold). Ophir was probably in India or Arabia.

tudinem tuam: ipse est dominus tuus; obsequere ei.

13. Et populus Tyri cum muneribus venit; favorem tuum capitant procures plebis.

14. Tota decora ingreditur filia regis; texturae aureae sunt amictus eius.

15. Amictu variegato induta adducitur ad regem; virgines posteam, sociae eius, adducuntur ad te.

16. Afferuntur cum laetitia et exultatione, ingrediuntur in palatium regis.

*The Psalmist Predicts the Numerous Progeny and Perpetual Glory of Their Sons (17, 18)*

17. Loco patrum tuorum erunt filii tui; constitues eos principes super totam terram.

18. Memorabo nomen tuum in omnem generationem et generationem; propterea populi celebrabunt te in saeculum saeculi.

sire thy beauty; he is thy lord, render obedience to him.

And the people of Tyre come with gifts; and the princes of the people seek thy favor.

All glorious, the king's daughter enters; her garments are of cloth of gold.

Clad in a robe of many colors, she is led to the king; after her the virgins, her companions, are led to thee.

They are brought in with gladness and rejoicing, they enter the palace of the King.

Thy sons shall take the place of thy fathers; thou shalt make them rulers over the whole earth.

I will recall thy name for all generations; therefore, shall the peoples praise thee for ever and ever.

#### REFLECTIONS

The close union between bridegroom and bride and the deep love which draws and binds them together are fitting illustrations of the union and love between God and the devout human soul. Marriage is the most intimate of human relationships. Persons thus joined are no longer two, but two in one flesh. And the ardent love which exists between them is grounded upon mutual similarities, real or apparent; they love each other because each sees self in the other.

A similar relationship exists between the soul and God. The soul is made by God and is like unto Him. It is a ray from the central sun, a finite light from the infinite luminary, a created image of the uncreated,

13. "Populus Tyri" here represent outside peoples.

17. The Psalmist addresses the king, not the queen.



eternal Being. God therefore loves the soul as a reflection of Himself, and from Him it derives all its beauty and attractiveness.

And resembling God in its spiritual nature and powers, the soul is made to outlast all lesser creatures, all material things, and to live on forever for God and with God. Hence the union set up between the soul and its Maker, being founded upon likeness and love, is intended to be an everlasting one, as human spouses are united for all their earthly life.

The love which draws spouses together is spontaneous, instinctive, delightful; it arises without effort or forethought; it is a free gift of God springing naturally from their common natures and qualities. In like manner the love which first consciously draws the soul to God is a gratuitous and joyous gift bestowed from above.

But in both cases the love which perpetuates the joyous and happy union must be worked for; it is the fruit and the reward of constant vigilance and labor, on the part of both spouses in the first case, and on the part of the soul in the second case, while God may withhold the sweetness of His graces in order that His beloved may learn to serve Him rather than its own satisfaction and delights. God freely and liberally bestows the first grace on us all, but we must cooperate and strive thereafter as long as we live here below, if love and friendship are to continue. This is hard, but great prizes are always hard to win and to hold.

In Heaven it will be different. There the saved shall know and love without effort, without fear, without diminution, and forever. There knowledge and love will be abundant, overflowing, completely satisfying, according to the capacity which each person has developed while here on earth. Now is the seeding, the planting time for the harvest which each of us is to reap in eternity.

## PSALM 45 (Heb. 46)

### GOD OUR REFUGE AND OUR STRENGTH

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm celebrates some signal deliverance of Jerusalem and God's people from an attack of foreign enemies. The crisis through which they have recently passed was so terrible and their anxiety so dreadful that their escape could be ascribed only to the mighty power of God, which is not only a manifestation of Jehovah's abiding love for His people, but is also an earnest of His ultimate supremacy over all nations.

The menace that threatened Israel was most probably the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, which invaded Judea during the reign of Ezechias (701 B.C.), and was about to lay siege to Jerusalem, when it was suddenly and mysteriously destroyed.

1. Magistro chori. Filiorum Core. Secundum "Virgines. . ." Canticum.	For the choir-master. Of the sons of Core. According to the tune, "The Virgins. . . ." A canticle.
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#### *While God Is with Us, We Need Not Fear (2-4)*

2. Deus est nobis refugium et robur; adiutorem in angustiis pro- bavit se valde.	God is our refuge and strength; really has He shown Himself a helper in distress.
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3. Propterea non timemus, dum subvertitur terra, et montes cadunt in medium mare.	Therefore we fear not when the earth is being overturned, and the mountains fall into the midst of the sea.
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4. Tumultuentur, aestuent aquae eius, concutiantur montes impetu eius; Dominus exercituum nobis- cum; praesidium nobis est Deus Iacob.	Let its waters roar and rage, let the mountains be shattered by its violence; the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.
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#### *While God Is in the Midst of the Holy City, It Is Impregnable (5-8)*

5. Fluminis rivuli laetificant ci- vitatem Dei, sanctissimum taber- naculum Altissimi.	The streams of the river glad- den the city of God, the most holy tabernacle of the Most High.
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6. Deus est in medio eius, non commovebitur; auxiliabitur ei Deus primo diluculo.	God is in the midst of her, she shall not be disturbed, God will help her at the first dawn of day.
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7. Fremuerunt gentes, commota sunt regna; intonuit voce sua, dif- fluxit terra:	The heathen raged, the king- doms were shaken; He thundered with His voice, and the earth was dissolved.
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8. Dominus exercituum nobis- cum; praesidium nobis est Deus Iacob.	The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our strong- hold.
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5. "Fluminis rivuli." This stream is set over against the wild waters of vv. 4, 5, and is therefore peaceful. Perhaps the waters of Siloe are meant.—"Civitatem Dei," i.e., Jerusalem.

6. "Primo diluculo," that is, at earliest dawn.



*God the Most High Puts an End to Wars (9-12)*

9. Venite, videte opera Domini,  
quae egit stupenda in terra.

10. Qui compescit bella usque  
ad finem terrae, arcus conterit et  
confringit hastas, et scuta combu-  
rit igni.

11. Desistite et agnoscite me  
Deum, excelsum in gentibus, ex-  
celsum in terra.

12. Dominus exercituum no-  
biscum; praesidium nobis est Deus  
Iacob.

Come and see the works of the  
Lord, the wondrous things He  
has done on earth.

He ends wars throughout the  
world, breaks the bows, shatters  
the spears, and consumes the  
shields with fire.

Cease and recognize that I am  
God, exalted among the nations,  
exalted on earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our strong-  
hold.

## REFLECTIONS

God was Israel's refuge and strength on numerous occasions through-  
out her long history, as when He delivered her people from Egypt, led  
them in their desert wanderings, drove out the heathen and established  
them in the Promised Land, gave victory to their arms and vanquished  
their foes, domestic and foreign, time after time.

But on account of their sins and unfaithfulness God often also per-  
mitted the Chosen People to become the prey of the tyrant and the op-  
pressor; to shed their blood and tears in profusion; to be plundered,  
devastated and overrun; to be objects of mockery and derision far and  
near; and finally, when in their blindness and perversity they rejected  
the Messiah, God permitted them to be utterly destroyed as a nation and  
to be scattered to the ends of the earth. They presumed too much and too  
long on divine goodness and mercy to help and to save them without  
their cooperation and in spite of their bad lives and evil deeds.

In the repeated heavy chastisements which fell on the Jews for their  
sins God's true and faithful servants—like the Prophets, the Blessed  
Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and many others—also had a doleful share, as so  
often happens to the holy and innocent everywhere in this world. As  
members of the one human family, as a part of the web of human society,  
the good not infrequently have to suffer for the sins of the bad. And  
what is more, God permits many to endure the calamities and hardships  
of life who apparently, in as far as can be known, are thus suffering  
neither for their own nor on account of others' wrongs.

10. A reference to the peace of the Messianic age.

Nevertheless, for all of these God was and is, and must ever continue  
to be for His elect, their refuge and their strength, not by suspending or  
changing the laws of cause and effect, nor the laws which regulate and  
integrate human society and nations; nor by performing miracles for the  
physical and temporal rescue and deliverance of each faithful person;  
nor by giving special temporal rewards for the virtues which the just  
practice, but by offering them special grace to bear their present hard-  
ships and crosses in faith and patience against the day of their appointed  
liberation from an evil world, thus preparing and ever increasing their  
heavenly rewards and building for them eternal mansions in the realm  
of the blessed.

## PSALM 46 (Heb. 47)

## GOD, THE VICTORIOUS KING, ASCENDS HIS THRONE

## INTRODUCTION

With prophetic vision the Psalmist is here looking forward, perhaps  
through some great national victory like that over Sennacherib (701  
B.C.), to Messianic times when the God of Israel shall be known and  
recognized by all nations, Jews and Gentiles, as the supreme Ruler of the  
world.

1. Magistro chori. Filiorum      For the choir-master. Of the  
Core. Psalmus.      sons of Core. A psalm.

*God, the Supreme King, Subjects All Nations to His People (2-5)*

2. Omnes populi, plaudite ma-      Clap your hands, all you peo-  
nibus, exsultate Deo voce laeti-      ples, shout to God with the voice  
tiae,      of gladness.

3. Quoniam Dominus excelsus,      For the Lord is exalted, terrible,  
terribilis, rex magnus super om-      a great king over every land.

4. Subicit populos nobis, et na-      He subdues the peoples under  
tiones pedibus nostris.      us, and the nations under our feet.

5. Eligit nobis hereditatem nos-      He chooses for us our inheri-  
tram, gloriam Iacob, quem diligit.      tance, the glory of Jacob whom  
He loves.

5. "Eligit nobis, etc." God of old chose and gave to the people of Israel the  
land of Canaan.—"Gloriam Iacob." The Promised Land was the glory of Jacob, i.e.,  
of the Israelites.



*Having Won the Victory, God Ascends His Throne in Heaven (6, 7)*

6. Ascendit Deus cum exultatione, Dominus cum voce tubae. God ascends with exultation, the Lord with the sound of the trumpet.

7. Psallite Deo, psallite; psallite regi nostro, psallite. Make music to God, make music; make music to our King, make music.

*God Now Reigns over All Nations, Princes and Peoples of the Earth (8-10)*

8. Quoniam rex omnis terrae est Deus, psallite hymnum. For God is the king of every land, sing a hymn.

9. Deus regnat super nationes, Deus sedet super solium sanctum suum. God reigns over the nations, God is seated upon His holy throne.

10. Principes populorum congregati sunt cum populo Dei Abraham. Nam Dei sunt proceres terrae: excelsus est valde. The princes of the peoples have united with the people of the God of Abraham. For the powerful of the earth are God's: He is greatly exalted.

#### REFLECTIONS

Psalm 45 closed with a summons to all nations to praise Jehovah as their King. This present Psalm takes up and expands that jubilant call, admonishing all the world that Israel's King is the universal Ruler, and inviting all men everywhere to join the chorus of His praise.

The Chosen People had been repeatedly humbled and punished for their unfaithfulness and sins; and just lately, it seems, some divine act had marvelously snatched them from the very grasp of a murderous enemy. Israel was in dire distress. God came down from heaven, as it were, to deliver her; and now, that the victory is won, He returns in triumph to His throne on high. So signal was the escape, so sudden and

6. "Ascendit, etc." The immediate reference is to some recent great victory for Israel, before which it seemed as if God had deserted His throne as Israel's King. In the Messianic sense the reference is to Christ's victory in redeeming mankind and then ascending to His Father.

8. "Psallite hymnum," that is, sing with understanding, with attention. The Hebrew *maskil* may mean a trained or skilful singer, or a special kind of song or hymn.

9. "Regnat," that is, all nations now recognize Jehovah's Kingship. The reference is Messianic.

10. The poet is looking forward to the time when all other nations will unite with the people of Israel and acknowledge Jehovah as the one, true God of all peoples and all the world. Then, indeed, God shall be exceedingly exalted.

unexpected the deliverance, that here in a burst of pure rapture the Psalmist calls upon all nations to unite with his people in shouting Jehovah's praises to the skies and accepting His world-wide dominion.

It is a somber feature of our earthly existence that individuals and nations alike seem to need the discipline of misfortunes as a means to their greater good. When all is well with them, they not only forget the giver and ignore the source of all they have and enjoy, but they drift into carelessness and decay, physical and moral, lose their hold on themselves and their possessions, and become easy prey for the ravager and the destroyer. Many times, if not as a rule, God does not intervene to save them, but lets them pay, in forfeiture and loss, the crushing price of their misdeeds. The ungrateful and the neglectful who do not appreciate and try to preserve the gifts and treasures they have received, of whatever kind—material, physical, mental, moral, spiritual—stand to lose them, and deserve to lose them.

Sometimes, however, in His goodness and mercy, God does step in to preserve our treasures, when we deserve to lose them, and to save ourselves when we deserve to be lost. And at such times it frequently happens, perhaps for the first time in our thoughtless lives, that we fully realize how richly we have been blessed all along and how careless and ungrateful we have been, how blindly and selfishly we have taken everything for granted, how coldly regardless we have been of others less favored, how often dissatisfied that we did not have more! Then, ashamed of ourselves, our heart is touched, and with mingled sentiments of sorrow and gratitude our souls overflow with praise to the Giver of all good things.

#### PSALM 47 (Heb. 48)

#### GOD'S GLORY MANIFESTED IN THE LIBERATION OF THE CITY

#### INTRODUCTION

The similarity in tone and in expressions between this Psalm and Psalm 45 makes it fairly certain that both were written by the same author. It is also generally agreed that both poems were occasioned by the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's invading hosts (701 B.C.). The Psalmist is here proclaiming the glory of the city of Sion and her safety under the protecting presence of Jehovah.



1. Canticum. Psalmus. Filiorum Core.

A canticle. A psalm. Of the sons of Core.

*God Is Praised for His Powerful Protection of His City (2-4)*

2. Magnus Dominus et laudabilis valde, in civitate Dei nostri.

Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised, in the city of our God.

Mons sanctus eius, (3) collis praeclarus, gaudium est universae terrae; Mons Sion, aquilo extremus, civitas est Regis magni.

His holy mountain, illustrious hill, is the joy of the whole earth; Mount Sion, on the extreme north, is the city of the great King.

4. Deus in arcibus eius sese probavit munimen tutum.

In her citadels God has shown Himself a safe bulwark.

*Description of the Assault and Rout of the Confederate Enemies (5-8)*

5. Ecce enim reges congregati sunt, irruerunt simul.

For behold, the kings combined, they attacked together.

6. Vixdum viderant, obstupuerunt, conturbati sunt, diffugerunt.

Scarcely had they seen *her*, when they were dismayed; they were troubled, they fled.

7. Tremor invasit eos ibidem, dolor velut parturientis,

Trembling seized them there, pain as of a woman in labor,

8. Ut cum ventus Orientis confringit naves Tharsis.

As when an east wind shatters the ships of Tarshish.

*Visitors to the Temple Are Asked to Praise God for the Victory, and to Transmit to Posterity the Story of the Miracle Wrought by God (9-15)*

9. Sicut audivimus, sic vidimus, in civitate Domini exercituum, in civitate Dei nostri: Deus confirmat eam in aeternum.

As we have heard, so we have seen, within the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God; God makes her firm for ever.

3. "Mons Sion," on which were built the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.—"Aquilo extremus," may refer to the northern side of Sion, where stood the Temple. Some authorities think that the reference is to the mythological notion that the dwelling-place of the gods was in the northern skies; if so, the Psalmist means that Sion is the true mount of the north, where dwells the true God.

4. "Arcibus," *Citadels, palaces, or towers*, that is, God is recognized as their builder and defender. God has in a singular manner protected His own city, Jerusalem.

8. "Cum ventus, etc.," *when an east wind* causes a sudden and violent storm.—"Naves Tharsis" were the large merchantmen of ancient times which carried goods between Palestine and Tartessus in southwestern Spain. These vessels were emblems of strength and safety, and also of the pride of powerful nations.

10. Recolimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam intra templum tuum.

We recall, O God, Thy mercy within Thy temple.

11. Sicut nomen tuum, Deus, sic et laus tua pertingit ad fines terrae.

As Thy name, O God, so also Thy praise reaches to the ends of the earth.

12. Iustitia plena est dextra tua: laetetur mons Sion, exsultant civitates Juda propter iudicia tua.

Thy right hand is full of justice: let Mount Sion be glad, let the cities of Juda exult because of Thy judgments.

13. Perlustrate Sion, et circuite eam, numerate turres eius.

Pass through Sion, and walk around her, number her towers,

14. Considerate propugnacula eius, percurrite arces eius,

Mark well her fortifications, go through her citadels,

15. Ut enarretis generationi futurae: "Tantus est Deus, Deus noster in aeternum et semper: ipse nos ducet."

That you may narrate to a future generation: "So great is God, our God unto eternity and always; He will lead us."

REFLECTIONS

Jerusalem was one of the principal cities of antiquity, and its Temple was one of the great wonders of the ancient world. It was a metropolis dear to the heart of every Israelite, not so much because it was the capital of the Jewish state and a center of great splendor and influence, as because it was God's special dwelling-place on earth and the scene of special divine manifestations. Jerusalem was to the Jew the joy of all the earth, because God dwelt there.

It is personality that crowns the world, and gives meaning and warmth and utterance to all its parts. The presence of one very dear can make tolerable and even delightful a barren waste; whereas the most gorgeous palace and the richest surroundings become cold and desolate when a cherished spirit has departed. Human beings are persons, and so can find their perfection and satisfaction only in something like themselves. Of course, in the last analysis this something must be divine; nothing short of that can finally and perfectly satisfy the vast capacity of the human soul. All else, however richly and variously endowed, is but a transient glimpse of the Unseen that delights partially and for the moment, a sweet and beautiful flower from the heavenly garden that blooms and diffuses its fragrance to a few travelers and for a short time, a lovely but tiny stream from the infinite ocean running down to earth



for brief refreshment, a charming but passing visitor that beckons away to far-off, unearthly scenes and eternal joys.

Jerusalem was also a symbol of strength and of beauty. Pitched high above the neighboring towns and surrounding ravines and hills, spread out in splendid array on Mount Sion some 2,500 feet above sea level, securely enclosed within her ramparts and walls, adorned with palaces and towers, she gave every appearance of a fortress city and was the envy of her pagan rivals. Little wonder, then, that when the sight of her broke on the approaching enemy from some hill-crest in the distance, he became paralyzed with fear and in nameless awe turned and fled away.

The strength of the Holy City, however, like her most endearing feature, was not in her lofty location, nor in her bulwarks and walls, nor in her citadels and towers, but in the presence of God within her. It was not material weapons, but an unseen hand that smote the enemy, a divine breath that blew on him, and he was scattered.

History is full of instances and stories of men and nations that ignored God and put their trust in wealth, in armies, in walls and fortifications, in ships and fleets, in wisdom and diplomacy, only to find in a crisis that all their efforts and calculations were useless and vain. It is the presence of God and reliance on Him that give strength and courage and hope, alike to the individual person and to the race.

## PSALM 48 (Heb. 49)

### RIDDLE OF THE PROSPERITY OF THE UNJUST

#### INTRODUCTION

Here the Psalmist, assuming the rôle of a moralist, discusses a theme of vital interest to all men of all time, namely, the wealth and prosperity of the godless as contrasted with the poverty and suffering of the just. Must not the poor acknowledge that wealth and possessions are the master forces of life, and therefore to be feared and envied? The Psalmist first, by way of introduction, invites men of all classes to consider the problem and to listen to his solution (vv. 2-5). Then he counsels not to fear the rich, for wealth can neither purchase exemption from death, nor help its owner in the grave (vv. 6-13). Though all must finally die, there is a vast difference hereafter between the godless rich and the righteous poor; the former are forever doomed to the nether world, but the latter in triumph are secure with God (vv. 14-21). Each of the two main divisions of this poem ends with the same refrain (vv. 13 and 21).

The theme of this Psalm is closely related to that of Psalms 36 and 72; but while in those Psalms the wickedness of the godless is uppermost in the singer's mind, here he is rather concerned with their worldliness. Resemblances between these three Psalms and the Book of Job should also be noted and studied. Job's vision of the future life is clearer.

1. Magistro chori. Filiorum Core. Psalmus. For the choir-master. Of the sons of Core. A psalm.

#### *All Are Invited to Consider the Problem (2-5)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Audite haec, omnes gentes; auribus percipite, omnes qui habitatis orbem, | Hear these things, all you nations; give ear, all you inhabitants of the world,              |
| 3. Humiles natu aequae ac proceres, pari modo dives et pauper.              | Low-born as well as princes, rich and poor alike.  |
| 4. Os meum loquetur sapientiam, et meditatio cordis mei intelligentiam.     | My mouth shall utter wisdom, and the reflection of my heart <i>shall give</i> understanding. |
| 5. Inclinao in proverbium aurem meam, pandam ad sonum lyrae aenigma meum.   | I will incline mine ear to a proverb; to the sound of the lyre I will expound my riddle.     |

#### *Even the Richest Men Must Die, Leaving Their Wealth behind Them (6-13)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 6. Quare timeam diebus malis, cum nequitia insidiantium me circumdat,  | Why should I fear in evil days when the malice of plotters encompasses me,   |
| 7. Qui confidunt opibus suis, et de multitudine divitiarum suarum gloriantur?  | <i>Of men</i> who trust in their own resources and glory in their abounding wealth?                                    |
| 8. Neque enim quisquam liberabit seipsum, non dabit Deo pretium redemptionis suae:                                   | For no one shall redeem himself, nor give to God the price of his ransom:  |
| 9. Nimio constat liberatio animae eius neque unquam sufficiet, (10) ut vivat ultra in aeternum nec videat interitum. | The redemption of his soul is too costly, nor will it ever suffice, so that he may live on for ever and not see death. |
| 11. Videbit enim mori sapientes, pariter interire insipientem  | For he shall see the wise die, and the senseless and the foolish   |
5. "Aenigma meum," i.e., the problem of the prosperity of the godless.



et stultum, relinquere alienis divitias suas.

12. Sepulcra sunt domus eorum in aeternum, habitacula eorum in progeniem et progeniem, quantumvis nominibus suis appellaverint terras.

13. Homo enim in opulentia non permanebit: similis est pecudibus quae pereunt.

perish likewise, *and* leave their wealth to strangers.

Sepulchres are their homes for ever, their dwelling-places for generation after generation, however much they may have called lands after their names.

For man shall not remain in wealth; he is like the beasts that perish.

*Among the Dead, the Lot of the Godless Shall Be Eternally Sad, Whereas the Just Shall Reign with God (14-21)*

14. Haec via eorum, qui stulte confidunt, et hic finis eorum, qui sorte sua delectantur.

15. Sicut oves in inferno ponuntur; mors pascit eos, et iusti dominantur in eos. Cito figura eorum absumetur, infernus erit domus eorum.

16. Verumtamen Deus liberabit ab inferis animam meam, eo quod me assumet.

17. Ne timueris, si quis factus sit dives, si creverint opes domus eius:

18. Neque enim, cum morietur, quidquam tollet secum, neque opes eius cum eo descendunt.

19. Etsi in vita sua benedixit sibi: "Praedicabunt te, quod bene fecisti tibi,"

Such is the fate of the foolishly self-confident, and this is the end of those that delight in their lot.

Like sheep they are put into Sheol; death shepherds them, and the just have dominion over them. Quickly their form shall be worn away, and Sheol shall be their abode.

But God will deliver my soul from the grave, for He will receive me.

Be not alarmed when someone has become rich, when the wealth of his house has increased;

For he shall take nothing with him at his death, and his wealth shall not accompany him below.

Even though he flattered himself during his life, *thinking*: "They will praise thee because of thy success,"

13. Wealth often dulls spiritual perceptions and makes its possessor as devoid of foresight as the brute beasts.

15. "Cito figura, etc.," i.e., *soon*, or, *in the morning*, after the night of death all help for them shall vanish in the grave, when their earthly glory and wealth have been left behind.

16. "Me assumet." This same verb is used of Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and of Elias (4 Kings 2:9, 10) taken into heaven, and of David when received into the room of Saul (1 Sam. 18:2). God will take the just to Himself.

20. Ibi ad coetum patrum suorum, qui in aeternum non videbunt lumen.

21. Homo in opulentia vivens neque considerans, similis est pecudibus quae pereunt.

He shall join the throng of his fathers, who shall behold the light nevermore.

A man living in wealth without contemplating *his end*, is like the beasts that perish.

#### REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist has been observing and considering, apparently for a long time, two opposing conditions of mankind here on earth, namely, the worldliness and arrogance of the godless rich and prosperous and the suffering and lowliness of the godly poor and unfortunate. These contrasted conditions have troubled him; they seem so out of harmony with the respective deserts of the two classes. But, in his vexation, he has bent his ear to the dictates of divine inspiration, and here upon the lyre he utters the lessons he has received. It is important to heed these lessons, for they contain a vital message to all classes of men; for him and all the righteous they ease the trial of faith and offer a solution of the problem which confronts him.

In the first place, while material wealth and worldly prosperity may in certain instances be the means of extending the span of human life somewhat, they cannot purchase exemption from death for anyone. All must finally die, rich and poor, high and low, strong and weak; and at best the longest earthly life is but a breath compared with the aeons that have preceded it and the eternity that follows it. What good, therefore, to strut and fret and boast one hour upon a stage, and then be seen no more? What pleasure to sit at a banquet which we know will shortly end, and during which we cannot but think how transient is human splendor, how uncertain and insecure is all our planning, how brief and fleeting the days of life, how vain the wealth that cannot buy off the reaper, Death!

To the worldly death is a paling and a chilling thought. Unless banished from the mind, it beclouds every bright prospect, it casts a hush over every merriment, it saddens every joy, its gloomy foreboding weighs down the strongest heart. It is the certainty and the finality of death that make it awful; life is soon over, and the dead return no more!

Again, the worldly rich cannot take with them their wealth; in the grave their riches cannot help them. That underworld to which all must go is a rude leveler; it respects no person. There splendor, fame, glory, beauty, power, magnificence—"all that earth ere gave"—fades swiftly



away. There all people are quickly reduced to the condition of the poorest and the weakest mortal.

So much for all that worldly wealth can finally do for its possessor: it cannot prevent death, it cannot help its owner in the grave.

But the Psalmist's argument does not stop here. There is a third consideration, and it concerns the righteous. Whatever else may happen to those who have made this world their portion and have had their heaven here, he apparently knows not, the divine voice he had heard did not tell him. In the darksome chambers of the nether world he therefore leaves them, stripped of all their tinsel pomp and forlorn, wasted and dumb forever, with Death alone as their cold and merciless ruler.

How different is the state of the righteous poor in that other world! From the sleep of death they wake up to everlasting enjoyment. From the darkness of the grave they come forth into eternal morning light. Their triumph is complete and sure over every foe.

This is a streaming glory ahead, waiting upon the incident of temporal death, which the Psalmist has glimpsed only partially and dimly, yet really, growing out of the felt certainty that communion and fellowship with God in this life cannot be interrupted hereafter. Love between the soul and its Maker is a bond which no outward influence can sunder; it is immune to the shock of death; it outlasts all time.

Behold, then, the difference between the respective last states of the worldly rich and the righteous poor!

## PSALM 49 (Heb. 50)

### PROPER WORSHIP OF GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

In the preceding Psalm we had a specimen of the moral philosophy of Israel, addressed to all mankind; here we are reminded of prophetic teaching, intended for the Chosen People of God. The Psalmist pictures Jehovah coming forth from Sion, amid fire and storm, to judge His people, as of old He appeared at Sinai to give them His law. Heaven and earth are summoned to witness the trial (vv. 1-6). First are addressed the formalists, who are punctilious about material sacrifices and external observances, but neglect the true sacrifice of the heart, which is expressed in thanksgiving and trustful prayer (vv. 7-15). Then the judge turns to the hypocrite and denounces him and his followers, who, while professing the law and repeating the divine commandments with their lips,

violate their most sacred duties towards their neighbor, including their own kin (vv. 16-21). In conclusion, he addresses a word of warning to both classes, reminding them of the true worship of the heart which He requires, and which alone avails for salvation (vv. 22, 23).

1. Psalmus. Asaphi.

A psalm. Of Asaph.

#### *Prophetic Description of God's Appearance for Solemn Judgment (1-6)*

Deus Dominus locutus est et vocavit terram a solis ortu usque ad occasum.

God the Lord has spoken and has summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

2. Ex Sion, plena decore, Deus affulsit: (3) advenit Deus noster nec silet.

Out of Sion, full of beauty, God has shone forth: Our God comes and is not silent.

Ignis consumens praecedit eum, et circa eum tempestas furit.

A devouring fire precedes Him, and around Him a tempest rages.

4. Vocat caelos desursum et terram, iudicaturus populum suum:

He summons the heavens above and the earth, He is about to judge His people:

5. "Congregate mihi sanctos meos, qui pepigerunt foedus meum cum sacrificio."

"Gather before Me My holy ones, who have ratified My covenant with sacrifice."

6. Et caeli annuntiant iustitiam eius, quoniam Deus ipse est iudex.

And the heavens proclaim His justice, for God Himself is judge.

#### *God Declares that He Does Not Need Sacrifices, but Asks Prayers and the Fulfillment of Vows (7-15)*

7. "Audi, popule meus, et loquar, Israel, et testabor contra te: Deus, Deus tuus sum ego.

"Listen, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, thy God.

8. Non de sacrificiis tuis te reprehendo, nam holocausta tua coram me sunt semper.

"Not for thy sacrifices do I reprove thee, for thy holocausts are always before Me.

9. Non accipiam de domo tua

"I will not accept a male calf

1. "Deus Dominus." Heb.: *El Elohim Yahweh*, which three names represent the different aspects of the divine character and are here juxtaposed to stress His majesty. *El* means God, as the mighty creator of the world; *Elohim* perhaps means the Mighty One as embodying every divine excellence and power; *Yahweh* is the God of revelation, the God of the covenant and grace.

3. Theophanies are usually accompanied by fire and storm and convulsions of nature. Cfr. Psalm 17:9-15.



vitulum, neque de gregibus tuis hircos:

10. Nam meae sunt omnes ferae silvarum, bestiarum milia in montibus meis.

11. Novi omnia volatilia caeli, et quod in agro movetur, notum est mihi.

12. Si esuriero, non dicam tibi: meus enim est orbis et quod eum replet.

13. Num comedam carnes taurorum, aut sanguinem hircorum bibam?

14. Immola Deo sacrificium laudis, et redde Altissimo vota tua.

15. Et invoca me die angustiae: liberabo te, et honorabis me."

*God Reprimands the Sinner for Professing the Law of God in Words, While Transgressing It in Acts (16-21)*

16. Peccatori autem dicit Deus: "Quare tu enarras praecepta mea, et habes in ore tuo foedus meum?

17. Tu, qui odisti disciplinam et proiecisti verba mea post te?

18. Cum videbas furem, currebas cum eo, et cum adulteris pars tua erat.

19. Os tuum laxabas ad malum, et lingua tua concinnabat dolos.

20. Sedens, adversus fratrem tuum loquebaris, filium matris tuae afficiebas opprobrio.

21. Haec fecisti, et ego tacebo? existimasti me esse similem tui? ar-

from thy house, nor he-goats from thy flocks;

"For all the wild animals of the forest are Mine, thousands of beasts on My mountains.

"I know all the birds of the air, and that which moves in the field is known to Me.

"If I shall be hungry, I will not tell thee: for Mine is the world and what fills it.

"Shall I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of he-goats?

"Offer to God a sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows to the Most High.

"Invoke Me in the day of distress; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt honor Me."

But to the wicked man God says: "Why dost thou recount My precepts, and have My covenant in thy mouth?

"Thou that hatest discipline, and hast cast My words behind thee?

"When thou didst see a thief, thou didst run with him, and with adulterers thou wast a partaker.

"Thou didst open thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue fashioned deceits.

"Sitting, thou didst speak against thy brother, and didst calumniate thy mother's son.

"These things hast thou done, and shall I be silent? Didst thou

guam te, et pandam ea ante oculos tuos. think that I am like Thee? I will reprove thee, and spread these things before thine eyes.

*God Demands Praise and Obedience: Whoever Neglects Them Shall Perish (22, 23)*

22. Intellegite haec, immemores Dei, ne rapiam nec sit qui salvos reddat.

"Understand these things, you that are unmindful of God, lest I snatch *you* away, and there be none to save *you*.

23. Qui immolat sacrificium laudis, honorat me, et qui ambulat recte, illi ostendam salutem Dei."

"He that offers a sacrifice of praise honors Me, and to him that walks righteously I will manifest the salvation of God."

#### REFLECTIONS

The Hebrews were God's Chosen People. The Almighty had selected them from out the mass of mankind to be the recipients and depositories of His special revelation to the world, to be the race from which the promised Messiah and Saviour should come, to be an example and a model to the rest of men. And for their high office and mission He endowed their leaders and representatives with many singular gifts and gave them an elaborate ritual for the worthy performance of their sacred duties and functions. Both their sacrifices and their ceremonial were ordained by God; the substance and the form of their official devotions were of divine origin; and therefore God could not but take pleasure in them.

But material sacrifices and the ritual which gives them proper setting are mere externals, mere draperies, intended to express and enforce an unseen, interior relationship between the soul and God. When they do not accomplish this their end, they have no reason for their existence. It is unfortunate for our ease that the externals of religion do not fulfill their purpose automatically; but they do not. They are in themselves only lifeless forms which need to be quickened by an effort of the spirit which they are supposed to serve.

The trial, therefore, to which Jehovah in this Psalm subjects His people, and to which Heaven and earth are summoned as witnesses, is first of all concerned with the failure of the people to enliven the external discharge of their religious functions with an internal spirit of thanksgiving and heartfelt praise. All material sacrifices are God's before they



are offered to Him. It is the heart that God wants, the sacrifice of the heart; but the human heart is not His until man freely surrenders it to Him.

Material sacrifice, then, means nothing to God apart from thanksgiving and a fulfillment of one's vows. What we offer to Him from external sources, after all, comes from gifts already bestowed on us by Him. These often honor and please Him, but He is especially honored and pleased when we ask and receive from Him, when we call on Him in our trouble and He delivers us, and we in turn give Him our thanks and service and thereby testify that prayer to Him is not in vain.

The second charge against the Chosen People is still more serious and is aimed at those who corrupt the worship of God by hypocrisy. These wicked leaders preach one thing and practice the opposite of it. They proclaim love of one's neighbor and honor of parents, and do not observe these precepts themselves. They condemn theft, impurity and lying; and yet they commit these very sins. Their perversity leads them from bad to worse. It mistakes God's patient endurance for approval, dims their conception of justice, darkens the true image and likeness of the Divine, and finally leads them to picture God to be like themselves.

This Psalm is a warning to superstitious formalists and hypocrites of all ages that their end is destruction, unless, by cooperating with the grace of God, they awaken to their perilous state and repent while there is time.

### PSALM 50 (Heb. 51)

#### CONFESSION, PROMISE AND PRAYERS OF A REPENTANT SINNER

##### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is a prayer of repentance and petition, and it is the fourth of the seven Psalms known from ancient times as the Penitential Psalms. According to its title and tradition, its author was David, and its occasion was the repentance of the king after the prophet Nathan had chided him for his adulterous relations with Bethsabee (2 Kings 12). There is no sufficient reason for rejecting this view. While a prayer, this Psalm is in reality a commentary on David's heartfelt confession of his sin and on Nathan's reassuring words that the Lord had pardoned his sin. It embodies all the elements of an act of contrition, and supplies the most appropriate language of sorrow and amendment to every truly repentant soul.

The two final verses of the Psalm do not belong to David, but were added in exilic or early post-exilic times, to express the wish that the walls of Jerusalem might be rebuilt and the old-time sacrifices restored, as a proof of the nation's forgiveness.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. Davidis, (2) cum venit ad eum Nathan propheta, postquam cum Bethsabee peccavit.

For the choir-master. A psalm. Of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had sinned with Bethsabee.

#### *The Psalmist Implores Remission of His Sin, Confessing that He Has Been Sinful from His Very Birth (3-8)*

3. Miserere mei, Deus, secundum misericordiam tuam; secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy mercy: according to the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgression.

4. Penitus lava me a culpa mea, et a peccato meo munda me.

Wash me thoroughly from my fault, and from my sin cleanse me.

5. Nam iniquitatem meam ego agnosco, et peccatum meum coram me est semper.

For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.

6. Tibi soli peccavi et, quod malum est coram te, feci, ut manifestetur iustus in sententia tua, rectus in iudicio tuo.

Against Thee alone have I sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight, that Thou mayest be shown just in Thy sentence, righteous in Thy judgment.

3. "Dele." The Psalmist asks God to erase or cancel the debt of his sin which he regards as recorded in God's book of reckoning.

4. "Penitus," that is, *thoroughly*, or *abundantly*.—"Lava . . . munda." There is reference to internal cleansing here, though the idea of washing away sin is derived obviously from the ritual purifications of the Old Law.

5. "Agnosco." David's sins have been before the eyes of God from the time of their commission, and now he has come to know and confess them himself; they are ever present to his conscience.

6. "Tibi soli peccavi." David here assigns a reason why he should ask God to pardon him. As King David was God's special representative, and as such was answerable directly to God, he had to look directly to God for pardon of the injuries done to his subjects. Furthermore, all sin is ultimately against God and His law, as all duty is rooted primarily in duty to God.—"Ut manifestetur, etc." Besides the explanation given above, we have the following explanations according to the Hebrew text: (a) the sins committed by David are peculiarly enormous and they have been witnessed by God; hence God's message to David through Nathan, in which he accuses the king of his crimes and pronounces sentence of punishment, is true and just; (b) David makes his confession of sin against the Lord in order that the Lord may be justified in pronouncing sentence against him; (c) David admits his sin in order that the justice and holiness of God may be more clearly manifested in punishing sin, which He hates.



7. Ecce, in culpa natus sum, et in peccato concepit me mater mea.

8. Ecce sinceritate cordis delectaris, et in praecordiis sapientiam me doces.

*The Psalmist Asks to Be Restored to Grace, and for a Good and Perservering Spirit (9-14)*

9. Asperge me hyssopo, et mundabor, lava me, et super nivem dealbabor.

10. Fac me audire gaudium et laetitiam, exsultent ossa quae contrivisti.

11. Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis, et omnes culpas meas dele.

12. Cor mundum crea mihi, Deus, et spiritum firmum renova in me.

13. Ne proieceris me a facie tua, et spiritum sanctum tuum ne abstuleris a me.

14. Redde mihi laetitiam salutis tuae, et spiritu generoso confirma me.

*The Psalmist Suggests Reasons Why God Should Pardon Him (15-19)*

15. Docebo iniquos vias tuas, et peccatores ad te convertentur.

16. Libera me a poena sanguinis.

7. David assigns another reason why his sins should be forgiven, namely, the corruption of his nature.

8. The Psalmist gives a further ground for beseeching pardon, namely, his previous loyalty to Jehovah and the intimate friendship and communications that existed in the past between God and himself. Perhaps there is reference to the Messianic promises.

9. "Hyssopo." Hyssop was a common herb that grew upon walls, a bunch of which was used as a sprinkler, especially in such liturgical rites as the cleansing of the leper and the purifying of the unclean.

16. "Poena sanguinis" can refer either to the murder of Urias, the husband of Bethsabee, or to personal violence against David himself.

Behold, I was born in fault, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, Thou art delighted with sincerity of heart, and within the breast dost teach me wisdom.

Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.

Grant me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones Thou hast crushed rejoice.

Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my faults.

Create for me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not from me Thy holy spirit.

Restore to me the gladness of Thy saving help, and confirm me with a generous spirit.

I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted to Thee.

Deliver me from the penalty of

nis, Deus, Deus salvator meus; exsultet lingua mea de iustitia tua.

17. Domine, labia mea aperies, et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.

18. Neque enim sacrificio delectaris; et holocaustum, si darem, non acceptares.

19. Sacrificium meum, Deus, spiritus contritus, cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias.

*A Brief Petition that Jerusalem and the Divine Worship Be Restored (20, 21)*

20. Benigne fac, Domine, pro bonitate tua, erga Sion, ut reedifices muros Ierusalem.

21. Tunc acceptabis sacrificia legitima, oblationes et holocausta, tunc offerent super altare tuum vitulos.

blood, O God, God my Saviour; let my tongue exult because of Thy justice.

Thou, O Lord, wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.

For Thou art not delighted with sacrifice; and Thou wouldst not accept a holocaust if I gave it.

My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Be kind toward Sion in Thy goodness, O Lord, that Thou mayest rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt Thou receive the legal sacrifices, oblations and holocausts; then shall they offer male calves upon Thine altar.

REFLECTIONS

David, God's chosen king and friend, had fallen foul of passion and committed the grievous sins of adultery and murder. In a careless moment, in spite of all his prerogatives, his lower nature had got the upper hand over his higher nature and had stripped his soul of all its comeliness in the sight of Heaven. But, bereft and prostrate as he was, by new grace from above, he here confesses and deplors his crimes.

The evil started in David's thoughts, and thence in his heart. Had it not first found lodgment there, it never could have appeared in his external actions. He speaks of it as "transgression," i.e., as a *rebellion* of his will against the will of God; as "iniquity," i.e., as something *bent* and *twisted*, a crooked path, winding and wandering away from the

18. "Holocaustum." Holocausts were whole-burnt sacrifices which were offered on the altar that stood in the outer court of the Tabernacle and Temple. The entire consumption of the victim in the flames signified the complete self-dedication of the worshipper to God.

For homicide and adultery no expiatory sacrifices were prescribed, nor in use; these crimes were punished by death, which, however, could not be inflicted on King David.



straight road that leads to Heaven; as "sin," i.e., as *missing the mark*, the true aim and goal of life. For a moment of sensual pleasure he had forfeited eternal delights; and now he realizes the destitution, the loneliness, the grief, the helplessness, to which he has been reduced and betrayed.

But in the midst of the confusion and the ruin wrought by his sins David did not despair. Through the thick darkness that enveloped him he could still see a ray of hope. God was forever the ocean of mercies, and he turned to Him. He could not go to anyone else. He could not cleanse himself, for he had been conceived and born in sin; his nature was inwardly poor and inclined to evil. He could not go for help to his fellow-creatures, since they too had inherited the same infected nature and bad tendencies.

Therefore the royal Psalmist turned to God whose mercies are above all His works and are more numerous than ever man's sins could be. He knew that a crushed and broken heart God could never despise. And so he prayed the All-Holy to wash and cleanse and purify him, that his soul might be made whiter and more chaste than the driven snow. He asked for renewed steadfastness in the divine service and for a return of the blessed consciousness of God's presence and favor. In gratitude he would proclaim the divine goodness evermore.

Grievous sin is always a perilous experiment. Save by a special grace of God, a person is ever afterwards worse for having tasted its false delights. But, as in David's case, the sad experience can become at once a constant reminder of one's own weakness; a warning against the danger that lurks in occasions of sin, even for those who think themselves strong in virtue; a source of knowledge for the instruction and guidance of others; and a reason for ever extolling the mercies of God.

## PSALM 51 (Heb. 52)

### AGAINST A POWERFUL CALUMNIATOR

#### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is here denouncing some rich and influential person who by treachery and detraction has been ruining the poor and defenseless. According to the title, his powerful oppressor was Doeg, Saul's chief herdsman, who revealed David's presence at Nob to the king. It was this Doeg who, at Saul's command, slaughtered eighty-five priests, besides a number of women, children and cattle at Nob (1 Kings 21:7;

22: 9, 10, 18, 22). Whether the Psalmist here had Doeg or some other evil-doer in mind is a matter of dispute.

1. Magistro chori. Maskil. Davidis, (2) postquam Doeg Edomita ad Saul venit eique narravit dicens: "David intravit in domum Abimelech."

For the choir-master. A maskil. Of David, after Doeg the Edomite had come to Saul and told him: "David has entered the house of Abimelech."

#### *Malice of a Powerful and Deceitful Enemy, Whose Eternal Ruin Is Prophesied (3-7)*

3. Quid gloriaris in malitia, praepotens infamis?

Why dost thou glory in malice, thou who art mighty in infamy?

Omni tempore (4) meditaris perniciem, lingua tua est velut novacula acuta, patrator doli.

All the time thou dost plan destruction, thy tongue is like a sharp razor, thou agent of deceit.

5. Diligis malum magis quam bonum, mendacium magis quam loqui iusta.

Thou lovest evil more than good, falsehood more than to speak things that are just.

6. Diligis omnes sermones perniciosos, lingua dolosa!

Thou lovest all destructive words, O deceitful tongue!

7. Ideo Deus destruet te, in sempiternum te removebit, extrahet te de tentorio et eradicabit te de terra viventium.

Therefore will God destroy thee, He will remove thee for ever, He will pluck thee from thine abode, and root thee out of the land of the living.

#### *The Just Shall Rejoice and Give Glory to God (8-11)*

8. Videbunt iusti et timebunt et de illo ridebunt:

The just shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying:

9. "Ecce homo qui non statuit Deum praesidium suum, sed speravit in multitudine divitiarum suarum, invaluit sceleribus suis."

"Behold, the man who made not God his fortress, but hoped in the abundance of his riches, and became strong through his crimes!"

10. Ego autem sicut oliva virens in domo Dei; confido in misericordia Dei in sempiternum.

But I myself am as a flourishing olive-tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever.

11. Celebrabo te in saeculum, quia egisti, et praedicabo nomen

I will praise Thee evermore, because Thou hast done *this*; and I

4. "Novacula acuta," which was able suddenly and seriously to injure.

11. "Quia egisti," by punishing the wicked calumniator.



tuum, quia bonum est, in conspectu sanctorum tuorum. will proclaim Thy name, for it is good, in the sight of thy holy ones.

## REFLECTIONS

Those of us who have learned in the school of Christ, and those who have been privileged even to grow up in a Christian atmosphere and environment without actually embracing the creed of Christians, are likely to view the Psalmist's words and sentiments here as harsh and unholy. And indeed he is speaking according to the spirit and limited revelation of the Old Testament. He had little if any conception of the teachings of the New Testament, which regard all men as brothers and make God the Father of all, which distinguish between man and his sin, and which insist upon forgiveness of injuries and the return of good for evil. Such lofty doctrines were not only beyond the thoughts of the Psalmist, but they could never have been grasped by his listeners or readers. God has made known His real nature and attributes and has unfolded the secrets of the world to come only gradually, as mankind has progressed and become sufficiently developed to receive that unfolding and profit by it.

On the other hand, we need to bear in mind two points. In the first place, many, perhaps most, of us have never experienced the scourges of wickedness against which the Psalmist is here, and elsewhere often, revolting and pouring out his fiery flood. If we, whose days are comparatively easy and peaceful, had to live under godless tyranny and to submit to constant inhuman treatment as to every simplest need of body and soul, doubtless we also should be found exulting when swift and sweeping retribution would fall upon our oppressors. If we now, in this recent period of history, were living in Poland, or Norway, or Holland, or those other countries of Europe which a modern Doeg has overrun and subjugated to his ruthless sway, what would be our attitude and with what eagerness should we look forward to the day when that cruel oppressor should be brought to judgment! From a secure shelter we get no adequate idea of the mental and physical condition of those who are enduring the horrors of actual battle.

In the second place, while Christianity has already leavened the whole world to a considerable extent and made humanity generally speaking more peaceful and civilized—except for periodic outbursts on the part of certain individuals, groups and nations—many of us, considering all our advantages, are hardly in a position to criticize too severely the moral standards of the time of David. We are still all too prone to resent and

A message we received on 5 December 2023:

**I THOUGHT** I'd take the time to say this: This Christmas time, I've had the chance to sit down and play through the hymns in the *Saint Jean de Brébeuf Hymnal*. I'm by no means a great organist—but most of the Catholic hymnals I've played contain arrangements that are clunky and non-intuitive. The one happy exception was the *New Saint Basil Hymnal*.

However, having now played through the hymns as in the *Brébeuf Hymnal*, I can happily affirm: it has the best arrangement of hymns since the *New Saint Basil Hymnal*. They are both beautiful and accessible. **You have gathered the best** from Catholic hymnals throughout the world, and it has done wonders promoting congregational singing in our church since we have adopted it.

Thank you for all the hard work and dedication that went into making the hymnal, as well as making it so easy to use for both singer and pew-sitter. Merry Christmas to you and yours.

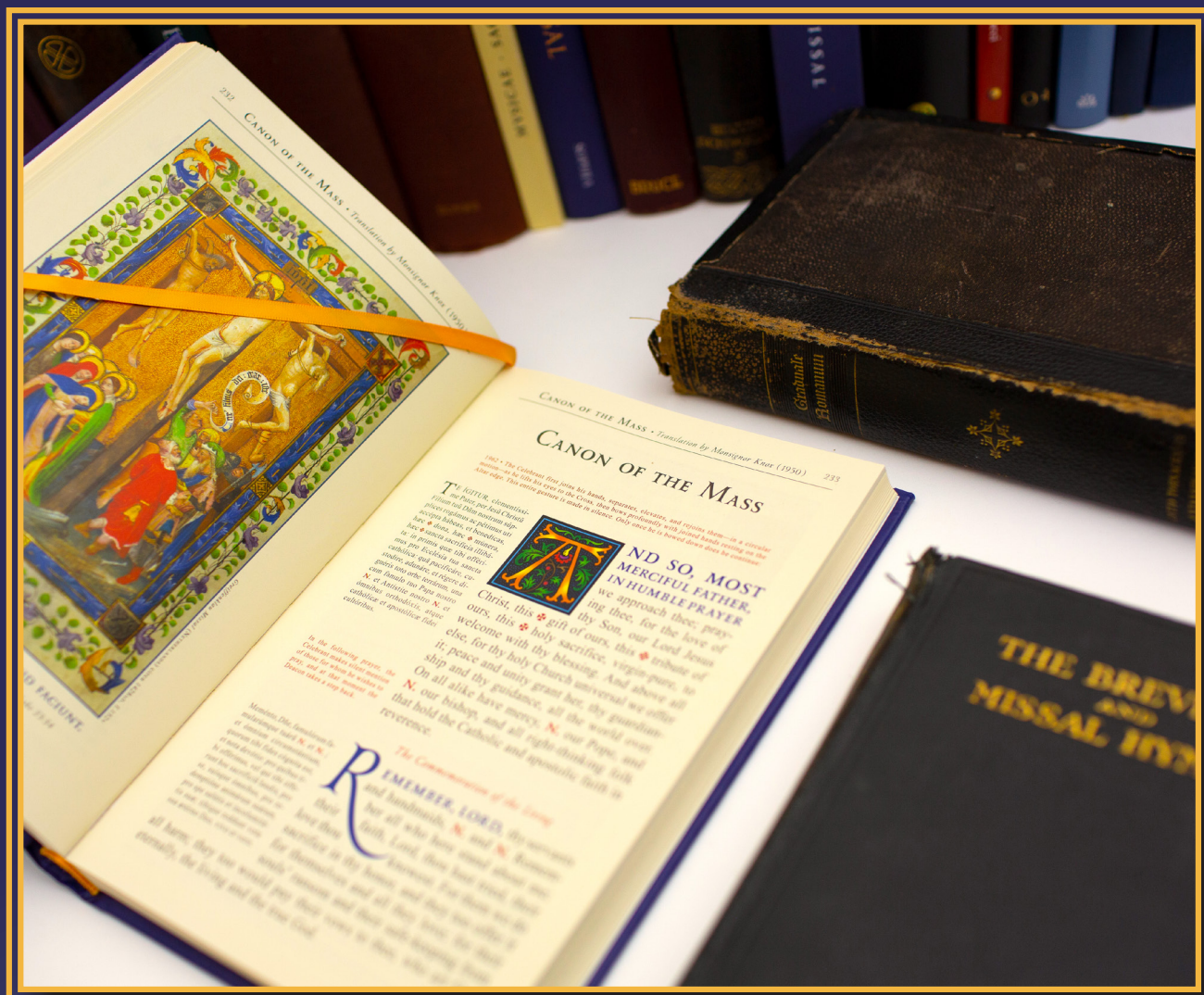
—Director of Music

Saint Philip's Catholic Church

[Further details withheld for anonymity's sake.]

<https://ccwatershed.org/hymn/>





**P**ERHAPS the most beautiful and accessible hand-missal ever published, the **Saint Edmund Campion Missal** stands alone among Extraordinary Form missals, serving as an elegant and dignified congregational book presenting the Traditional Latin Mass. This missal is lavishly designed, with large fonts, beautiful artwork, photographs, and Gregorian chant in just 672 pages. English translations by Father F. X. LASANCE (d. 1946) were scrupulously reproduced, providing a guide as elegant as it is literal. This third edition (2022) includes many improvements to make it more user-friendly, including a reduction in both weight and page count (so it is less bulky to handle). Yet despite the page reduction, important additions were made, such as the inclusion of the **1950 Holy Week** that utilizes a remarkable and recently-discovered English translation by Msgr. Ronald Knox (d. 1957). The **1962 Holy Week** is also included, as well as the ancient Roman Rite verses for Offertory and Communion—praised by Pope Pius XII—which no other handmissal reproduces except this one.

<https://ccwatershed.org/campion/>

to revenge the small injuries we receive, and to rejoice over the punishment and misfortunes of others.

Moreover, even when there is no question of righting flagrant wrongs, or of the reign and triumph of plain justice, too long delayed, not a few of us progressive Christians are far too much absorbed in our own well-being, quite insensible to what may be the plight of others all around us in the world. So long as all is well with us, too many of us care little for the misfortunes of our brethren of the human family. When we feel that it is our happy lot to be a flourishing olive tree in the garden of the Lord and to enjoy the divine fellowship and the comforts of the heavenly household, some of us are often apt to sit content and let the rest of the world, and especially those whom we consider sinners, go their way to judgment and punishment; whereas the true spirit of Christianity is altogether otherwise.

Christ came to redeem the world, to save sinners; and for that He gave His life. His true followers, therefore, far from rejoicing over the sufferings and punishments of sinners, forget themselves and spend themselves for the good of all others. They are concerned for every sheep of the flock. They want all of God's children to have and to enjoy in proper proportion the good things with which they are blessed, and they are willing and eager to make every reasonable effort within their reach for the attainment of this end.

## PSALM 52 (Heb. 53)

### GENERAL CORRUPTION AND ITS CHASTISEMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is only a later recension of Psalm 13, with the minor differences chiefly noted in the treatment of that poem. Moved by some special occasion, the Psalmist is deploring the profound and widespread corruption of mankind in general, or of people within his own country, which has resulted from their neglect to seek after God (vv. 2-4). Progressing in their corruption, these godless persons have devoured Israel like food, ignoring God, until overtaken by sudden and complete destruction (vv. 5, 6). The Psalm concludes with a prayer that God may gladden His people with full redemption (v. 7).

The second half of verse 6 here, so different from verse 6 of Psalm 13, is explained by some as referring to the discomfiture of Sennacherib's



army, but by others as relating to the destruction of the godless within the nation of Israel.

The notes given for Psalm 13 will suffice for this one also.

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|--|---|
| 1. Magistro chori. Secundum<br>"Mahalat." Maskil. Davidis. | For the choir-master. According<br>to the tune, "Mahalat." A maskil.<br>Of David. |
|--|---|

*The Psalmist Deplores the Universal Corruption (2-4)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Dicit insipiens in corde suo:<br>"Non est Deus."   | The fool says in his heart:<br>"There is no God."  |
| Corrupti sunt, abominanda ege-<br>runt; non est, qui faciat bonum.  | They have become corrupt, and<br>have wrought abominations; there<br>is none that does good.                         |
| 3. Deus de caelo prospicit super<br>filios hominum, ut videat, num sit<br>qui intellegat et quaerat Deum. | God looks down from heaven<br>on the sons of men, to see if there<br>be one that understands and seeks<br>after God. |
| 4. Omnes simul aberraverunt,<br>depravati sunt; non est qui faciat<br>bonum, non est nec unus.            | All have gone astray together,<br>they are depraved; there is none<br>that does good, not even one.                  |

*The Psalmist Declares the Divine Punishment of the Wicked (5, 6)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 5. Nonne resipiscent, qui faci-<br>unt iniquitatem, qui devorant popu-<br>lum meum, sicut comedunt pan-<br>nem, non invocant Deum?                              | Will they not come to their<br>senses, those that work iniquity,<br>that devour My people as they eat<br>bread, that do not call on God?   |
| 6. Ibi trepidaverunt timore, ubi<br>non erat timor, quoniam Deus dis-<br>sipavit ossa eorum, qui te obside-<br>bant: confusi sunt, quoniam Deus<br>abiecit eos. | They trembled with fear, where<br>there was no fear, because God has<br>scattered the bones of those that<br>besieged thee; they have been con-<br>founded because God rejected<br>them. |

*May a Better Lot Befall Israel (7)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 7. Utinam veniat ex Sion salus<br>Israel! Cum verterit Deus sortem<br>populi sui, exsultabit Iacob, laeta-<br>bitur Israel. | O that salvation of Israel may<br>come from Sion! When God will<br>have changed the lot of His people,<br>Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall<br>be glad. |
|---|--|

See reflections on Psalm 13.

PSALM 53 (Heb. 54)

PRAYER FOR DIVINE AID AGAINST ENEMIES

INTRODUCTION

According to its title, this Psalm was written by David when betrayed by the treacherous Ziphites almost into the very hands of Saul. He and his men had taken refuge in the wilderness of Ziph, to the southeast of Hebron, but, when the Ziphites revealed his hiding-place, he was in imminent peril of being apprehended, and only narrowly eluded the cruel king (1 Kings 23:19 sqq.). Hence, he here prays to be delivered from the merciless enemies that surround him (vv. 3-5). He is confident that God will save him and punish his foes, and so promises thanksgiving for his deliverance (vv. 6-9).

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|---|--|
| 1. Magistro chori. Fidibus. Mas-<br>kil. Davidis, (2) postquam Ziphaei<br>ad Saul venerunt dicentes: "Ecce,<br>David apud nos abditus latet." | For the choir-master. With<br>stringed instruments. A maskil.<br>Of David, after the men of Ziph<br>had come to Saul, saying: "Behold,<br>David is hiding among us." |
|---|--|

*The Psalmist Implores the Divine Aid against Enemies Plotting His Life (3-5)*

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|--|--|
| 3. Deus, in nomine tuo salvum<br>me fac, et virtute tua age causam<br>meam.  | O God, in Thy name save me,<br>and with Thy might champion my<br>cause.  |
| 4. Deus, audi orationem meam;<br>auribus percipe verba oris mei.   | O God, hear my prayer; give ear<br>to the words of my mouth.   |
| 5. Nam superbi insurrexerunt<br>contra me, et violenti quaesierunt<br>vitam meam; non proposuerunt<br>Deum ante oculos suos. | For proud men have risen up<br>against me, and violent men have<br>sought my life, <i>men who</i> have not<br>set God before their eyes. |

3. "In nomine tuo." The *name* of God stands for the person, the help, the presence, or the Providence of God, according to the context in which it is used; and it may be so rendered.



*Now Certain of Being Heard, the Psalmist Promises Sacrifices and Thanksgiving to God (6-9)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 6. Ecce, Deus adiuvat me,<br>Dominus sustentat vitam meam.                                   | Behold, God helps me, the Lord<br>sustains my life.  |
| 7. Retorque malum in adversa-<br>rios meos, et pro fidelitate tua des-<br>true illos.        | May evil recoil upon my foes,<br>and for Thy faithfulness' sake de-<br>stroy them!             |
| 8. Voluntarie sacrificabo tibi,<br>celebrabo nomen tuum, Domine,<br>quia bonum est.          | I will gladly offer sacrifice to<br>Thee, I will praise Thy name, O<br>Lord, for it is good.   |
| 9. Nam ex omni tribulatione<br>eripuit me, et inimicos meos con-<br>fusus vidit oculus meus. | For He has rescued me from<br>every trouble, and mine eye has<br>seen mine enemies confounded. |

REFLECTIONS

Encompassed by foes, the Psalmist turns at once to God. For his deliverance and safety he appeals first to the divine name, that is, to the nature and character by which God in word and deed has manifested Himself and has become known; and then to the divine power, which can do all things. With such reserves of strength at his command, he has no reason to fear; no harm can come to him.

As king to be, David here identifies himself and his cause with God and the divine purposes. What therefore is done or plotted against him is likewise against God; enmity to him is enmity to God, rebellion against him is rebellion against God.

This conviction of close relationship between himself and God explains the Psalmist's confidence that God will punish the strong and violent enemies that have surrounded him, and also the satisfaction which that punishment will give him. He could not but rejoice in God's faithfulness to His purpose and promises and in the vindication of God's cause, which was identical with his own, even though that meant the destruction of his foes.

This special relation, therefore, which the Psalmist bears to the divine plan at once explains and modifies his apparently vindictive prayer. And so sure is he of the answer to his petition that the future becomes present to him, and he plans his thank-offerings, the glad sacrifices he will make to his bountiful Lord.

However true the explanation just given of the Psalmist's prayer here, Christians may not make it their own; first because they may not presume

on the particular relationship which existed between God and His anointed king, and secondly because they are heirs of a fuller and more perfect revelation of the nature and character of God and of His relation to His human creatures. Taught by a gentle and loving Master, their lips and ears are attuned to higher and more heavenly music.

PSALM 54 (Heb. 55)

AGAINST ENEMIES AND A PERFIDIOUS FRIEND

INTRODUCTION

We have here a pathetic account of persecution and suffering to which the Psalmist has been subjected by cruel enemies, led by a traitor who was formerly an intimate and trusted friend. Almost in despair, the sufferer appeals to God for help, describing his desperate condition and its consequences, and expressing the ardent wish that, like the dove, he might fly away and be at rest. But, realizing the impossibility of escape, he burns with indignation against his foes for the iniquity that reigns in the city, deploring especially the treachery of his former friend and invoking dire destruction on all his enemies. Then in a calmer tone he turns to prayer, trustful that God will hear and deliver him, referring again to his enemies and in particular to the traitor. In conclusion, the Psalmist consoles himself and all the just by reflecting on God's goodness to the righteous and His judgment upon the wicked.

The treachery of a former friend, complained of here, is mentioned also in Psalm 40, verse 10. Both of these Psalms are assigned by tradition to the period of Absalom's rebellion, and Achitophel is identified as the traitor (2 Kings 15:2 sqq.). Other critics, disagreeing with this view, believe this Psalm originated in the time of Jeremias or in the Machabean age. Whatever its date or occasion, its Messianic character, recognized by the Fathers, must be admitted.

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|---|--|
| 1. Magistro chori. Fidibus. Mas-<br>kil. Davidis. | For the choir-master. With<br>stringed instruments. A maskil. Of<br>David. |
|---|--|

*The Psalmist Describes His Anxiety at the Attacks of His Enemies and His Desire for a Refuge from the Storm (2-9)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Auribus percipe, Deus, ora-<br>tionem meam, nec te subtraheris | Give ear to my prayer, O God,<br>and draw not aloof from my sup- |
|---|--|



supplicationi meae, (3) attende mihi et exaudi me.

Agitor in angore meo, et conturbor (4) propter vocem inimici, ob clamorem peccatoris.

Quoniam inferunt mihi mala et in ira me infestant.

5. Cor meum conturbatur in me, et pavor mortis cadit super me.

6. Timor et tremor veniunt super me, et operit me horror.

7. Et dico: "O si haberem penas sicut columba, avolarem et quiescerem;

8. Ecce, longe discederem, manerem in deserto.

9. Quaererem cito perfugium mihi a turbine et procella."

*The Psalmist Complains of the Discord Distracting the City, Especially of the Defection of a Particular Friend (10-15)*

10. Dissipa, Domine, divide linguas eorum; nam video violentiam et discordiam in civitate:

11. Die ac nocte circumeunt eam super muros eius, et iniquitas et oppressio sunt in medio eius.

12. Insidiae sunt in medio eius, et de plateis eius non recedunt iniuria et dolus,

13. Si inimicus exprobrasset mihi, sustinuissem utique; si is, qui odit me, contra me insurrexisset, abscondissem me ab eo.

14. Sed eras tu, sodalis meus, amicus et familiaris meus,

10. "Divide linguas," i.e., make their tongues discordant.

plication; give heed to me and answer me.

I am tossed about in mine anguish, and am distracted because of the shout of the enemy, on account of the sinner's uproar.

For they bring evils upon me, and in anger harass me.

My heart is disturbed within me, and the terror of death falls upon me.

Fear and trembling are come over me, and horror covers me.

And I say: "O if I had wings like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest!

"Lo, I would go far away, I would abide in the wilderness!

"Quickly would I seek a refuge for myself from whirlwind and storm."

Scatter *them*, O Lord, confound their tongues; for I see violence and discord in the city;

Day and night they make a tour of it upon its walls, and iniquity and oppression are in its midst.

Treacheries are in the midst of it, and injury and deceit never depart from its streets.

If an enemy had slandered me, I would indeed have endured it; if he that hates me had risen up against me, I would have hidden myself from him.

But it was thou, my comrade, my friend and familiar,

15. Quocum dulce habui consortium, in domo Dei ambulavimus in coetu festivo.

*Praying for the Defeat of His Enemies and His Own Liberation, the Psalmist Has Full Confidence in God (16-24)*

16. Irruat mors super illos, viventes ad inferos descendant, quoniam nequitiae in habitationibus eorum, in medio eorum!

17. Ego autem ad Deum clamabo, et Dominus salvabit me.

18. Vespere et mane et meridie lamentabor et gemam, et audiet vocem meam.

19. Redimet in pacem animam meam ab iis qui me infestant: nam multi sunt contra me.

20. Audiet Deus, deprimetque eos, qui regnat ab aeterno; neque enim mutantur nec timent Deum:

21. Extendit suas quisque manus contra familiares suos, violat pactum suum.

22. Blandior butyro est facies eius, sed cor eius pugnax.

Molliores oleo sunt sermones eius, sed sunt gladii stricti.

23. Proice super Dominum curam tuam, et ipse te sustentabit: non sinet in perpetuum vacillare iustum.

24. Et tu, Deus deduces eos in puteum interitus; viri sanguinum et dolosi non complebunt dimidium dierum suorum; ego autem spero in te, Domine.

15. "In coetu festivo" seems to refer to the solemn processions to the temple. The sense then is: We were very closely associated both in private and public life.

21. The unfaithfulness of his friend saddened him more than the plots of enemies.

24. "Non complebunt, etc.," i.e., they will come to a premature death.

With whom I had sweet intercourse; in the house of God we walked among the festive throng.

Let death descend upon them, let them go down alive into Sheol, for there is villainy in their dwellings, in their midst!

But as for me, I will call on God, and the Lord will save me.

Evening and morn and noon I will lament and moan, and He will hear my voice.

He will redeem my soul in peace from those that infest me; for many are against me.

God who reigns from eternity will hear and will lay them low, for they are not changed, nor do they fear God.

Each of them stretches out his hand against his associates; he violates his contract.

His face is more ingratiating than butter, but strife is in his heart.

His words are smoother than oil, but they are drawn swords.

Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee; He will not suffer the just man to be for ever insecure.

And Thou, O God, wilt bring them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and deceit shall not live out half their days; but I, O Lord, hope in Thee.



## REFLECTIONS

The state of excitement and agitation in which we find the Psalmist here is so extreme that his thoughts and emotions are really in confusion at times; he is literally distracted with troubles. Hence the obscurities, lack of sequence and accuracy, repetitions, the alternations of complaint and longing, indignation and imprecation, confidence and hope, which make up his plea. Fear and trembling take hold of him, darkness envelops him, dreadful forebodings oppress him. And yet, in spite of all, he begins by asking that his prayer may be heard, so grounded is he in faith and so habituated to turning at all times to God. But soon, like other mortals in dire distress, he yields to weariness and to longing that he had the wings of a dove and might fly away and be at rest. He cannot, however, forsake his post; duty restricts him; responsibility rests upon him; he must face his enemies and his trials.

Turning then from his distracting thoughts and feelings to the outward cause of them, he beholds a sea of troubles. In the streets and open places of the city he sees violence, strife, iniquity, mischief, oppression, deceit—all converging on himself and watching to prevent his escape. And worst of all, among those many enemies he beholds a former friend who has become the leader of the ruthless band.

In such circumstances, and in view of the lower moral and religious level of the Old Testament and his personal relationship to Jehovah, it is little wonder that the Psalmist erupts with petitions for the destruction of his foes. But after this outburst of righteous indignation against injustice and violence, holier thoughts fill the singer's mind. He remembers Jehovah, the Covenant God, and he is calmed. He will now give himself to constant prayers of devotion and trust, confident that all will yet be well. His groaning and sadness will not speedily pass; they may not pass at all, but they will be easier to bear, and communion with God will place them on a high and meritorious spiritual plane. God does not promise to take away our crosses, but to those who have faith and who do what they can, He promises the necessary sustaining strength to bear whatever may come.

As to the Psalmist's enemies and the traitor who was once a friend, God will deal with them as they deserve. The same divine power which sustains, and will at length redeem, the trustful and righteous will finally bring to destruction all murderers and liars. About the fate of these latter persons, however, Christians may not rejoice, though apart from divine intervention, that fearful fate follows infallibly from the rigid laws which govern causes and their effects.

## PSALM 55 (Heb. 56)

## AN OPPRESSED MAN'S CONFIDENCE IN GOD

## INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is abused and oppressed by enemies, fear takes hold of him, but his faith is unshaken. His absolute trust in God is expressed in a twice-repeated refrain (vv. 5 and 11).

1. Magistro chori. Secundum "Yônat 'elem rehoqim." Davidis. Miktam. Cum Philistaei eum tenerent in Gath.

For the choir-master. According to the tune, "The Silent Dove of Them That Are Far Off." A miktam. Of David, when the Philistines were holding him in Gath.

*Though Trampled Down by His Enemies, the Psalmist Has No Fear*  
(2-5)

2. Miserere mei, Deus, nam conculcat me homo, perpetuo pugnant opprimunt me.

Have mercy on me, O God, for man tramples upon me; fighting incessantly he oppresses me.

3. Conculcant me inimici mei perpetuo, quoniam multi pugnant adversum me.

Mine enemies trample upon me incessantly, for many fight against me.

Altissime, (4) quo die invadet me timor, ego in te confidam.

O Most High, on the day when fear will assail me, I will put my trust in Thee.

5. In Deo, cuius celebri promissum, in Deo, confido, non timebo: quid faciet mihi caro?

In God, whose promise I proclaim, in God do I trust; I shall not fear; what shall flesh do to me?

*The Psalmist Implores God to Be Mindful of His Hard Life and to Aid Him* (6-12)

6. Toto die obtrectant mihi, adversum me sunt omnes cogitationes eorum, ad malum.

All day long they malign me; all their thoughts are directed against me for evil.

7. Conveniunt, insidiantur, vestigia mea observant, quaerentes vitam meam.

They gather together, they lie in ambush, they watch my footsteps, seeking my life.

6. "Tota die, etc." Literally, *They constantly interfere with my affairs.*



8. Pro iniquitate repende illis,  
in ira populos prosterne, Deus.

9. Exsilii mei vias tu notasti;  
reconditae sunt lacrimae meae in  
utro tuo: nonne consignatae in  
libro tuo?

10. Tunc recedent inimici mei  
retrorsum, quodcumque invoca-  
vero te; hoc probe scio Deum esse  
pro me.

11. In Deo, cuius celebri pro-  
missum, (12) in Deo confido, non  
timebo: quid faciet mihi homo?

For their iniquity repay them, in  
anger, O God, lay *those* people low.

Thou hast marked the ways of  
my exile; my tears are stored in  
Thy water-skin; are they not en-  
tered in Thy book?

Then shall mine enemies fall  
back, whenever I shall have called  
upon Thee; thereby I know truly  
that God is for me.

In God, whose promise I pro-  
claim, in God do I trust; I shall  
not fear; what shall man do to me?

*On His Liberation, the Psalmist Will Fulfill His Vows of Thanksgiving*  
(13, 14)

13. Teneor votis, Deus, quae  
feci tibi, persolvam tibi sacrificia  
laudis,

14. Quoniam eripuisti vitam  
meam de morte, et pedes meos de  
lapsu, ut ambulem coram Deo in  
lumine viventium.

I am bound by the vows which  
I made to Thee, O God, to Thee  
will I offer sacrifices of praise,

For Thou hast rescued my life  
from death, and my feet from  
stumbling, that I may walk before  
God in the light of the living.

#### REFLECTIONS

It may seem strange that David in the Psalms is so constantly in trouble and beset by so many and such fierce enemies. But we shall understand when we reflect that he lived at a time and in a world far less civilized and refined than ours, and that he was a king surrounded by hostile factions within his own country and by pagan neighbors without.

Again it is remarkable that while He recognizes God as the first cause and supreme ruler of the world, he accepts without question or explanation the actual and frequent antagonism between God and His human creatures, as if the latter were independent of their source, at least in their actions, and had not come from a cause at once all-good and all-powerful. Whether or not this last difficulty and a solution of it occurred to the Psalmist, we may reason as follows.

9. "Exsilii mei." Literally, *Thou knowest my life to be that of a wanderer and a fugitive.*—"In utro tuo." God carefully collects every tear.—"Nonne consignatae, etc.," seems to mean that God keeps a memory of all sorrows and tears.

14. "In lumine viventium," i.e., in this life, preserved from death.

Although God made the world and everything in it, He is not, and cannot be, the cause of the evil that is in it. As possessing the fullness of being, God could not be the cause or source of anything defective. But evils, physical and moral, are here in abundance. How, then, harmonize these two opposing facts, that God made the world and all that is, and that evils abound in the world which God has made?

As a preliminary answer to this question we must note that things impossible cannot be done, even by God, for that would imply a contradiction in terms; it would mean that a thing could be and not be at the same time and under the same aspect. Therefore it follows that God cannot be God and not God at the same time; He cannot be at once and in the same way the Creator and a creature, cause and effect; He cannot be at once Supreme and not supreme.

If then God must be the only supreme being, the one and only all-perfect being, and this cannot be otherwise, it also follows that the world and every creature that God has made must by their very nature be less than God, less than perfect, and therefore to some extent at least, imperfect and defective; and if their nature is thus more or less faulty, so must be the actions which flow from it, if left to themselves: *agere sequitur esse*. The evils therefore which we find in the world, of whatever kind, arise in the first place from the limitations and defects inherent in every created being.

Why then, we may ask, did God create anything at all? Or why, since He chose to create, has He not supplemented by special gifts the defective natures of His creatures, so that all evil might be excluded on earth as it is in Heaven?

The answers to these questions are hidden in dark mysteries. All we can say is that God, being all-wise, all-perfect, all-powerful, must have had paramount reasons for creating the world and for permitting it to be as it is. It would be satisfying if we knew and could understand these reasons, but such knowledge is not for us now when we must needs walk by faith and not by sight.

At any rate, the Psalmist here, as elsewhere, takes things as he finds them. He knows that the world is bad in many ways, and that many people in it are somehow the source of much mischief; but he is also persuaded that God is altogether good and opposed to the evils of the world. When confronted with the evils that come from created beings, he is filled with fear, until he turns in faith to the supreme source of love and power. Then fear vanishes and troubles fade away like clouds before the rising sun; then he stands firm like a mountain amid wild tempests and surging seas. He knows that God keeps account of all his wanderings and his



tears, and that at length all will be well with him; he will continue to walk the ways of life with his Lord, because this has been the purpose of his many deliverances.

The evils of life, after all, hard and grievous as they are, cannot last; they are temporary and passing. But the rewards which God will give for bearing them with faith and patient trust are everlasting. God permits our many trials that we may profit by them unto a life worthy of the name.

### PSALM 56 (Heb. 57)

#### COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION

##### INTRODUCTION

Unwavering trust in God, in the midst of surrounding danger, is the dominant thought of this inspiring song. In thought, structure and contents, it is very like the preceding Psalm. The title indicates that it was written by David during his flight from Saul when in the cave, whether of Adullam (1 Kings 12) or of Engaddi (1 Kings 24) we cannot determine.

Verses 8-12 here, with a few changes, form the first verses of Psalm 107, a later poem. This Psalm has two parts, each ending with the same refrain.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Magistro chori. Secundum<br>"Ne destruxeris." Davidis. Mik-<br>tam. Quando a Saul in cavernam<br>fugit. | For the choir-master. Accord-<br>ing to the tune, "Destroy Not."<br>A miktam. Of David, when he<br>fled to the cave away from Saul. |
|--|---|

*The Psalmist Confidently Invokes God's Aid against Enemies Pressing on All Sides (2-6)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. Miserere mei, Deus, mise-<br>rere mei, quia ad te confugit anima<br>mea, et in umbram alarum tua-<br>rum confugio, donec transeat cala-<br>mitas. | Have mercy on me, O God,<br>have mercy on me, for my soul<br>seeks refuge in Thee, and in the<br>shadow of Thy wings I seek re-<br>fuge, until the calamity passes. |
| 3. Clamo ad Deum altissimum,<br>ad Deum qui bene facit mihi.   | I cry to God the Most High,<br>to God who has been my bene-<br>factor.  |

3. "Deum altissimum." Heb.: *Elohim Elyon*, which is the Elohist equivalent of *Yahweh Elyon*. It occurs again in Psalm 77:56.

4. Mittat de caelo et salvet me,  
opprobriis afficiat eos qui me per-  
sequuntur; mittat Deus gratiam  
suam et fidelitatem.

5. In medio leonum decumbo,  
qui avide devorant filios homi-  
num. Dentes eorum sunt lanceae  
et sagittae, et lingua eorum gladius  
acutus.

6. Excelsus appare super caelos,  
Deus; super omnem terram sit  
gloria tua!

May He send from heaven and  
save me, afflicting my persecutors  
with shame; may God send His  
grace and faithfulness!

I lie down in the midst of lions  
that devour greedily the sons of  
men. Their teeth are spears and  
arrows, and their tongue is a  
sharp sword.

Exalted above the heavens ap-  
pear, O God; may Thy glory be  
above every land!

*Now Certain of Liberation the Psalmist Will Thank God (7-12)*

7. Rete paraverunt gressibus  
meis: depresserunt animam meam;  
foderunt ante me fossam: cadant  
in eam.

8. Firmum est cor meum,  
Deus, firmum cor meum; cantabo  
et psallam.

9. Evigila, anima mea; evigi-  
late, psalterium et cithara! exci-  
tabo auroram.

10. Laudabo te in populis, Do-  
mine; psallam tibi in nationibus,

11. Quoniam magna est us-  
que ad caelum misericordia tua,  
et usque ad nubes fidelitas tua.

12. Excelsus appare super cae-  
los, Deus; super omnem terram  
sit gloria tua!

They have prepared a net for  
my steps, they have depressed my  
soul; they have dug a pit before  
me; let them fall into it.

My heart is unshaken, O God,  
my heart is unshaken; I will sing  
and make music.

Awake, O my soul; awake,  
psaltery and harp! I will awake  
the dawn.

I will praise Thee among the  
peoples, O Lord; I will make mu-  
sic to Thee among the nations.

For great even to heaven is Thy  
mercy, and Thy faithfulness even  
to the clouds.

Exalted above the heavens ap-  
pear, O God; may Thy glory be  
above every land!

##### REFLECTIONS

The implicit faith in God and trust in the divine goodness and promises which the Psalmist so often expresses are enough to put many Christians

4. "Gratiam suam, etc.," like ministering angels.  
8. "Firmum, etc." After fearing, he is filled with confidence, and even with joy.  
9. "Anima mea" in Hebrew means the inner part of a thing.—"Excitabo auro-  
ram," that the dawn may join in his praise of God.



to shame, if we consider the obscure and fragmentary revelation of the Old Testament and its meager graces as compared with the fuller revelation and abundant graces of the New Testament. When in great peril, his first thought is of God; not like those people who never think of the Lord at any other time, but like one whose converse with the divine is habitual and who knows from past and frequent experience how potent and sure that fellowship is. Under the protection of the divine wings he can endure any danger from man or other creature, because he knows such peril is finite and passing, while his help is infinite and abiding.

What is the secret of this extraordinary faith and confidence? Is it that the Psalmist was just an unusual person, a born saint or mystic, whose love and inclination towards God and the things of Heaven were as natural and spontaneous as are the earthly tendencies of other people? Were his spiritual gifts altogether singular, such as few persons can ever hope to enjoy? Did he speak only for himself and the comparatively small group of holy souls who have adorned Biblical literature and been torchbearers to the masses throughout religious history?

Doubtless the authors of the Psalms, like the writers of our other sacred books, were extraordinary spiritual characters, divinely selected and endowed for their high mission. But they would be little or no help to the rest of us, if a measure of their spiritual attainments were not also within our reach. In the first place, therefore, we can say that if their gifts were extraordinary, the trials within and without them, to which they were subjected, were equally beyond the ordinary. Our Lord, His Blessed Mother, the Apostles and martyrs, and the other saints of all times have had a harder lot in this world than the rest of us; if they enjoyed more graces, they also endured more hardships than we do. And even if the outward circumstances of their lives were sometimes less harsh than those of some of us, their inward sensitiveness was more keen because their natures were more refined, and thus their sufferings were subjectively greater than any of ours.

In the second place, we are not all required to attain to the same high degree of holiness, but only according to the measure of grace that God gives us. As star differs from star in splendor, so do holy people differ; in the heavenly country there are many mansions of never-ending glorious variety.

Again, that strong and ready faith with which the saints have ever been blessed is the ripe fruit of holiness, of friendship and fellowship with God, a communion founded upon the love which casts out all fear. Faith is indeed a pure gift of God, but its growth and fruitfulness depend also on our own much striving and vigilance. We cannot hope to have the

rewards and easy use of strong trust in God if the divine friendship is unknown to us or little cultivated by us.

Another fruit of the vivid faith and intimate communion with God which the Psalmist enjoys is the desire for the divine glory. He seeks not only his own deliverance, but also, and more, that through it God may be exalted above the heavens and His glory spread over the world. Real love is always concerned, first and foremost, with the good of the beloved; and it is the ardent desire of every fervent soul that his efforts, however weak and poor, may contribute as much as possible to the honor and glory of his Creator and Redeemer.

As to the Psalmist's enemies, they are to be pitied. The pits they have dug for him are for themselves, and into them they will fall in the long run. It is ever so. Wrong-doing and wrong living eventually recoil upon their source.

### PSALM 57 (Heb. 58)

#### REBUKE OF UNJUST JUDGES

##### INTRODUCTION

If, as the title suggests, David wrote this Psalm, it was likely during the reign of Saul. The author is inveighing against unjust judges who, instead of striving to secure the observance of the law, are themselves among its worst violators. Such men, he says, belong to a class of inveterate villains, obstinate and incurable, whom he prays the Lord to deprive of their power to continue to do harm. Their punishment will cause the righteous to rejoice and men in general to acknowledge and praise the just Ruler of the world.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Magistro chori. Secundum<br>"Ne destruxeris." Davidis. Mik-<br>tam. | For the choir-master. Accord-<br>ing to the tune, "Destroy Not."<br>Of David. A miktam. |
|--|---|

*The Psalmist Rebukes Unjust Judges Who, Instead of Acting as Vicegerents of God, Have Established a Norm of Injustice (2-6)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2. Num vere dicitis ius, poten-<br>tes? num iudicatis recte, filii ho-<br>minum? | Do you truly speak justice, you<br>mighty ones? Do you judge aright,<br>you sons of men? |
| 3. Immo in corde iniquitates   | Nay, in your hearts you work   |



patratis, in terra iniustitias dispensant manus vestrae.

4. Deviaverunt impii inde a sinu matris, inde ab utero erraverunt, qui mendacium dicunt.

5. Venenum est illis simile veneno serpentis, veneno aspidis surdae, quae aures suas obturat,

6. Ne audiat vocem fascinatorum, incantatoris incantantis perire.

*Against Unjust Judges the Psalmist Invokes the Divine Justice (7-12)*

7. Deus, contere dentes eorum in ore ipsorum; molares leonum confringe, Domine.

8. Dissolvantur quasi aquae quae defluunt; si dirigunt sagittas suas, sint velut obtusae.

9. Transeant sicut limax, quae diffluit, quasi fetus abortivus mulieris, qui solem non vidit.

10. Priusquam ollae vestrae senserint veprem, dum est viridis, aestus turbinis abripiat eum.

11. Laetabitur iustus, cum viderit vindictam, pedes suos lavabit in sanguine iniqui.

iniquities, your hands deal out injustices in the land.

From the very bosom of their mother the godless have gone astray, from the very womb have they erred that speak falsehood.

There is poison in them like the poison of the serpent, like the poison of the deaf asp that stops up its ears,

Lest it should hear the voice of the charmers, of the enchanter as he chants skilfully

O God, smash their teeth in their mouth; break the grinders of *those* lions, O Lord.

Let them be dissolved like waters which run away; if they aim their spears, let them be blunted.

Let them pass like a snail which melts away, like a woman's premature offspring which sees not the sun!

Before your pots feel the briar-brush, while it is green, may the hot fury of the whirlwind sweep it away.

The just man shall be glad when he sees the vengeance; he shall bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked.

5, 6. Their heart is so poisoned that they do not want to hear advice or proof.

10. A difficult verse. The Hebrew is perhaps best rendered as follows: *Before your pots can feel the thorns* (burning under them), *like raw flesh shall wrath sweep them away with a whirlwind*; or *shall He* (God) *sweep them away with a whirlwind in wrath* (Kirkpatrick). The meaning is clear in all renderings, namely, the sudden destruction of the wicked. The figure in the Hebrew is taken from travellers in the desert who to cook their meal have lighted under their pots a fire of dry thorns or brambles, but which a whirlwind suddenly sweeps away before anything is cooked.

11. "Pedes suos, etc.," like the soldier who for victory passes through the blood of the killed and wounded.

12. Et dicent homines: "Utique est fructus iusto, utique est Deus, iudicans in terra." And men shall say: "Yes, there is reward for the just man, yes, there is a God that judges on earth."

#### REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist begins here by attacking those who abuse judicial authority entrusted to them; but he soon merges those malefactors into an inveterate class of sinners whose habitual wrong-doing has so hardened them in evil ways that they seem hopeless. Such wicked men, he says, are estranged from God from the beginning of their lives, their thoughts and words are deceitful and false, their envenomed tongues are like those of deadly snakes, their ears are deaf both to the calls of patient love and the threats of outraged justice.

Then, as often in similar Psalms, the Psalmist calls down divine vengeance on those evil-doers. Only here he indulges in an unequalled display of metaphor, heaping figure upon figure, in order to express his intense emotion, as well as the transiency of defiant evil and the swift completeness of its destruction.

It is a deplorable fact that too many persons entrusted with authority never seem to realize or bear in mind the source from which they derive their powers. If they were really aware that all lawful authority is from God and that to Him they are in a special way accountable for the manner in which they exercise it, they would not be so eager for responsibility and how differently would they discharge its duties! As it is, they act as if there were no God, or as if they could go on recklessly with impunity forever.

The truth is that such functionaries are either practical atheists or notorious hypocrites or gross ignoramuses, or perhaps a combination of all these. That some of them pretend to be Christians and go through certain forms of Christianity, only makes their case worse. Nor can they find refuge in an ignorance which would excuse them; and so, if they have any belief in God at all, they must be regarded as hypocrites, denying by their way of living the faith they claim to possess. And Christians who make friends of such notorious sinners and keep their company give indirect approval of their bad lives and thereby scandalize other people.

The Psalmist says the righteous will rejoice over the punishment of the unworthy representatives of divine justice. Those hypocrites have

12. "Deus," a God. Heb.: *Elohim*. The plural form of El is here used doubtless to embrace both God and the earthly judges who are His representatives. This verse in St. Jerome reads: *Vere est fructus iusto; vere est Deus iudicans in terra.*



abused their God-given powers, while ignoring the source from which they derive them, they have oppressed and imposed upon their fellow-men, and scandalized them, they have made earthly things and unlawful gains their sole quest, with selfishness as their only standard of conduct. Their just punishment, therefore, will give legitimate satisfaction to all honest beholders as a vindication of God's existence and righteous rule over the world and of the cause of the innocent and just. But while there is reason for rejoicing over the downfall of wickedness and the triumph of righteousness, the spirit of Christ ever bids us to remember mercy, and to pity the fate of evil-doers, who are their own worst enemies.

### PSALM 58 (Heb. 59)

#### AGAINST RAPACIOUS AND BLOODY ENEMIES

##### INTRODUCTION

Here we have another profession of unfailing trust in God in the midst of perilous and difficult circumstances. The contents of the poem seem to bear out the claims of the title that it refers to the time when Saul sent his guards to David's house to watch him, that he might be killed in the morning (1 Kings 19:11). There are two main divisions in the Psalm, each ending with a similar refrain (vv. 10-11 and 18). These are again subdivided, the new divisions being marked by repeating the same verse (vv. 7 and 15).

1. Magistro chori. Secundum "Ne destruxeris." Davidis. Mik-tam. Quando Saul viros misit qui domum observarent, ut eum occiderent.	For the choir-master. According to the tune, "Destroy Not." A miktam. Of David, when Saul sent men to watch his house with a view to slaying him.
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#### *The Psalmist Describes the Plots of His Enemies, and Implores God's Assistance (2-11a)*

2. Eripe me de inimicis meis, Deus meus, ab insurgentibus contra me tuere me.	Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God, protect me from those that rise up against me.
3. Eripe me de patrantibus iniquitatem, et a viris sanguinum salva me.	Deliver me from workers of iniquity, and from men of blood save me.

4. Ecce enim insidiantur vitae meae, conspirant contra me potentes.

Non est crimen in me nec peccatum, Domine: (5) sine culpa mea procurrunt et aggrediuntur.

Evigila, occurre mihi, et vide; (6) nam tu, Domine exercituum, Deus Israel es.

Expergiscere, castiga omnes gentes, noli miserere omnium perfidorum.

7. Revertuntur vespere, latrant ut canes et percurrunt civitatem;

8. Ecce se iactant ore suo; contumeliae sunt in labiis eorum: "Quis enim audit?"

9. Sed tu, Domine, irrides eos, ludibrio habes omnes gentes.

10. Robur meum, ad te attendam, quia tu, Deus, praesidium meum es, (11) Deus meus, misericordia mea.

For behold, they lay ambushes for my life; mighty ones conspire against me.

There is neither crime nor sin in me, O Lord; without my fault they rush forward and attack.

Awake, come to meet me, and see; for Thou, O Lord of hosts, art the God of Israel.

Bestir Thyself, chastise all the nations; have no mercy upon all perfidious ones.

They return at evening, baying like dogs, and prowl about the city;

Behold, they brag with their mouth; insults are upon their lips: "For who hears?"

But Thou, O Lord, dost laugh at them, Thou dost deride all heathens.

To Thee, my strength, will I hearken, for Thou, O God, art my stronghold, O my God, my mercy.

#### *The Psalmist Prays God to Confound His Enemies (11b-18)*

Subveniat mihi Deus, faciat ut delecter de hostibus meis.

12. Deus, occide eos, ne offensae sint populo meo, conturba eos robore tuo et prosterne eos, clipeus noster, Domine.

13. Peccatum oris eorum est sermo labiorum eorum, et capiuntur superbia sua et maledictis et mendaciis quae dicunt.

May God come to me, may He make me to rejoice over mine enemies!

O God, slay them, lest they be scandals to my people; confound them with Thy strength and beat them down, O Lord, our shield.

Every word they utter is a sin of their mouth; let them be entrapped by their pride, and by the curses and lies which they speak.

12. The M.T. here has: *Kill them not, lest my people forget, or lest they forget my people.* But this rendering seems to contradict verse 14 below.

13. Whatsoever proceeds from their lips is a sin.



14. Perde eos in ira, perde, ut iam non sint, ut sciatur Deum regnare in Iacob et usque ad fines terrae.

15. Revertuntur vespere, latrant ut canes, et percurrunt civitatem;

16. Vagantur cibum quaerentes; si satiati non sunt, ululatum edunt.

17. Ego autem cantabo potentiam tuam, et exultabo mane de misericordia tua, quia factus es praesidium mihi, et refugium die angustiae meae.

18. Robur meum, tibi psallam, quia, Deus, praesidium meum es, Deus meus, misericordia mea.

Destroy them in wrath, destroy *them*, that they may be no more, that it may be known that God rules in Jacob and even to the ends of the earth.

They return at evening, baying like dogs, and prowl about the city;

They wander in search of food; and they howl, if they are not filled.

But as for me, I will sing of Thy strength, and in the morning I shall exult because of Thy mercy, because Thou art become my stronghold, and a refuge in the day of my distress.

O my strength, to Thee will I make music, for Thou, O God, art my stronghold, O God, my mercy.

#### REFLECTIONS

The picture of human wickedness here drawn is a distressing one. It is depressing to know the depths of degradation to which our nature is capable of descending. We might perhaps console ourselves with thinking that the poet is exaggerating, or depicting some condition of the remote past, if our own knowledge of similar or of parallel malice in countless forms did not put his words beyond doubt. There is too much daily evidence on all sides to question the truth of the description here given.

Reflecting on this aspect of our race, sometimes we cannot but wonder why God ever made man. For it is man from whom comes the one discordant note in the mighty music of creation here below. Apart from the wickedness and depravity of human beings, the world is marvellous in many ways—full of riches of all kinds, abounding in inexhaustible resources for pleasure and happiness, endless in the variety of its attractions, alternately beautiful and sublime to contemplate. All this is amply clear to anyone who reflects even casually on the myriad wonders of earth and sky, and of the kingdoms of vegetable and animal life. But the

sinfulness of man steps in, and our joy is then often turned into sorrow, our pleasure into pain, our singing into crying!

We know that Christianity has provided the teachings and the spiritual means sufficient to reform and renovate our nature, and thus make the world what it ought to be; but, in spite of all this, so far the progress has been so slow and the results so meager, if we consider mankind as a whole, that the general prospect is often far from encouraging. We are often tempted to ask whether the world on the whole is much better than it has ever been, whether it will ever be much better than it is. Of course there has been improvement in many ways; but so much bad sameness, and even retrogression, in many other ways!

It is no satisfactory solution of the matter simply to say that man is free. We are all free, at least to some extent. But in the first place, it is asked, why were we made free to do wrong? and secondly, why such a difference in the ways we use our freedom? The answer is not that the ability to do wrong belongs to freedom as such; for our Lord and the Blessed Virgin were free and the blessed in heaven are free, and the power to do wrong cannot be associated with them. Nor is the difference in the ways in which we use our freedom to be explained simply by saying that "we are free," for freedom is common to all normal human beings; and "what is common does not distinguish," as the Schoolmen say.

In answer to the first question, therefore, we must say that the ability to do wrong does unfortunately belong to the kind of defective nature which we have in this life; and as to the second question, we need to note that another element enters in to explain why we use our common freedom so differently, and that element is also our human nature, specifically the same but individually different, of which our kind of liberty or freedom is a mode or faculty. Hence, generally speaking and apart from special divine intervention, which we call grace, each one of us will use or abuse his freedom according to the nature he has. Some natures are strongly inclined to evil, others to good from their very birth. Men and women do not choose the natures they have; they inherit them, they find themselves with them, for better or for worse. How much these facts influence one's future conduct and responsibility only God can know; but they do account mightily for much that goes on in the world.

Amidst all this perplexity we can only continue to strive, to pray and to hope, as best we can, for improvement in ourselves and others, and leave the final issue with God. Certainly some, and even much, good can be done by proper effort. Otherwise teaching, exhortation, threats, promises, rewards and punishments would all be to no purpose; but every-day



experience proves that this is not so. Moreover, while human nature is to a great extent prone to evil, there is also a great deal of native good in much of it. Even the wicked have much good in them underneath a rough surface. Their badness is often due to many causes which can be changed and which greatly emphasize the poor natures and tendencies which they have inherited, such as lack of education or wrong education, evil environment, unnecessary poverty, absence of religious influence and the like. These are conditions which can be changed and improved, and those of us who are more fortunate, and who deplore so much the wickedness of man, have a duty to exert every reasonable effort and influence that our less favored brethren of the human family may be given a chance, with the help of God's grace, to bring out the good and to repress the evil that is in them.

### PSALM 59 (Heb. 60)

## LAMENTATION, CONFIDENCE AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AFTER A DEFEAT

### INTRODUCTION

The title of this Psalm affords the best explanation of the occasion that called it forth. David was occupied with a heavy war in the north against the Syrians. Edom, the ancient enemy of Israel, seized this occasion to attack Judea in the south, inflicting heavy losses on the Chosen People. Through Joab, his commander-in-chief, David sent an army which completely routed the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, to the south of the Dead Sea (2 Kings 8; 1 Paral. 18).

We may suppose that David wrote this Psalm immediately after dispatching the army to attack the Edomites. It was an anxious moment, the issue of which might decide the fate of his kingdom. Therefore, the monarch first complains to God for having abandoned His people, even though it be on account of their sins, to a disastrous defeat (vv. 3-7). But then he hopes for victory, recalling God's promise to give Israel possession of Canaan and supremacy over her frontier foes (vv. 8-10). The Psalm closes with an expression of confidence that God will yet give His people complete victory over their enemies (vv. 11-14).

Verses 7-14 of this Psalm are repeated to form the second part of Psalm 107.

1. Magistro chori. Secundum "Lilium legis." Miktam. Davidis. Ad docendum. (2) Quando contra Aram Naharaim et contra Aram Soba egressus est, et quando Ioab reversus devicit Edom in valle salis: 12,000 (hominum).

For the choir-master. According to the tune, "The Lily of the Law." A miktam. Of David, for teaching, when he went forth against Aram Naharaim and against Aram Soba, and when Joab returned and defeated Edom in the Valley of Salt: 12,000 (men).

### *The Psalmist Describes the Crushing Defeat of the People and Implores Aid for the Coming Battle (3-7)*

3. Deus, reppulisti nos, perfregisti acies nostras, iratus es: restitue nos.

O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast broken our battle fronts, Thou art angry; restore us.

4. Concussisti terram, scidisti eam; sana rupturas eius: nam vacillat.

Thou hast convulsed the land, Thou hast rent it; O heal its breaches, for it totters.

5. Imposuisti populo tuo dura; potasti nos vino inebrianti.

Thou hast laid hard things upon Thy people; Thou hast made us drink a staggering wine.

6. Statuisti timentibus te vexillum, ut fugerent ab arcu;

Thou hast set up a standard for them that fear Thee, that they may flee from the bow;

7. Ut liberentur dilecti tui, adiuva dextra tua, et exaudi nos.

That Thy beloved ones may be delivered, help with Thy right hand, and answer us.

### *The Psalmist Recalls God's Promise that All Neighboring Peoples Would Become Subject to the Israelites (8-10)*

8. Deus locutus est in sanctuario suo: "Exultabo et partibor Sichem, et vallem Succoth dime-

God has spoken in His holy place: "I shall exult and I will divide up Sichem, and measure out the valley of Succoth;

3. "Perfregisti acies nostras," i.e., Thou hast made our enemies to break through our battle-array, giving them victory over us.

8. "In sanctuario suo" may refer to God's holiness, or to Heaven, or to the Tabernacle.—"Sichem" represents the country west of the Jordan, the most important part of Canaan.—"Succoth" in Galaad is the land east of the Jordan. Succoth and Sichem stand for the whole of Palestine.



9. Mea est terra Galaad, et mea terra Manasses, et Ephraim galea capitis mei, Iuda sceptrum meum,

10. Moab pelvis lotionis meae; super Edom ponam calceamentum meum, de Philistaea triumphabo."

*The Psalmist Begs God's Active Assistance (11-14)*

11. Quis adducet me in civitatem munitam? quis deducet me usque in Edom?

12. Nonne tu, Deus, qui repulisti nos, nec iam egrederis, Deus, cum exercitibus nostris?

13. Da nobis auxilium contra inimicum, quia vanum est subsidium hominum.

14. Per Deum fortiter agemus, et ipse conculcabit inimicos nostros.

"Mine is the land of Galaad, and Mine the land of Manasses, and Ephraim is the helmet of My head, and Juda My sceptre,

"Moab is My wash-basin; upon Edom I will cast My shoe, over Philistia I will triumph."

Who will lead me into the fortified city? Who will lead me even into Edom?

Wilt not Thou, O God, who hast cast us off, Thou O God, who goest no longer forth with our armies?

Give us help against the enemy, for vain is the help of men.

Through God we shall do mightily, and He will trample upon our foes.

REFLECTIONS

Israel has been sorely punished for her sins. A colossal disaster has overtaken the Chosen People. The nation is as a broken wall, the ranks of its army have been shattered, all the land trembles, the state is disorganized, the very banner which had been given for parade to victory has become a signal for flight. And still worse, all this has occurred at God's own bidding. How can Israel any more be designated as the "Chosen People"?

It was a dark hour when these conditions existed. All seemed lost.

8-10. The Psalmist here recites an ancient promise which God gave to David, pledging to subject all of the land of Canaan to Himself and His king, David. Very probably the promise referred to is that found in 2 Kings 3:18.

9, 10. "Galaad" (Gilead) is the southern part of the territory east of the Jordan, and "Manasses" probably means the northern part of the same region.—"Ephraim" and "Iuda" represent all the country west of the Jordan. Ephraim, the strongest of all the tribes, is symbolic of strength, whereas Juda typifies wisdom.—"Moab" was a pagan country east of the Jordan. It was to become David's "wash-basin," a symbol of humiliating subjection.—"Edom" was south of the Dead Sea, and was to become like the slave to whom the victorious warrior would cast his sandals to be carried or cleaned. The shoe was also with many ancient people a sign of the right of property.—"Philistaea," the people of Philistia, who were also to be compelled to pay homage to David.

11. "In civitatem munitam" was probably Petra, the capital of Edom.

But suddenly light pierced the gloom when the Psalmist recalled the divine Oracle, which promised unity to Israel and the subjugation and submission of her foes. Man's unfaithfulness cannot undo God's promises. The Chosen People—beaten, scattered, humiliated—are still beloved, still God's "darlings," and they shall not be cast away forever. They needed chastisement, needed to be made aware of the futility of their presumptuous self-reliance; and this done, God will take care of them because He loves them, and will put to flight all their enemies.

These thoughts gave the Psalmist confidence and furnished the basis of the prayer with which he closes. A happy faith acknowledges past sins. It was Israel that first abandoned her true Friend; and then, to bring her to her senses, He abandoned her for a time, that she might learn how vain is all help which is not from Him, that He alone is her strength and her safety.

As with Israel, so with the rest of us often. How frequently does our folly lead us into peril, to grief and even to disaster! We know that God is our strength and our surest friend, and that all others are helps and friends only as they participate in His friendship by union with Him, through conformity with His laws. And yet we are led away by what are at best only shadows of God. We put our trust in ourselves and other creatures, in our physical and mental powers and those of other mortals, in the riches and resources of the world around us, in the favor and applause of men, and so on. So weak and earthly are we that the material world and its allurements, the attractions of creatures and the pleasures of the flesh make far stronger appeal to us than do the treasures of heaven and the spirit world.

Such is the poor stuff of which we are made! To be sensual, fleshly, carnal, is easy; it is within the reach of our natural powers. But to be spiritual, to seek the things that are above, requires effort and a strength which only God can provide.

But God is, and must be, ever ready to give us this needed strength. In order, however, that we may accept it and make use of it, there is required a disposition on our part which is not independent of our own efforts. Even though the every will and desire of the spiritual and supernatural must come from God, yet God does not force Himself upon us. In the shadowy land between the workings of grace and our cooperation with grace we cannot see all that goes on, but at the same time we know that every supernatural, meritorious work which comes from us is the joint-product of God's grace and our cooperation with it; God is the necessary principal cause and we the equally necessary secondary cause of every such good work. If therefore we are willing to do what we can,



hard though it is, God will do the rest, and a good life and salvation will be ours.

It is not forbidden us to like and to seek the good things of this world, provided we do so in order and within proper limits. All the good and beautiful and lovely objects of earth, of whatever kind and form, which so strongly appeal to us, are from God; they are reflections of Him, images and shadows of Him. And since we were made for Him, and ever yearn for that fullness of peace, pleasure and happiness which He alone can give, it is only natural that we should be attracted—sometimes almost beyond our control—by the glimpses we catch of Him here below. But we need to know and to be mindful that these things are not God, but only dim pictures of Him, only the trailing clouds of His glory; that we may have and enjoy them only according to the laws which regulate our particular life; that we must take care not to become so attached to any of them or so absorbed in them that we shall lose Him from whom they all come and in whom they are all found in a perfection which they have not and cannot have here.

In this ceaseless battle between the spirit and the flesh, between God and creatures, between the things we desire and the things we should desire, we can only pray and wait in patience for the time to come, for the happy state, in which we shall possess and enjoy God Himself, the fountain of all delights, in which, at last, we shall not hunger any more, or thirst any more, or pine any more.

### PSALM 60 (Heb. 61)

#### PRAYERS OF THE EXULTANT KING ARE GRANTED

##### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm was very probably written by David while he was in the country east of the Jordan in flight, during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Kings 15:22-26). Being far from Jerusalem and the Tent of the Lord where he loves to dwell, he utters a heartfelt prayer that he may return and again enjoy the protecting care of his Master. He closes with a prayer for Jerusalem's king, whose reign, through the Messiah, will endure forever; and he promises, in thanksgiving for his own restoration, to hymn the mercies of the Lord throughout his life.

1. Magistro chori. Fidibus. For the choir-master. With Davidis. stringed instruments. Of David.

#### *Driven into Exile, David Begs God to Restore Him to the Holy City and Its Citadel Sion (2-5)*

2. Audi, Deus, clamorem meum, intende orationi meae.

Hear, O God, my cry; give heed to my prayer.

3. Ab extremis terrae, ad te clamo, cum deficit cor meum.

From the ends of the earth I call to Thee, when my heart fails.

In petram extolles me, dabis quietem mihi, (4) quia praesidium es mihi, turris fortis contra inimicum.

Thou wilt exalt me upon a rock, Thou wilt give me rest, because Thou art a fortress to me, a tower of strength against the enemy.

5. Utinam habitem in tabernaculo tuo semper, confugiam sub tegmen alarum tuarum!

Would that I might dwell in Thy tent for ever, and find refuge under the cover of Thy wings!

#### *His Prayers Having Been Granted, David Asks for a Long Life and God's Favor (6-9)*

6. Tu enim, Deus, audisti vota mea; dedisti mihi hereditatem timentium nomen tuum.

For Thou, O Lord, hast heard my vows, Thou hast given me the inheritance of those that fear Thy name.

7. Dies adice ad dies regis, anni eius aequent generationes multas;

Add days to the days of the king, may his years equal many generations;

8. Regnet in aeternum coram Deo; gratiam et fidelitatem mitte, ut conservent eum.

May he reign before God for ever; send favor and faithfulness to preserve him!

9. Sic cantabo nomen tuum semper, et solvam vota mea omni die.

So will I sing Thy name for ever, and will fulfill my vows each day.

##### REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist is in exile, far removed from the Sanctuary, of all places on earth the most adorable to Him, because it was the material symbol of the divine presence, the one spot where he could most fully realize communion with his Lord. Deep gloom, therefore, overcasts his soul and

3. "Ab extremis terrae" almost always means a very distant region. With David it is an hyperbolical phrase.

7, 8. The eternity of the Messiah's reign, here referred to, is foretold also in 2 Kings 7:12-16; Luke 1:32, 33.—"Anni eius, etc." The king asks for a long life.



wraps him round as with a garment. Dear as was that home when he enjoyed it, it is dearer now that he is homeless. He recalls the sweet intimacies with Jehovah which then were his—intimacies which only holy souls can know—when he dwelt in safety, as in a tower of strength; and from his loneliness and sorrow now he cries to Heaven that it may be granted him, the faithful and reverent lover, to return to the house of his God and there abide evermore. He is a king himself, the representative of Jehovah here on earth, the type and forerunner of the Messiah to come, through whom and through whose everlasting kingdom he asks that his own throne and dominion may endure and be upheld forever.

It was sin that drove David from the place that he cherished and that interrupted the special divine communion which was his soul's delight. Absalom, his dearly beloved son, had rebelled against him.

Thus it is that sin, our own or others' wrong-doing, so often spoils for us also the best things in life. It is sin and our inborn tendency to evil that obscure our vision of God and of spiritual things, that lower or destroy our taste and relish for the higher life, that weaken and drag us down to earth, that stimulate fleshly desires and appetites, that deceive and betray our souls and rob them of the peace and happiness which they crave. And besides our own misdeeds and wayward natures, there are the sins of others around us in the world, some grievous and far reaching, whose influence we can hardly escape. There are the great seducers of mankind, who make a business of crime; the public scandal-givers, who spread moral disorder and disease far and wide; the notorious defrauders and oppressors of the poor and lowly, who despise and would enslave all but themselves in the world; the promoters and makers of war, who drench the earth in blood, demoralize and pauperize the nations, and turn large parts of the world into scenes of ruin and desolation for generations after them.

Little wonder, then, that holy souls in every age have looked upon the present world as a place of exile, a valley of tears, from which they long to be free. But, like St. Paul (Phil. 1:23-25), they are hard pressed between the alternatives of departing to be with Christ, which would be far better for themselves, and of remaining here where others of their suffering brethren of the human family may need their help. In self-denial, however, they prefer and are willing to remain here as long as they can be useful to God and to their fellow-man, but no longer.

## PSALM 61 (Heb. 62)

## OUR HOPE MUST BE IN GOD ALONE

## INTRODUCTION

At a time when detracting foes are plotting against his life and endeavoring to cast him down like a wall that is tottering, and when faint-hearted followers are inclined to yield to the influence of the power exhibited by the opposing forces, the Psalmist finds peace and confidence in the thought that God is his rock, his refuge, his salvation and his hope; and that, compared with the strength of his mighty Lord, all the power of man and of material wealth is as nothing—mere vanity.

The title attributes the Psalm to David, and the language is very similar to that of other Davidic Psalms, like 4, 17, 38, etc. It was probably written during the rebellion of Absalom (cfr. 2 Kings 15:4-14).

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| 1. Magistro chori. Secundum Iduthun. Psalmus. Davidis. | For the choir-master. According to Iduthun. A psalm. Of David. |
|--|--|

*The Psalmist's Sole Trust Is in God (2, 3; 6, 7)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. In Deo tantum quiescit anima mea, ab ipso venit salus mea.                  | In God alone does my soul rest; from Him comes my salvation.                    |
| 3. Ipse tantum est petra mea et salus mea, praesidium meum: nequaquam movebor. | He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; in no wise shall I be moved. |

*All the Attempts of the Psalmist's Enemies to Destroy Him by Force or Guile Are Vain (4, 5)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 4. Quousque irruitis in hominem, subvertitis eum omnes, ut parietem inclinatum, ut murum ruentem?                      | How long will you rush upon a man, all of you striving to overthrow him, like a leaning wall or a tottering battlement?                |
| 5. Profecto e loco meo excelso moliuntur me pellere, delectantur mendacio; ore suo benedicunt, et in corde maledicunt. | Truly, they strive to drive me from my exalted place, they delight in falsehood; they bless with their lips, and curse in their heart. |



*Why the Psalmist's Whole Trust Is Placed in God (6-9)*

6. In Deo tantum quiesce, anima mea, quia ab ipso venit quod spero.

7. Ipse tantum est petra mea et salus mea, praesidium meum: non movebor.

8. Penes Deum est salus mea et gloria mea, petra roboris mei: refugium meum in Deo.

9. Spera in eo, popule, omni tempore; effundite coram eo corda vestra: Deus est refugium nobis!

In God alone take rest, O my soul, for from Him comes what I hope.

He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be moved.

With God is my salvation and my glory, the rock of my strength; my refuge is in God.

Hope in Him, O people, all the time; pour out your hearts before Him; God is our refuge!

*Human Glory and Power Avail Nothing; Power and Justice Are Vested Only in God (10-13)*

10. Halitus tantum sunt filii hominum, fallaces filii virorum: in statera in altum ascendunt, leviores quam halitus omnes simul.

11. Nolite confidere oppressioni, neque in rapina vane gloriari; opibus, si crescant, ne adhaeseritis corde.

12. Unum locutus est Deus; haec duo audiui: "Deo potentia est, (13) et tibi, Domine, gratia; nam tu reddes unicuique secundum opus eius."

The sons of mankind are but a breath; the sons of men are deceptive; *weighed* in the scales they mount high, all of them together lighter than a breath.

Trust not in oppression, nor glory vainly in plunder; if riches increase, cling not to them with the heart.

One thing has God spoken; these two things have I heard: "With God there is power, and with Thee, O Lord, is lovingkindness; for Thou renderest to every one according to his work."

## REFLECTIONS

As a king, beset by opponents from within and enemies from without, and as a ruler of a theocratic state, David's life was doubtless both more turbulent and more richly endowed than are the lives of most of us. But

10. "Filii hominum" means the simple, lower classes of people; "filii virorum," the noblemen, higher classes. All these put together do not amount to the value even of a breath.

12. "Unum . . . duo." The "duo" is emphatic—a Semitic way of expressing the more important of two or more numbers.

in a bewildering world like this one, in which we have to pass our days, the secret of real peace for each and every human being, high or low, rich or poor, is in submission to the will of God. If we could be induced actually to put our complete trust in the power and goodness of God, how peaceful and undisturbed we should be, regardless of the conditions of our lives! How could anyone be greatly moved, no matter what might happen to him, who is convinced that an all-powerful and all-holy God watches over him as to every detail of his life from its beginning to its end?

Why do we not so put our trust in God? In theory perhaps we do, if we are intelligent Christians at all; but in practice so many of us do not! And why not? There are many reasons, the simplest and most fundamental of which is lack of proper faith. Either we have an altogether wrong idea of God, or we are not inwardly and entirely convinced that He is all we profess to believe He is. Then, we set too much store by the present world; we are too much concerned with our temporal needs, comforts, plans, hopes, ambitions. We fear that God may not be sufficiently interested in our welfare, or that, if we leave it to Him, He may have other things in view for us which will be hard, which will require labor, pain, sacrifice, sorrow, tears; as if these few years of earth were the whole of existence for us, as if the Father could neglect His children, as if to lose our life here in obedience to God's will were not to find it forever hereafter! Our trouble, then, is both a want of faith of the right kind and a false appreciation of values.

And pursuant to these faults of faith and judgment, giving our own will precedence over the divine, we proceed to put our trust in other things—in our puny powers and resources, in our frail fellow-creatures, in the passing and changing material world around us. Thus do most individuals and mankind in general act. And with what results! Human history tells the long, sad story. It is one of deception, disappointment, disillusionment, disaster, following one on another in every such life, generation after generation. Nor is there improvement, which should come from experience and observation. Children are likely to make the same mistakes as their parents before them, as they come along, though the bitter fruits of the actions of their predecessors are plain to all. Having put their trust in everything else besides God, with heart-breaking consequences, one would naturally expect that people would at last awaken to their mistakes, and try God for a change. But the faith is not there; conviction is lacking.

We may easily grant that such confident reliance on God as we should have is a special gift of divine grace; but assuredly also it depends on us,



on our willingness to accept it, to cooperate with it and make it fruitful. Just because it is a precious gift far above our deserts and natural power, we must expect to possess and enjoy it only at great cost and effort on our part, as far as lies in us. God does not confer His special favors on the unworthy, the indifferent, the unwilling. But on the other hand, God is generous with His grace to those who do the best they can to obey His will and please Him; God will never deny His help to him who does all that lies in his own power.

Neither should we fear that complete trust in God for time and eternity will cause us to neglect our temporal affairs and duties. That would be a poorly instructed faith which would presume to throw everything upon God and neglect obligations to self, to those depending upon us and to our neighbors; as if the mental and physical faculties, and many other gifts we have, had been given us for nought. That would not be the virtue of faith, but the sin of presumption!

### PSALM 62 (Heb. 63)

#### LONGING FOR GOD, OUR LIFE AND SALVATION

##### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is permeated with sentiments of the most tender and ardent love of God, and is one of the most pathetic cries that ever proceeded from the heart of David. The royal prophet's favorite but ungrateful son Absalom had just raised an army against him, and forced him to take refuge in the desert of Juda. There David in mourning offered up his morning prayer to the Lord for the Sanctuary and its sacrifices. Dejected as he was in his exile, he hoped once more for delivery through the help of Jehovah.

From the earliest days of the Church this Psalm has been used as part of the morning office.

1. Psalmus. Davidis, cum in deserto Iuda commoraretur.

A psalm. Of David, while he sojourned in the desert of Juda.

*As the Parched Land Longs for Rain, So the Psalmist Thirsts for God*  
(2-4)

2. Deus, Deus meus es: sollicite te quaero; te sitit anima mea, de-

O God, Thou art my God; anxiously I seek Thee; my soul is

siderat te caro mea, ut terra arida et sitiens, sine aqua.

athirst for Thee, my flesh pines for Thee, like an arid and thirsty land without water.

3. Sic in sanctuario contempler te, ut videam potentiam tuam et gloriam tuam.

So I contemplate Thee in the sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory.

4. Quia melior est gratia tua quam vita, labia mea praedicabunt te.

Because Thy favor is better than life, my lips shall proclaim Thee.

*God Is the Psalmist's Whole Good upon Which His Memory Dwells Night and Day (5-9)*

5. Sic benedicam tibi in vita mea: in nomine tuo attollam manus meas.

So will I bless Thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name.

6. Sicut adipe et pinguedine satiabitur anima mea, et labiis exultantibus laudabit os meum,

My soul shall be filled as with marrow and fat, and my mouth shall praise with exultant lips,

7. Cum memor ero tui super stratum meum, in vigiliis meditabor de te.

When on my couch I shall be mindful of Thee, I shall meditate on Thee in the night watches.

8. Etenim factus es adiutor meus, et in umbra alarum tuarum exulto:

For Thou art become my helper, and I exult in the shadow of Thy wings.

9. Adhaeret anima mea tibi, me sustentat dextera tua.

My soul clings to Thee, Thy right hand sustains me.

*The Psalmist's Enemies Will Perish in Misery, but the King and His Faithful Servants Shall Rejoice (10-12)*

10. Qui autem perdere quaerunt animam meam, introibunt in profunda terrae.

But they that seek to destroy my soul shall go into the depths of the earth.

11. Tradentur in manus gladii, portio vulpium erunt.

They shall be delivered to the hand of the sword, they shall be the portion of foxes.

12. Rex vero laetabitur in Deo,

But the king shall rejoice in God;

6. "Adipe et pinguedine." The *marrow* and *fat* were the richest meats of the sacrificial banquet. But to praise God is more delightful to the soul of the Psalmist than to partake of these delicious foods. The soul of the Psalmist, united to God, feels as if present at a rich feast where it is completely satisfied.

7. "In vigiliis." The ancient Jews divided the night into three watches (Lam. 2:19; 1 Kings 11:11). Later they adopted the Roman method of four watches of three hours each (Matt. 14:25; Mark 13:35).

12. "Iurat per eum," i.e., by God. To swear by God in reverence is an act of worship by which His supreme authority is acknowledged.



gloriabitur omnis qui iurat per eum,  
quia obstruetur os loquentium ini-  
qua. everyone that swears by Him shall  
glory, because the mouth of them  
that speak evil shall be stopped.

## REFLECTIONS

Every soul is athirst for God, though it may not know or be distinctly aware of this. And however astonishing this statement may seem, or however much one might at first be tempted to question it, its truth is embodied in the clear fact that every soul craves its own perfection, its perfect happiness and satisfaction, which can be found nowhere save in God.

It is a matter of experience that no created good can give us all we want. At best such goods are too limited, too incomplete, too transient, too much encompassed with faults and imperfections for our needs. All of them put together cannot satisfy all our wants and desires; and even when some particular satisfaction is experienced, it is only for the moment or for a short time, and it is followed by satiety as soon as the limits of its cause or source are reached. Thus money will buy food and clothing and shelter, and the pleasures of mind and body will give thrills and passing delights; but these are not enough, they always leave in us a vast void, ever yawning for more or for something else, but never filled.

Every soul, therefore, has a capacity for enjoyment, for satisfaction, for happiness, which no creature or combination of created goods can fill or complete, and which only the infinite being of God can satisfy. And it would be wrong to say that such a capacity has been given us in vain, without any good on earth or in Heaven adequate to its demands; for then it would follow that God had given us a false nature, that He had deceived us and made a mockery of us in the very heart of our being. Since, then, each human being is ever striving to satisfy a capacity which only God can fill, we rightly say that every soul seeks God and is athirst for Him, however darkly or deviously.

The trouble, however, is that, while everyone hungers and thirsts for that which will give him his fill, comparatively few are enlightened enough to know where this is to be found; and so the many eat at earthly cribs and poor tables and drink from shallow, and often muddy, pools and cisterns, instead of going to the eternal banquet and the fountain of living waters. They grope as in the dark, seeking, striving, yearning; yet not knowing which way to go.

And of those who are better instructed and are convinced of God's transcendent excellence and absolute sufficiency for all our cravings, how

many seem to lack the strength to rise and go to the Father! These appear to understand that all earthly enjoyments and possessions, whether of body or of soul or of both, have but a feather's weight when compared with the pure, heavy gold of God; nevertheless, like sick people unable to rise from their lowly beds, they continue to pass their days and years on the same low, unsatisfying level. To these persons, in actual practice, the shadow appeals more strongly than the substance, the corporal more vividly than the spiritual, the temporal more earnestly than the eternal; and all because the lower is easier, nearer and more tangible than the higher, more directly and instantly alluring to the poor natures which they have. And often when such souls have been, by the grace of God, lifted up for a time and given a taste of the unparalleled delights and sweetness of God and the world to come, they have, after a while, in a moment of weariness and strain, or when dazzled by some earthly ray or reflection of the central Luminary, turned again to the lower goods and pleasures around them here on earth, forfeiting the complete for the partial, the eternal for the temporal. And of course precious graces, gifts, treasures, once possessed and then lost, are always hard to recover.

Alas for these poor children of God who know not what to do, or are too weak to do what they know they should do, or have proved to be unequal to the labor and strain required for the great prizes of the spirit! Their plight is pitiable. If only they could long for God as they do for creatures, as they do for their present mental and fleshly gratifications—which at most and best are mere reflections of God—how much easier would be their struggle, how much more bearable their lot! What remains for them, except, in humility and tears, to beg of God to supplement their poor natures and weak efforts and by His grace to lift them up to the heavenly goods for which they are longing in their feeble way, but to which they can never attain if left to themselves?

Very few persons can ever hope to enjoy the mystic graces of a David, but each and all can do the best that in them lies, however poor it is, and can continue to hope and strive in their own simple fashion that God will yet, or again, become their sole portion and delight, or will at least give them a greater and more constant longing and taste for Himself and the things that lead to Him than for the things that lead away from Him. Like the Psalmist in exile and far from the beloved visible symbols of the presence of his Lord, those unsatisfied and yearning souls should remember past mercies and deliverances, and see in them earnest and assurances of graces and blessings to come.



## PSALM 63 (Heb. 64)

## GOD'S JUDGMENT ON PERFIDIOUS PERSECUTORS

## INTRODUCTION

In words that ring with a tone of prophetic authority we are assured in this poem that divine judgment will at length overtake the enemies of the just, and that, when it comes, it will be executed with such swiftness as utterly to dismay the wicked, and serve at once as a warning to those who behold it and as a consolation to the righteous, who shall see in it a manifestation of divine justice.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. Davidis.

For the choir-master. A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Invokes God's Aid against Malicious Liars Who Conspire against the Pious (2-7)*

2. Audi, Deus, vocem meam, dum queror; a timore inimici custodi vitam meam.

Hear, O God, my voice as I complain; guard my life from the fear of the enemy.

3. Protege me a concilio malignorum, a tumultu agentium iniqua,

Protect me from the malignant throng, from the tumult of the workers of iniquity,

4. Qui acuunt ut gladium linguas suas, dirigunt ut sagittas verba venenata,

Who whet their tongues like a sword, and aim their poisoned words like arrows,

5. Ut feriant ex latebris innocentem, de improvise feriant eum nihil timentes.

To strike down from ambush the innocent man, to strike him down unawares, fearing nothing.

6. Firmiter proponunt sibi rem malam, conspirant de laqueis tendendis occulte, dicunt: "Quis nos videbit?"

They discuss evil resolutely, secretly they plot to lay snares, they say: "Who will see us?"

7. Excogitant nefaria, occultant cogitationes excogitatas, et mens cuiusque et cor sunt profunda.

They form vile schemes, they hide the plans they have devised, and the mind and heart of each one are deep.

7-9. The more these evil men try to hide their wicked plans and schemes, the nearer their ruin is.

*The Destruction of the Wicked Is a Warning for All and an Encouragement of the Just (8-11)*

8. Sed Deus ferit eos sagittis, de improvise percutiuntur vulneribus,

But God strikes them with His arrows, unexpectedly are they pierced with wounds,

9. Et ruinam parat eis lingua ipsorum: capita movent omnes qui vident eos.

And their own tongue prepares their ruin; all that see them shake their heads.

10. Et omnes timent et praedicant opus Dei, et perpendunt acta eius.

And all fear and proclaim the work of God, pondering what He has done.

11. Laetatur iustus in Domino et confugit ad eum, et gloriantur omnes recti corde.

The just man is glad in the Lord and takes refuge in Him, and all the upright of heart glory.

## REFLECTIONS

The central thoughts of this Psalm have to do with godless sinners, suffering innocence, divine retribution, and lessons to be drawn from God's actions in punishing sin. All these are frequent themes in other Psalms; but the singer here and elsewhere feels that they cannot be stressed too often since the facts of life which occasion them and draw attention to them are so much a part of the experience of many persons.

This description of enemies and of their plans and machinations would seem an exaggeration if applied to any ordinary life; but it has a real setting and is entirely intelligible if connected with a conspicuous and representative person like King David, as suggested by the title of the Psalm; or with the Chosen People, if Israel personified was the speaker.

It is not pleasant or cheerful to reflect that our present world never has been, and perhaps never will be, without an ample quota of godless transgressors, private and public. And yet so the world is made; so God wisely permits it to be. Such sinners are deluded lovers of self, haters of mankind, rebels against society and established order, human beasts of prey, denizens of the jungle, but without the sense of natural decency and fair play which often prevails among wild animals. And their wicked toll would be bad enough if it did not include the innocent and continue so long. That lawless sinners should suffer among themselves and mutually share the evil consequences of their wrong-doing, causes little wonder and would seem to be what they deserve. But that the good and the inoffensive should suffer also from the sins of those others, and should many times be the principal sufferers, and that notorious offenders

9. "Capita movent," in awe and contempt.



should, as often happens, prevail and prosper so long, even until whole peoples and nations are ruined—these are indeed problems which heavily tax one's faith and resourcefulness to explain.

The Psalmist accepts these difficulties without question, and finds satisfaction in the thought that divine retribution will eventually overtake all grievous and unrepentant sinners, and that other evil men will derive salutary lessons from the fate of wanton transgressors while good men will come to understand and praise the justice of God.

This solution is not enough for Christians. We too want sins punished and wrongs righted, and we know that justice when executed teaches helpful lessons of restraint to the bad and of encouragement to the good. But when just punishment is long delayed, as so frequently happens, what recompense is there for countless innocent victims whom sin and crime have cruelly tortured and already swept away, perhaps long since? And what about the scandal given and taken and the evil seeds that have grown and borne their bitter harvest during sin's long unclouded day? It would be a poor and unchristian comfort, during the bloody and fiery reign of any of the many murderers and tyrants of history, for example, to think that on some far-off day those human demons will be overthrown and receive the punishment due their inhuman deeds. No, there must be some recompense and solution here and now for the oppressed, the enslaved and the tortured; and the comfort given them must be something higher than mere vengeance and more immediate than a manifestation of justice which punishment will at long last provide.

Our Lord Himself, His Holy Mother, His Apostles and saints furnish the only answer here and point the one way out, namely, to bear in patient faith, as a spiritual discipline and means to spiritual perfection, the wrongs we cannot now cure or prevent. Accepting in this way the evils they could not avoid, those holy leaders triumphed over them, one by one, as they came along, and made of them steps that led to the heights of Heaven.

This is an uninviting prospect to mere human eyes and a burden all too heavy for natural strength to bear. But to spiritual vision and the grace that God provides to those who really want it, it is at once delightful and easy; it is the food on which holy souls have ever fed and nourished themselves unto everlasting life.

Moreover, Christianity teaches its followers to hate sin and to strive in every lawful way within their power for its removal and destruction, while pitying the sinner and trying to save him. There is no place in the religion of Christ for rejoicing over the loss of even one of God's children, however bad he may be.

## PSALM 64 (Heb. 65)

## SOLEMN THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S BLESSINGS

## INTRODUCTION

This is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God for an exceptionally bountiful harvest, and was to be sung by all the people gathered together at Jerusalem for one of the great national festivals, doubtless the Passover. Pentecost or Tabernacles could hardly be meant, since they marked the close of the harvest, and here the corn is flourishing in the field (v. 14).

It is becoming that a grateful people should praise and thank Him who hears their prayers, pardons their sins and invites them to His holy House (vv. 2-5). He is their God and Saviour, and the hope of all the world; He has established the mighty mountains, He stirs up the thundering sea, to the astonishment of men near and far (vv. 6-9). He sends the rains and fertilizes the soil, and brings forth an overflowing harvest (vv. 10-14).

The Hebrew title ascribes this poem to David. In the Septuagint and Vulgate there is an addition which makes it a song of Jeremias and Ezechiel for the returning Babylonian exiles. The Psalm was also appropriate for use by the returning exiles, but this was not the occasion that first called it forth.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. Davidis. Canticum.

For the choir-master. A psalm. Of David. A canticle.

*Thanksgiving for the Remission of Sins and Admission to the Temple*  
(2-5)

2. Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion et tibi reddatur votum, (3) qui exaudis preces.

A hymn befits Thee, O God, in Sion, and let a vow be paid to Thee who answerest prayers.

Ad te omnis caro venit (4) propter iniquitates. Opprimunt nos delicta nostra: tu ea dimittis.

To Thee all flesh has recourse because of its sins. Our faults weigh us down; Thou dost dismiss them.

5. Beatus, quem eligis et asumis: inhabitat in atriis tuis. Satis-

Blessed is he whom Thou choolest and takest; he dwells in

3, 4. The division of these verses in M.T. is not satisfactory; verse 3a should be joined with verse 2, and 4a with 3, as in the version above.



mur bonis domus tuae, sanctitate  
templi tui.

Thy courts. May we have our fill  
of the good things of Thy house,  
of the holiness of Thy temple!

*Praise of God, the Creator and Lord of Nature and the Moderator of  
Human Events (6-9)*

6. Signis stupendis exaudis nos  
cum iustitia, Deus salvator noster,  
spes omnium finium terrae et mari-  
um procul,

7. Qui firmas montes virtute  
tua, accinctus potentia,

8. Qui compescis sonitum maris,  
sonitum fluctuum eius et tumultum  
nationum:

9. Et timent, qui habitant ter-  
minos terrae, propter signa tua; ex-  
trema Orientis et Occidentis gaudio  
reple.

With astounding signs Thou  
answerest us in justice, O God  
Our Saviour, hope of all the ends  
of the earth and of the seas afar,

Who dost establish the moun-  
tains by Thy might, girded with  
power,

Who dost curb the roaring of  
the sea, the roaring of its waves  
and the tumult of the nations:

And they that inhabit the ends  
of the earth are in fear because of  
Thy signs; the outermost regions  
of the East and of the West Thou  
dost fill with joy.

*Thanksgiving for the Fertility of the Earth and an Abundant Harvest  
(10-14)*

10. Visitasti terram et irrigasti  
eam, multum locupletasti eam.  
Rivus Dei repletus est aquis, para-  
sti frumentum eorum; ita enim  
parasti eam:

11. Sulcos eius irrigasti, com-  
planasti glebas eius, imbribus eam  
mollisti, benedixisti germini eius.

12. Coronasti annum benigni-

Thou hast visited the earth and  
watered it, Thou hast greatly en-  
riched it. God's stream is brimming  
with waters; Thou hast provided  
their grain; for thus Thou hast pre-  
pared the earth:

Thou hast watered its furrows,  
Thou hast levelled its clods, Thou  
hast softened it with showers,  
Thou hast blessed its springing  
growth.

Thou hast crowned the year with

10. "Rivus Dei," i.e., the rain which comes from heavenly receptacles.

12. "Semitae tuae." God is pictured as passing over the earth dispensing benefits.

tate tua, et semitae tuae pinguedi-  
nem stillant.

13. Stillant pascua deserti, et  
colles exsultatione se cingunt.

14. Vestiuntur gregibus arva, et  
valles operiuntur frumento: ac-  
clamant et cantant.

Thy bounty, and Thy paths drip  
lushness.

The pastures of the wilderness  
drip, and the hills gird themselves  
with rejoicing.

The fields are clothed with flocks,  
and the valleys are covered with  
grain: they cry out *for joy*, yea,  
they sing.

#### REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist's soul is overflowing with exultant joy as he contem-  
plates the divine goodness to Israel. God answers the prayers of His  
people, He blesses them with the graces of His holy House, He enriches  
their land and gives them an abundant harvest, and so amply provides  
for all their needs, both of body and of soul. Nay more, this same divine  
benefactor is likewise the hope and refuge of all the rest of the world,  
to which He speaks and reveals Himself through the spiritual and tem-  
poral favors He confers on the Chosen People and through His mighty  
deeds in nature and history.

In the midst of his prayer of jubilation the Psalmist is saddened for a  
moment as he reflects on the transgressions of his people (verse 4),  
knowing that sin always hinders full and ready access to God; but then  
this very weakness furnishes another reason for rejoicing, since upon  
repentance God grants forgiveness, thus showing the extent of His love  
for His dear ones. After pardon the cleansed soul is enabled to approach  
the House of its Lord with added confidence and to take up its abode  
there, surrounded and supplied with every good it can desire, calm and  
secure amidst the blessings which faith, love, fellowship and obedience  
provide, regardless of tempests and storms that may afflict its life from  
without.

Gratitude for favors received is always a duty, even among men; and  
the more one has been blessed, the more thankful one should be. Nor is  
there anyone who has been entirely excluded from a share in the good  
things that have been bestowed from above. Of course it goes without  
saying that none of us has all he wants; that would be impossible short  
of Heaven. Where we all are apt to fail is in recognizing the blessings we  
have and being thankful for them.

Furthermore, those who have been more richly endowed, physically  
or mentally, temporally or spiritually, than the common run of their  
kind, generally seem unaware that the virtues of humility and charity



should especially characterize their lives rather than sins of pride and hardness. After all, what claim has any of us to special gifts? And for what have those gifts been vouchsafed? The very fact that God has singled out any of His creatures for particular blessings of whatever kind ought to make them feel all the more their intrinsic unworthiness to be thus preferred to their fellow-mortals, and should incline them to share, as far as they reasonably can, with others less favored the fruits of their superior qualities and possessions. To those who rightly understand their relations to their brethren of the one human family, to be able to assist others in their needs, whatever those needs may be, constitutes one of the chief purposes of our earthly life as well as one of the principal sources of our present happiness. Thus can we give a real proof that we love our neighbor as ourselves. And in doing good for our neighbor we are also serving God, for our Lord has solemnly declared that what we do to the least of His brethren we do to Him (Matt. 25:34-45).

### PSALM 65 (Heb. 66)

#### HYMN DURING A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

##### INTRODUCTION

Another song of thanksgiving for singular benefits. The Psalm has two main divisions, in the first of which the people, speaking in the first person plural, thank God for His special favors to Israel as a nation (vv. 1-12); and in the second of which the leader and representative of the people, speaking in the first person singular, prepares to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and then tells the people how it was that God blessed him with success in their behalf, namely, because of perseverance in prayer and avoidance of sin on his part (vv. 13-20).

We think Dr. T. E. Bird is very probably right in assigning Josue as the author of this Psalm, as can be seen from an analysis of its contents.

- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Magistro chori. Canticum. | For the choir-master. A canticle. |
| Psalmus.                     | A psalm.                          |

#### *The Whole Earth Is Invited to Praise God (1-4)*

- |                                 |                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Exsultate Deo, omnes terrae, | Shout with joy unto God, all       |
| cantate gloriam nominis eius,   | lands, sing the glory of His name, |
| laudem praeclaram reddite ei.   | give glorious praise to Him.       |

3. Dicite Deo: "Quam stupenda sunt opera tua! ob magnitudinem roboris tui blandiuntur tibi inimici tui.

4. Tota terra adoret te et cantet tibi, cantet nomen tuum."

Say to God: "How astounding are Thy works! Because of the greatness of Thy might Thy enemies cringe before Thee.

"May all the earth adore Thee and sing to Thee, may it sing Thy name."

#### *The Psalmist Recalls the Liberation from Egypt and the Aid Which God Furnished in All Calamities, While Sternly Testing His People (5-12)*

5. Venite et videte opera Dei: stupenda patravit inter filios hominum!

6. Convertit mare in aridum; pedibus flumen transierunt: ideo laetemur de eo.

7. Dominatur potentia sua in aeternum, oculi eius gentes observant: rebelles ne se extollant.

8. Benedicite, gentes, Deo nostro et annuntiate famam laudis eius,  
9. Qui dedit animae nostrae vitam, nec sivit commoveri pedem nostrum.

10. Nam probasti nos, Deus; igne nos examinasti sicut examinatur argentum;

11. Induxisti nos in laqueum; onus grave imposuisti lumbis nostris;

12. Incedere fecisti homines super capita nostra; transivimus per ignem et aquam: sed relaxationem dedisti nobis.

Come and see the works of God: He has wrought astounding deeds among the sons of men!

He changed the sea into dry land; they passed through the flood on foot: therefore, let us be glad because of Him!

He rules by His power for ever; His eyes keep watch over the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves.

Bless our God, you nations, and proclaim the fame of His praise,

Who gave life to our soul, and suffered not our foot to be moved.

For Thou has tried us, O God; Thou hast tested us with fire as silver is tested;

Thou didst lead us into a net; Thou didst lay a heavy burden upon our loins;

Thou didst make men march over our heads; we passed through fire and water: but Thou hast given us relief.

3. "Blandiuntur tibi," i.e., they praise Thee against their will.

9. "Qui dedit, etc.," in the Promised Land of Canaan.

11. "In laqueum," of Egyptian bondage.

12. "Relaxationem, etc.," i.e., abundance in the Promised Land.



*For a Peril Recently Overcome the People Pay Promised Vows (13-20)*

13. Introibo domum tuam cum holocaustis, reddam tibi vota mea,

14. Quae protulerunt labia mea quaeque promisit os meum in tribulatione mea.

15. Holocausta ovium pinguium offeram tibi cum adipe arietum: immolabo boves cum hircis.

16. Venite, audite et narrabo, omnes qui timetis Deum, quanta fecerit animae meae!

17. Ad ipsum ore meo clamavi, et laudavi eum lingua mea.

18. Iniquitatem si intendissem in corde meo, non exaudisset Dominus.

19. Sed exaudivit Deus: attendit voci precessionis meae.

20. Benedictus Deus, qui non reppulit precessionem meam neque amovit a me misericordiam suam.

I will go into Thy house with holocausts, I will pay Thee my vows,

Which my lips declared, and my mouth promised during mine adversity.

I will offer Thee holocausts of well-fed sheep with the fat of rams; I will immolate oxen with he-goats.

Come and listen, all you that fear God, and I will recount what great things He has done for my soul!

I called to Him with my mouth, and praised Him with my tongue.

If I had harbored evil in my heart, the Lord would not have answered *me*.

But God has answered, *and* given heed to the voice of my prayer.

Blessed be God, who has not spurned my prayer, nor withdrawn His mercy from me.

## REFLECTIONS

This history of Israel was a parable for the rest of the world, collectively and singly. It was meant to teach all peoples what God is, what He expects from men in general and in particular, what blessings follow upon obedience to His will as expressed in His laws, and what punishments await all deliberate violators of His mandates. The Chosen People were, so to speak, a specimen group which God had selected and set apart, to experience intimate relations with their Maker and supreme Ruler, to be recipients of His special favors and heavenly condescensions, to be witnesses of His personal interventions and mighty deeds in their behalf, and to know the light and joy that flood the path of those who walk in the way of the Lord.

Thus understanding God's purpose in and for Israel, we can also understand to some extent all that happened to that extraordinary race—

its heights and depths, its victories and defeats, its triumphs and failures, the glories to which betimes it attained and the ignominies into which at other times it sank. When the Chosen People were faithful to their God-given laws, they were prosperous and happy. Their primitive condition and undeveloped spiritual capacity and perceptions made it necessary for God to confer on them temporal rewards for spiritual faithfulness. And had they been entirely faithful, the glowing promises of the Prophets, which the people generally understood so literally, would have been fulfilled also that way; and the temporal peace and abundance which would then have been theirs, had they been rightly used, would in due course have been followed by the spiritual treasures of which those earthly gifts were intended to be but faint symbols. But as their hearts became gross and their desires and aspirations more and more earthly and material, they never, as a people and for long, possessed the former favors, nor ever were they to enjoy the latter.

Christianity, as the reality of which Judaism was the figure and shadow, naturally requires more of its followers. Christians are obliged not only to obey the laws that govern their natural and supernatural lives, but they must also have a higher and more spiritual view of their present existence, of all that happens to them and to others while here, and of the rewards that follow upon faithful service. They must not, therefore, expect temporal recompense for their good lives, though virtuous living preserves from many present ills and gives its own rewards; they must regard all mankind as God's offspring who are called upon to praise their Maker and have the same high destiny as themselves; they need to understand that the road to Heaven is the way of the cross, that, far from indulging any sense of exclusiveness and personal complacency, sacrifice and self-denial for God and one's neighbor are of the very essence of their religion, and that, consequently, we are to praise God's mercy to others as well as to ourselves, and make it known as far as we can to all the world.

## PSALM 66 (Heb. 67)

## A BLESSING IS ASKED FOR THE PREACHING OF THE FAITH TO THE GENTILES

## INTRODUCTION

This poem is a thanksgiving song for a bountiful harvest, sung by the people in the Temple at the Feast of Pentecost, and perhaps also at the other great national festivals of Passover and Tabernacles. God has



blessed Israel with an abundant harvest (v. 7), thus showing His love and care for His people; and this material benefit is a type of the larger spiritual blessings in which all the world will share during the Messianic era.

Underlying the Psalm, therefore, is the consciousness of Israel's mission to the world as the Messianic nation; she is God's instrument for the ultimate spread of His universal Kingdom.

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|--|---|
| 1. Magistro chori. Fidibus. Psalmus. Canticum. | For the choir-master. With stringed instruments. A psalm. A canticle. |
|--|---|

*The People Ask Grace to Fulfill Their Duty of Preaching Salvation to the Gentiles (2-4)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. Deus misereatur nostri, et benedicat nobis; serenum praebeat nobis vultum suum, | May God be merciful to us and bless us; may He look benignly upon us,         |
| 3. Ut cognoscant in terra viam eius, in omnibus gentibus salutem eius.             | That people may know His way on earth, His saving help among all the nations! |
| 4. Celebrent te populi, Deus, celebrent te populi omnes.                           | May the peoples praise Thee, O God, may all peoples praise Thee!              |

*All Nations Are Invited to Rejoice in the Just Rule of God Who Has Blessed the Harvest and Is Asked to Bless Also His People for the Fulfillment of Their More Sublime Task (5-8)*

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|--|--|
| 5. Laetentur et exsultent nationes, quod regis populos cum aequitate, et nationes in terra gubernas. | Let the nations be glad and exult that Thou rulest the peoples with justice, and governest the nations upon earth! |
| 6. Celebrent te populi, Deus, celebrent te populi omnes.   | May the peoples praise Thee, O God, may all peoples praise Thee!   |
| 7. Terra dedit fructum suum: benedixit nobis Deus, Deus noster.                                      | The earth has yielded its fruit; God, our God, has blessed us.   |
| 8. Benedicat nobis Deus, et timeant eum omnes fines terrae!  | May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear Him!  |

#### REFLECTIONS

The divine blessings conferred upon Israel, whether in the natural or in the supernatural order, were an evidence, to the Chosen People first and then to all the rest of the world, of the nature and character of God.

They were also a presage and a foretoken of the heavenly favors which eventually, through Christ, should be offered to all mankind. True, from the very beginning of time God's Providence had embraced every human being, providing what was necessary for each individual and generation as it came along; but not in the special ways and degrees in which Israel was blessed. The unfolding of the divine plan and bounty for the whole world was gradual, proceeding from more to more, from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from sufficiency to abundance.

The Psalmist here in the first strophe prays for the extension to all mankind of God's goodness, or for a recognition by all men of that goodness. And, as is clear from what he says here and in the strophes that follow, he has two motives for his prayer of desire: he wants all peoples and nations to share in the favors with which Israel has been blessed and to enjoy them, and he wants the real character of God, to which those blessings bear witness, to be known everywhere, that all the world may unite in praising God and in thanking Him for His goodness to men. The Psalmist himself and his nation know from experience what God is like, and as a result their souls are full of praise. In the spirit of a true missionary the sacred singer wants others also to know what God is like, to the end that they too may praise Him.

It is easy enough to show theologically and in theory that God is good, the supreme good, and that He really loves all mankind; but practically and concretely to convince men of these truths often constitutes one of the hardest tasks of the Christian ministry. If it were otherwise, conversions would be simple and the fervor and fidelity of all Christians could be largely taken for granted. We naturally love those who we know and feel love us, and it is easy and delightful to serve those whom we really love. As a happy and contented people are the surest proof of a good king, so their happiness and contentment are the surest guarantee of their love and loyalty.

Without doubt the evidence and proof of God's goodness and love for men, especially in the Incarnation and in the person, life, teachings and sacrifice of Christ, are many and compelling; but over against all these there are the innumerable hardships and sufferings of daily life, and often tragedies and world disasters, arising from the limitations and defects of creatures and creation, which God for inscrutable reasons permits His children to endure and which consequently and frequently cast dark clouds over the face of God and deeply obscure the divine vision for which the soul was made and for which it longs unceasingly. These difficulties, of course, are explainable. They are part of the test and trial



of faith; they are the fire and water by which souls are purified and made ready for a better world; they are the stuff out of which saints and eternal crowns are made. We cannot expect great prizes without great effort, even in this world.

Happy, then, are they who by God's grace are able in faith and patience to surmount all obstacles here below and attain to everlasting rewards hereafter.

### PSALM 67 (Heb. 68)

## TRIUMPHAL JOURNEY OF GOD FROM EGYPT TO MOUNT SION

### INTRODUCTION

We have here one of the grandest Psalms in the Psalter. It celebrates the irresistible triumph of God over His foes. The poet surveys past history, recalling the mighty and gracious works of God for His people in the exodus from Egypt, in the wilderness, in the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land, and in the enthronement of the Lord on Sion. Then he reviews the present and forecasts the future. The Lord of Old is with His people still; His protecting care and His power so embrace the coming ages that at length all nations shall hasten to pay Him homage and join in the universal praise of Israel's God.

The Psalm is Davidic in tone, but what particular victory it commemorates—to which the thanksgiving procession of verses 25-28 seems to refer—we cannot tell. Besides an introduction, it has two main divisions:

Introduction (vv. 2-7): God has displayed His power over His foes (vv. 2-4), and therefore the people should praise Him as the mighty Lord of heaven and as the protector of His people (vv. 5-7).

I. First main division (vv. 8-19), a survey of Israel's past history: (a) from the exodus to the entrance into Canaan (vv. 8-11); (b) the conquest of Palestine (vv. 12-15); (c) the enthronement of the Lord on Sion (vv. 16-19).

II. Second main division (vv. 20-36), a review of the present and a forecast of the future: (a) Jehovah is an ever-present Saviour of His people (vv. 20-24); (b) a procession to Sion in thanksgiving for victory (vv. 25-28); (c) may all nations be brought to Sion to pay homage to God (vv. 29-32); (d) a prophetic vision of all the nations joining in praising Israel's God (33-36).

- |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Magistro chori. Davidis. | For the choir-master. Of David. |
| Psalmus. Canticum.          | A psalm. A canticle.            |

### *At the Sight of the Ark the Enemies Flee and the Just Rejoice (2-4)*

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|--|---|
| 2. Exsurgit Deus, dissipantur inimici eius, et fugiunt, qui oderunt eum, a facie eius. | God arises, His enemies are scattered, they that hate Him flee from His face. |
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| 3. Sicut dispergitur fumus, dissipantur, sicut diffluit cera ante ignem, sic pereunt peccatores ante Deum. | As smoke is scattered, they are scattered; as wax melts before the fire, so sinners perish before God. |
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|---|--|
| 4. Iusti autem laetantur, exsultant in conspectu Dei, et delectantur in laetitia. | But the just are glad; they exult in the presence of God, and rejoice with gladness. |
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### *The Passage through the Desert (5-7)*

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|--|--|
| 5. Cantate Deo, psallite nomini eius; sternite viam ei qui vehitur per desertum, cui nomen est Dominus, et exsultate coram eo. | Sing to God, chant a psalm to His name, prepare a way for Him who is borne through the desert, whose name is the Lord, and exult before Him. |
|--|--|

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|--|---|
| 6. Pater orphanorum et tutor viduarum Deus est in habitaculo sancto suo. | The father of orphans and the guardian of widows God is in His holy dwelling. |
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|--|--|
| 7. Deus domum parat derelictis, educit captivos ad prosperitatem: rebelles tantum degunt in torrida terra. | God prepares a home for the abandoned, He leads forth the captives into prosperity; the rebels alone dwell in a torrid land. |
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### *God Manifests His Power on Mount Sinai and Graciously Provides Nutriment for His People (8-11)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 8. Deus, cum exires ante populum tuum, cum incederes per desertum, | O God, when Thou didst go forth before Thy people, when Thou didst pass through the wilderness, |
|--|---|

2. This verse repeats the prayer which Moses was wont to utter as the Ark, the symbol of the divine presence, was taken up for a march as Israel journeyed through the wilderness: "Arise, O Yahweh, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee from before Thy face" (Num. 10:35). For this reason some authorities think this Psalm was written for the transfer of the Ark to Sion.

4. "Iusti," i.e., the Israelites.

5. "Sternite viam." See Isaias 40:3 ff.



9. Terra mota est, caeli quoque stillarunt ante Deum, tremuit Sinai ante Deum, Deum Israel.

10. Pluviam copiosam demisisti, Deus, in hereditatem tuam, et fatigatam tu refecisti.

11. Grex tuus habitavit in ea, parasti eam in bonitate tua pauperi, Deus.

*Brief Description of the Occupation of the Holy Land (12-15)*

12. Dominus profert verbum, laeta nuntiantium multitudo est magna:

13. "Reges exercituum fugiunt, fugiunt; et incolae domus dividunt praedam.

14. Dum quiescebatis inter caulas gregum, alae columbae nitebant argento, et pennae eius flavore auri.

15. Dum Omnipotens illic dispergebat reges, nives ceciderunt in Salmon!"

The earth quaked and the heavens also shed rain before God; Sinai trembled before God, the God of Israel.

Thou didst send down abundant rain, O God, on Thine inheritance, and when it was exhausted Thou didst refresh it.

Thy flock dwelt in it, and in Thy goodness Thou didst prepare it for the poor, O God.

The Lord declares the word; great is the throng that announces the joyful tidings:

"The kings of the armies are fleeing, fleeing; and the inhabitants of the house divide the spoil.

"While you were resting among the sheepfolds, the wings of the dove shone with silver, and its feathers with the yellow of gold.

"While the Almighty was scattering the kings there, snows fell upon Salmon."

8, 9. These verses are borrowed almost literally from the Canticle of Debora (Judges 5:4, 5). Earthquake and storm used to accompany the manifestations of God, as symbols of His presence and power.

10. "Pluviam copiosam" refers to the manna which God rained down from heaven on Israel in the desert (Exod. 16:3, 4; Deut. 4:20; 9:26, 29).

12-15. These verses describe the battles between the kings and the Israelites contending for the Land of Canaan.—"Verbum," i.e., the promised victory.

13. Verses 13-15 re-echo the Canticle of Deborah (Judges 5)—"Reges exercituum, etc." The reference is to the defeat of the hostile kings of Palestine by Josue, and to the division by the housewives of the spoil which the victorious warriors have brought home with them.

14. A very obscure verse. Of the many explanations given it, the rendering follows the one which seems most probable to us. Though some of the tribes of Israel may prefer slothful ease among the portions of the conquered land assigned to them ("inter caulas gregum") to fighting the battles of Yahweh, yet Israel (*the dove*), through God's help is victorious, and her wings, as it were, are adorned with silver and her back with gold. The appearance of the dove's wings and back glistening in the sunlight suggested the figure.

15. While indolent tribes of Israel were neglecting their part in Israel's wars, the Almighty was driving before Him the enemy kings of Palestine like snow before the hurricane.—"Nives ceciderunt, etc." *It snowed in Salmon*, that is, the hostile kings were scattered like snow on Salmon. There was a Mount Salmon near Sichem.

*Mount Sion Is Selected as God's Habitation (16-19)*

16. Montes excelsi sunt montes Basan, clivosi montes sunt montes Basan:

17. Cur invidiosi aspicitis, montes clivosi, montem in quo habitare placuit Deo, immo in quo habitabit Dominus semper?

18. Currus Dei myriades sunt, mille et mille: Dominus de Sinai in sanctuarium venit.

19. Ascendisti in altum, duxisti captivos, accepisti in donum homines, vel eos qui nolunt habitare apud Dominum Deum.

Lofty mountains are the mountains of Bashan, steep mountains are the mountains of Bashan.

Why do you look enviously, O steep mountains, at the mount upon which it has pleased God to dwell, yea, on which God will dwell for ever?

The chariots of God are myriads, thousands and thousands: the Lord comes from Sinai into the sanctuary.

Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captives, Thou hast received men as a gift, even those that wish not to dwell with the Lord God.

*Reference to Other Wars in Which God Preserved the People (20-24)*

20. Benedictus Dominus per singulos dies: portat onera nostra Deus, salus nostra!

21. Deus noster est Deus qui salvat, et Dominus Deus dat eversionem a morte.

22. Profecto, Deus confringit capita inimicorum suorum, verticem capillatum eius qui ambulat in delictis suis.

Blessed be the Lord each single day: God, our safety, carries our burdens.

Our God is the God who saves, and the Lord God gives escape from death.

Truly, God shatters the heads of His foes, the hairy crown of him that walks in his sins.

16, 17. The general meaning of these two verses is that Mount Sion, since it is the dwelling-place of God, is greater and more venerable than all the other hills of Palestine, including the fertile range of Bashan and lofty Hermon.

18. The myriads are angelic hosts attending the chariots of God.

19. "Ascendisti in altum, etc." St. Paul in Eph. 4:8, applies these words to the Ascension of our Lord to the throne of God in Heaven. Here they literally refer either to the transfer of the Ark to Sion, or to some triumphal procession following a great military victory of the Hebrews.—"Accepisti, etc.," that is, the Lord received gifts from the vanquished, or from those who sought His favor.—"Qui nolunt habitare," perhaps refers to the Jebusites who were unwilling to be subjects of King David (2 Sam. 5:6-8; 1 Par. 11:5).

22. "Verticem, etc." The hairy head was a sign of the power and pride of the enemy.



23. Dixit Dominus: "Ex Basan reducam, reducam e profundo maris,

24. Ut intingas pedem tuum in sanguine, ut linguis canum tuorum sit portio ex inimicis."

*Description of the Procession of the Ark to Mount Sion (25-28)*

25. Vident ingressum tuum, Deus, ingressum Dei mei, regis mei, in sanctum:

26. Praecedunt cantores, postremi sunt citharoedi, in medio puellae tympana sonant.

27. "In coetibus festivis benedicite Deo, Domino vos, ex Israel nati."

28. Ibi est Benjamin, minimus natu, praecedens eos, principes Iuda cum turmis suis, principes Zabulon, principes Nephtali.

*A Prayer for Victory over Hostile Nations (29-32)*

29. Exsere, Deus, potentiam tuam, potentiam, Deus, qui operaris pro nobis!

30. Propter templum tuum, quod est in Ierusalem, tibi offerant reges munera!

31. Increpa feram arundinis,

The Lord said: "I will lead *them* back from Bashan, I will lead *them* back from the depth of the sea,

That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood, that a share of the enemies may be for the tongues of thy dogs."

They see Thine entrance, O God, the entrance of my God, my king, into the sanctuary:

The singers march in front, the harpists last, in the middle the maidens play on timbrels.

"In festive assemblies bless God the Lord, you of Israel born."

There is Benjamin, the youngest, going before them, the princes of Juda with their troops, the princes of Zabulon, the princes of Nephtali.

Display, O God, Thy might—  
Thy might, O God, who dost work for us!

Because of Thy temple which is in Jerusalem, let the kings offer gifts to Thee!

Rebuke the wild beast of the

23. The Lord will bring back for subjugation Israel's enemies even from the most secure hiding-places, like Bashan and the sea.

24. "Ut linguis, etc.," that is, that the dogs may have their share of the blood of the enemies. The Hebrew of the second half of this verse is variously rendered, but not very clearly: (a) *The tongue of thy dogs out of foes, from the same (blood);* (b) *the tongue of the dogs, from foes call it off;* (c) *the tongue of thy dogs, out of foes, through Him (God).*

28. The four tribes here mentioned stand for the whole people of Israel. Benjamin and Juda represent Judea or the South; Zabulon and Nephtali, Galilee or the North.

31. "Feram arundinis." R. V.: *The wild beast of the reeds*, that is, the hippopotamus, or the crocodile, which was a symbol of Egypt.—"Dissipa gentes." The Lord is asked to destroy those nations that reject offers of peace from Israel.

turmam taurorum cum vitulis populorum, prosternant se cum laminis argenti: dissipa gentes quae bellis laetantur.

32. Veniant magnates ex Aegypto, Aethiopia extendat manus suas ad Deum.

*All Nations Are Invited to Proclaim the Power of the God of Israel (33-36)*

33. Regna terrae, cantate Deo, psallite Domino, (34) qui vehitur per caelos, caelos antiquos!

Ecce, edit vocem suam, vocem potentem: (35) "Agnoscite potentiam Dei!" Super Israel maiestas eius, et potentia eius in nubibus.

36. Timendus est Deus e sancto suo, Deus Israel; ipse potentiam dat et robur populo suo. Benedictus Deus!

reed, the herd of bulls with the calves of the people, let them prostrate themselves with plates of silver; scatter the nations that delight in wars.

Let the great ones come from Egypt, let Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God.

Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth, make music to the Lord who is borne through the heavens, the heavens of old.

Behold, He sends forth His voice, a powerful voice: "Acknowledge the might of God!" His majesty is above Israel, and His might in the clouds.

To be feared is God from His holy place, the God of Israel; He gives might and strength to His people. Blessed be God!

REFLECTIONS

The first thought that arises from meditation on this majestic Psalm is of the irresistible power of God. The divine will must finally prevail, in spite of anything and everything that may or could create a suspicion to the contrary. Of course there is nothing strange or surprising in that omnipotence should be overpowering and have its way, if not at once, then surely at last. It could not be otherwise. The Psalmist is therefore not now arguing so much to prove directly the overwhelming might of God as simply to cite facts of history which clearly manifest the superintending, far-reaching divine power in behalf of his people. His aim is to show that God is ever with His faithful servants, and that no accidents of time or circumstance, no foes of His or enemies of theirs, can ever snatch from His loving and mighty grasp those whom He has chosen and protects. Israel's long and checkered story proves this. God's dealings with His Chosen People were therefore at once a revelation of His character and a type of His attitude towards faithful souls of all



nations and generations. To those who love and serve Him, He is their friend, their protector, their deliverer, their God.

But Israel as a people was in the end lost to God. Despite all the divine favors and care she had enjoyed so long, she at length found herself rejected and cast out. The smile of Heaven which had quickened and blessed her for many centuries finally seemed turned to a frown, and she withered and died. What happened? How could a day so long and in the main so full of joy and light terminate in a night of sorrow and deep darkness? Did God change? Were not His glowing promises made to stand forever? Could He abandon the people He had chosen and the home He had selected for them, and give both the one and the other over to the stranger and the destroyer?

It was not that God had changed, but Israel. It happened with the Chosen People, as it does with other unfaithful souls; the change from favor to disfavor, from friendship to enmity, from love to wrath, was not in God but in them. Like the far-off bright stars, like the sun in heaven, whose light and warmth continue the same even after clouds and storms have shut us away from them, so God continued the same as He had been before, after Israel by her repeated and prolonged sins and unfaithfulness had turned away from Him and thrown up a barrier between Him and her. It is always the sinner who turns away from God, and who deliberately walks out of light into darkness, who prefers the dregs of an earthly cup to the overflowing fountains of Heaven.

What a note of warning to us all may then be gathered even from the swelling strains of this superb hymn of lyric grandeur! If upon a day so fair and bright, as is here described, such awful night could later fall, who will not feel the ever-present need of working out his salvation in fear and trembling? The human nature we have is a treacherous thing; we must constantly watch it from within and from without. Only God can be trusted. He is our way, our truth and our life; and we must keep our eyes fixed habitually upon Him, lest we go astray and be lost.

But alas for poor sinners! Though their perdition is their own, whose heart does not ache for them? They have been brought into a hard world without their knowledge or consent, they have inherited poor natures, they live but a short time, they know not what they do (Luke 23:34). It was out of love for them that the Son of God came to earth in human form. The words of triumphant rejoicing over their downfall and punishment which resound through this Psalm are in keeping with the moral and spiritual level of the Old Testament, but they fall far below that of the New.

Sin is always bad and hateful, and we have every good reason to rejoice

and be glad when it and its evil doings are swept away. But while hating sin and doing all in our power to avoid it and keep others from it, we have been taught by Christ in word and example to love the sinner and to do what we can to save him. Our Lord set once and forever the standard of Christian conduct towards sinners, when dying on the cross He prayed for His murderers: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

## PSALM 68 (Heb. 69)

### PRAYER OF A MAN GRIEVOUSLY AFFLICTED FOR GOD'S SAKE

#### INTRODUCTION

In this Psalm a righteous sufferer in extreme need pleads to God for help against many wicked enemies. It is true he bears the burden of sin, but it is for God's sake that he is persecuted. He describes his sufferings, and earnestly begs God to help him and rescue him from his foes, for he is alone with gall for food and vinegar for drink. At the thought of all he has to suffer without cause, he imprecates vengeance upon his enemies and persecutors. But faith sustains him, and he calmly looks forward to relief and promises prayers of praise in return for his deliverance.

This Psalm is best understood as a description of the suffering Saviour, and hence is Messianic, at least in its spiritual meaning. Indeed, it can all be explained as Messianic even in its primary sense, if we except perhaps the last three verses, which seem to be a liturgical addition to the original poem. Our Lord applied v. 5b to His own enemies (John 15:25). His disciples saw the fulfillment of v. 10a in the cleansing of the Temple (John 2:17). St. Paul applies v. 10b to Christ (Rom. 15:3), and vv. 23, 24, to the Jews that rejected Him (Rom. 11:9, 10). The vinegar of v. 22 was the drink that was offered to our Lord in His passion (Matt. 27:34, 48; John 19:29, 30). In v. 26 St. Peter sees described the fate of Judas (Acts 1:20).

Dr. Bird regards vv. 31-37 as a post-exilic addition to the original Psalm. As to the rest of the poem, there is no reason for rejecting the Davidic authorship. If it bears a striking resemblance to Jeremiah, this need not prove more than that it was known to the sorrowful prophet and was used by him.



1. Magistro chori. Secundum  
"Lilia . . . ." Davidis.

For the choir-master. According  
to the tune, "The Lilies. . . ." Of  
David.

*The Psalmist Describes under Various Metaphors the Magnitude of His  
Affliction (2-5)*

2. Salvum me fac, Deus, quoni-  
am venerunt aquae usque ad col-  
lum.

Save me, O God, for the waters  
have reached to the neck.

3. Immersus sum in limo pro-  
fundi, et non est, ubi pedem figam;  
veni in altum aquarum, et fluctus  
obruunt me.

I am plunged in the mire of the  
deep, and there is not where to set  
a foot. I am come into the depth  
of the waters, and the waves over-  
whelm me.

4. Defessus sum clamando, rau-  
cae factae sunt fauces meae; defe-  
cerunt oculi mei, dum exspecto De-  
um meum.

I am weary with crying, and my  
throat is become hoarse; mine eyes  
are grown weak, while I wait for  
God.

5. Plures sunt quam capilli ca-  
pitis mei, qui oderunt me sine  
causa, validiores quam ossa mea,  
qui iniuste adversantur mihi: num,  
quae non rapui, illa reddam?

More numerous than the hairs  
of my head are they that hate me  
without cause, stronger than my  
bones are they that oppose me un-  
justly; shall I restore what I have  
not pillaged?

*The Psalmist's Persecution Is Unmerited, Being Due to His Fidelity  
to God (6-13)*

6. Deus, tu scis insipientiam  
meam, et delicta mea te non latent.

O God, Thou knowest my folly,  
and mine offenses are not hidden  
from Thee.

7. Ne confundantur propter  
me, qui sperant in te, Domine,  
Domine exercituum.

Let not those that hope in Thee  
be confounded because of me, O  
Lord, Lord of hosts.

Ne erubescant propter me, qui  
quaerunt te, Deus Israel.

Let not those that seek Thee  
blush with shame because of me,  
O God of Israel.

8. Etenim propter te sustinui

For it is for Thy sake that I

5. "Quae non rapui, etc.," was probably a proverbial expression signifying one's  
innocence.

6. "Insipientiam meam," i.e., the sins that I bear; but in the Messianic sense,  
the reference is to the folly of the cross (1 Cor. 1:21, 23).

8. "Propter te," i.e., because I am thy faithful servant.

opprobrium, operuit confusio faci-  
em meam.

have borne reproach, that confusion  
has covered my face.

9. Extraneus factus sum fratri-  
bus meis, et alienus filiis matris  
meae.

I am become a stranger to my  
brethren, and an alien to my  
mother's sons.

10. Nam zelus domus tuae  
comedit me, et opprobria expro-  
brantium tibi ceciderunt super me.

For zeal for Thy house has con-  
sumed me, and the reproaches of  
Thy revilers are fallen upon me.

11. Afflixi ieiunio animam me-  
am, et versum est in opprobrium  
mihi.

I afflicted my soul with fasting,  
and it was turned into a reproach  
against me.

12. Saccum indui pro vesti-  
mento, et ludibrio factus sum illis.

I put on sackcloth as a garment,  
and I became a laughing-stock to  
them.

13. Fabulantur contra me qui  
sedent in porta, et conviciantur  
mihi qui bibunt vinum.

They that sit at the gate chatter  
against me, and the wine-bibbers  
revile me.

*The Psalmist Earnestly Begs God to Deliver Him from His Afflictions  
(14-22)*

14. Mea autem oratio ad te,  
Domine, tempore gratiae, Deus:  
secundum magnam bonitatem  
tuam exaudi me, secundum auxil-  
ium tuum fidele.

But my prayer is to Thee, O  
Lord, at the time of favor, O God;  
according to Thy great goodness  
answer me, according to Thine un-  
failing help.

15. Eripe me de luto, ne sub-  
mergar, libera me ab iis qui me  
oderunt, et de profundis aquarum.

Rescue me from the mire lest I  
sink, deliver me from those that  
hate me, and from the deep waters.

16. Ne obruant me fluctus  
aquarum, neve absorbeat me pro-  
fundum, neve occludat super me  
puteus os suum.

Let not the floods of water over-  
whelm me, nor the abyss swallow  
me up; let not the pit close its  
mouth upon me.

17. Exaudi me, Domine, quia  
benigna est gratia tua; secundum  
multitudinem misericordiae tuae  
respice in me.

Answer me, O Lord, for kind  
is Thy favor; according to Thy  
bounteous mercy look upon me.

18. Neque absconderis faciem  
tuam a servo tuo; quoniam tribu-  
lor, cito exaudi me.

Hide not Thy face from Thy  
servant; make haste to answer me,  
for I am troubled.

19. Appropinqua ad animam

Draw near to my soul and re-

12. "Saccum," a vesture of sorrow.



meam, redime eam, propter inimicos meos libera me.

20. Tu scis opprobrium meum et confusionem meam et ignominiam meam; in conspectu tuo sunt omnes qui tribulant me.

21. Opprobrium fregit cor meum et defeci, et exspectavi commiserantem, sed non fuit, et consolantes, sed non inveni.

22. Et indiderunt in escam meam fel, et in siti mea potaverunt me aceto.

*May the Unjust Persecutors Be Punished According to Their Deserts*  
(23-29)

23. Fiat mensa eorum laqueus ipsis, et amicis tendicula.

24. Obscurentur oculi eorum, ne videant, et lumbi eorum fac semper vacillent.

25. Effunde super eos indignationem tuam, et aestus irae tuae comprehendat eos.

26. Habitatio eorum devastetur, et in tabernaculis eorum ne sit qui habitet.

27. Quoniam quem tu percussisti, persecuti sunt, et dolorem eius quem vulnerasti, adauxerunt.

deem it; because of mine enemies deliver me.

Thou knowest my reproach and my confusion and my shame; in Thy sight are all those that trouble me.

Reproach has broken my heart, and I am become faint; and I looked for one that felt pity, but there was none, and for those that would offer comfort, but found none.

And they put gall into my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Let their table become a trap for them, and a snare for their friends!

Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and make their loins shake without ceasing!

Pour out Thine indignation upon them, and let the blaze of Thine anger seize them!

Let their habitation become devastated, and let there be none to dwell in their tents!

For they have persecuted him whom Thou hast smitten, and They have added to the pain of him whom Thou hast wounded.

22. "Et indiderunt, etc." Cfr. Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23; John 19:28-30.

23. The imprecations in this and in the following verses have been fulfilled in regard to the Jewish nation. Cfr. Rom. 11:7, 8; 2 Cor. 3:13-16; John 12:40.—"Mensa" among the Orientals was nothing more than a blanket or coverlet spread out on the ground, which the foot could easily catch and become entangled in.

24. "Lumbi . . . vacillent." i.e., that the body may fail in strength.

26. Cfr. Acts 1:20; Rom. 11:9 ff.

27. The Psalmist says he is being punished by God, but not on account of his sins, as his enemies claim.

28. Adde culpam ad culpam eorum, et apud te ne declarentur iusti.

29. Deleantur de libro viventium, et cum iustis ne scribantur.

*Promise of Praise and Thanksgiving (30-33)*

30. Ego autem sum miser et dolens; auxilium tuum, Deus, tueatur me.

31. Laudabo nomen Dei cum cantico, et praedicabo eum cum gratiarum actione.

32. Et placebit Deo magis quam taurus, quam iuvenus cornutus et unguatus.

33. Videte, humiles, et laetamini, et reviviscat cor vestrum, qui quaeritis Deum.

*Application to the Jewish Exiles in Babylon (34-37)*

34. Quia pauperes audit Dominus, et vinctos suos non contemnit.

35. Laudent eum caeli et terra, maria et quidquid movetur in eis.

36. Nam Deus salvabit Sion, et aedificabit civitates Iuda: et habitabunt ibi et possidebunt eam.

37. Et semen servorum eius hereditabit eam; et qui diligunt nomen eius, morabuntur in ea.

Add sin to their sin, and let them not be declared just before Thee.

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and let them not be recorded with the just.

But I am wretched and sorrowful; may Thy help, O God, protect me!

I will praise the name of God in song, and will laud Him with thanksgiving.

And it will please God more than a bull, than a young ox with horns and hooves.

See, you humble ones, and be glad; and may your heart revive, you that seek God.

For the Lord hears the poor, and despises not His enslaved ones.

Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and whatever moves in them.

For God will save Sion and build up the cities of Juda, and people shall live there and possess it.

And the seed of His servants shall inherit it; and those that love His name shall dwell there.

#### REFLECTIONS

A more pathetic description of the agonies of a righteous sufferer could hardly be given than is found in this lyric. To one less holy, less

28. The obdurate are permitted constantly to add to their sins, as in the case of Pharaoh (Exod. 7:3 ff.).



spiritually sensitive to sin and evil, than was this Psalmist, the portrayal might seem exaggerated and unreal. And indeed it would not be unreasonable to make some allowance for excessive language in view of the poetic character of the song and the Oriental temperament of the singer here. But even so, the gulf that separates the world as such from the Kingdom of God and the antagonism that ever exists between the members of these two realms are so vast and deep that no human words could overstate them. These are realities, however, which are clearly discerned only by the spiritual. Half-hearted Christians are always trying to harmonize the world and Christ. They fail to see much difference between the two, and the reason is that they are really Christians in name only; they are worldlings wearing the garb of Christianity. They may and they do fool many of the faithful, but they do not fool the world, which sees through them and uses them for its own purposes.

People whose life and conduct are regulated by the principles of the world can hardly have much sympathy for the true servants of Christ; nay, when their personal interests are at stake, they can hardly avoid sentiments of secret hostility which often burst into open and fierce opposition and persecution. In that event, however, only real Christians have a right to complain. If the hatred of men is deserved for one's wrongdoing and wrong living, it is an instrument of God inflicting merited chastisement, and one should receive it as such and endeavor to profit by it. Then, when acknowledged sin has been corrected, the sufferer may rightly pray to God for deliverance, so that his answered prayer may give hope and confidence to others who are likewise waiting for divine intervention in their own behalf.

More than his personal sufferings the Psalmist laments here the desecration or neglected condition of the Sanctuary, the House of God, the place of divine worship. This public departure of many from their Lord involves not only the honor due to God, but the welfare of the souls of others. It is much harder to be good when others all around are bad. Public sins are worse than private ones. Scandal tears down more than piety builds up. It was because of this sunken condition of divine worship that the saddened singer here had chosen sackcloth for his clothing, and fasting and weeping as his practice; but with no good results. His actions were only ridiculed and taunted by his godless enemies, so inveterate and hardened were they. There was no good word or action that could make any appeal to those sinners; they were beyond all hope of reclaim.

The Psalmist therefore in despair gives way in verses 23-29 of this Psalm to imprecations against his persecutors which for fierceness and

violence of language are unsurpassed in the Psalter. He invokes upon them an extremity of punishment. For this reason many scholars, who are willing to admit that practically all the rest of the Psalm is Messianic, even directly and in its literal sense, are opposed to accepting these verses as such. No word that our Lord ever uttered bears any resemblance to the words here used by the Psalmist. Even the "woes" of Matthew 23 were not wishes but solemn declarations of evils to come in consequence of outrageous and unrepented sins and crimes. Far from the Saviour ever wishing evils or punishments upon anybody, he prayed His Heavenly Father to forgive those who had inflicted on Him unspeakable tortures and were putting Him to death. In this, as in everything else that He ever did or said, He is our divine model.

### PSALM 69 (Heb. 70)

#### PRAYER FOR DIVINE AID

##### INTRODUCTION

With but a few unimportant variations, which are due to the editor of the Elohist collection of the Psalms, this present poem is nothing more than a repetition of vv. 14-18 of Psalm 39. The main difference between the two poems is the tendency here to substitute Elohim for the Yahweh of Psalm 39, save in the last verse where just the contrary is the case.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Magistro chori. Davidis. Ad<br>commemorandum. | For the choir-master. Of David.<br>In commemoration. |
|--|--|

#### *The Psalmist Appeals to God (2-6)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Placeat tibi, Deus, ut eripias<br>me; Domine, ad adiuvandum me<br>festina.   | Be pleased, O God, to rescue<br>me; O Lord, make haste to help<br>me.  |
| 3. Confundantur, et erubes-<br>cant, qui quaerunt vitam meam.<br>Cedant retrorsum, et pudore<br>afficiantur, qui delectantur malis<br>meis. | Confounded and ashamed be<br>those that seek my life!<br>Put to flight and disgraced be<br>they that delight in my misfor-<br>tunes! |
| 4. Recedant confusione operti,<br>qui dicunt mihi: "Euge, euge!"  | Turned back and covered with<br>confusion be they that say to me:<br>" 'Tis well! 'Tis well!"  |
| 5. Exsultent et laetentur de te   | May all that seek Thee exult   |



omnes qui quaerunt te; et dicant semper: "Magnificetur Deus," qui desiderant auxilium tuum.

6. Ego autem miser sum et pauper, Deus, succurre mihi! Adiutor meus et liberator meus es tu: Domine, ne tardaveris.

and be glad because of Thee; and may they that long for Thy help say always: "God be magnified!"

But I am miserable and poor, O God succor me! Thou art my helper and my deliverer; O Lord, delay not.

## REFLECTIONS

See Reflections on Psalm 39.

## PSALM 70 (Heb. 71)

## "FORSAKE ME NOT IN TIME OF OLD AGE"

## INTRODUCTION

The writer of this Psalm is an old man. During his long journey through life he has suffered much, has had many and grievous afflictions to bear, but along with them all, the goodness and mercy of God have been constantly manifested towards him.

Whether or not this poem is mainly personal or national is a disputed question, but the former opinion seems far more probable in view of the many personal and individual expressions occurring in the Psalm, as well as its similarity to other personal Psalms. For the author has woven into his song the thoughts and words of many other Psalms. Compare, for example, verses 1-3 with 30:2-4; verse 3 with 17:3; verse 6 with 21:10, 13; verse 13 with 34:4, 26; verse 12 with 39:14.

In its spiritual sense this Psalm is Messianic, since in various respects the sufferer in question was clearly a type of the suffering Messiah.

*Oppressed by Some Calamity, the Psalmist Implores the Help of God, Who Has Protected Him from His Infancy (1-8)*

1. Ad te, Domine, confugio: ne confundar in aeternum;

2. Secundum iustitiam tuam eripe me et libera me; inclina ad me aurem tuam et salva me.

3. Esto mihi petra refugii, arx

To Thee, O Lord, do I flee; let me not be confounded for ever.

According to Thy justice rescue me and deliver me; incline Thine ear to me and save me.

Be Thou to me a rock of refuge,

munita, ut salves me: nam petra mea et arx mea es tu.

4. Deus meus, eripe me de manu iniqui, de pugno improbi et oppressoris:

5. Nam tu es expectatio mea, Deus meus, Domine, spes mea a iuventute mea.

6. Tibi innixus sum ab utero; a ventre matris meae eras protector meus: in te speravi semper.

7. Tamquam prodigium apparui multis; tu enim fuisti adiutor meus fortis.

8. Plenum erat os meum laude tua, toto die gloria tua.

a fortified citadel, that Thou mayest save me; for Thou art my rock and my citadel.

O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked man, from the fist of the unholy man and the oppressor;

For Thou art my hope, O my God; O Lord, my hope from my youth.

On Thee have I leant from my birth; from my mother's womb Thou hast been my protector; in Thee have I ever hoped.

To many I have appeared as a prodigy, for Thou hast been my strong helper.

My mouth was filled with Thy praise, with Thy glory all day long.

*The Psalmist Describes the Malicious Plans of His Enemies (9-16)*

9. Ne abieceris me tempore senectutis; cum defecerint vires meae, ne dereliqueris me.

10. Nam loquuntur de me inimici mei, et observantes me, consiliantur una,

11. Dicentes: "Deus dereliquit eum; persequimini et comprehendite eum, quia non est qui eripiat."

12. Deus, noli stare procul a me, Deus meus, ad iuvandum me festina.

13. Confundantur, deficient adversantes vitae meae; operiantur confusione et pudore qui quaerunt mala mihi.

Cast me not off in time of old age; when my strength shall fail, forsake me not.

For mine enemies are talking about me; and observing me, they take counsel together,

Saying: "God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to rescue."

O God, stand not far from me; my God, make haste to help me.

Let them be confounded and come to naught that threaten my life; let those that seek to harm me be covered with confusion and shame.

7. "Prodigium." The Psalmist is a marvel to others both on account of his afflictions and the help he constantly receives from God.



14. Ego autem semper sperabo, et in dies conferam ad omnem laudem tuam.

15. Os meum annuntiabit iustitiam tuam, toto die auxilia tua: neque enim novi mensuram eorum.

16. Enarrabo potentiam Dei, Domine, praedicabo iustitiam tuam solius.

*Recalling God's Frequent Help in Past Difficulties, the Psalmist Begs that This Aid Shall Not Fail Him in Old Age (17-24)*

17. Deus, docuisti me a iuventute mea, et usque nunc annuntio mirabilia tua.

18. Et in senecta quoque et senio, Deus, ne dereliqueris me, dum annuntiabo brachium tuum generationi huic, omnibus venturis potentiam tuam,

19. Et iustitiam tuam, Deus, quae contingit caelos, qua fecisti tam magna: Deus, quis par est tibi?

20. Imposuisti mihi tribulationes multas et malas: rursus vivum facies me et de profundis terrae rursus me extolles.

21. Auge dignitatem meam, et denuo me consolare.

22. Ego quoque celebrabo psalterio fidelitatem tuam, Deus, psallam tibi cithara, Sanctus Israel.

As for me, I will always hope, and will join daily in all Thy praise.

My mouth shall proclaim Thy justice, Thy helps, all day long, the measure of which I have not known.

I will tell of the power of God; O Lord, I will declare the justice that is Thine alone.

O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth, and even till now do I declare Thy wondrous deeds.

And in old age also and grey hairs, O God, forsake me not, until I proclaim Thy power to this generation, Thy might to all that are to come,

And Thy justice, O God, which reaches the heavens, where-with Thou hast done such great things; O God, who is like to Thee?

Thou hast laid upon me many and grievous afflictions; Thou wilt revive me once more, and raise me up again from the depths of the earth.

Increase my dignity, and console me anew.

I will also praise with the psalter Thy faithfulness, O God; I will make music to Thee with the harp, O Holy One of Israel.

14. "Conferam, etc." Literally, "Addam ad omnem laudem tuam," i.e., *I will praise Thee without ceasing.*

15. "Mensuram eorum," i.e., their number. The benefits which the Lord confers on the Psalmist are without number.

21. "Auge dignitatem meam," by relieving me from my affliction.

22. "Sanctus Israel." God is often so called in Isaiah.

23. Exsultabunt labia mea, cum cantabo tibi, et anima mea, quam redemisti. My lips shall exult when I shall sing to Thee, and my soul which Thou hast redeemed.

24. Etiam lingua mea toto die eloquetur iustitiam tuam, quia confusi sunt et erubuerunt qui quaerunt malum mihi. Moreover, my tongue shall proclaim Thy justice all day long, for they that seek my hurt have been confounded and put to same.

#### REFLECTIONS

Whether Israel personified or an individual person is speaking in this Psalm makes little difference. In either case the writer is reviewing times long past. He is looking "down the arches of the years"; and amidst the sunshine and shadows, the joys and sorrows and all "the labyrinthine ways" which he there beholds and contemplates one glorious vision stands out and above all else, and that is the merciful goodness of God. Through the buoyant anticipations and trials of youth, the ambitions, labors and disappointments of riper years, the rewards and losses of oncoming age, he can see the finger of God and the working of divine Providence in his behalf everywhere.

Now in retrospect the Psalmist is convinced that God was teaching him from the beginning of his days. Often the school in which he learnt was hard. Many times, doubtless, like numerous other souls, he was discouraged and cast down, thinking his life a failure, bending and groaning under the labors and burdens he had to bear, fearing that God had no interest in him or had forsaken him, seeing others around him who seemed to have an easier lot with much more talent and success, looking forward to a dark and dismal future which would end in nothingness. But now at length the tangled threads of the web of life have sufficiently separated and straightened out for him to perceive that there was a divine plan in it all. At times, even in his darkest moments, he perhaps had hints of the final happy issue of his present existence, but he could hardly presume to think it so in view of his unworthiness. But at last the signs have become too many and too strong for real doubt. Not that all is now fixed and certain beyond the possibility of a reversal, or that all his days henceforth will be lightsome and glad, since while life lasts there is always danger and storms are bound to interrupt the even flow of sunshine and calm. He knows that often prosperous careers have been overshadowed at the end, that failure at last sometimes follows upon many alternating reverses and triumphs, and that the trials of withered age have frequently proved too much for declining strength. And there-



fore he will continue to pray for help and to sing in gratitude of past mercies.

The Psalmist's life has really been a marvel to many who witnessed it, and likely to himself most of all. Observers have noted his extreme sorrows and sufferings, and have wondered not only at his survival, but at the enviable state in which old age has found him. They must have been convinced that there was an unseen, strong hand somewhere which helped and sustained him all along. But to himself the wonder has been greatest of all; for he, more than anyone else, has known what he has had to endure and his unworthiness to be noticed or assisted at all. How could God have had any special interest in him? Were there not others all around who seemed far more deserving, naturally better and more richly endowed, more patient in adversity, more willing to share and to help than he; but who in the long run fell far behind him in special blessings which only God can bestow? What was there in his frail make-up more than in many others that made him a child of predilection? How could God mark him out for special love? Yes, the Psalmist was indeed a marvel to many of his acquaintances, but most of all a wonder to himself. Well might he exclaim: "And Thy justice, O God, which reaches the heavens, wherewith Thou hast done such great things; O God, who is like to Thee?" (verse 19).

Youth and age have their respective compensations. Youth is hopeful and happy, full of gleaming prospects; it has its peculiar joys and delights; it is brave, strong and venturesome. It is like the budding, blooming flowers; like the dawn and morning light; like the perfumed fields of living green in springtime. It reckons not the cost of toil, of privation, of passing disappointments, in view of the excitement, the glamor, the riches, the triumphs that seem sure to come.

On the other hand, age is likely to be pensive and cautious. It has been through life's trying school. Often it can enjoy a wealth of pleasant memories and the satisfaction of work well done. Sometimes it has realized to the full the ambitions and hopes of early years, but more frequently it is apt to be either disillusioned and disappointed, or quietly and perhaps unwillingly resigned to its lot and the place it has found in the world. The natural man finds declining years unwelcome. They indicate the approaching end of strength and activity, of joy and gladness; they are like the sinking sun, bidding farewell to light and warmth and warning of the oncoming darkness and chill of night. But not so the spiritual man. How differently he views the prospect and state of age! To him the end of earthly years is the beginning of life. All that has preceded has been a preparation, a training, a discipline, for the finest things

soon to come. To him all his time has been a schooling for a glorious and an immortal existence in which he is to realize every hope and every dream he has ever had, and countless other joys and delights of which he has not even been aware here below, but which the possession of God and the eternal home will unfold to him. He is thrilled, therefore, with the prospect, as he awaits the end of schooldays and the coming of the long vacation.

## PSALM 71 (Heb. 72)

### THE REIGN OF THE MESSIAH

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is a description of the Ideal King, the Messiah, and of His eternal, universal and beneficent reign. No human king of Israel, not even Solomon or David, ever fitted into the picture here drawn. If the Psalmist begins with a prayer for this King (v. 2), and later foretells that all His subjects will pray for Him (v. 17), this is to be understood as referring to the human aspects of the Messiah and His reign. If material benefits and a wide temporal dominion are predicted as characteristic of His era, these must be taken in a spiritual sense, as types of spiritual blessings that will distinguish His rule and His Kingdom.

The Psalmist, therefore, first utters a prophetic prayer that the Ideal Ruler shall be endowed with a knowledge of God's way of judging and with His spirit of justice, that He may discharge His office as becomes His character, and thus give relief to the oppressed and the blessings of peace and justice to all evermore. His rule will embrace all peoples and lands and seas, and kings from afar, seeing the moral and spiritual supremacy of His government, shall come with their gifts to pay Him homage. Peace and prosperity shall reign on earth, and all nations shall be blessed, thus realizing the promise given long ago to Abraham.

Verses 18 and 19 are not a part of the original Psalm, but a doxology closing Book II of the Psalms.

1. Salomonis.

Of Solomon.

*Justice and Beneficence Will Mark the Messiah's Reign (1-4)*

Deus, iudicium tuum regi da,  
et iustitiam tuam filio regis:

O God, impart Thy judgment  
to the king, and Thy justice to the  
king's son:



2. Gubernet populum tuum cum iustitia, et humiles tuos cum aequitate.

3. Afferent montes pacem populo et colles iustitiam.

4. Tuebitur humiles populi, salvos faciet filios pauperum, et conteret oppressorem.

May he rule Thy people with justice, and Thy lowly ones with equity!

May the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills justice!

He shall watch over the lowly ones of the people, he shall save the sons of the poor, and shall crush the oppressor.

*The Messiah's Reign Will Be Eternal (5-7)*

5. Et diu vivet ut sol, et sicut luna in omnes generationes.

6. Descendet ut pluvia super gramen, sicut imbres qui irrigant terram.

7. Florebit in diebus eius iustitia et abundantia pacis, donec deficiat luna.

He shall live long, like the sun, and as the moon unto all generations.

He shall descend like rain upon the grass, like showers that water the land.

Justice shall flourish in his days, and a fullness of peace until the moon shall fail.

*The Messiah's Reign Will Be Universal (8-11)*

8. Et dominabitur a mari usque ad mare, et a flumine usque ad terminos terrae.

9. Coram illo procident inimici eius, et adversarii eius pulverem lingent.

10. Reges Tharsis et insularum munera offerent, reges Arabum et Saba dona adducent:

And his dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

Before him his enemies shall bow down, and his foes shall lick the dust.

The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall offer presents; the kings of the Arabs and of Saba shall bring gifts.

3. "Afferent montes . . . colles," i.e., the whole region inhabited by His people.

8. "A mari usque ad mare," that is, over the whole world. The seas are the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, in the Psalmist's view.

9. "Pulverem lingent." A Semitic expression signifying total subjection.

10. "Reges Tharsis, etc.," that is, the kings of Tarshish in South Spain and the islands of the Mediterranean.

11. Et adorabunt eum omnes reges terrae, omnes gentes servient ei.

Yea, all the kings of the earth shall adore him, all nations shall serve him.

*The Messiah's Reign Will Bring Security and Happiness to the Lowly and Afflicted (12-14)*

12. Etenim liberabit pauperem invocantem, et miserum, cui non est adiutor.

13. Miserebitur inopis et pauperis, et vitam pauperum salvabit:

14. Ab iniuria et oppressione liberabit eos, et pretiosus erit sanguis eorum coram illo.

For he shall deliver the poor man who calls, and the wretched for whom there is no helper.

He shall have compassion on the needy and the poor man, and shall save the life of the poor.

He shall deliver them from injustice and oppression, and their blood shall be precious before him.

*The Messiah's Reign Shall be Prosperous and Glorious for All Eternity (15-17)*

15. Ideo vivet, et dabunt ei de auro Arabiae, et orabunt pro eo semper, perpetuo benedicent ei.

16. Erit abundantia frumenti in terra; in summis montium strepet, ut Libanus, fructus eius, et flore-bunt incolae urbium ut gramina terrae.

17. Erit nomen eius benedictum in saecula; dum lucebit sol, permanebit nomen eius.

Et benedicentur in ipso omnes tribus terrae, omnes gentes beatum praedicabunt eum.

And so shall he live, and they shall give him of the gold of Arabia; and they shall ever pray for him, and shall bless him without ceasing.

There shall be an abundance of grain in the land; on the mountain tops its harvest shall rustle like Lebanon, and the inhabitants of the cities shall flourish like the grasses of the earth.

His name shall be blessed for ever; while the sun shall shine, his name shall endure.

And in him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed, all nations shall proclaim him happy.

14. "Sanguis eorum" means their life.

15. "Vivet." It is disputed whether the *King* or the *poor* is the subject of this verb, more probably the King.—"Orabunt." As also in LXX and St. Jer. We too pray for Christ when we pray for the extension of His kingdom, saying: "Thy kingdom come!"



*Doxology Closing Book II of Psalms (18, 19)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 18. Benedictus Dominus, Deus<br>Israel, qui facit mirabilia solus.  | Blessed be the Lord, the God<br>of Israel, who alone does won-<br>drous things;                               |
| 19. Et benedictum nomen eius<br>gloriosum in saecula; et repleatur<br>gloria eius omnis terra. Amen.<br>Amen. | Yea, for ever blessed be His<br>glorious name, and may every<br>land be filled with His glory!<br>Amen. Amen. |

## REFLECTIONS

The qualities with which the Psalmist here conceives the Ideal King to be endowed are righteousness of rule, perpetuity of reign and universality of dominion. Of course, whether he knew it or not, he was describing the character and the reign of the Messianic King. Only relatively could any other king possess the qualities here ascribed to the Ideal Ruler; but to the degree in which they are possible these same qualities should characterize everyone who is placed in authority over others.

Every ruler who is worthy of the name should have righteousness as his standard and principle of judgment, he should try by word and example to perpetuate that kind of rule, and he should extend it to all his subjects, to the least as well as the greatest. In such a reign there will be no room for self-interest, favoritism, revenge or tyranny. At times special attention will be necessary, but it should be given to the poor and the afflicted for their alleviation and comfort, and to wrong-doers for their restraint and correction.

He is not a good ruler or superior who in the exercise of his authority does not find his chief happiness in making his people and subjects happy as far as he can. If his gentle and pitying care for them can reach out to their needs, enter into their sorrows, solace their griefs, calm their fears and shelter their lives, he is sure to win their hearts and receive not only their loyalty and generous service but their lasting remembrance and benediction.

A rule of this kind will yield the priceless fruits of peace and contentment for all concerned, for ruler and ruled alike. Nor will its blessings be confined to the temporal well-being of subjects and superior. They will extend also to their spiritual welfare and to the proper worship of God. Peace and happiness contribute to the good of religion; discord and misery, to its destruction. Since human beings are partly material and temporal, they need for the most part a measure of the good things

of earth in order to draw out and develop in them a desire for the things of Heaven. When hungry and cold, or in trouble, it is harder to pray and give thought and attention to the soul and the higher life. Often we must first try to heal and feed men's bodies before we can hope to do any good to their spirits. The material and sensible produce the pressing needs; the spiritual always seems more remote.

Throughout this Psalm the singer, consciously or unconsciously, is describing and looking forward to the Messiah, the Ideal King, and His reign. Only such a One could establish on earth the perfect rule here outlined. For He, being God as well as man, can know and exercise only righteousness and justice; His dominion embraces all men of all time, since all belong to Him, not only as having been created by Him, but also in a special manner, as having been redeemed and purchased by His own blood and sacrifice; and of His Kingdom there can be no end, because, unlike the dying kings of Israel, He is the immortal God, who as man died once, but now lives evermore.

If the Messianic King has not yet brought to actual fruition on earth all these gracious results, He has at least provided the spiritual means by which they can be obtained, He has established the organization and arranged for the ministers and workers to carry out His plan, and a beginning of the perfect accomplishment has already been made. Much indeed remains to be done; but while His human instruments and agents must labor incessantly to bring to completion His will here below, He is ever gathering His precious subjects into His perfect kingdom above.



# THE THIRD BOOK OF THE PSALTER

(Pss. 72-88)

## PSALM 72 (Heb. 73)

### RIDDLE OF THE HAPPINESS OF THE GODLESS AND ITS SOLUTION

#### INTRODUCTION

The problem of the Book of Job—the problem already discussed in Psalm 36, namely, the prosperity and happiness of the godless as contrasted with the poverty and sufferings of the just—is here again in the poet's mind. In that previous Psalm the writer solved this vexing question by counselling patience and faith, for sooner or later punishment is bound to overtake the wicked and reward come to the righteous here in this life, if not in the persons concerned, then in their offspring. But in this present Psalm the solution of the problem is more complete and satisfying. For by light vouchsafed from above the Psalmist has been made to understand that there is absolutely no comparison between health and wealth and earthly success without God, on the one hand, and the joy of communion with God through a holy life, on the other; man's supreme happiness and perfection consist not in worldly possessions, however many or great, but in the possession of his God here and hereafter.

The Psalm has two main divisions, following an introductory verse, which expresses the final conclusion at which the Psalmist had arrived.

I. The problem is stated: Seeing the peace of sinners, their disregard of death, their freedom from sickness and the ills of other men, their pride, violence, blasphemy, and the way they seduce others to follow their example, the Psalmist had almost lost his faith (vv. 1-12).

II. The solution of the problem: But as he wrestled with his temptations the Psalmist concluded that to yield to his doubts and follow sinners would be treason to God's people; and so he entered the Temple, and there it was revealed to him how really miserable and hollow is all that the world can give without God, and, on the contrary, how full and

blessed is that life which is lived in union with God; it was his brutish ignorance that made him think otherwise, ignoring the divine presence and fellowship which are his glory and happiness now and forever. He concludes: They that forsake God shall perish; but the Psalmist will stay close to Him and proclaim His mercies (vv. 13-28).

1. Psalmus. Asaphi.

A psalm. Of Asaph.

### *The Psalmist's Faith in the Goodness of God Was Disturbed by the Happiness of the Godless (1-3)*

Quam bonus rectis est Deus,  
Dominus eis qui puro sunt corde!

How good is God to the upright, the Lord to those that are pure of heart!

2. Mei autem fere nutarunt pedes, paene lapsi sunt gressus mei,

But my feet almost wavered, my steps wellnigh slipped,

3. Quia impiis invidebam, prosperitatem peccatorum observans.

For I was envious of godless men, observing the prosperity of sinners.

### *The Happiness and Pride of the Godless and Their Influence with the People (4-12)*

4. Nulla enim sunt iis tormenta, sanum et pingue est corpus eorum.

For they are immune from hardships, hale and fat is their body.

5. In aerumnis mortalium non versantur, et cum hominibus non flagellantur.

In the trials common to mortals they are not involved, and they escape the scourges of other men.

6. Ideo cingit eos, ut torquis, superbia, et violentia, ut vestis, operit eos.

Therefore, pride envelops them like a collar, and violence, like a garment, covers them.

7. Prodit ex crasso corde iniquitas eorum, erumpunt figmenta mentis.

Their iniquity issues from an unfeeling heart, imaginations come forth from their mind.

8. Irrident et loquuntur maligne, oppressionem ex alto minantur.

They jeer and speak maliciously; in arrogance they threaten oppression.

9. Aggrediuntur caelum ore

They assail heaven with their

7. "Prodit, etc." Heb. and St. Jer.: *Their eyes protrude from their fatness; the desires of their heart overflow*—a description of the insolent look of these well-fed sinners.

8. "Ex alto." St. Jer.: *De excelso*, that is, haughtily, arrogantly.



suo, et lingua eorum perstringit terram.

10. Ideo populus meus se convertit ad eos, et aquas abundantes sorbent sibi.

11. Et dicunt: "Quomodo scit Deus, et estne cognitio in Altissimo?"

12. Ecce tales sunt peccatores et, semper tranquilli, potentiam augent.

mouth, and their tongue traverses the earth.

Therefore my people turn to them, and they swallow deep draughts of water for themselves.

And they say: "How does God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?"

Behold, such are the sinners, and ever at ease, they increase in power.

*After a Fruitless Struggle to Solve the Riddle for Himself, the Psalmist Entered the Sanctuary and Found the Solution (13-17)*

13. Ergone frustra mundum servavi cor meum, et lavi in innocentia manus meas?

14. Nam flagella patior omni tempore, et castigationem cotidie.

15. Si cogitarem: Loquar ut illi, genus filiorum tuorum deseruissem.

16. Meditabar ergo, ut cognoscerem hoc; sed laboriosum visum est mihi,

17. Donec intravi in sancta Dei, et attendi fini illorum.

Have I then in vain kept my heart spotless, and washed my hands in innocence?

For I suffer scourges all the time, and chastisement every day.

Were I to think: "I will speak as they," I should betray the race of Thy sons.

Therefore I took thought, that I might fathom this problem; but it seemed hard to me,

Until I entered God's sanctuary, and considered their end.

*The Life and Success of the Godless Are Mere Delusions, Which No Man of Intelligence Would Prize (18-22)*

18. Vere in via lubrica collocas eos, praecipitas eos in ruinas.

Truly, Thou dost set them on a slippery path, Thou dost cast them headlong into ruins.

19. Quomodo corruerunt mo-

How have they fallen in a mo-

10. Many Israelites were seduced by the prosperity and bad life of the wicked.—"Aguas, etc.," that is, great pleasures are enjoyed by those who follow the life and maxims of the wicked.

11. "Et dicunt," i.e., the common people, misled by the powerful among them.

15. The Psalmist wishes to remain faithful to the tradition of the pious sons of God.

17. "Sancta Dei" means the divine commands which constitute the inner sanctuary of God, and from which God enlightens the Psalmist.

mento, desierunt, absumpti sunt magno terrore!

20. Sicut somnium, cum quis evigilat, Domine, ita, cum surrexeris, spernes figmentum eorum.

21. Quando exasperabatur mens mea, et cor meum pungebatur,

22. Ego insipiens eram neque intellegebam: ut iumentum fui coram te.

ment! They have ceased to be, carried away with great terror.

As a dream, when one awakes, O Lord, so wilt Thou, upon arising, dispel their illusion.

When my mind was embittered and my heart was pierced,

I was foolish and understood not; I was like a brute before Thee.

*God Leads the Just Man by the Hand and Receives Him into Glory for All Eternity (23-28)*

23. Ego autem semper tecum ero: apprehendisti manum dexteram meam;

24. Consilio tuo deduces me, et in gloriam tandem suscipies me.

25. Quis praeter te mihi est in caelo? et, si tecum sum, non delectat me terra.

26. Deficit caro mea et cor meum, Petra cordis mei et pars mea Deus in aeternum.

27. Ecce enim, qui recedunt a te, peribunt, perdis omnes qui fornicantur abs te.

28. Mihi autem bonum est prope Deum esse, ponere in Domino Deo refugium meum.

Enarrabo omnia opera tua in portis filiae Sion.

But I shall be with Thee always: Thou hast taken my right hand;

By Thy counsel Thou wilt guide me, and into glory Thou wilt finally receive me.

Whom have I in heaven besides Thee? And if I am with Thee, earth delights me not.

My flesh and my heart fail; God is the Rock of my heart and my portion for ever.

For behold, they that forsake Thee shall perish; Thou dost destroy all that are unfaithful to Thee.

But it is good for me to be near to God, to place my refuge in the Lord God.

I will relate all Thy works at the gates of the daughter of Sion.

#### REFLECTIONS

Again the Psalmist is troubled with the problem, how to reconcile God's moral government of the world with the facts of life. There are

20. "Cum surrexeris," i.e., in judgment.

24. "In gloriam," i.e., in the state of glory, or in the vision of the glory of God. There is here therefore an assertion of eternal happiness in another life.



the prosperity and apparent happiness of sinners, on the one hand, and the poverty and suffering of the righteous on the other. If God rules the world and the affairs of men, how does He tolerate these opposing conditions of His rational creatures? One would think that the situation should be the very opposite of what it is. Do the good things of earth and time follow upon sin and bad living, and contrariwise, evil things upon virtue and a good life? If this can be so, thought the Psalmist, why not cast aside the restraints of religion and throw one's lot in with the wicked? What reward is there for being good, when all the prizes of life go to sinners?

The Psalmist was strongly tempted to act this way; he was nearly ready to fling away his faith, when another thought gave him pause. What about the simple and the lowly among the people to whom His intellectual doubts and troubles had never occurred? Religion and all its teachings were an abiding comfort to those humble folk. They implicitly believed in God and loved Him; it never dawned on them to question any of His doings. They trusted Him at all times as sheep trust their shepherd. And if he, the Psalmist, whom the simple people regarded as a religious and holy man, as a teacher and a guide of others, were to give up his faith and fall away, what would happen to those poor followers who had nothing but God and their religion? Their faith in God once shattered, to what could they turn?

These thoughts touched the Psalmist's heart, for he loved God's simple and trustful people. Doubtless he envied their unquestioning faith; for his own real trouble was, not that he wanted to enjoy the temporal good things which the wicked had, but that their possession and enjoyment of those things in spite of their sins created an obstacle for him to that whole-hearted love of God and trust in divine providence which he wanted to have and without which he was miserable.

That was the Psalmist's great difficulty, as it has been a stumbling-block to many another devout soul. Such souls care nothing for the present world or its goods; they want only to believe in God and to love Him. This they feel is the whole purpose of their existence. And so they are vexed and grievously troubled when they see anything in life which can in any wise be turned against God, thus darkening the vision and chilling the love they want to have of Him. To doubt or mistrust Him, or to have wrong thoughts about Him, is the very thing they want to avoid. And yet, they cannot just throw aside difficulties and close their eyes to what seem to be glaring facts. Thus they are deeply disturbed by much that they see and hear in the world. Like the good people whom the Psalmist refused to betray, these souls can find their peace and satis-

faction only in God; and hence if any objection or problem could be sustained which would put between God and them, they have nothing left, their loss is total, their misery complete.

Reflecting on the consequences of any rash thing he might say or do, the Psalmist decided to be silent, to keep his troubles to himself. But relief did not come to him until he entered into devout and profound communion with God. Then he saw things aright. Then he understood how really poor and to be pitied those rich worldlings were in the possession and enjoyment of all their material goods, which pass away so quickly, fail to satisfy at any time and lead their godless possessors to a dreadful end; but how rich and abundant, on the other hand, was he in possessing God and having the divine fellowship and guidance! What is there on earth or in Heaven besides God? He who has God possesses all things. The paltry delights of prosperous worldlings, passing and incomplete at best, must soon be left behind; whereas sweet communion with God is an alliance which nothing can break and which satisfies the soul. This divine fellowship is a pledge here and now of an everlasting glory to come in a life beyond this temporal sphere (verse 24). Happy beyond words to tell are those who have it! Poverty cannot pinch them, sorrow sadden them, fear frighten them, trouble depress them, loneliness bereave them nor any other evil hurt them; even death has no power over them. God holds them in His own strong grasp, and He will not let them go.

### PSALM 73 (Heb. 74)

#### LAMENT OVER THE DEVASTATED SANCTUARY AND PRAYERS

##### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist complains to God that heathen enemies have overrun his country, profaning and destroying everything sacred, especially the Temple and the Holy City, causing the religious seasons and festivals to pass unobserved, spreading desolation and despair all around.

There are only two periods of Jewish history to which the description here given can easily correspond, namely, the destruction wrought by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. and that by Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned in Syria about 175-165 B.C. Many great authorities are divided as to which of these periods it was that the Psalmist had in mind. Strong argu-



ments are advanced on each side of the question, which the professor in the classroom can explain.

1. Maskil. Asaphi.

A maskil. Of Asaph.

*The Psalmist Describes the Devastation and Profanation of the Temple, and Begs God to Have Mercy on His People (1-11)*

Quare, Deus, reppulisti in perpetuum, exardescit ira tua contra oves pascuae tuae?

Why, O God, hast Thou cast us off for ever, why is Thy wrath enkindled against the sheep of Thy flock?

2. Recordare sodalitatis tuae, quam condidisti ab antiquo, tribus, quam redemisti tibi in possessionem, montis Sion in quo sedem posuisti.

Remember Thy community which Thou didst establish of old, the tribe which Thou didst redeem for Thy possession, Mount Sion on which Thou didst dwell.

3. Dirige gressus tuos ad ruinas perpetuas: omnia vastavit inimicus in sanctuario.

Direct Thy steps towards her perpetual ruins; the enemy has laid waste everything in the sanctuary.

4. Rugierunt adversarii tui in loco conventus tui, posuerunt signa sua in tropaeum.

Thine adversaries have roared in the place of Thy assembly, they have set up their standards as a trophy.

5. Similes sunt illis qui in concesso vibrans securim, (6) et iam ascia et malleo ianuas eius pariter contundunt.

They are like men that brandish an axe in a thicket, and now with axe and hammer they demolish likewise its gates.

7. Igni tradiderunt sanctuarium tuum, profanarunt in terra tabernaculum nominis tui.

They gave over Thy sanctuary to the fire, they have profaned the tabernacle of Thy name on earth.

8. Dixerunt in corde suo: "Destruamus eos simul; comburite omnia sanctuaria Dei in terra."

They have said in their hearts: "Let us destroy them all together; burn all the sanctuaries of God in the land."

9. Signa nostra non iam videmus, non est propheta; neque inter nos est qui sciat quousque.

No more now do we see our standards, there is no prophet; nor is there anyone amongst us that knows how long.

10. Quousque, Deus, exprobrabit inimicus? blasphemabit adversarius nomen tuum in perpetuum?

How long, O God, will the foe taunt? Shall the adversary blaspheme Thy name for ever?

11. Quare avertis manum tuam et dexteram tuam retines in sinu tuo?

Why dost Thou withdraw Thy hand, and keep Thy right hand in Thy bosom?

*Meditation on God's Glorious Deeds in Leading the People from Egypt and in Creating the World (12-17)*

12. Deus autem rex meus est ab antiquo, qui efficit salutem in medio terrae.

Yet God is my king of old, who works salvation in the midst of the earth.

13. Tu dirupisti potentia tua mare, contrivisti capita draconum in aquis.

Thou didst sunder the sea with Thy power, Thou didst shatter the heads of dragons in the water.

14. Tu confregisti capita Leviathan, dedisti eum escam monstribus marinis.

Thou didst smash the heads of the Leviathan, and give him as food to the monsters of the sea.

15. Tu elicuisti fontes et torrentes: tu siccasti fluvios copiosos.

Thou didst bring forth fountains and torrents; Thou didst dry up swollen floods.

16. Tuus est dies et tua est nox; tu stabilisti lunam et solem.

Thine is the day and Thine the night; Thou hast established moon and sun.

17. Tu statuisti omnes terminos terrae; aestatem et hiemem tu formasti.

Thou hast fixed all the bounds of the earth; summer and winter Thou hast formed.

*The Psalmist Urgently Implores God for Aid, Since His Own Cause Is at Stake (18-23)*

18. Recordare haec: inimicus exprobravit tibi, Domine, et populus insipiens maledixit nomini tuo.

Remember these things: the enemy has mocked Thee, O Lord, and a foolish people has profaned Thy name.

19. Ne tradideris vulturi vitam turturis tui: vitam pauperum tuorum noli oblivisci in perpetuum.

Deliver not to the vulture the life of Thy turtle-dove; forget not for ever the life of Thy poor.

20. Respice in foedus tuum,

Consider Thy covenant, for all

11. "Retines in sinu," i.e., quiet and inactive.

13-15. There is a question here of the Exodus. The "dracones" and "Leviathan" represent the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea.

19. "Vulturi" means the fierce enemies; "turturis tui," the people of Israel.



quia violentiae plena sunt latibula terrae, et campi.

21. Ne humilis revertatur confusus: pauper et inops laudent nomen tuum.

22. Exsurge, Deus, age causam tuam; recordare improperii quod insipiens cotidie infert tibi.

23. Noli oblivisci voces adversariorum tuorum: tumultus insurgentium contra te ascendit semper.

the hidden places of the land and the field are filled with violence.

Let not the lowly man turn away confounded; may the poor and needy praise Thy name.

Arise, O God, defend Thy cause; remember the reproach that the foolish man offers Thee daily.

Forget not the clamor of Thine enemies; the uproar of those that rebel against Thee rises continually.

#### REFLECTIONS

Israel was God's beloved nation, His chosen race. Beginning with Abraham a special people had been divinely elected for a singular purpose and a high destiny. Separated and set apart from all the pagan world, they eventually were securely located in the land of Canaan, and thus naturally protected by the sea on the west, by the mountains on the north, by the desert on the east and by the desert and Egypt on the south. For their sake their appointed dwelling-place was gradually cleared of hostile tribes and hurtful influences and surroundings. They were blessed from the start with heaven-sent leaders and teachers. Special holy laws and institutions were given them. The rich abundance of their spiritual treasures was enough to make them at once the attraction and the envy of the ancient world. Theirs was truly a land flowing with milk and honey, and they a people living in the sunshine and smile of Heaven.

But how strange the contrast to all these facts is the description of the Chosen People and of their religion and country as given in this Psalm! Here ruin and desecration have swept over the land, sorrow and lamentation have succeeded to festival and song. What has happened? The Psalmist implies that the Lord is angry with His people, that they have grievously offended Him, and in punishment He has given them over to enemies. He had been bounteous to them, but they had failed in fidelity to Him.

It is remarkable that when things go wrong with the Psalmist or his people, he always assumes the fault to be his or theirs in some way, not God's. And so it must be; no mistake or sinful action can be associated with divinity. But however true this is, it is also undeniable that God has given human beings poor natures, which of themselves are prone to

evil, and that not all the evils from which individuals suffer can be traced to their own faults. We live in a world of innumerable interrelated and operating causes and effects, and a mistake or disturbance in one part, whether due to ourselves or to others, has its far-reaching results, like the pebble dropped in the ocean which displaces every molecule of the deep.

This is our situation; but just because it is so, we, like the Psalmist here and so often, can and should appeal to the mercy and power of God to save us and deliver us from the consequences of our own and others' sins and from the evils inherent in the very structure of creation. It would seem that God has so made us and permitted us to be, that we should thus call upon Him: "For God included all in disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (Rom. 11:32).

In his present desperate need the Psalmist appeals to God for help in view of past divine favors in behalf of His people when leading them from the bondage of Egypt to the Promised Land, and of His power in regulating the times and seasons of the world. He whose might and mercy have saved so often before will save again. But it is to be observed that the inspired singer is pleading, not so much for the sake of himself and his people, as for the sake of God's honor which has been insulted throughout the land, and of His holy Mount, Shrine and service which have been everywhere profaned (verses 2-10, 18, 22, 23).

Our misfortunes are sometimes a needed discipline and a salutary remedy against sinful excesses; but they are also not infrequently a rude interruption of our service of God, as well as a grave hindrance to our spiritual progress and the good we want to do in the world. While well aware that he who would follow Christ must bear the cross, we also know that if altogether crushed, we cannot follow at all. Then the loss is not only our own, but it is likewise God's and our neighbor's. Our time and opportunities are brief and uncertain, and the fruits of our efforts will be poor at best; but we are anxious to do what we can while we can, and as long as we can.

#### PSALM 74 (Heb. 75)

#### THE LORD IS THE JUDGE OF THE NATIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

Some recent great victory of the Chosen People, which was a manifestation of the just judgment of God, has moved the Psalmist to draw for us here a brief picture of the Day of the Lord, when the earth shall



be dissolved and all its inhabitants brought to judgment. Despite all appearances to the contrary, God is ever the support of the just and the Supreme Ruler of the world; and in due time He will come to set things right and put men in their places. Let presumptuous sinners, therefore, take warning, for the Great Judge is coming who will humble the proud and exalt the lowly, and pour out the vials of His wrath on all sinners.

1. Magistro chori. Secundum      For the choir-master. Accord-  
"Ne destruxeris." Psalmus. Asa-      ing to the tune, "Destroy Not."  
phi. Canticum.      A psalm. Of Asaph. A canticle.

*The Psalmist Praises God for His Wondrous Deeds (2)*

2. Celebamus te, Domine, ce-      We praise Thee, O Lord, we  
lebamus, et praedicamus nomen      praise; we proclaim Thy name,  
tuum, enarramus mirabilia tua.      and recount Thy wondrous works.

*God Announces that at a Fixed Time He Alone Will Judge Everyone  
According to His Merits (3-9)*

3. "Quando statuero tempus,      "When I shall have fixed the  
ego secundum ius iudicabo.      time, I will judge justly.

4. Etsi moveatur terra cum om-      "Although the earth with all  
nibus incolis suis: ego firmavi co-      its inhabitants be moved, I have  
lumnas eius.      made firm its pillars.

5. Dico insolentibus: 'Nolite      "I say to the insolent: 'Be not  
insolescere,' et impiis: 'Nolite ex-      insolent.' And to the impious:  
tollere cornu,'      'Lift not up your horn.'

6. Nolite extollere contra Al-      "Lift not up your horn against  
tissimum cornu vestrum, nolite      the Most High, speak not against  
loqui contra Deum proterva.      God arrogant things.

7. Neque enim ab Oriente ne-      "For neither from the East nor  
que ab Occidente neque a deserto      from the West, neither from the  
neque a montibus:      wilderness nor from the moun-  
tains:

8. Sed Deus est iudex; hunc      "But God is the judge; this one  
deprimit, et illum extollit.      He humbles, and that one He  
exalts.

4. Cfr. 2 Peter 3:10-12.—"Ego firmavi, etc." He who has established the earth will also see that justice shall prevail.

5. "Cornu," a symbol of power.

6. "Nolite loqui, etc." Literally, "Contra Petram."—"Contra Deum" is according to the LXX.

9. Nam in manu Domini calix      "For in the hand of the Lord is  
est, qui spumat vino, plenus      a cup, foaming with wine and  
mixto: Et propinat ex eo; usque      filled with spices: And He pours  
ad faeces sorbebunt, bibent omnes      from it a drink; even to the dregs  
impii terrae."      they shall swallow it, all the im-  
pious of the earth shall drink."

*Praise of God for His Wondrous Deeds (10, 11)*

10. Ego autem exultabo in ae-      But as for me, I will exult for  
ternum, psallam Deo Iacob.      ever, I will sing to the God of  
Jacob.

11. Et omnia cornua impiorum      And I will break all the horns  
confringam; extollentur cornua      of the godless; *but* the horns of  
iusti.      the just shall be exalted.

REFLECTIONS

Good people, who have not been able to learn the long hard lesson that the secret of great holiness and peace is in the entire submission of our wills to the divine will, often become impatient with God's ways of acting as revealed in the lives of individual human beings and in the records of society and nations. The reign of sin is frequently so extended as to time and place, the exercise of justice so long delayed, the suffering of innocence so interminable, and the intervening loss and havoc so colossal and appalling, that righteous and helpless observers often grow sick at heart and are sorely tempted to murmur. They cannot understand why the all-powerful and all-good Ruler of the world can apparently be so indifferent to the affairs of earth. Is He deaf to the cries of the weak, the poor and the defenseless? Can He not be moved by the agonies of His children? Does He not care what happens to them here or hereafter? What importance have individual persons and groups in His sight?

These questions, so appealing and so often asked, are in reality a proof that those who utter them are but children as regards God and spiritual realities. Judging by a limited material sphere in which they live, they have only the vaguest and most fragmentary conceptions of an immaterial world which they cannot see and of which they know next to nothing. These questioners fail to consider that God is a universal ruler and provider, and so has a vast plan and purpose which are for the most part entirely beyond our scrutiny, and which consequently we can never hope to take in and comprehend in our present state. When emphasizing

9. "Calix," full of a bitter drink, is often in Scripture a symbol of divine anger.—"Plenus mixto," *well spiced*, that is, potent.



that God is all-powerful and all-good, we must never forget that He is also all-wise. That what He does seems queer or wrong to us is due to our stupidity. Furthermore, God now works through secondary causes and according to the nature of those causes, with the result that effects, both good and bad, must often be long awaited. Seeds sown or planted on earth, whether physical or moral, require time to grow and develop before bearing their fruit. Again, Holy Scripture assigns a twofold purpose for God's delay in punishing wrong, namely, that the sinner may be brought to repentance, and that evil in working itself out may show its real nature, as something to be hated and shunned.

Keeping these reasons in mind, the righteous oppressed will be saved from impatience and despondency and the wicked oppressor from dreams and delusions of impunity. But in due time all things run their course, and then divine intervention swiftly asserts itself according to its changeless character of righteousness, meting out judgment in truth and equity to everyone, saving the tottering framework of society, and re-establishing the moral order of the world.

It was such a manifestation of divine intervention in behalf of Israel that the Psalmist is here extolling. He rejoices not only that insolent wickedness has come to the end of its road and rope and been brought face to face with judgment, but also, and more, that the righteous character of God which hates evil and loves good, has again been clearly shown and vindicated. In conclusion he reflects that he is a servant of God, one of the many secondary causes or instruments through which God works here on earth; and he is resolved to do his part in fighting evil and crushing oppression and godlessness.

People who complain about God delaying so long before acting and permitting so much evil in the world would do well to examine their own lives and actions, to see how slow they are to act and how many evils they tolerate in themselves and in others which they could and should correct and eradicate without delay. Until each one has done his part in this matter, he is not in a very good position to question God's part. And if each of us were resolutely to root out all the evils that come within our power, what a changed world this would be!

### PSALM 75 (Heb. 76)

#### TRIUMPHAL HYMN AFTER A GREAT VICTORY

##### INTRODUCTION

This is a song of thanksgiving, primarily for the salvation of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's menacing hosts, and secondarily for the dawn of

the Messianic era, foreshadowed in the miraculous deliverance of the Holy City. The destruction of the Assyrian army and the consequent preservation of Sion (4 Kings 19:33-35; Isa. 37:33-36) was a type and a pledge of the overthrow of a wider despotism, and the inauguration of a peaceful union of all nations in the service of God, which would be realized in the Messianic age.

The language of the Psalm is highly poetical and figurative.

1. Magistro chori. Fidibus.	For the choir-master. With
Psalmus. Asaphi. Canticum.	stringed instruments. A psalm.
	Of Asaph. A canticle.

#### *Brief Description of Defeat (2-4)*

2. Innotuit Deus in Iuda, in Israel magnum est nomen eius.	In Juda God is known, in Israel His name is great.
3. In Salem est tabernaculum eius, et habitatio eius in Sion.	In Salem is His tabernacle, and His abode in Sion.
4. Ibi confregit fulmina arcus, scutum et gladium et arma.	There has He shattered the bolts of the bow, the shield and the sword and the weapons.

#### *With God's Powerful Aid, the Enemy Collapsed as if Stunned (5-7)*

5. Splendens luce tu, potens, venisti a montibus aeternis.	Shining with light and powerful, Thou didst come from the eternal mountains.
6. Spoliati sunt robusti corde, dormiunt somnum suum, et omnium fortium defecerunt manus.	Despoiled were the stout of heart, they sleep their sleep, and the hands of all the strong availed not.
7. Increpatione tua, Deus Iacob, torpuerunt currus et equi.	At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, numbed were their chariots and horses.

#### *Victory Was Due to God, the Mighty and Just Judge (8-10)*

8. Terribilis es tu, et quis resistet tibi, ob vehementiam irae tuae?	Thou art terrible, and who shall resist Thee, on account of the vehemence of Thy wrath?
9. De caelo audiri fecisti iudicium: terra expavit et siluit,	Thou didst make sentence to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still,

5. "A montibus aeternis" seems to refer to the mountains about Jerusalem. God appears coming from the Temple (verse 3).



10. Cum exsurget ad iudicium Deus, ut salvos faceret omnes humiles terrae.

When God arose for judgment, to save all the lowly ones of the earth.

*The People Are Invited to Honor the Terrible God of Israel and to Offer Sacrifices (11-13)*

11. Nam furor Edom glorificabit te, et superstites Emath festum agent tibi.

For the fury of Edom shall glorify Thee, and the survivors of Emath shall hold festival for Thee.

12. Facite vota et solvite ea Domino Deo vestro, omnes in circuitu eius munus ferant Terribili,

Make vows and fulfill them to the Lord your God, let all around Him bring a gift to the Terrible One,

13. Ei qui cohibet spiritum principum, qui terribilis est regibus terrae.

To Him who curbs the spirit of princes, who is terrible to the kings of the earth.

#### REFLECTIONS

The theme of this Psalm is a solemn manifestation of God's judgment against the enemies of His Chosen People. That manifestation was a revelation of God's character. The divine nature is made known in general through its acts in creating, sustaining and governing the world. But God had chosen Mount Sion and its Holy City as a place of special dwelling here on earth, as the scene of particular revelations of Himself to His elected race and through them to all mankind.

Acts of wickedness are always against God, but when they are directed against places, persons or things whereby His love and goodness are especially manifested, they take on a special malice and become doubly opposed to the divine nature and thus doubly bad and hateful. When therefore a foreign foe rose against God's people and their place of hallowed dwelling, they provoked a divine fury and encountered an invisible might which paralyzed all their strength, made impotent their arms and weapons and swept them to the weakness and silence of death before they could deliver a blow. Let sinners and all the world behold and take warning!

We prefer to think of the divine Being as a God of love and mercy, and so He is; but love is not weakness, nor mercy a surrender to brazen and defiant wrong. If God were not capable of punishing sin and sinners, how many would be moved or deterred by His love and goodness? It is

11. "Edom . . . Emath," i.e., regions to the south and the north of the Holy Land are invited to acknowledge God.

according to our unfortunate nature that fear must always play a large part in the welfare of our lives here and for the world to come. We are not yet good enough to be ruled by love alone, except in rare instances. Thus, though God, in dealing with His frail and defective human creatures, inclines to mercy and kindness far more than to justice and rigor, He would not be God at all and would do us great harm, if He could not and did not punish sin, at times very severely. Hence it is that the transgressions of man and their chastisement serve to manifest at once the real nature of God and His goodness towards us.

The recent divine victory, therefore, which the Psalmist is celebrating, is looked upon as a call to Israel to bow in worship and a summons to the nations around to bring tribute to Him who is able in an instant to humble to the dust the pride of princes and to strike mortal terror into the kings of the earth.

#### PSALM 76 (Heb. 77)

#### LAMENTATION AND CONSOLATION OF THE AFFLICTED PEOPLE

##### INTRODUCTION

In sore distress over the fate that has befallen his nation, which has been carried away captive to Babylon, the Psalmist here complains to God for having apparently abandoned His Chosen People and broken His promises to their fathers. But reflecting on Israel's past history, in which divine guidance and mercy have been signally manifested, he finds consolation and feels certain that all will yet be well; God will redeem His people and judge their enemies.

The spirit and language of this poem are very similar to the Cantic of Moses (Exod. 15) and the prayer of Habacuc (Hab. 3).

1. Magistro chori. Secundum Iduthun. Asaphi. Psalmus. For the choir-master. According to Iduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.

*Praying and Meditating Incessantly, the Psalmist Can Find No Consolation, since the Providence of God towards His People Seems to Have Changed (2-13)*

2. Vox mea ad Deum ascendit et clamo, vox mea ad Deum, ut audiat me; (3) die angustiae meae Dominum quaero. My voice ascends to God and I cry out; my voice to God, that He may hear me; in my day of distress I seek the Lord.



Manus mea per noctem extenditur indefessa, consolationem renuit anima mea.

4. Cum Dei recordor, ingemisco; cum recogito, deficit spiritus meus.

5. Tenes vigiles oculos meos; conturbor nec possum loqui.

6. Perpendo dies antiquos, et pristinos annos (7) recordor:

Meditor nocte in corde meo, recogito et scrutatur spiritus meus:

8. "Num in aeternum repellet Deus, nec propitius erit ultra?"

9. Num in perpetuum deficiet gratia eius, irrita erit promissio in omnes generationes?

10. Num oblitus est misereri Deus? an iratus occlusit misericordiam suam?"

11. Et dico: "Hic est dolor meus, quod mutata est dextera Altissimi."

12. Memor sum factorum Domini, utique memor sum antiquorum mirabilium tuorum.

13. Et meditor omnia opera tua, et gesta tua perpendo.

*The Psalmist's Spirits Revive at the Thought of God's Holiness and Power, Manifested in the Liberation of the People from Egypt and the Miracles at the Red Sea (14-21)*

14. Deus, sancta est via tua: quis deus est magnus ut Deus noster?

Through the night my hand is stretched forth unwearyingly, my soul refuses comfort.

When I remember God, I groan; when I ponder, my soul pines away.

Thou keepest my eyes wakeful; I am disturbed and cannot speak.

I think on the days of old, and I recall the early years:

I meditate at night within my heart, I reflect and my spirit explores:

"Will God cast us off for ever, will He not be propitious any more?"

"Will His favor fail for ever, will His promise be void for all generations?"

"Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has He in wrath shut up His mercy?"

And I say: "This is my grief, that the right hand of the Most High is changed."

I am mindful of the deeds of the Lord; yes, I am mindful of Thy wonders of old.

And I meditate on all Thy works, and ponder Thy deeds.

O God, Thy way is holy; what god is great as our God?

5. "Tenes vigiles, etc.," so that he may not close his eyes in sleep.

11. "Mutata est, etc.," i.e., the right hand of the Lord is not exercised in our favor as in former times. Such is the interpretation of the ancients—the Targums, Aquila, Theodotion, St. Jerome.

14. "Sancta est via tua," i.e., God's ways of acting are always in conformity with His infinite holiness.

15. Tu es Deus, qui mirabilia patras, notam fecisti in populis potentiam tuam.

16. Redemisti bracchio tuo populum tuum, filios Iacob et Ioseph.

17. Viderunt te aquae, Deus, viderunt te aquae: tremuerunt, atque commoti sunt fluctus.

18. Profunderunt nubila aquas, nubes emiserunt vocem, atque sagittae tuae volarunt.

19. Tonitrus tuus in turbine sonuit, collustrarunt fulgura orbem: commota est et tremuit terra.

20. Per mare facta est via tua, et semita tua per aquas multas, neque apparuerunt vestigia tua.

21. Duxisti ut gregem populum tuum, per manum Moysis et Aaron.

Thou art the God that workest wonders, Thou hast shown among the peoples Thy might.

With Thine arm Thou didst redeem Thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee; they trembled and the waves were convulsed.

The clouds poured forth water, the clouds voiced thunder, and Thine arrows flew apace.

Thy thunder sounded in the whirlwind, lightnings lit up the world; the earth was shaken and trembled.

Thy way was made through the sea, and Thy path through many waters, nor did Thy footsteps appear.

Thou didst lead Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

#### REFLECTIONS

The singer's spirit in the first half of this Psalm is so wrapt in profound sadness, as a result of a national disaster, that he is nearly in despair. The calamities of his people have become his own, and they have lasted so long that he is beginning to fear that God has cast off His beloved ones forever. Having received no answer to prolonged and earnest prayer, he can only sigh and groan. He is wondering whether God has changed. But in the second part of the Psalm the recollection of past mercies to Israel gives the Psalmist a different viewpoint. Then he thinks, what God

16. "Filius Iacob," who had immigrated into Egypt, "et (filius) Ioseph," who were born there. See Gen. 46:26 ff. Jacob was the first father of the Israelites, and Joseph, as it were, a second father.

17. "Aquae," i.e., the Red Sea when the Israelites crossed it.

20. The reference is to the triumphal march of Jehovah and His people through the Red Sea.—"Neque apparuerunt, etc." The power of God leading His people through the sea was invisible to human eyes.



has done before He will do again; God will once more redeem and save His people. Thus the clouds of sorrow break, and the troubled spirit has the answer to all its questions and doubts. To the Psalmist, past divine favors were an assurance of future ones.

If we would succeed in the spiritual life, in sanctifying and saving our souls, it would seem that we must cultivate and preserve first and above all else an unshaken faith and confidence in God. By deliberate and frequent acts we must train ourselves to regard God as the Father who out of love brought us into life, who really wants and intends to save us, whose love has provided us with everything necessary for our present personal sanctification and future salvation, and who will surely bring to perfection His designs concerning us, if at all times and under all circumstances we will act on these convictions and trust Him while doing the best we can to obey His laws. To do all this is hard indeed for natures like ours and in a world like this; but it is the secret of ultimate triumph, whatever else may happen.

We cannot so depend on other things, either on the part of God or ourselves, such as divine visitations, special illuminations and favors, periods of fervor and devotion, uninterrupted fidelity to duty, the use of grace, physical and mental states and conditions, the aid and example of friends, and the like; for all these things are fitful and passing, present with us today perhaps, in whole or in part, but gone tomorrow. Our lives and labors, moods and circumstances, are in flux; we can never for long count on them. But if through, and in spite of, all that happens to us, we can steadfastly maintain, without presumption, our trust in God as our unfailing and all-powerful friend, nothing can do us any real harm and all in the end will be found to have contributed to our lasting good. A faith of this kind will be an unmistakable light in the deepest darkness.

Such confidence and trust, of course, can never mean that we shall not try to perform our full duty to ourselves and others, both positively and negatively, by doing the things we know we can and should do and avoiding and preventing to the best of our ability all that can hurt or make life harder for ourselves and others. On the contrary, this implicit trust means that, when we have tried to do all that we can do and are obliged to do, we shall be peacefully resigned to whatever may happen, convinced that it will finally turn out to be the best for us. In the same way we shall regard even our past faults and mistakes, once we are sorry for them and have done what we can to repair the harm they may have done.

As then our strongest hope is in perfect trust, so our greatest spiritual danger is that, for some or any reason, we shall weaken in our faith and

confidence in God as our abiding and mighty friend, and as a consequence fail in fidelity to our duties.

## PSALM 77 (Heb. 78)

### BENEFACCTIONS OF GOD AND INGRATITUDE OF ISRAEL

#### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this poem is to draw lessons of warning for the present and the future from a consideration of the history of the past. Repeatedly in the past Israel has experienced the goodness and mercy of God, especially in times of great need; but soon she forgot those benefits, giving way to repeated rebellion and distrust of her Lord. Each time severe chastisement has been the result, even though mercy has always tempered punishment. Let Israelites, therefore, learn from the mistakes of their forebears how to avoid sorrows and calamities like to theirs. Similar teaching is found in Psalms 104 and 105.

The poet here traces Israel's history from the Exodus from Egypt down to the time of David, treating in poetic fashion those parts of the accounts of the Exodus, the wanderings, and the settlement in Canaan, as found in Exodus, Numbers and 1 Kings, that pertain to his purpose. His order is not chronological but logical, as he conceives it, so as best to bring out God's goodness and Israel's ingratitude with its consequent punishment.

The Psalm is certainly pre-exilic, but whether written before or after the fall of the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.) cannot be determined. The expression, "Holy One of Israel" (v. 41), harks back to Isaías.

1. Maskil. Asaphi.

A maskil. Of Asaph.

#### *Lessons to Be Drawn from Israel's History (1-8)*

Ausculata, popule meus, doctrinam meam; inclinate aures vestras ad verba oris mei.

Hearken to my teaching, O my people; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2. Aperiam ad parabolas os meum, proferam arcana aetatis antiquae.

I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things of the olden age.

3. Quae audivimus et cognovi-

What things we have heard

2. "Ad parabolas." The Hebrew means *similitude*, a didactic song.



mus, et quae patres nostri narra-  
verunt nobis,

4. Non occultabimus a filiis  
eorum, generationi futurae nar-  
rabimus laudes Domini et po-  
tentiam eius et mirabilia quae fe-  
cit.

5. Statuit enim praeceptum in  
Iacob et legem condidit in Israel,  
ut, quae mandavit patribus nos-  
tris, nota facerent filiis suis,

6. Ut cognoscat generatio ven-  
tura, filii qui nascentur, ut sur-  
gant et narrent filiis suis,

7. Ut ponant in Deo spem  
suam neque obliviscantur opera  
Dei, sed mandata eius observent;

8. Neve fiant, sicut patres eo-  
rum, generatio rebellis et con-  
tumax: generatio quae cor non  
habuit rectum, neque animum Deo  
fidelem.

*The Miracles in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the Desert (9-16)*

9. Filii Ephraim pugnantes ar-  
cu terga verterunt die proelii.

10. Non servaverunt foedus  
Dei, et in lege eius renuerunt am-  
bulare,

11. Et obliti sunt opera eius,

9. "Filii Ephraim." This phrase embraces here all the Israelites of the time of the Exodus and of the period of the Judges.—"Pugnantes arcu," *stretching the bow and shooting*. It would seem that, on some occasion unknown to us, the Ephraimites turned traitor and betrayed their countrymen in battle; or the meaning may be that the Ephraimites were like cowards who flee in battle, and failed to fight the cause of God (Kirkpatrick). The main purpose of this Psalm, according to certain authorities, is to show the unfaithfulness and consequent rejection of Ephraim and the election of Juda as God's favorite tribe.

and known, and what our fathers  
have told us,

We will not hide from their  
sons; we will recount to the com-  
ing generation the praises of the  
Lord and His might, and the  
wonders He has done.

For He has established a pre-  
cept in Jacob, and framed a law  
in Israel, that what things He  
commanded to our fathers they  
should make known to their sons,

So that the coming generation,  
the sons to be born, might know  
and rise and relate to their sons,

That they should put their hope  
in God and should not forget the  
works of God, but should observe  
His commands;

Lest they become, like their  
fathers, a rebellious and stubborn  
generation: a generation that was  
not upright in heart, nor faithful  
in spirit to God.

The sons of Ephraim, fighting  
with the bow, turned their backs  
on the day of battle.

They kept not the covenant of  
God, and refused to walk in His  
law,

And they forgot His works,

et mirabilia eius quae ostendit  
eis.

12. Coram patribus eorum fe-  
cit miracula in terra Aegypti, in  
campo Taneos.

13. Scidit mare et traduxit  
eos, et statuit aquas ut aggerem.

14. Et duxit eos nube per  
diem, per totam noctem lumine  
ignis.

15. Scidit petras in deserto, et  
adaquavit eos, ut fluctibus, copi-  
ose.

16. Et elicuit rivos de petra, et  
deduxit, ut flumina, aquas.

*When the People Murmured, God Sent Manna and Quail, but  
Chastised Their Cupidity (17-31)*

17. Sed perrexerunt peccare in  
eum, offendere Altissimum in de-  
serto.

18. Et tentaverunt Deum in  
cordibus suis, petentes cibum se-  
cundum cupiditatem suam.

19. Et locuti sunt contra Deum;  
dixerunt: "Num poterit Deus pa-  
rare mensam in deserto?"

20. Ecce percussit petram, et  
fluxerunt aquae et torrentes ema-  
naverunt: num panem quoque po-  
terit dare, vel parare carnem po-  
pulo suo?"

21. Ideo, cum audisset Domi-  
nus, furore exarsit, et ignis ac-  
census est contra Iacob, et ira ef-  
ferbuit contra Israel,

and His wonders which He had  
shown them.

In the sight of their fathers He  
wrought marvels in the land of  
Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

He divided the sea and led  
them forth, and made the waters  
stand like a mound.

And He led them through the  
day by a cloud, and all night long  
by a fiery light.

He sundered the rocks in the  
wilderness, and gave them water  
in abundance, as in floods.

And He brought forth streams  
from the rock, and made the  
waters flow down like rivers.

But they continued to sin against  
Him, to offend the Most High  
in the wilderness.

And they tempted God in their  
hearts, demanding food according  
to their greed.

And they spoke against God,  
saying: "Will God be able to  
spread a table in the wilderness?"

"Behold, He struck a rock and  
and the waters flowed, and tor-  
rents streamed forth. Can He  
also give bread, or furnish flesh  
for His people?"

Therefore, when the Lord  
heard, He was inflamed with  
wrath, and a fire was enkindled  
against Jacob, and anger boiled  
up against Israel,

12. "Taneos," which was an important city on the eastern bank of the Tanitic arm of the Nile. It was the capital of the Hyksos dynasty, and there the Pharaoh of the Oppression held his court.



22. Quia non crediderunt in Deum, nec speraverunt in auxilio eius.

23. Sed mandavit nubibus desuper, et ianuas caeli aperuit,

24. Et pluit super eos manna ad manducandum, et panem caeli dedit eis.

25. Panem fortium manducavit homo: cibaria misit eis ad saturitatem.

26. Excitavit Eurum de caelo et adduxit potentia sua Austrum.

27. Et pluit super eos, ut pulverem, carnes, et, sicut arenam maris, volatilia pennata,

28. Et ceciderunt in castra eorum, circa tabernacula eorum.

29. Et manducaverunt, et saturati sunt valde, et desiderium eorum implevit eis.

30. Nondum cessaverant a desiderio suo, et escae eorum erant in ore ipsorum, cum ira Dei efferbuit contra eos,

31. Et caedem fecit procerum eorum, et iuvenes Israel prostravit.

*Although the People Repeatedly Experienced God's Mercy, They Continued to Sin (32-39)*

32. Sed tamen peccaverunt ultra, nec crediderunt miraculis eius.

33. Et consumpsit velociter dies eorum, et annos eorum exitio repentino.

34. Cum occidebat eos, quaere-

27. "Ut pulverem . . . sicut arenam" poetic hyperboles, to signify great numbers.

Because they believed not in God, nor trusted in His aid.

So, He commanded the clouds from above and opened the portals of heaven,

And He rained down upon them manna to eat, and gave them bread of heaven.

Man ate of the bread of the strong; He sent them food to satiety.

He aroused the East wind from the sky, and by His power called forth the South wind.

And He rained upon them flesh like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the sea,

And they fell into their camp, around their tents.

And they ate and were well filled, and He satisfied their desire.

Not yet had they ceased from their craving, and their food was still in their mouth, when the anger of God boiled up against them,

And He slew their strong ones, and laid low the young men of Israel.

Nevertheless, they continued to sin, and believed not His wonders.

And He consumed their days swiftly, and their years with an abrupt end.

Whenever He slew them, they

bant eum, et conversi requirebant Deum;

35. Et recordabantur Deum esse petram suam, et Deum Altissimum redemptorem suum.

36. Sed decipiebant eum ore suo, et lingua sua mentiebantur ei.

37. Et cor eorum non erat rectum cum eo, nec fideles erant in foedere eius.

38. Ipse tamen miserans dimittebat culpam nec perdebat eos, et crebro cohibuit iram suam, neque effudit totum furorem suum.

39. Et recordatus est eos esse carnem, halitum qui vadat nec revertatur.

*The Psalmist Enumerates the Miracles in Egypt, Recalls the Journey through the Desert and God's Concession to Israel of the Land of Canaan (40-55)*

40. Quoties provocaverunt eum in deserto, afflixerunt eum in solitudine!

41. Et iterum tentaverunt Deum, et Sanctum Israel exacerbaverunt.

42. Non sunt recordati manus eius, diei quo redemit eos de manu adversarii,

43. Quando patravit in Aegypto signa sua, et prodigia sua in campo Taneos,

44. Et convertit in sanguinem flumina eorum et rivos eorum, ne biberent.

45. Misit in eos muscas quae comederunt eos, et ranas quae infestarunt eos;

44-51. These verses enumerate the plagues of Egypt, but in a somewhat different order from that given in Exod. 7:12.

sought Him, and being converted they had recourse to God;

And they remembered that God was their rock, and God Most High their redeemer.

But they deceived Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied to Him.

And their heart was not right towards Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant.

Yet He showing mercy remitted *their* fault and destroyed them not, and repeatedly curbed His wrath and tempered His fury.

And He remembered that they were flesh, a breath that passes and returns no more.

How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, *and* grieved Him in the desert!

And again they tempted God, and embittered the Holy One of Israel.

They were not mindful of His power, of the day when He delivered them from the hand of the enemy,

When He worked His signs in Egypt, and His portents in the field of Zoan,

And turned their rivers into blood, and their streams that they might not drink.

He sent upon them flies that devoured them, and frogs that harassed them;



46. Et dedit bruchus proventus eorum, et fructum laboris eorum locustae.

47. Percussit grandine vineas eorum, et sycomoros eorum pruina.

48. Et tradidit grandini iumenta eorum, et greges eorum fulminibus.

49. Misit in eos aestum irae suae, indignationem et furorem et tribulationem: catervam ministrorum calamitatis.

50. Viam aperuit irae suae: non servavit eos a morte, et animalia eorum tradidit pesti.

51. Et percussit omne primogenitum in Aegypto, primos partus eorum in tabernaculis Cham.

52. Et eduxit sicut oves populum suum, et deduxit eos ut gregem in deserto.

53. Et duxit eos securos nec timuerunt, et inimicos eorum operuit mare.

54. Et perduxit eos in terram sanctam suam, ad montes quos acquisivit dextera eius;

55. Et eiecit ante eos gentes, et sorte attribuit eas in hereditatem, et habitare fecit in tabernaculis earum tribus Israel.

*Since They Sinned against God in Canaan with Their High Places and Idols, God Punished the People with Defeat (56-64)*

56. Sed tentaverunt et provocaverunt Deum Altissimum, et praecepta eius non servaverunt.

55. "Attribuit eas," i.e., He gave the land of the Gentiles to the Israelites as an inheritance.

And He gave their crops to the cankerworm, and the fruit of their labor to the locust.

He struck their vines with hail, and their sycamores with frost.

And He gave over their beasts to the hail, and their flocks to the lightnings.

He sent upon them the heat of His anger, indignation and fury and trouble—a troop of ministers of calamity.

He gave free course to His anger, sparing them not from death and delivering their animals to the plague.

And He smote every first-born in Egypt, their firstlings in the tents of Cham.

But He led out His people like sheep, and conducted them like a flock in the wilderness.

And He led them secure and they feared not, and the sea covered their enemies.

And He brought them into His holy land, to the mountains which His right hand acquired;

And He cast out the heathen before them, and by lot distributed them as an inheritance, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

But they tempted and provoked God Most High, and kept not His precepts.

57. Et defecerunt et praevaricati sunt sicut patres eorum, aberraverunt ut arcus fallax.

58. Ad iram lacessiverunt eum excelsis suis, et sculptilibus suis aemulationem eius excitaverunt.

59. Audivit Deus et exarsit furore, et acriter reiecit Israel.

60. Et reliquit habitaculum Silo, tabernaculum, ubi habitavit inter homines.

61. Et tradidit in captivitatem robur suum, et gloriam suam in manus inimici.

62. Et tradidit gladio populum suum, et contra hereditatem suam exarsit.

63. Iuvenes eorum comedit ignis, et virgines eorum non sunt desponsatae.

64. Sacerdotes eorum gladio ceciderunt, et viduae eorum non ploraverunt.

*Though Giving Them Victory over the Enemy, God Reprobated the Sanctuary in Silo, Rejected the Tribe of Ephraim, Chose the Tribe of Juda and Mount Sion, and Made David King (65-72)*

65. Et expergefactus est velut e somno Dominus, velut bellator victus a vino.

66. Et percussit a tergo inimicos suos: ignominiam aeternam inflixit eis.

67. Et reiecit tabernaculum Io-

58. "Cum excelsis suis," where idolatry was practised. Cfr. Deut. 32:16 sqq.

60. "Et reliquit, etc.," out of hatred for the sins of the Ephraimites.

61. "Robur . . . gloriam." Both words stand for the Ark of the Covenant.—"In captivitatem" of the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:6).

63. "Et virgines eorum, etc." R. V.: *And their maidens had no marriage song.*

64. "Non ploraverunt." The meaning may be that the customary mourning and funeral rites were not performed.

67, 68. The Ark returned no more to Silo, which was in Ephraim; Mount Sion in the tribe of Juda became its sanctuary.

And they failed and prevaricated like their fathers, they departed from the way like a crooked bow.

They provoked Him to anger by their high places, and excited His envy by their graven images.

God heard and burned with wrath, and in bitterness He rejected Israel.

And He deserted the abode of Silo, the tabernacle wherein He dwelt among men.

And He delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the hands of the enemy.

And He delivered His people to the sword, and was inflamed against His inheritance.

Fire consumed their young men, and their maidens were unwed.

Their priests fell by the sword and their widows grieved not.

And the Lord was roused as if from sleep, like a warrior overcome with wine.

And He smote His enemies as they fled; He inflicted everlasting ignominy on them.

And He rejected the tabernacle



seph, et tribum Ephraim non elegit.

68. Sed elegit tribum Iuda, montem Sion quem dilexit.

69. Et extruxit, ut caelum, sanctuarium suum, ut terram, quam fundavit in saecula.

70. Et elegit David, servum suum, et tulit eum de caulis ovium:

71. Sequentem lactantes vocavit eum, ut pasceret Iacob, populum suum, et Israel, hereditatem suam.

72. Et pavit eos cum probitate cordis sui, et prudentia manuum suarum duxit eos.

of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim.

But He chose the tribe of Juda, Mount Sion which He loved.

And He raised up His sanctuary like heaven, like the earth which He has founded for ever.

And He chose David His servant, taking him from the sheepfolds;

Him who was following the sucklings He called to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel, His inheritance.

And David pastured them with the uprightness of his heart, and led them with the prudence of his hands.

#### REFLECTIONS

The poet here is seriously concerned about the future of his people. A survey of their present moral and religious state makes him anxious; they are far from what God intended them to be and what they would be if they exerted themselves sufficiently.

The writer therefore in his zeal invites his readers to review with him the record of the past, from the liberation of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt down to the establishment of David's kingdom and the Holy Land. From that long and pathetic story the people will get the lessons they need to learn and bear in mind for their present and future behavior. There they can see contrasted the many wondrous deeds performed by God for their ancestors, and the habitual acts of ingratitude and rebellion against God on the part of those ancestors. There they will see also the sufferings and chastisements which the people brought upon themselves by their sins, and the kindness and mercy of God which tempered punishment and prevailed over rigor and justice. It was God's declared wish that a knowledge of that history should be handed down from parents to children, from family to family, from generation to generation, for the purpose of learning and inculcating salutary lessons of fear and obedience regarding the divine will and the laws which manifest it.

71. "Sequentem lactantes," i.e., he was called from the care of flocks to feed the people of God.

Throughout her history, it seems, Israel misunderstood the meaning of her chosen state and all the extraordinary blessings she received and enjoyed. She appeared to accept everything as if due her and deserved by her. That she had a great mission to perform for others—a message from God to be carried to the world, as well as the fulfillment of the divine will in herself—and that all her special gifts were conferred in view of that purpose, she failed consistently and on the whole to realize. Israel's central sins were therefore selfishness and pride. Her eyes were turned inward, not outward; she thought only of receiving, not of giving; she gloried in her possessions, instead of her sacrifices. That was why divine favors were received with little or no gratitude and were soon forgotten, why punishments and calamities brought on by sins taught only partial and passing lessons, why both precept and mercy to her had been in vain.

But true to His nature and character God pitied the Israelites in the midst of their sins. Like a loving Father, He looked into their faces and there saw His own children whom He, and not any other, had brought into the world, made in His own image and likeness, and therefore dear to Him in spite of their faults. While He could not but hate their forwardness and perversity, and had at times to punish them for their sins, He considered their frail natures, their trials and sufferings, the brevity of their passing lives, and He yielded to the appeal of mercy and restrained His uplifted hand (vv. 38, 39). And yet, so persistent and grievous were their transgressions, so corrupt and foul their ways of acting, that God at length was obliged in saddened justice to reject Ephraim and its Sanctuary. Thus Silo, the special divine dwelling-place, became empty for evermore; the Ark, which was their glory, was allowed to fall into the hands of enemies; the bodies of their dead lay strewn and ghastly everywhere; bridal songs and joys were hushed while maidens grieved, their priests were massacred and sorrowing widows mourned alone.

But divine love and mercy could not permit this doleful situation to continue forever. Suddenly, as if from a deep sleep, God rose up against the oppressors of His people. Though their wretchedness was due to their sins, He would tolerate their sufferings no longer. Soon, therefore, the persecuting Philistines were routed; the Ark was restored, but with Sion as its abode; Juda was chosen in place of Ephraim; and David was enthroned as the leader of God's people to feed and care for them for all time.

To the Psalmist the Davidic kingdom was the final form of national existence, and, together with the Sanctuary, was regarded as enduring as the heavens above and the earth beneath. Through the Messiah and



His everlasting kingdom this conception has been realized; and the greatest of God's mercies to His people have been manifested.

Thus did divine goodness and mercy at length prevail over the sins of the people. Therefore may ingratitude, selfishness and rebellion against God be no more, that merited punishment for such sins may be no more! If the ancient Hebrews were grievously reprehensible for faults of this kind, what is to be said of Christians who are likewise guilty, in spite of the much richer and more numerous blessings which God in Christ has bestowed on them!

## PSALM 78 (Heb. 79)

### LAMENT OVER THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

#### INTRODUCTION

The thought and language of this Psalm, as well as the historical situation described, are so nearly identical with those of Psalm 73 that it may safely be referred to the same period, if not also to the same author—that is, to the time of the Babylonian exile, or, less probably, to the Machabean era.

The Psalmist complains to God that the Holy Land has been invaded by heathens, Jerusalem has been destroyed, the Temple has been desecrated, holy ones have been slain and the people are an object of scorn (vv. 1-4). This terrible situation is due to sin, but the Psalmist entreats Jehovah to divert His wrath from His own people to the oppressors (vv. 5-8). He renews his appeal on the ground that God's honor is at stake, for the enemies are waiting a chance to deny His existence; let them be punished (vv. 9-12). In conclusion, he vows perpetual praise, if his nation be restored (v. 13).

1. Psalmus. Asaphi.

A psalm. Of Asaph.

#### *The Psalmist Describes the Sad Lot of Jerusalem (1-4)*

Deus, venerunt gentes in hereditatem tuam, polluerunt templum sanctum tuum, redegerunt Ierusalem in ruinas.

2. Dederunt corpora servorum tuorum escam volatilibus caeli,

O God, the heathen have invaded Thine inheritance, they have profaned Thy holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to ruins.

They have delivered the bodies of Thy servants as food to the birds

2, 3. The bodies of the slain have no graves.

carnes sanctorum tuorum bestiis terrae.

3. Effuderunt sanguinem eorum ut aquam in circuitu Ierusalem, neque erat qui sepeliret.

4. Facti sumus opprobrium vicinis nostris, irrisio et ludibrium his qui sunt in circuitu nostro.

of heaven, the flesh of Thy holy ones to the beasts of the earth.

They have poured out their blood like water around Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them.

We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to those that surround us.

#### *The Psalmist Implores Punishment of the Enemy and Pardon of His People (5-8)*

5. Quousque, Domine? irasceris perpetuo? ardebit velut ignis zelus tuus?

6. Effunde iram tuam super gentes quae te non agnoscunt, et super regna quae non invocant nomen tuum.

7. Etenim comederunt Iacob, et habitationem eius vastaverunt.

8. Noli recordari contra nos culpas maiorum; cito obveniat nobis misericordia tua: nam miseri sumus valde.

How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou be angry for ever? Will Thy jealousy burn like fire?

Pour out Thy wrath on the heathen that know Thee not, and on the kingdoms that invoke not Thy name.

For they have devoured Jacob, and have laid waste his abode.

Remember not against us the faults of our forefathers; may Thy mercy come quickly upon us, for we are wretched indeed.

#### *The Psalmist Urges that the Very Glory of God's Name Demands Aid for His People, and Makes a More Urgent Plea for God's Help, Promising Perpetual Thanksgiving (9-13)*

9. Adiuva nos, Deus salutis nostrae, propter gloriam nominis tui, et libera nos et dimitte peccata nostra propter nomen tuum.

10. Quare dicant gentes: "Ubi est Deus eorum?"

Innotescat inter gentes, coram oculis nostris, ultio sanguinis servorum tuorum, qui effusus est.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; and deliver us and remit our sins for Thy name's sake.

Why should the heathen say: "Where is their God?"

Let the avenging of the shed blood of Thy servants be made known among the heathen before our eyes.

4. "Vicinis nostris." Reference is especially to the Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites, who were the inveterate enemies of Israel.



11. *Perveniat ad te gemitus captivorum; secundum potentiam brachii tui solve addictos morti.*

12. *Et retribue vicinis nostris septies in sinum eorum opprobrium quo affecerunt te, Domine.*

13. *Nos autem, populus tuus et oves pascuae tuae, celebrabimus te in aeternum; a generatione in generationem enarrabimus laudem tuam.*

Let the groans of the captives come to Thee; according to the power of Thy arm set free those doomed to death.

And pay back our neighbors seven times over, into their bosom, the taunt they have attached to Thee, O Lord.

But we, Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture, will praise Thee for ever; from generation to generation we will recount Thy praise.

#### REFLECTIONS

Again, as in Psalm 73, the singer's heart is in agony over the sufferings of his people, the destruction of their city and the profanation of their Temple. He first draws a picture of appalling conditions and heart-rending sights, which he hopes will move God to pity and to help. Then he appeals directly to God, begging that He would mitigate and withdraw His anger, which has been justly kindled by the sins of the people.

The Psalmist knew that wickedness on the part of Israel—of those then living and of their ancestors—was immediately responsible for all the calamities she was suffering. But he wished that the divine wrath might rather be poured out upon the heathen nations that did not even believe in God or invoke His name, because he was aware that the miseries of Israel involved not only the welfare of her people, but also the honor of God Himself and the reality of God's special relation to the Chosen People. If Israel were permitted so severely to be chastised and for long, what would the heathen think of her God? Would they not doubt, and even deny, His goodness and mercy, and perhaps His existence? If His heart could remain unmoved to pity by the horrible destruction all around and the sights of holy blood and lifeless corpses which befouled the streets, if the cries and groans of His servants fell only on deaf ears, what was there to Israel's boast of a God of power, of mercy, of lovingkindness?

As always, the Psalmist was more concerned about God than about anyone else. Much as he deplored the sufferings of his people and wanted them relieved, he desired still more that no one should get a wrong

12. "In sinum eorum." In the bosom of their clothes people carried the things they wished to preserve.

notion of God by reason of those sufferings. It would turn them against the God of special revelation and His cause in the world. It would give them an excuse for blaspheming Him and remaining in their unbelief and paganism.

So it is with deeply spiritual people at all times and everywhere. In the sorrows, calamities, tragedies and disasters of life which occur so frequently, and are so much a part of the earthly lot of multitudes, good and bad, their thoughts invariably turn to God, first in prayer for help, then in wonder why all the excessive suffering, and finally in fear of the effect on others less fervent, or weak in faith, or unbelieving, or hostile to God and religion. They feel, with the Psalmist, that God's honor, goodness, power, is at stake. Are not these human beings everywhere in the world His children, His creation? Did He not fashion their bodies and souls, give them their parents and their ancestry, allot to them the thousand accidents and circumstances of time and place of birth, and bring them into life? Has He not an individual providence for each one of them for time and eternity? Are not His conceptions and attributes of love, kindness, pity, mercy, the same as ours at our best, only infinitely more intense and perfect? How then explain to the weak and wavering in faith, or to the cold and unsympathetic, God's ways towards the members of His human family? The friends of God know that He is, and must be, consummate goodness and holiness in the very way in which these terms are properly understood by us, and to an infinite degree; but they are often in agony when trying to harmonize these notions with the apparently contradicting facts of life and experience.

In the face of such perplexities the Psalmist had only one answer, and that was, unwavering trust in God. Though his limited knowledge and grasp of things might be all wrong, he was sure that the infinitely perfect being of God could not be wrong. His faith, like ours, was sometimes tested to the breaking point, but it always triumphed; and that was the proof of its reality and value. It has been well said that "the light of faith shows brightest against the darkest background."

#### PSALM 79 (Heb. 80)

#### "RESTORE THY DEVASTATED VINE!"

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm bears a close resemblance to the preceding one, and perhaps was written by the same author for the same or for a similar occasion. It is a prayer to the Shepherd of Israel that He would again visit



and restore Israel, His vine, which was once so flourishing, but which is now trampled down and ravaged by foreign foes. The Psalm has four parts, of which the first two end and the last begins and ends with nearly the same refrain.

1. Magistro chori. Secundum "Lilium legis." Asaphi. Psalmus. For the choir-master. According to the tune, "The Lily of the Law." Of Asaph. A psalm.

*The Psalmist Implores the Aid of God, the Shepherd of Israel (2-4)*

2. Qui pascis Israel, ausculta, qui ducis, velut gregem, Ioseph. Hearken, O Thou who tendest Israel, Thou who leadest Joseph like a flock.
3. Qui sedes super Cherubim, affulge coram Ephraim et Benjamin et Manasse. Excita potentiam tuam, et veni, ut salvos facias nos. Thou who art enthroned above the Cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, and Benjamin and Manasses. Arouse Thy strength and come to save us.
4. Deus, restitue nos, et serenum praebe vultum tuum, ut salvi simus. O God, restore us, and show Thy face unclouded, that we may be saved.

*The Psalmist Describes the Long-standing Calamity of the People (5-8)*

5. Deus exercituum, quousque succensebis, cum oret populus tuus? O God of hosts, how long wilt Thou be angry, while Thy people pray?
6. Cibasti eum pane lacrimarum et potasti eum lacrimis copiose. Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears, and made them drink of tears in full measure.
7. Fecisti nos causam iurgii vicinis nostris, et inimici nostri illudunt nobis. Thou hast made us a bone of contention to our neighbors, and our enemies scoff at us.

2, 3. "Qui pascis, etc." . . . "Qui sedes super, etc." The reference is to God's presence over the Ark between the two Cherubim.

3. "Coram Ephraim, etc." Ephraim and Manasses were the sons of Joseph, and Joseph and Benjamin had the same mother, Rachel. Hence, these tribes were naturally associated together. The Psalmist is praying that God would re-establish the northern kingdom and come to the aid of Judah.

6. "Copiose," i.e., God gave His people tears in great measure.

7. "Causam iurgii." The enemy nations fight over the booty taken from Israel.

8. Deus exercituum, restitue nos, et serenum praebe vultum tuum, ut salvi simus. O God of hosts, restore us, and show Thy face unclouded, that we may be saved.

*The Psalmist Reminds God of His Bountiful Care for Israel, His Vine (9-12)*

9. Vitem ex Aegypto abstulisti, expulisti gentes, et plantasti eam. Thou didst bring a vine out of Egypt, Thou didst cast out the heathen, and didst plant it.
10. Praeparasti ei solum, et radices egit et implevit terram. Thou didst prepare the soil for it, and it took root and filled the land.
11. Operti sunt montes umbra eius, et ramis eius cedri Dei. The mountains were covered with its shade, and the cedars of God with its branches.
12. Extendit palmites suos usque ad mare, et usque ad flumen propagines suas. It extended its tendrils even to the sea, and its shoots even to the river.

*Describing the Pitiful State in Which the Vine Now Is, the Psalmist Begs God's Protection (13-16)*

13. Quare destruxisti maceriam eius, ut vindemient eam omnes qui transeunt per viam, Why hast Thou destroyed its wall, so that all who pass by may reap its vintage,
14. Devastet eam aper silvestris, et bestiae agri depascantur eam? So that the boar of the forest may lay it waste, and the beasts of the field devour it?
15. Deus exercituum, revertere, respice de caelo et vide, et visita vitem hanc. O God of hosts, return, look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine.
16. Et protege eam, quam plantavit dextera tua, et surculum, quem roborasti tibi. Protect that which Thy right hand has planted, and the young sprout which Thou hast strengthened for Thyself.

9. "Et plantasti eam," i.e., in Canaan, from which the pagans were first expelled.

10. "Implevit terram," i.e., the Promised Land.

11. "Cedri Dei," on Lebanon.

12. "Mare" means the Mediterranean, and "flumen," the Euphrates.

14. "Aper silvestris et bestiae agri" perhaps refer to the same animal, the boar or wild ass. St. Jerome has for the second despoiler, *Omnes bestiae agri*.



*The Psalmist Begs that the Enemy Be Destroyed, and Promises that the People Shall Remain Faithful Hereafter (17-20)*

17. Qui eam combusserunt igni et considerunt eam, pereant comminatione vultus tui.

18. Sit manus tua super virum dexteræ tuæ, super filium hominis, quem roborasti tibi.

19. Iam non recedemus a te ultra; vivos servabis nos, et prædicabimus nomen tuum.

20. Domine, Deus exercituum, restitue nos, et serenum præbe vultum tuum, ut salvi simus.

Let those that have consumed it with fire and cut it down perish at the threat of Thy countenance.

May Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the son of the man whom Thou hast strengthened for Thyself.

Now we will stray from Thee no more; Thou wilt preserve our lives, and we will proclaim Thy name.

O Lord God of hosts, restore us, and show Thy face unclouded, that we may be saved.

#### REFLECTIONS

At a time of national disaster the Psalmist recalled the past glories of Israel, before division had separated the northern and the southern kingdom. Whether Juda to the south has been touched to sorrow by the recent captivity of the Ten Tribes in the north, or whether she herself is languishing in Babylon, the singer here is pleading for a return of the ancient days when the Chosen People were one, when all followed the voice of the one Shepherd and were happy and prosperous under His protection and in the smile of His face. One gleam of that same divine countenance now would change the present dark night into glorious day. Other help for Israel in her crisis there is none, except the manifestation of God's face. How long will God be angry with His people? How long must tears and sighs be their food and drink? How long must they be the mockery of their foes?

God did so much for His people in the past! Transplanting them like a vine from the slave soil of Egypt, He took them to the Promised Land. There, cleaning out the Canaanites as weeds that encumbered and poisoned the ground, He planted His vineyard; and there it struck its roots and grew luxuriantly, spreading out its branches far and wide until they reached the Mediterranean on the west and the Euphrates on the east. But now, what a contrast! The protecting wall is thrown down, the vineyard is desolated, the vines lie prostrate; that rich plantation is now exposed to the ravages of every vagrant and destructive passer-by, whether man or beast. If only God would turn again and see the pitiable condition

of His once flourishing vineyard, He would be moved to interfere and restore it!

The nation which God chose, established and favored so long has perished for its sins; like a vine, it has withered and died at the rebuke of divine displeasure. But where is the profit of all those many past blessings? For whom and for what did God make Israel strong, except for Himself? Are not the gifts of Heaven without repentance? Can the divine purposes be defeated by man's unworthiness or opposition?

These pleading questions are made with the conviction that, in spite of Israel's numberless sins and mistakes, God's gifts are bestowed not in vain and all will yet be well with the chosen race. And then the people who have known what it means in peace and joy to have God, and also what it means in misery and anguish to be without Him, will never again depart from Him. In gratitude for restoration to divine favor they will praise Him evermore.

How unfortunate for our present and future happiness, as well as our physical and spiritual welfare, that so often we fail to appreciate the blessings we have until we lose them! Weak and perverse by nature, we are our own worst enemies. We are in constant need of divine help to save us from ourselves. Neglecting or abusing what we have, whether because we do not understand the purpose of it, or are too indolent to make use of it, or are dissatisfied with it, or whether we resort to unlawful means to get more than we should have, we often lose all. Nor can we presume that the lost fruit of wasted time, talents, opportunities and graces will ever be restored to us. Better therefore to take heed of our ways, and turn to utmost advantage the present and what we have, bearing in mind the holy counsel: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccles. 9:10).

#### PSALM 80 (Heb. 81)

#### HYMN AND ADMONITION ON A SOLEMN FESTIVAL

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm was composed as a hymn for use at the joyous Feast of Tabernacles, which began with the full moon on the fifteenth day of Tishri (September-October), the first month of the civil year and the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year. The first day of Tishri, the Jewish New Year's Day, was observed as a solemn festival, and was called the Day of Trumpet-blowing; the celebration was continued for



a fortnight, up to Tabernacles. Thus, the two feasts were joined together, and hence the reference in verse 4 to the New Moon, on the first day of Tishri. Of course, the blowing of silver trumpets took place at the beginning of each month (Num. 10:10), but it was not accompanied by a special feast save on the first Tishri.

Tabernacles was the most joyous of Jewish feasts. It commemorated, primarily, the Exodus, and the years when the Israelites dwelt in tents or tabernacles in the wilderness; and, secondarily, the ingathering of the fruits of the year, coming, as it did, at the close of the vintage season. During this feast the Law was read (Deut. 31:11).

The central thoughts therefore, of this Psalm are deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the Law, in consequence of which Israel owed Jehovah her unfailing loyalty.

1. Magistro chori. Secundum "Torcularia . . . ." Asaphi.	For the choir-master. Accord- ing to the tune, "The Wine- presses . . . ." Of Asaph.
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*The People Are Invited to Celebrate the Feast Instituted by God (2-6b)*

2. Exsultate Deo adiutori nostro, acclamate Deo Iacob.	Shout with joy to God our helper, acclaim the God of Jacob.
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3. Sonate psalterio, et pulsate tympanum, citharam dulce sonantem cum lyra.	Sound the psaltery, and beat the timbrel, the sweet-sounding harp with the lyre.
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4. Clangite in neomenia bucina, in plenilunio, die sollemni nostro.	Blow at the new-moon the trumpet, at the full moon, on our solemn day.
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5. Quia institutum Israel est, praeceptum Dei Iacob.	For this is a custom of Israel, a precept of the God of Jacob.
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6. Legem statuit hanc in Ioseph, cum prodiret contra terram Aegypti.	He established this law in Joseph, when he went forth against the land of Egypt.
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*God Recalls His Delivery of Israel from Egypt, The Sinaitic Code, and Especially the Precept that All Should Worship Himself Alone (6c-11)*

Linguam quam non noveram, audiui: (7) "Liberavi ab onere"	I heard a tongue which I had not known: "I have freed his
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2. The Israelites are first addressed, then the Levites in v. 3, and finally the Priests in v. 4.

4. At the new moon special sacrifices were offered (Num. 28:11-15), and on the day of full moon the feasts of Pasch and Tabernacles began.

6, 7. A prophetic speaker announces the message of Jehovah concerning the glad tidings of deliverance from Egyptian bondage and the benefits of the Lord in the desert. Heretofore Israel had heard for centuries only the voice of her grim masters in Egypt.

humerum eius; manus eius a cophino cessarunt.	shoulder from the burden; his hands have been relieved of the hod.
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8. In tribulatione clamasti, et eripui te; ex nube tonanti respondi tibi, probavi te apud aquam Meriba.	"Thou didst cry out in trouble, and I rescued thee; from the thunder-cloud I answered thee, I tested thee at the water of Meriba.
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9. Audi, popule meus, et monebo te: Israel, utinam audias me!	"Hear, O My people, and I will admonish thee: O Israel, that thou wouldst listen to Me!
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10. Non erit apud te deus alienus, neque adorabis deum peregrinum:	"There shall be no strange god in thee, nor shalt thou worship a foreign god;
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11. Ego sum Dominus, Deus tuus, qui eduxi te de terra Aegypti: dilata os tuum, et implebo illud.	"I am the Lord, thy God, who led thee out of the land of Egypt; open wide thy mouth, and I will fill it.
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*Conquered because of Their Disobedience, the People Are Again Promised Protection from Their Enemies and Bounteous Blessings if They Obey (12-17)*

12. Sed non audivit populus meus vocem meam, et Israel non obtemperavit mihi.	"But My people heard not My voice, and Israel obeyed Me not.
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13. Ideo tradidi eos duritiae cordis eorum: ambularent secundum consilia sua.	"Therefore, I surrendered them to the hardness of their heart, to walk according to their own counsels.
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14. Utinam populus meus audiret me, Israel ambularet in viis meis:	"O that My people would hear Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!
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15. Confestim deprimerem inimicos eorum, et contra adversarios eorum verterem manum meam;	"I would at once subdue their enemies, and would turn My hand against their foes.
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16. Qui oderunt Dominum, blandirentur ei, et sors eorum maneret in perpetuum.	"They that hate the Lord would cringe before Him, and their doom would endure for ever.
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17. Illum autem cibarem de medulla tritici, et melle de petra saturarem eum."	"But him I would feed on the marrow of the wheat, and I would fill him with honey from the rock."
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17. "Cibarem, etc." The reference is to Israel, to the prosperity which she would enjoy when her foes would be no more.—"De medulla tritici," i.e., from the finest wheat.—"Melle de petra." So abundant will be the honey that it will flow even from stones and rocks. See Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13.



## REFLECTIONS

Since their poem seems to refer rather to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt than to the desert wanderings in Sinai which followed that event, some authorities think the solemn festival which the singer here summons priests and people to commemorate is the Passover, and not the Feast of Tabernacles. However this may be, the festival was the occasion of an exuberant joy on the part of all classes of the Chosen People, manifested by the fullest outpouring of music and song.

By the triple names of *Israel*, *Jacob* and *Joseph*, the Psalmist calls on his entire nation to unite in celebrating a feast which is designated as a "law" of the people, an "ordinance" of God, and a "testimony" or witness of God's care for Israel. This festival is a reminder of all God did for His people in emancipating them from the bondage of Egypt and during their sojourn in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The people, therefore, are exhorted to recall and ponder that prolonged manifestation of divine love in their behalf. God's purpose in lavishing these many benefits on Israel was to bind her to Himself.

But, strange to relate, Israel was not won by those blessings; she did not remain faithful to her Lord; other gods claimed her love and devotion. And here the divine voice is heard lamenting the failure of benefits, precepts and promises to win the Chosen People to their true God. If only they had listened to Him and walked in His ways, there was nothing He would not have done for them, no enemies would have hurt them, victory and abundance would have been theirs. But they would not listen, they would not obey, they preferred to do as they pleased; and God finally abandoned them to their own perversity, to follow their own will and live according to their own counsels.

We have here one among innumerable examples in life of the conflict between God's will and man's will, between what God would have us do and what we incline and elect to do. The goods of the material order generally appeal to us more strongly than those of the spiritual order; the flesh rules us more strongly than does the spirit. Such is our poor estate! But just because we are so made and circumstanced, we need instruction in higher things, and God has made it possible that we receive that instruction. As in the order of nature we are born ignorant but with a capacity to learn, and as we naturally shrink from the labor and effort necessary to improve ourselves until we see the necessity of improvement and the rewards that wait upon it, so we come into the world without a knowledge of spiritual things and with a disinclination to learn them and guide our lives according to them until their necessity for our present and future interests becomes plain to us either through

education, or experience, or as a result of God's illuminating grace. We should seek instruction and try to profit by it; we need to observe and learn from our own and others' mistakes; we must train our eyes to see and our ears to hear the overtures of divine guidance.

We hear and read much about the glories of liberty, of being free to do as one pleases. But we also see on all sides that freedom must be used within the framework of law and the common good, or it leads to wreck and ruin. It is they who do as they please that end in temporal and eternal prisons. Self-chosen ways, regardless of God or man, are always dark and lead to deepening darkness. No greater peril could befall any man than to be abandoned to his own will.

Our true glory, therefore, and blessedness can be found only in the submission of our wills to God's will, as manifested in the divine law. God's ways are often hard and sometimes dark to natures so low and poor as ours, but with His help, and in a not-too-distant future for any of us, they will end in triumph and unfading light.

## PSALM 81 (Heb. 82)

## LOT OF UNJUST JUDGES

## INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist here describes a vision that was vouchsafed him of God, the Supreme Judge, sitting in judgment on an assembly of earthly judges and rulers who, as representatives of the Almighty, were also called gods. Thus:

I. God takes His place as Judge of His earthly representatives (v. 1).

II. God speaks, upbraiding the judges for their injustice, partiality and oppression (vv. 2-4).

III. The Psalmist speaks, describing the character of those judges, whose abuse of authority and neglect of duty have imperilled the foundations of the moral order of the world (v. 5).

IV. God again speaks, reminding His audience that, although as His representatives they deserve to be called gods and sons of the Most High, they shall nevertheless perish like ordinary mortals, like all other princes before them (vv. 6, 7).

V. The Psalmist calls on God to hasten the advent of the Messianic Kingdom and to take His seat as Ruler of all mankind (v. 8).

There are many points of similarity between this Psalm and Psalm 57;



and Isaias 3 denounces the same kinds of injustice which the Psalmist is here condemning.

1. Psalmus. Asaphi.

A psalm. Of Asaph.

*The Psalmist Represents God Himself as Passing Judgment on Unjust Judges, Reproving Their Injustice Which Favors the Godless and Oppresses the Lowly (1-4)*

Deus assurgit in concilio divino,  
in medio deorum iudicium agit.

God arises in the divine assembly; in the midst of the gods He passes judgment.

2. "Quousque iudicabitis inique, et causae impiorum favebitis?"

"How long will you judge unjustly, and favor the cause of the wicked?"

3. Defendite oppressum et pupillum, ius reddite humili et pauperi.

"Defend the oppressed and the orphan, render justice to the lowly and the poor.

4. Liberate oppressum et egenum: de manu impiorum eripite eum."

"Deliver the oppressed and needy man; rescue him from the hand of the wicked."

*The Unjust Judges Are Obstinate and Have Created Universal Disorder; They Shall Die an Ignominious Death, and the Psalmist Asks God to Put This Sentence into Effect (5-8)*

5. Non sapiunt neque intelligent, in tenebris ambulant: commoventur omnia fundamenta terrae.

They know not, nor do they understand, they walk in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6. Ego dixi: "Dii estis, et filii Altissimi omnes.

I have said: "You are gods, and all sons of the Most High.

7. Verumtamen sicut homines moriemini, et sicut quivis ex principibus cadetis."

"Nevertheless you shall die like men, and shall fall like any one of the princes."

8. Surge, Deus, iudica terram, quoniam tu iure possides omnes gentes.

Arise, O God, judge the earth, for Thou by right dost possess all the nations.

1. "Deorum." Heb.: *Elohim*, i.e., earthly judges, rulers, God's vicars on earth.

5. "Omnia fundamenta," i.e., the principles of the moral order of the world.

6, 7. "Dii estis," i.e., endowed with power from above. Cfr. Exod. 22; Ps. 57. Our Lord appealed to this verse when the Jews accused Him of blasphemy (John 10:34 sqq.). Those unworthy judges are to be deprived of the authority and power which God gave them but which they have abused, and they are to die miserably as mere men.

# REFLECTIONS

God is pictured here as having gathered His chosen nation, the congregation of Israel, for the purpose of accusing and condemning in their presence the unfaithful judges among them who had exercised injustice and hardness towards the people. Those functionaries enjoyed an exalted office and authority bestowed by God; they shared in a human way in God's power and dignity, and so in a wide sense could be called "gods" and "sons" of the Most High. But they also had corresponding weighty obligations to discharge in behalf of their subjects. They gloried in the former prerogatives, but neglected the latter duties. Their office was sacred; they themselves were wicked. Instead of helping the poor, they favored the rich; instead of heeding the cries of the helpless, they shut their ears and hardened their hearts against them; instead of aiding and protecting the holy and the weak, they left them to perish at the hands of the bad and strong.

Those judges were without knowledge; they walked in moral darkness. Selfishness, pride and greed had blinded them and made them insensible not only to their duty, but to every finer instinct and to every higher motive and appeal. They were supposed to be representatives of God and to shadow out something of His infinite justice and mercy, but they were in truth ministers of Satan, inured to injustice and heartlessness. Nor did their mischief affect only private persons; it shook the foundations of society and imperilled the moral order. For the sake of the common good, therefore, it was necessary to strip them of their robes and authority, thus reducing them to the condition of the least of human kind, and to let them die in disgrace before God and man.

Is this a description only of judges in ancient Israel, and a condemnation of those only who occupy positions of lofty dignity? Rather do not these solemn words from Heaven reach down to our own times and apply to many persons vested with similar authority today, and to some others whether in high or low positions, who are charged with rule over others?

How lightly do many modern rulers and superiors seem to bear their responsibilities! How easily they carry their weighty loads! Few of them are loth to accept office or show any fear of its burdens. And why? Is it that they are eager for larger spheres of activity and greater opportunities for doing good; that, in toil and self-sacrifice, they sincerely desire wider fields of labor in which they can make the best of their talents and time, for spiritual ends, in serving God and their fellow-man more fruitfully? Or are they seeking through dignity and authority the applause of men, greater freedom from lawful submission to the will of someone else,



more time for ease and diversion, more opportunities and means for pleasure and self-indulgence, and such like worldly advantages? The answers to these questions will tell each one whether or not, in his desire for office and authority, or in the discharge of superior duties and responsibilities, he belongs to the class of men spoken of in this Psalm, and whether, consequently, he is deserving of commendation or condemnation.

### PSALM 82 (Heb. 83)

#### PRAYER FOR PROTECTION AGAINST ALLIED ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE

##### INTRODUCTION

In the preceding poem the Psalmist described a vision he had of the Almighty sitting in judgment on the unholy rulers of his nation. Here he sketches what seems to be an imaginary picture of Israel's unfriendly neighboring nations, all forming a confederacy against her with the purpose of destroying her utterly and obliterating the people of God from the face of the earth. He earnestly prays that, in such an event, God may not be as an indifferent spectator, refusing to intervene while enemy nations unite and advance to make an end of the Chosen People; but that, on the contrary, He may arise in His might, as of old He did against the Midianites and Canaanites, and humble Israel's foes, forcing them in dire defeat to acknowledge that He alone is supreme all over the world.

It seems best to regard this as a description of a possible combination against Israel, rather than as a narration of an actual occurrence; for we know of no period in Jewish history which satisfactorily corresponds to the situation here depicted. Those authors who believe the Psalm relates actual history are divided between the Machabean struggles (1 Mach. 5) and the wars of Josaphat (2 Par. 20), neither of which, however, completely fits the description of the Psalm.

1. Canticum. Psalmus. Asaphi.      A canticle. A psalm. Of Asaph.

*The Psalmist Describes the Formation of the Alliance against Israel,  
and Enumerates the Enemies (2-9)*

2. Noli, Domine, tacere; noli      Be not silent, O Lord; be not  
silere, Deus, neque quiescere!      still, O God, nor remain inert.

3. Nam ecce inimici tui tumultu-      For lo, Thine enemies are in

uantur, et qui oderunt te, extollunt  
caput.

4. Contra populum tuum molitur  
consilia, et consultant contra  
protectos tuos.

5. "Venite," aiunt, "disper-  
damus eos, ne sint populus, neve  
memoretur nomen Israel ultra."

6. Vere, consultant uno corde,  
et contra te ineunt foedus:

7. Tentoria Edom et Ismaelitae,  
Moab et Agareni,

8. Gebal et Ammon et Amalec,  
Philistaea cum incolis Tyri;

9. Etiam Assyrii se consociaver-  
unt cum eis, brachia prae-buerunt  
filiis Lot.

*God Is Implored to Destroy the Enemies, as He Formerly Destroyed  
Hostile Princes (10-19)*

10. Fac illis sicut Madian, sicut  
Sisarae, sicut Iabin ad torrentem  
Cison,

11. Qui interempti sunt apud  
Endor, facti sunt sterquilinum  
terrae.

12. Principes eius similes fac  
Oreb et Zeb, similes Zebbee et Sal-  
mana omnes duces eorum,

uproar, and those that hate Thee  
lift up *their* head.

Against Thy people they form  
designs, and take counsel against  
Thy favored ones.

"Come," they say, "let us ex-  
terminate them, so that they may  
no more be a people, nor the name  
of Israel be remembered any  
more."

Verily, they have taken counsel  
with but one desire, and form a  
league against Thee:

The tents of Edom and the Is-  
maelites, Moab and the Agarenes,

Gebal and Ammon and Ama-  
lec, Philistia with the inhabitants  
of Tyre;

The Assyrians too have joined  
them, they have lent their arms to  
the sons of Lot.

Do to them as *Thou didst* to  
Madian, to Sisara, to Jabin at the  
torrent of Cison,

Who were slain at Endor, who  
became a dung-pile for the  
ground.

Treat their princes like Oreb  
and Zeb, all their leaders like Ze-  
bee and Salmana,

7-9. "Tentoria Edom, etc.," *the tents of the Edomites*, etc., that is, the Edomites and Ismaelites who dwell in tents, leading a nomadic life. The Edomites dwelt between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba. The Ismaelites, also called Midianites, roamed over the deserts between Egypt and the northwest shore of the Persian Gulf. East of the Dead Sea were the Moabites, and east of Galaad lived the Agarenes or Agrites, who were descendants of Agar, Abraham's bondwoman and the mother of Ismael. Gebal is ancient Seir, which was the northern part of the mountains of Edom. The Ammonites came from beyond the Jordan, the Amalekites from the desert south of Palestine near the frontier of Egypt. The Assyrians were leagued in the Psalmist's mind with the sons of Lot, the Ammonites and Moabites.

10-12. For the victories here alluded to, see Judges 4, 5, 7, 8.



13. Qui dixerunt: "Occupemus nobis regiones Dei."

14. Deus meus, fac eos similes foliis turbine rotatis, stipulae ante ventum,

15. Sicut ignis qui comburit silvam, et sicut flamma quae exurit montes,

16. Ita persequere eos tempestate tua, et procella tua conturba eos.

17. Imple facies eorum ignominia, ut quaerant nomen tuum, Domine.

18. Erubescant et conturbentur in aeternum, et confundantur et pereant.

19. Et cognoscant te, cuius nomen est Dominus, esse solum Excelsum super totam terram.

Who said: "Let us occupy for ourselves the territories of God."

O my God, make them like leaves spun by the whirlwind, like straw before the blast,

Like fire that consumes a forest, like the flame that sets mountains ablaze,

So pursue them with Thy tempest, and dismay them with Thy storm.

Fill their faces with disgrace, that they may seek Thy name, O Lord.

Let them be put to shame and dismayed for ever; yea, let them be confounded and perish.

And let them know that Thou, whose name is the Lord, art alone the Most High over all the earth.

#### REFLECTIONS

The enemies which the Psalmist conceived of here as joining in conspiracy against Israel for the purpose of exterminating her and obliterating her religion from the face of the earth were moved out of hatred for God, the God of Israel. They hated Israel, too, and thoroughly, but only because she was God's chosen nation. Their motive, however, was not so bad as it might seem. The peoples enumerated were heathens, pagan nations. They had their own deities and forms of worship, false and absurd as they were to those who knew the true God and had the true religion. They were ignorant in religious matters. They thought of Israel's God and religion as opposed to theirs, and therefore opposed to themselves, to what they loved and to their dearest interests.

Hatred is the obverse of love; it is aimed at what is regarded as obstructing the possession of what one desires or loves. It is often wrong and misdirected, but that is because its subject misconceives either the object which is thought to be obstructed or the obstruction itself. If hating something one were to discover that the thing hated was really no obstruction or impediment to what one desired or sought, or that the object desired was in reality bad and injurious, one would cease to hate that something. Thus, people who think or say they hate God have a

wrong conception of God. They hate what they conceive God to be, or what other people say He is. It is impossible for anyone to hate God as He really is in Himself, because He is altogether good, the Supreme Good, the all-perfect Being from whom we all came and by whom and for whom we were all made, the one object for which we are ever craving and striving, however blindly and erroneously, the one and only possession that can completely satisfy us. No one can knowingly hate what is only good, because that would be going against himself, since one hates that which seems to stand in the way of what is considered good. It is likewise with regard to religion. People may hate religion, or a particular form of religion, either because they hate God, as just explained, or because they think such a religion is wrong or bad in some way, or opposed to what they consider their own good.

Hatred of the true God, therefore, or of the true worship of the true God, results from ignorance, vincible or invincible; such ignorance, namely, as can be overcome by reasonable effort and investigation, or not. How far the ancient pagans, in hating the God and religion of Israel, were vincibly or invincibly ignorant is an uncertain and therefore a disputable question; and what can be said of them in this matter can be said in due proportion of all opponents of God and religion before and since their time.

After enumerating the nations which he thought of as arrayed against Israel and her God, the Psalmist in language remarkable for its poetic beauty and power, prays that condign punishment may overtake those enemies. But it is to be observed and stressed that the motive of his petitions is high and holy. He does not desire that Israel's foes be chastised for sake of revenge, or for their torture, or even for justice' sake, but that through their punishment good may come to them, that they may thus be made to seek the true and eternal God and come to recognize Him as the supreme Ruler over all the world.

#### PSALM 83 (Heb. 84)

#### LONGING FOR THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD

#### INTRODUCTION

This beautiful poem expresses the joy and happiness of a pious pilgrim who, coming from afar, has at last arrived at the Sanctuary of his God in Jerusalem. He has been longing and pining for the hallowed courts, and, now that he is in them, he is happy, like a bird which has found a nest



wherein to lay its young (vv. 2-4). How happy, he reflects, are they who, like the priests and Levites, dwell always in the house of the Lord (v. 5)! They also are happy who set out on pilgrimage to the Sanctuary, surmounting all difficulties as they proceed in the strength of the God of Sion (vv. 6-8). There in the Temple he first pours out his soul in prayer for the king, God's anointed, and then declares how precious is the privilege of access to Jehovah, who never fails to bless those who place their trust in Him (vv. 9-13).

The marked resemblance between this poem and Psalms 41-42 is admitted by all. They were doubtless all written by the same author, but this one under different circumstances. Here the Psalmist is actually at the Sanctuary, whereas he was detained in exile when he composed the other two. The terms relative to the Sanctuary—its "courts," "altars," etc.—can apply equally to the Tabernacle or the Temple.

1. Magistro chori. Secundum "Torcularia." Filiorum Core. Psalmus.	For the choir-master. According to the tune, "The Wine-presses." Of the sons of Core. A psalm.
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*The Psalmist Declares His Ardent Desire to Visit the Temple of God (2-4)*

2. Quam dilecta habitatio tua, Domine exercituum! (3) desiderat, languens concupiscit anima mea atria Domini;	How lovely is Thine abode, O Lord of hosts; my soul yearns and longingly pines for the courts of the Lord;
---	--

Cor meum et caro mea exsultant ad Deum vivum.	My heart and my flesh exult in the living God.
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4. Etiam passer invenit domum, et hirundo nidum sibi, ubi ponat pullos suos: altaria tua, Domine exercituum, rex meus et Deus meus!	Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for itself, wherein to lay its young: Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God!
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*Blessed Are Those Who Can Always Dwell in God's House, and Who Make Pilgrimage to the Temple (5-8)*

5. Beati qui habitant in domo tua, Domine, perpetuo laudant te.	Blessed are they that dwell within Thy house, O Lord; they praise Thee unceasingly.
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3. "Cor meum et caro mea," i.e., his whole being.

4. "Passer . . . hirundo," refer to the Psalmist and the Israelites who, from far away, have at last returned to their home, the Sanctuary.

5. "Qui habitant, etc.," that is, the priests and the Levites.

6. Beatus vir, cuius auxilium est a te, cum sacra itinera in animo habet:

7. Transeuntes per vallem aridam, fontem facient eam, ac benedictionibus vestiet eam pluvia prima.

8. Procedent de robore in robur: videbunt Deum deorum in Sion.

Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee, when he plans the sacred journeys;

Passing through a parched valley, they shall make it a fountain, and the first rain shall clothe it with blessings.

They shall advance from strength to strength, they shall see the God of gods in Sion.

*Finally, Imploring God's Aid, the Psalmist Proclaims the Happiness of Those Dwelling in the Courts of God and the Blessings Which God Imparts (9-13)*

9. Domine exercituum, audi orationem meam; auribus percipe, Deus Iacob.

10. Clipeus noster, aspice, Deus, et respice faciem uncti tui.

11. Vere, melior est dies unus in atriis tuis quam alii mille; consistere malo in limine domus Dei mei, quam morari in tabernaculis peccatorum.

12. Nam sol et clipeus est Dominus Deus: gratiam et gloriam largitur Dominus, non negat bonis qui ambulant in innocentia.

13. Domine exercituum, beatus homo qui confidit in te.

O Lord of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob.

Behold, O God our Shield, and look upon the face of Thine anointed.

Better assuredly is one day in Thy courts than a thousand others; I would rather stand on the threshold of the house of my God than dwell within the tents of sinners.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord bestows favor and glory; He withholds no good things from those that walk in innocence.

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in Thee.

#### REFLECTIONS

All devout souls experience, at least to some degree and in some way, the sentiments felt and expressed by the Psalmist in this exquisite poem. Every human being, even, whether especially religious or not, is restless till it rests in God, though it may not be distinctly aware of this; and the

6, 7. "Sacra itinera," that is, to Jerusalem.—"Transeuntes, etc." The Heb. reads: *Passing through the valley of Baca* (a waterless and barren vale), *they make it* (by faith) *a place of springs*. The faith of the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem overcomes all obstacles.



reason is that it is ever seeking to be satisfied and only God can satisfy it. Devoutly spiritual people, however, know and understand that it is the divine Being which is the end and goal of all their longings and strivings. The sacred singer, therefore, in extolling the blessedness of union and communion with God, the holy joy that attends upon the quest of that divine intimacy and fellowship, and the calm delight of the perfect trust which stimulates the quest and through upright living makes sure the possession and enjoyment of the divine object, is giving utterance to perennial holy emotions and universal spiritual aspirations.

To the Psalmist the Sanctuary was the best means of realizing communion and fellowship with God, and that was why he loved and sought it, and why even the journey to it was delightful, however long and otherwise dark and difficult. Though he knew that God is everywhere, he also knew that in the Sanctuary the divine Being revealed Himself more distinctly and intimately and there drew nearer to all who approached Him. There, in the Tabernacle or Temple, everything reminded and spoke directly of God. Thither people came to shut themselves off for a time from the noisy and sinful world without, and in the presence of the altar of sacrifice, in the midst of holy surroundings and companions, and within sound of the alluring voice of sacred music and song, they could lift up their minds and hearts and pour out their souls in prayer to God as they could do nowhere else. The Psalmist knew that man on earth is material as well as spiritual, and that consequently suitable material surroundings help to fortify and express the spirit within, and in this way bring out to the best advantage the whole of man.

Thus, love of God and longing for Him were the spring and source of all the Psalmist says here and of all his holy desires and actions. It was given him to understand and to feel that the living God is the fountain of all life, all love, all beauty; of the good, the true, the noble; of everything that man can desire or hope to have now and forever. Hence he also felt that one day with God is far more precious than a thousand elsewhere, that a single moment of divine communion and fellowship surpasses years of earthly delight, that the lowest and humblest place in God's house is infinitely more elevated and more to be coveted than the highest seat in the gilded palaces of worldlings.

If all Christian souls do not experience the fervent longing for God and the thrilling delights of divine fellowship which the Psalmist enjoyed, a twofold explanation may be given. First, such keen appreciation of the divine, such longing for God and enjoyment of Him are precious supernatural gifts to which no one can lay any claim. If God in His abundant goodness sees fit to bestow them on any of His human children,

these are blessed indeed; they have a foretaste of the rapture of heaven while yet walking the ways of earth, they move among the stars; though still toiling and suffering in a wicked world, they already enjoy the deep, calm delights of the everlasting kingdom. Those therefore who possess these gifts are privileged and favored souls, and should ever be mindful of the priceless treasures they have gratuitously received and never cease to thank God for them. Furthermore, they should be at pains to make use of their endowments to the utmost for the honor and glory of the Giver and the good of others, while jealously guarding them against harm from sin or anything that might diminish or destroy them.

In the second place, an explanation of the question proposed above is indicated by the Psalmist himself in the two closing verses of the poem. There it is said that God bestows His favors on those who come to Him, and that He will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly. The love of God, the longing for Him and the delight in Him, which bring heaven down to earth, and which make fertile and flourishing every desert and lightsome and joyous every dark and lonely place of our present earthly journey, is a celestial bestowment and prize, beyond the power of words to express or describe, for which we, on our part, must strive ceaselessly and hard, and which cannot be thought of without extraordinary personal integrity and holiness. It is not the divine rule to lavish the most precious of heavenly gifts on anyone who has not first done all in his own power to deserve them. If we would have friends, we must try to be friendly and make ourselves worthy of friendship. If we would possess riches, we must labor honestly and strenuously to acquire them. The reason why God seems aloof and does not strongly appeal to many Christians is that they do not really come to Him; they do not give their minds and hearts and efforts to Him, but rather to other things which often are opposed to Him. If we were wholeheartedly and uninterruptedly to give ourselves to the keeping of the divine commandments and subordinate everything else in our lives to this complete surrender, God in His bounty would give Himself unreservedly to us.

#### PSALM 84 (Heb. 85)

#### "OUR SALVATION IS NEAR"

#### INTRODUCTION

Through Jeremiah (33:8 sqq.) and Isaias (40-46) the Lord had promised to deliver Israel from the Babylonian captivity and receive her once more into His favor. And while the first part of this divine promise



has been fulfilled, yet God seems not entirely to have withdrawn His anger, for the condition of the returned exiles leaves much to be desired; only a few have returned, unsettlement and sadness prevail throughout the land and the glowing hopes of the prophets have not been realized. Therefore, the Psalmist here prays on behalf of the nation that the Lord would hearten His people by a new manifestation of His power; and in answer to His prayer he is assured that God's promises of good have not been forgotten, but shall surely be fulfilled: He will yet dwell among His people and bless them, and accomplish all that the prophets have foretold.

1. Magistro chori. Filiorum      For the choir-master. Of the  
Core. Psalmus.                      sons of Core. A psalm.

*The Returned Exiles Gratefully Recall that God Has Remitted the Sins  
of the People and Laid Aside His Anger (2-4)*

2. Propitius fuisti, Domine, terrae tuae; bene vertisti sortem Iacob.	O Lord, Thou hast been propi- tious to Thy land; Thou hast fa- vorably changed the lot of Jacob.
3. Dimisisti culpam populi tui; operuisti omnia peccata eorum.	Thou hast forgiven the fault of Thy people; Thou hast covered all their sins.
4. Continuisti omnem iracundi- am tuam, destitisti a furore irae tuae.	Thou hast tempered all Thine anger, and abandoned the fury of Thy wrath.

*The Exiles Implore God to Complete His Work of Rehabilitation and  
Restore Full Life to the People (5-8)*

5. Restitue nos, Deus Salvator noster, et depone indignationem tuam adversus nos.	Restore us, O God our Saviour, and put aside Thine indignation against us.
6. Num in aeternum irasceris nobis, aut extendes iram tuam in omnes generationes?	Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever, or extend Thine anger to all generations?
7. Nonne tu vitam restitues nobis, et populus tuus laetabitur in te?	Wilt Thou not restore life to us, and Thy people shall be glad in Thee?
8. Ostende nobis, Domine, mi- sericordiam tuam, et salutem tuam da nobis.	Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy, and grant us Thy salvation.

*A Prophet or Priest, Hearing God's Voice within Him, Declares that  
Salvation Is at Hand, that God Will Come with Justice, Mercy and  
Prosperity in His Train (9-14)*

9. Audiam, quid loquatur Do- minus Deus: profecto loquitur pacem populo suo et sanctis suis et eis qui corde convertuntur ad eum.	I will listen to what the Lord God may say; truly He speaks peace to His people and to His holy ones, and to those that are con- verted to Him in heart.
10. Certe propinqua est salus eius timentibus eum, ut habitet gloria in terra nostra.	Surely His saving aid is near to those that fear Him, so that glory may dwell in our land.
11. Misericordia et fidelitas ob- viam venient sibi, iustitia et pax inter se osculabuntur.	Mercy and faithfulness shall meet each other, justice and peace shall embrace.
12. Fidelitas germinabit ex terra, et iustitia de caelo prospici- et.	Faithfulness shall spring from the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.
13. Dominus quoque dabit bo- num, et terra nostra dabit fruc- tum suum.	The Lord also will give what is good, and our earth shall sup- ply its fruit.
14. Iustitia ante eum incedet et salus in via gressuum eius.	Justice shall go before Him, and salvation in the way of His steps.

#### REFLECTIONS

This Psalm is an embodiment of conflicting emotions and sudden changes of feeling. It is a natural expression of the reaction on the part of the Psalmist and his people to the restoration from Babylonian captivity to their homeland. Though that great event had been promised by the Prophets, and therefore was to be expected, its actuality was so welcome that it filled all hearts with exuberant joy and evoked a chorus of praise and thanksgiving to God. But once again home and the excitement of liberation over, the exiles could not but be dejected as they looked about and beheld their ruined city, the destroyed Temple, the prostrate fallow land and surrounding bitter enemies.

As the Psalmist regarded the exile and all its harrowing experiences a punishment for Israel's past sins, so he took the sad conditions which greeted the survivors upon their return as a sign that God had not yet

10-14. These verses refer in a special manner to the rich blessings of the Mes-  
sianic age.



withdrawn all His anger towards them. At first he wonders whether the divine indignation may never again be entirely abated, but may continue from generation to generation; whether the people may ever hope once more to rejoice in God over a salvation which is complete, giving deliverance from all evils and the possession of all good, both of body and spirit. Then he resolves to pray and listen to what Jehovah will say; and the still small voice heard in the depths of his soul whispers words of peace to him and all the people, to all true worshippers who sincerely turn to Him, avoiding the folly of seeking other gods and other helps. As lovingkindness and faithfulness are united in God, so righteousness and peace shall go hand in hand with those who revere their Lord and God. Even more, the faithfulness which springs from the lives of men on earth will blend with the kindness of God looking down from Heaven, and thus complete "the bridal of the earth and sky." God will bestow His blessings, and earth will yield her increase; righteousness shall go before Him to make a path for His footsteps to proceed in and a way for men to follow in. In the Messianic era the God-Man will become man's visible, tangible, divine model for life and conduct.

Such was to be the happy issue of the restoration from exile of the Chosen People of Israel, provided they remained faithful to God and did not relapse into their former sins. But alas for the tragic sequel! Despite the dreadful punishments they had suffered during the enslavement in Babylon and before it for their transgressions, despite all the rejoicing upon their return home and the glowing divine promises of future blessings here assured by the Psalmist, that fated people did not long continue true to their God and Liberator, but returned again and again to their folly, until they consummated their doleful history and long list of sins by rejecting the Messiah and His salvation.

Such is the treacherous character of human nature, to which the allurements of wrong frequently appeal far more strongly than do the treasures of grace! Who that has eyes to see and a mind to understand does not fear its frailty and mistrust its promptings! Who will question the need of watching and guarding it at all times? It cannot be trusted with too much freedom now. Always prone to evil, it becomes doubly so once it has tasted forbidden fruits. Israel had sinned so often that waywardness became a habit with her, and she seemed to prefer it; she came to love darkness, and at length she perished in it.

## PSALM 85 (Heb. 86)

## PRAYER OF A PIOUS SERVANT OF GOD IN TIME OF ADVERSITY

## INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist here, in a series of pathetic appeals, begs Jehovah to deliver him from a condition of sorrow and wretchedness to which godless oppressors have reduced him. He is confident of help, because he is the devoted servant of the great Lord, who alone is God, and who only does wondrous things. Looking forward to the Messianic era, he sees the time when all nations will pay homage to the God of Israel, whose revealed character is one overflowing with love and kindness. The Psalmist promises to praise this merciful Lord, and in conclusion asks for a token of divine favor towards himself as a proof against his enemies that God guides and protects him.

This Psalm is made up of fragments from other Davidic psalms found in Book I of the Psalter.

1. Precatio. Davidis.

A prayer. Of David.

*The Psalmist Suggests Reasons Why God Should Be Moved to Lend His Aid (1-7)*

Inclina, Domine, aurem tuam, exaudi me, quia miser et pauper sum ego.

Incline Thine ear, O Lord; answer me, for I am wretched and poor.

2. Custodi animam meam, quia devotus sum tibi; salvum fac servum tuum sperantem in te.

Guard my soul, for I am devoted to Thee; save Thy servant who hopes in Thee.

Deus meus es tu: (3) miserere mei, Domine, quia assidue ad te clamo.

Thou art my God; have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry continually to Thee.

4. Laetifica animam servi tui, quia ad te, Domine, animam meam attollo.

Gladden the soul of Thy servant; for to Thee, O Lord, I do lift up my soul.

5. Tu enim, Domine, es bonus et clemens, plenus misericordiae in omnes qui invocant te.

For Thou, O Lord, art good and kind, abounding in mercy to all that call upon Thee.

6. Ausculta, Domine, oratio-

Hearken, O Lord, to my prayer,



nem meam, et attende ad vocem obsecrationis meae.

7. Die tribulationis meae clamo ad te, quia exaudies me.

*Hymn in Praise of God's Power (8-10)*

8. Non est tibi par inter deos, Domine, et non est opus simile operi tuo:

9. Omnes gentes, quas fecisti, venient et adorabunt te, Domine, et praedicabunt nomen tuum.

10. Quia magnus es tu et facis mirabilia: tu solus es Deus.

and attend to the voice of my plea.

In the day of my trouble I call to Thee, for Thou wilt answer me.

There is no equal to Thee among the gods, O Lord, and there is no work like Thy work.

All the nations Thou hast made shall come and adore Thee, O Lord, and they shall declare Thy name.

For Thou art great and dost wonderful things; Thou alone art God.

*The Favors Sought by the Psalmist: the Grace of a Good Life and Aid against Powerful Enemies (11-17)*

11. Doce me, Domine, viam tuam, ut ambulem in veritate tua; dirige cor meum, ut timeat nomen tuum.

12. Celebrabo te, Domine, Deus meus, toto corde meo, et praedicabo nomen tuum in aeternum,

13. Quia misericordia tua magna fuit erga me, et eripuisti animam meam de profundis inferni.

14. Deus, superbi insurrexerunt contra me, et turba praepotentium insidiantur vitae meae, neque te ponunt ante oculos suos.

15. Sed tu, Domine, Deus misericors es et benignus, tardus ad

Teach me, O Lord, Thy way, that I may walk in Thy truth; direct my heart, that it may fear Thy name.

I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and will proclaim Thy name for ever,

For Thy mercy has been great towards me, and Thou hast rescued my soul from the depths below.

O God, the proud have risen up against me, and a band of very powerful men lie in wait for my life, nor do they place Thee before their eyes.

But Thou, O Lord, art a merciful and benign God, slow to an-

8. "Inter deos," i.e., among the spirits that surround God (see Ps. 88:7, 8); or, among those who are called gods (see Exod. 15:11).

13. "De profundis inferni," from the nethermost Sheol, that is, from greatest distress.

iram, summe clemens et fidelis.

16. Respice in me et miserere mei; da robur tuum servo tuo, et salvum fac filium ancillae tuae.

17. Signum da mihi favoris tui, ut videant, qui oderunt me, et confundantur, quod tu, Domine, adiuveris me et consolatus sis me.

ger, supremely kind and faithful.

Look upon me and have mercy on me; give Thy strength to Thy servant, and save the son of Thy handmaid.

Give me a sign of Thy favor, so that they who hate me may see and be confounded, because Thou, O Lord, hast helped me and consoled me.

REFLECTIONS

The words and phrases of this poem are largely drawn from a number of other similar Psalms, and the situation of the author here is also a familiar one. The Psalmist is afflicted and poor, proud enemies have risen against him, violent men who care nothing for God are seeking his life. He therefore turns to God for help. He grounds his petition on his urgent need, on his relation to God as a faithful servant, on his daily and constant prayers, and especially on the good and forgiving nature of God, overflowing with lovingkindness to all that call on Him. These last words, which are descriptive of the character of God, make the Psalmist reflect more profoundly in the second section of the poem on the unique majesty and work of Jehovah, by which all nations shall ultimately be led to recognize and proclaim the supremacy and solitary grandeur of Israel's God.

This contemplation of the incomparable nature and sovereign power of Jehovah causes the Psalmist to forget for the moment his outward troubles and needs, and to utter in verse 11 a deep and tender prayer for divine guidance and consecration. His thought is more clearly expressed in the Hebrew of the verb here used, according to which he prays that hereafter all his powers and affections may be united and concentrated on God. Past experience—perhaps often regretful experience—has taught him that there is no peace or help for a divided heart, and that besides God there is no object in all the world which is worthy of him and which can satisfy all the needs of his being. Now it becomes plainer than ever why God in the first commandment requires us to love Him with our whole heart and soul, mind and strength, namely, because He is the sole total and perfect good which we all crave, and for which we are all striving, even though blindly and wrongly oftentimes.

16. "Filius ancillae tuae," means a slave born in the house (Gen. 14:14), one therefore who enjoys a closer relationship with the family.



Many other things on earth are good and attractive and lovable, too, because they have come from God and participate to some extent as creatures in the nature of their Creator; but they are all too limited and too much bound up with imperfection adequately to respond to the demands and capacities of the human heart and soul. Doubtless the Psalmist could not, even if he would, become cold and indifferent to all of these, but, with his heart united and properly directed, he will know how rightly to estimate and sublimate them as images and reflections of the one and all-embracing Good. Hereafter, consequently, when impressed by any of the good and alluring things of this present life, or when making legitimate use of them, he will not become unbalanced or led astray, but will be mindful whence these objects derive their attractiveness and, keeping them in subordination, will thus make them aids instead of impediments, to the supreme goal of human existence.

Strengthened by his reflection on the divine nature and name, and his resolve henceforth to make God the chief aim of all his thoughts and desires, the singer returns to what he said in the beginning and closes his poem with a more detailed statement of his pressing needs and of God's adorable character of infinite pity and lovingkindness, and a renewal of his prayer for help. Seeing now so clearly the divine power and goodness, he has nothing to fear from men; and he is sure that his prayer will be answered. But this manifestation of God's favor is desired not for himself alone; he wishes it also that his enemies may see what it means to pray to Jehovah, and may thereby be made ashamed of their past conduct and be led to better ways.

### PSALM 86 (Heb. 87)

#### SION, MOTHER OF ALL PEOPLES

##### INTRODUCTION

Here we have a song of Sion, a hymn in honor of Jerusalem which God had chosen for His dwelling-place. The prophets had frequently extolled the grandeur and magnificence, the future glory and greatness, of the Holy City on Mount Sion; but when it had been laid in ruins by the Chaldeans in 587 B.C., and all its beauty desolated, the people slowly came to realize that God's promises were meant to find their fulfillment, not in temporal and political ways, but in a spiritual manner. It was not the meaning of the prophets that Jerusalem was to be the capital of a great earthly empire, but rather that she should become the center of the

pure worship of God and the spiritual home of all true believers. The purpose, therefore, of the Psalmist in this prophetic song was to teach that the day would come when from all parts of the earth worshippers would look to Jerusalem as to their mother, and would journey to Sion to take part in the services of the Temple. Still more, this Psalm was intended to foretell the final incorporation of the Gentile nations into the spiritual Jerusalem, the Church of Christ. Hence tradition is unanimous in understanding the present Psalm of the call of the Gentiles into the new and universal nationality of the Israel of God, which is the Christian people.

1. Filiorum Core. Psalmus. Of the sons of Core. A psalm.  
Canticum. A canticle.

*God Loves the Messianic Sion, and Glorious Things Are Prophesied about Her (1-3)*

Fundationem suam in montibus sanctis (2) diligit Dominus: on the holy mountains; the gates  
portas Sion magis quam omnia of Sion more than all the tents of  
tabernacula Iacob. Jacob.

3. Gloriosa praedicantur de te, Glorious things are declared of  
civitas Dei! thee, O city of God!

*All Nations Are Declared to Be Sprung from Sion (4-6)*

4. Accensebo Rahab et Babel I will reckon Rahab and Babel  
colentibus me: ecce, Philistaea et among those that worship Me;  
Tyrus populusque Aethiopum: hi behold, Philistia and Tyre and the  
nati sunt illic. people of the Ethiopians; these  
were born there.

5. Et de Sion dicetur: "Viritim And of Sion it shall be said:  
omnes sunt nati in ea, et ipse fir- "Man by man, all were born of her,  
mavit eam Excelsus." and the Most High Himself has  
established her."

6. Dominus scribet in libro po- The Lord will write in the book  
pulorum: "Hi nati sunt illic." of the peoples: "These were born  
there."

1. "Fundationem suam," that is, the city of God, God's dwelling.

2. "Portas," i.e., the city.

4. God is the speaker. "Rahab," i.e., Egypt.—"Philistaea," i.e., the Philistines.—"Nati sunt," *were born*, is plural also in LXX, but singular in Heb. and St. Jer.: *was born*.—"Illic," i.e., in Jerusalem.

5. Sion was to become the mother city of the world.—"Viritim" is for a Hebraism, meaning *each and every man*.

6. When the Lord comes to make a final registration of the peoples of the world, He finds that all nations have had their spiritual birth in Sion.



*To Sion Are Referred All Blessings that the Nations Enjoy (7)*

7. Et cantabunt, dum chorum      And they shall sing as they  
ducent: "Omnes fontes mei sunt      lead the dance: "All my foun-  
in te."      tains are in thee."

## REFLECTIONS

A glorious vision has been vouchsafed the singer here. It is of a time to come when all peoples and nations, near and far, now friendly or hostile, great and small, shall be spiritually reborn, transformed, and united as worshippers of the one true God and shall trace their spiritual origin to Jerusalem, the Holy City founded by God Himself and built on mountains made holy by divine dwelling and manifestations. With the advent of that glorious time and the dawn of that radiant day all the world will understand, as never before, the purpose of God in choosing a special people and establishing of old a sacred city and place of worship, in revealing Himself there in a special manner, in taking human flesh from that race and becoming man in the person of the divine Son, in giving to all mankind through that God-Man and Saviour a new unfolding of heavenly secrets and truths, and in founding a universal Church and means of salvation which are to gather all nations into one spiritual citizenship and one common brotherhood.

The very thought of this gladsome coming era evokes from the Psalmist in the first strophe of his poem a rapture of praise for God's beloved city of Sion. In the second section he foretells the ingathering of all peoples and nations as spiritual citizens of Jerusalem. In the last verse he draws a vivid picture of the triumph and rejoicing of that happy and mighty throng, marching, singing and dancing in praise of the city whence have come to them all fountains of joy and springs of eternal delight.

Three astonishing truths were revealed to the Psalmist and expressed by him in this short poem. They were: that the Jewish religion and church whose center was at Jerusalem were destined in the course of time to expand into a world-wide religious community, which would embrace men and women of every nation and every class and condition of life; that this human ingathering and unification were to be effected by a spiritual rebirth and transformation of those peoples and nations, giving them like spiritual conceptions, aims and affiliations; and that this incor-

7. The text of this verse is very doubtful. The Vulgate means that all the citizens of Sion are full of joy and gladness. Jerusalem is the source from which have come the light, joy, peace, hope and other blessings which are now found in the Church of Christ (Zorell). On verses 4-7 here, see W. H. McClellan in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, April 1942, pp. 155-158.

poration should be by individual accession of members, of single souls, so as afterwards to appear in the divine Register, that this man and that man were "born in her" (verse 5).

Surely a divine light from Heaven streamed on the Psalmist when he penned these glowing words. There was nothing in men or nations around him that could have suggested such a picture as he has painted here. Even now, after so many centuries as have intervened between his time and ours, after nearly two thousand years of actual Messianic rule in the world, his vision of spiritual unity, of universal brotherhood among men, of the reign of love and peace and justice here on earth, seems so far from being realized as an actuality and a world movement, that, in frequent sorrow, disappointment and dejection of spirit, we can only pray and sigh for the better time to come, for the passing of this night of darkness and the dawning of that far-off bright era of which the Psalmist sings so beautifully; we can only fall back on sure hope and trust in the divine power and goodness which will not fail yet to fulfill the promises so graciously made to His herald and mouthpiece ages ago.

## PSALM 87 (Heb. 88)

## LAMENT AND SUPPLICATION OF A PERSON GRIEVOUSLY AFFLICTED

## INTRODUCTION

This is acknowledged to be the saddest of the Psalms. Unlike other pathetic cries of the Psalter, which, however darksome, always terminate amid rays of light and hope, this one proceeds and ends in deepening gloom. But just because the Psalmist, in his desperate plight, foresees no hope of relief and yet clings tenaciously to God, this Psalm affords a supreme example of perfect faith in the goodness of God, which refuses to be shaken by any appearances to the contrary or any temptations to infidelity.

This Psalm is descriptive of an individual who from his early years has been afflicted with some loathsome disease, doubtless leprosy, that has barred him from society and the Temple worship, and left him forsaken even by friends and relatives. He is as good as dead; nay, he is already reckoned among the dead, while yet alive. There is for him no prospect of any betterment, even in the world to come, for in the shadowy land of Sheol all intercourse and communion with his Maker will be at an end. The wrath of the Eternal sweeps over him and surrounds him on every



side, and yet he continues his prayer for mercy and casts himself unreservedly on the divine clemency as the darkness deepens.

The Fathers have rightly seen in this Psalm a description of the Messiah in His passion. The language employed resembles that of the Book of Job, of Lamentations and of Psalms 32 and 38 especially.

1. Canticum. Psalmus. Filiorum Core. Magistro chori. Secundum "Mahalat" Ad cantandum. Maskil. Heman Ezrahite. A canticle. A psalm. Of the sons of Core. For the choir-master. According to the tune, "Mahalat." For singing. A maskil. Of Heman the Ezrahite.

*The Psalmist Describes the Gravity of the Affliction Which Has Brought Him to Death's Door and Separated Him from All His Dear Ones (2-9)*

2. Domine, Deus meus, interdiu clamo, nocte lamentor coram te. O Lord, my God, I call out by day; in the night I lament before Thee.

3. Perveniat ad te oratio mea, inclina aurem tuam ad clamorem meum. Let my prayer reach to Thee; incline Thine ear to my cry.

4. Nam saturata est malis anima mea, et inferis vita mea propinquat. For my soul is filled with evils, and my life draws near the grave.

5. Accenseor descendentibus in foveam, similis factus sum viro invalido. I am reckoned among those that go down into the pit; I am become like a man without strength.

6. Inter mortuos est stratum meum, sicut occisorum, qui in sepulcro iacent, quorum non es memor amplius et qui a cura tua sunt seiuncti. My couch is among the dead, like that of the slain who lie in the grave; whom Thou rememberest no more, and who are cut off from Thy care.

7. Collocasti me in fovea profunda, in tenebris, in voragine. Thou hast placed me in the deep pit, in darkness, in the abyss.

8. Super me gravat indignatio tua, et omnibus fluctibus tuis opprimis me. Thine indignation lies heavily upon me, and with all Thy waves Thou dost oppress me.

9. Removisti notos meos a me; abominabilem fecisti me illis, clausus sum, neque egredi possum. Thou hast deprived me of my friends; Thou hast made me an abomination to them; I am imprisoned and cannot emerge.

6. "A cura, etc." Literally, *cut off from Thy hand*, no longer enjoying the protection of divine Providence.

*The Psalmist Implores the Aid of God, Who Is Praised, Not by the Dead, but by the Living (10-13)*

10. Oculi mei ob miseriam tabescunt, clamo ad te, Domine, cotidie; expando ad te manus meas. Mine eyes waste away from misery; daily, O Lord, I cry to Thee, I stretch out my hands to Thee.

11. Num pro mortuis facis mirabilia? an defuncti surgent, et laudabunt te? Dost Thou work wonders for the dead? Will the dead rise up and praise Thee?

12. Num enarratur in sepulcro bonitas tua, fidelitas tua apud inferos? Is Thy goodness declared in the tomb, Thy faithfulness among the dead?

13. Num manifestantur in tenebris mirabilia tua, et gratia tua in terra oblivionis? Are Thy wonders manifested in the dark, Thy favor in the land of oblivion?

*The Psalmist Renews His Prayers, Describing His Misery and Desolation (14-19)*

14. Ego autem ad te, Domine, clamo, et mane oratio mea ad te venit. But I cry to Thee, O Lord, and in the morning my prayer comes to Thee.

15. Quare, Domine, repellis animam meam, abscondis faciem tuam a me? Why, O Lord, dost Thou cast off my soul; why dost Thou hide Thy face from me?

16. Miser sum ego et moribundus inde a puero, portavi terrores tuos et elangui. Wretched am I and close to death even from my boyhood, I have borne Thy terrors and have languished.

17. Super me transierunt irae tuae, et terrores tui me perdiderunt. Over me have swept Thine angers, and Thy terrors have destroyed me.

18. Circumdant me ut aqua perpetuo; circumveniunt me omnes simul. They surround me unceasingly like water; they encompass me all together.

19. Removisti a me amicum et sodalem: familiares mei sunt tenebrae. Thou hast deprived me of my friend and comrade; my companions are darkness.

13. "Terra oblivionis," where nothing is known of the things of this world. See Job 14:21; 21:21.



## REFLECTIONS

The thought of this poem is oppressive throughout, both because of the Psalmist's hopeless condition and because of God's apparently inexorable attitude towards him. Some of his utterances seem contradictory, so great is his emotion: he appears to be in despair, and yet he prays and speaks of Jehovah as the God of his salvation; he makes no mention of sin as the cause of his sufferings, but does not protest that his afflictions are undeserved; he refers to the divine lovingkindness, faithfulness and righteousness, while complaining that God cares nothing for him.

This sufferer has been at the point of death with some loathsome disease from his youth. He has never known any happiness, any peace. His soul is sated with troubles, his body reduced to a shadow, relatives and friends shun and abominate him, he is as good as dead and shut up in the grave, he has no companions but darkness and gloom. Nor has he neglected to pray. On the contrary, he has cried to God day and night, has lifted up his hands in prayer to Heaven, has begged the Almighty to hear him, has pleaded that he may be spared, for he can do nothing for Jehovah in the grave. But to all this God has turned a deaf ear. Instead of being heard and helped by his Lord, he speaks as if all his pains and sorrows were God's doing. It is Jehovah that has made him like one dead and buried, that has poured out wrath upon him, that has separated him from relatives and friends, that has hidden His face from him and cast him off, that has left him alone in the darkness.

It is remarkable that, in spite of his pitiable condition and sufferings, the Psalmist here never wavers in his faith. Neither does he show any sign of rebellion against God or divine Providence. In lowly meekness and desolation he submits to the divine will, and bears in forlorn patience the failure of his supplications to move his Master. No ray of hope illumines his dark horizon.

It would be difficult to find a greater contrast than between the picture of God painted here and that given in Psalm 22, the Good Shepherd Psalm. Here Jehovah is deaf to prayer and pleading; He is wrathful, hard and implacable; He gives no indication of mercy, love or compassion. But there, in that other Psalm, the divine Shepherd is the very opposite of all this; He is full of love, gentleness, tenderness, care and provision for each and all of His frail and dependent children.

The explanation, of course, is that here the writer was a great sufferer and a type of One to come who was to take our sins upon Himself and bear all our infirmities and woes, and thus was to be for a time, namely, in His passion, as if forgotten and cast away by His heavenly Father. All that was necessary, according to the divine plan, for our redemption and

salvation; and the author of this Psalm, in describing his own sufferings and God's attitude towards him, was drawing a picture, most likely without knowing it, of the coming Redeemer and the divine behavior towards that Redeemer in His passion and death. The Psalmist therefore did not understand the special role he was playing, nor that the answer to all his prayers and the relief which he sought would be found in the redemption to be brought to the whole world by the God-Man, of whom he himself was a figure and type.

In the Good Shepherd Psalm we have a picture of God as mirrored in the whole life of our Lord here on earth. That is the true and abiding likeness of our heavenly Father as He is in Himself and in His dealings with all His human children. If He permits them to suffer, and often dreadfully, they will remember that so also did He permit His own divine Son in human form to suffer. As He had a wise and merciful purpose in permitting the one, so has He in permitting the other. They will further always keep in mind that, while He cannot but hate their sins, He cannot but love them; for He made them, and not they themselves; they are His (Ps. 99:3).

In a word, then, in Psalm 22 we are given a picture of God and His attitude towards us as revealed in Christ; and in this Psalm, a picture of our Lord in His passion and of the eternal Father's attitude towards His Incarnate Son during that awful time.

## PSALM 88 (Heb. 89)

DIVINE PROMISES MADE TO DAVID COMPARED WITH THE  
RUIN OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

## INTRODUCTION

This Psalm was most probably written during the exile in Babylon. The Davidic Kingdom has been overthrown, Jerusalem is in ruins, the Temple is no more. It would seem that God's promises to David of an abiding rule and a universal dominion have failed, leaving Israel an object of scorn to her neighbors and the laughing-stock of her foes.

It is about all this that the Psalmist is here complaining, but he makes his complaint very adroitly. He begins by praising the kindness and faithfulness of Jehovah, as manifested in the solemn covenant with David, by which He promised to give to His anointed king an everlasting and unlimited throne (vv. 2-5). He then proceeds to celebrate the power and fidelity, the love and equity of Jehovah—the sure guarantees of His promises, which are proclaimed alike by heaven and earth, by the sea



and terrestrial powers (vv. 6-15). How happy the people who have such a God, and whose king has been chosen by Him (vv. 16-19)! Next, he gives an extended poetical paraphrase of the Messianic promises made to David through Nathan (2 Kings 7), which assured the king and his successors of an eternal kingdom of vast power and unlimited prosperity, and which not even the unfaithfulness of succeeding generations could make void or violable (vv. 20-38).

After this glorious description of divine pledges, the Psalmist passes to a survey of the actual state of Israel's dethroned head, plundered kingdom and desolate people. What has become of all those solemn promises of Israel's almighty God (vv. 39-46)? From complaint he turns to prayer, and, pleading the shortness and weakness of human life, begs God to hasten His help, lest Israel perish forever and her enemies triumph in their derision of her (vv. 47-52).

Verse 53 is a doxology marking the end of Book III of the Psalter.

1. Maskil. Ethan Ezrahitae.      A maskil. Of Ethan the Ezrahite.

*The Psalmist Recalls God's Promises and His Fidelity (2-5)*

2. Gratias Domini in aeternum cantabo; per omnes generationes annuntiabo fidelitatem tuam ore meo.      The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever; throughout all generations I will declare aloud Thy faithfulness.

3. Dixisti enim: "In aeternum fundata est gratia"; in caelo stabilisti fidelitatem tuam.      For Thou hast said: "My lovingkindness is founded for ever"; in heaven Thou hast established Thy faithfulness.

4. "Inii foedus cum electo meo; iuravi David, servo meo:      "I have made a covenant with My chosen one; I have sworn to David, My servant:

5. Usque in aeternum stabiliam semen tuum, et fundabo in omnes generationes thronum tuum."      "I will establish thy seed for ever, and I will set up Thy throne for all generations."

*Faith Is Confirmed by the Consideration of God's Power and Justice (6-19)*

6. Caeli mirabilia tua celebrant, Domine, et fidelitatem tuam in coetu sanctorum.      The heavens proclaim Thy wondrous deeds, O Lord, and Thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy.

6. "In coetu sanctorum," i.e., of the Angels, who in verse 7 are also called "filii Dei."

7. Nam quis in nubibus aequabitur Domino, similis erit Domino inter filios Dei?

8. Deus est terribilis in concilio sanctorum, magnus et tremendus prae omnibus circa eum.

9. Domine, Deus exercituum, quis par est tibi? potens es, Domine, et fidelitas tua circumdat te.

10. Tu imperas superbiae maris, tumorem fluctuum eius tu compescis.

11. Tu transfixum conculcasti Rahab, brachio potenti tuo dispersisti inimicos tuos.

12. Tui sunt caeli, et tua est terra; orbem terrarum et quod eum replet tu fundasti;

13. Aquilonem et austrum tu creasti; Thabor et Hermon de nomine tuo exsultant.

14. Tibi brachium potens est, firma manus tua, dextera tua erecta.

15. Iustitia et ius sunt fundamentum throni tui; gratia et fidelitas praecedunt te.

16. Beatus populus qui exultare novit; ambulant, Domine, in lumine vultus tui,

17. De nomine tuo laetantur semper, et iustitia tua extolluntur.

18. Nam tu es splendor potentiae eorum, et tuo favore extollitur cornu nostrum

For who in the clouds shall be compared to the Lord, *who* shall be likened to the Lord among the sons of men?

God is terrible in the council of the holy, great and to be dreaded above all around Him.

O Lord, God of hosts, who is equal to Thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and Thy faithfulness is around Thee.

Thou rulest the arrogance of the sea, Thou dost suppress the commotion of its waves.

Thou didst trample upon Rahab after he was pierced, with Thy powerful arm Thou didst scatter Thine enemies.

Thine are the heavens and Thine is the earth; the world and its fullness Thou hast founded:

The North and the South Thou hast created; Thabor and Hermon exult because of Thy name.

Thine is a mighty arm, Thy hand is steadfast, Thy right hand uplifted.

Justice and right are the foundation of Thy throne; grace and faithfulness go before Thee.

Blessed the people that knows how to exult; they walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.

Because of Thy name they are ever glad, and by Thy justice they are exalted.

For Thou art the splendor of their might, and by Thy favor our power is exalted.

11. "Rahab" is explained by some authorities as meaning a monster which personifies pride and rebellion.



19. Nam Domini est clipeus noster, et Sancti Israel rex noster. For our shield belongs to the Lord, and our king to the Holy One of Israel.

*The Psalmist Enumerates the Promises Made by God to David and His House (20-30)*

20. Olim locutus es in visione sanctis tuis et dixisti: "Imposui coronam potenti; extuli electum de populo.

21. Inveni David, servum meum, oleo sancto meo unxi eum,

22. Ut manus mea sit semper cum eo, et brachium meum confirmet eum.

23. Non decipiet eum inimicus, neque malignus deprimet eum.

24. Sed contundam coram eo adversarios eius, et, qui oderunt eum, percutiam.

25. Fidelitas mea et gratia mea cum ipso; et in nomine meo extolletur cornu eius.

26. Et extendam super mare manum eius, et super flumina dexteram eius.

27. Ipse vocabit me: 'Pater meus es tu, Deus meus et petra salutis meae.'

28. Atque ego primogenitum constituam eum, celsissimum inter reges terrae.

29. In aeternum servabo ei gratiam meam, et firmum manebit ei foedus meum.

Formerly Thou didst speak in a vision to Thy holy ones, saying: "I have laid a crown on a mighty one; I have lifted up a chosen man from the people.

"I have found David, My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed him.

"So that My hand may be always with him, and Mine arm may strengthen him.

"The enemy shall not deceive him, nor the malicious man oppress him.

"But I will crush his foes before him, and I will pierce those that hate him.

"My faithfulness and My favor shall be with him; and in My name his power shall be exalted.

"And I will extend his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers.

"He shall invoke me: 'Thou art my Father, my God and the rock of my salvation.'

"And I will make him my first-begotten, the most exalted among the kings of the earth.

"I will preserve My favor towards him for ever, and My covenant shall remain unchanged for him.

20. "Sanctis tuis," i.e., to the prophets, Samuel and Nathan.

30. Et aeternum faciam semen eius, et thronum eius ut dies caeli. "And I will make his seed everlasting, and his throne as the days of heaven.

*Even though David's Posterity Sinned, God Did Not Withdraw His Favor nor Dissolve His Covenant (31-38)*

31. Si dereliquerint filii eius legem meam, neque ambulaverint in praeceptis meis,

32. Si violaverint statuta mea, nec custodierint mandata mea:

33. Virga puniam delictum eorum, et verberibus culpam eorum;

34. Sed gratiam meam non subtraham ei, nec fidem meam fallam.

35. Non violabo foedus meum, neque effatum labiorum meorum mutabo.

36. Semel iuravi per sanctitatem meam: Davidi certe non mentiar,

37. Semen eius in aeternum manebit et thronus eius coram me erit ut sol,

38. Ut luna, quae manet in aeternum, testis in caelo fidelis."

"If his children shall forsake My law, and walk not in My precepts,

"If they shall violate My statutes, and keep not My commands,

"I will punish their sin with the rod, and their fault with stripes;

"Yet I will not withdraw My favor from him, nor will I void My trust.

"I will not violate My covenant, nor will I change the pronouncement of My lips.

"I have sworn once by My holiness; to David certainly I will not lie.

"His seed shall remain for ever, and his throne shall be before me as the sun,

"As the moon, which remains for ever, a faithful witness in heaven."

*Sad Conditions in the Psalmist's Day: the Covenant Broken, the Enemy Triumphant, David's Throne Razed to the Ground (39-46)*

39. Tu vero reppulisti et abiecisti, graviter iratus es uncto tuo.

40. Sprevisi foedus servi tui, profanasti humi coronam eius.

But Thou hast cast us off and abandoned us; Thou art grievously angry with Thine anointed.

Thou hast spurned the covenant of Thy servant, Thou hast profaned his crown to the earth.

31-34. The prophecy here uttered was fulfilled in Christ, the spiritual successor of David.



41. Diruisti omnes muros eius, munitiones eius excidio tradidisti.

42. Diripuerunt eum omnes transeuntes per viam, ludibrio factus est vicinis suis.

43. Extulisti dexteram inimicorum eius; implevisti gaudio omnes hostes eius.

44. Retudisti aciem gladii eius, nec sustentasti eum in proelio.

45. Cessare fecisti splendorem eius, et thronum eius in terram deiecisti.

46. Breviasti dies adolescentiae eius, operuisti eum ignominia.

Thou hast razed all his walls, and laid his fortifications in ruins.

All passers-by have plundered him; he is become a laughing-stock to his neighbors.

Thou hast exalted the right hand of his enemies; Thou hast filled all his foes with joy.

Thou hast blunted the edge of his sword, and hast not supported him in battle.

Thou hast put an end to his splendor, and hast toppled his throne to the ground.

Thou hast shortened the days of his youth, and hast covered him with disgrace.

*Prayer that, Mindful of the Ancient Promise, God May Lend Speedy Aid and Remove the Insult Offered to His Anointed (47-52)*

47. Quousque, Domine? abscondes te semper? ardebit ut ignis indignatio tua?

48. Memento, quam brevis sit vita mea, quam caducos creaveris omnes homines.

49. Quis est, qui vivat nec videat mortem, qui e manu inferi subtrahat animam suam?

50. Ubi sunt gratiae tuae antiquae, Domine, quas David iurasti per fidelitatem tuam?

How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever? Will Thine indignation burn like a fire?

Remember how short is my life, how frail Thou hast created all men.

Who is there that can live on and not see death, that can withdraw his soul from the clutch of the grave?

Where are Thy favors of old, O Lord, which Thou didst pledge to David by Thy faithfulness?

42. "Vicinis suis" refers to the Edomites, Arabians, Syrians, etc.

44. "Acie gladii eius." Heb.: *The rock of his sword*, referring to the hard edge of his sword, which was as hard as flint.

45. Dr. Bird renders the whole verse: *Thou hast put an end to his lustre, and hast hurled his throne to the earth*, just like our text.

46. "Breviasti dies," i.e., of the royal house of David which was soon to pass.

48, 49. Before he dies the Psalmist hopes to see the end of so many and such great evils.

51. Memento, Domine, contumeliae servorum tuorum: porto in sinu meo omnes inimicitias gentium,

52. Quibus insultant adversarii tui, Domine, quibus insultant gressibus uncti tui.

Remember, O Lord, the taunting done to Thy servants; I bear in my bosom all the enmities of the heathen,

With which Thine adversaries deride, O Lord, with which they deride the steps of Thine anointed.

*Doxology Closing Book III of Psalms (53)*

53. Benedictus Dominus in aeternum! fiat! fiat!

Blessed be the Lord for ever! So be it! So be it!

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist is pleading here for a restoration to divine favor of his shattered nation. The situation and prospect before him are depressing in the extreme. All seems lost, except God's great mercies, His loving-kindness and faithfulness. The Davidic family which had been promised perpetual existence and dominion is dying, if not dead. The throne which Jehovah had promised should stand forever has fallen. Like an aged and enfeebled man, the Israelitic monarchy is tottering on the verge of the grave; disaster has overtaken it; neighbors and foes look on with mingled feelings of derision and contempt. All the glorious divine pledges given to David seem to be forgotten or have been made void.

There is left only one hope, but it is an inspiring one, for it is grounded on the lovingkindness and faithfulness of Jehovah, and these in turn are based on infinite divine power. He that built the heavens and the earth, that rules the surging sea and stills its waves, that crushed proud Egypt of old and drowned her hosts in the great waters, that so often scattered the enemies of His people, that has so abundantly and frequently blessed His chosen ones in the past—such a One is able to fulfill all His promises, and His attributes of lovingkindness and faithfulness are an assurance that He will.

As in times past, so now, God chastises the sins of His people, but His sacred unconditional pledges to them He will never repudiate. If the peoples' transgression have been so great and numerous that He cannot keep His promises to them in material and temporal ways, He will nevertheless keep them in spiritual and better ways. They have failed in their part of the covenant He made with them, and now they are in dire trouble and their spokesman is complaining; but He will not fail in His



part of that compact though their sins have interfered with the manner of its fulfillment.

In verses 39-46 the Psalmist blames Jehovah for the disastrous state of his nation and people. But in so speaking he intends no irreverence. In his direct way of tracing things back to first causes and speaking candidly to his Lord, it is Jehovah, he says, that is wroth with His people, that has cast them off, rejected them, abhorred His covenant with them, broken down their fences, made them a reproach to their neighbors, strengthened the hand of their enemies and so on. But then, in the following verses, he becomes calm and turns to pleading prayer. Plaintively he asks how much longer the divine anger will have to burn like a fire before it will relent and forgive. In his own name he implores help for his people, citing the shortness of his life, which has not much longer to wait for a manifestation of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness, and urging that the divine honor is involved in Israel's disasters, since the reproaches her enemies heap upon her are reproaches also against God.

As it was with Israel, so it is with human kind generally and always. When all is well with us, we are prone to neglect or abuse our powers, our resources, our opportunities, our gifts and blessings of many kinds. We overlook or underrate the vigilance necessary for safety in a world like this one. Even warnings and threats are not heeded. We fail to realize the constantly verified fact that not less effort is required to keep riches and treasures of any kind than to acquire them. And then, when disaster is upon us, we are in dismay, we lament and wail, in desperation we frantically try to redeem hopeless losses and time wasted, we perhaps turn to God for the first time or as never before, and in the end we are inclined to blame Him for ruin which we ourselves have brought upon ourselves, and many others besides.

In response to all this it cannot be repeated too often or affirmed too vehemently, that those, whether individuals or nations, who have treasures, whether spiritual or temporal, and are not ready to make the necessary effort to keep them, to use them rightly, to protect and preserve them, are most likely to lose them and deserve to lose them. And when this occurs there is no one, on earth or in Heaven, to be blamed except the unworthy possessors of gifts of God which they did not appreciate, and which therefore they did not deserve.

## THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE PSALTER

(Pss. 89-105)

PSALM 89 (Heb. 90)

GOD ETERNAL IS MAN'S REFUGE DURING THE BRIEF SPAN  
OF HUMAN LIFE

### INTRODUCTION

In this dignified and deeply religious poem the Psalmist is praying that his people, now under the frown of God's wrath for their sins, may again be restored to the divine favor. Age after age God has been their helper; He is eternal and they are transitory; to Him a thousand years are like the flight of one day, like an hour passing in the night, while they are like grass that springs up in the morning and is dead before evening. True, their sins have provoked the divine displeasure and are the cause of all their sorrow. Would, says the Psalmist, that they recognized this, and that they might learn the spiritual lessons that their sufferings are intended to teach! He then humbly prays that Jehovah may relent and pardon, and may grant them restoration and joy for all the years they have known sadness and misfortune.

If this Psalm did not seem to be reflecting on a long period of national existence (v. 1), there would not be much difficulty in ascribing its authorship to Moses, as is done by the title, for it is really a meditation on Gen. 3:19, and its majestic tone reminds us of the great leader of God's people. But since the fact is otherwise, and since we find in it repeated echoes of Job (14:1), Isaias (40:6), and Lamentations (5:16-22), it seems better to place its composition during or towards the close of the exile in Babylon.

1. Precatio. Moysis, viri Dei.

A prayer. Of Moses, the man of God.

*The Psalmist Compares the Eternal and Omnipotent God, the Refuge of Every Generation, with Man Whose Life Is But a Brief Span (1-6)*

Domine, tu fuisti refugium  
nobis a generatione in generati-  
onem.

Lord, Thou hast been our re-  
fuge from generation to genera-  
tion.



2. Priusquam montes gignerentur et nasceretur terra et orbis, et ab aeterno in aeternum tu es, Deus.

3. Reverti iubes mortales in pulverem, et dicis: "Revertimini, filii hominum."

4. Nam mille anni in oculis tuis tamquam dies hesternus sunt qui transivit, et tamquam vigilia nocturna.

5. Abripis eos: fiunt ut somnium matutinum, ut herba virescens:

6. Mane floret et viret, vespere succiditur et arescit.

Before the mountains were begotten and the earth and the world were born, even from eternity to eternity, Thou art, O God.

Thou dost bid mortals to return to dust, and sayest: "Return, you sons of men."

For a thousand years in Thine eyes are as a yesterday that is gone, and as a watch in the night.

Thou dost snatch them away; they become as a morning dream, as sprouting grass.

In the morning it flourishes and is green, in the evening it is cut down and withers.

*Human Life Is So Sad and Hard because of God's Anger Provoked by Man's Sin (7-11)*

7. Vere consumpti sumus ira tua, et indignatione tua conturbati.

8. Posuisti culpas nostras in conspectu tuo, peccata nostra occulta in lumine vultus tui.

9. Nam omnes dies nostri transierunt in ira tua; finivimus annos nostros ut suspirium.

10. Summa annorum nostrorum sunt septuaginta anni et, si validi sumus, octoginta; et plerique eorum sunt labor et vanitas: nam cito transeunt, et nos avolumus.

11. Quis perpendit potentiam irae tuae, et pro debito tibi timore indignationem tuam?

Truly we are consumed by Thy wrath, and dismayed by Thine indignation.

Thou hast laid out our faults in Thy sight, our hidden sins in the light of Thy countenance.

For all our days have passed by in Thine anger; we have ended our years as a sigh.

The sum of our years is three score and ten, and four score, if we are strong; and for the most part they are toil and vanity; for they quickly pass and we flit away.

Who has estimated the force of Thy displeasure, and of Thine indignation as fear of Thee demands?

*The Psalmist Begs God that Men May Attain Wisdom, and that He in His Mercy May Recompense Them for the Miseries of Life (12-17)*

12. Dinumerare nos doce dies nostros, ut preveniamus ad sapientiam cordis.

13. Revertere, Domine, — quousque? et propitius esto servis tuis.

14. Satia nos cito misericordia tua, ut exsulemus et laetemur cunctis diebus nostris.

15. Laetifica nos pro diebus quibus nos afflixisti, pro annis quibus vidimus mala.

16. Appareat servis tuis opus tuum, et gloria tua filiis eorum,

17. Et bonitas Domini Dei nostri sit super nos, et opus manuum nostrarum secunda nobis, et opus manuum nostrarum secunda.

Teach us so to reckon our days, that we may attain to wisdom of heart.

Return, O Lord — how long wilt Thou continue angry? and be propitious to Thy servants.

Fill us quickly with Thy lovingkindness, that we may exult and be glad all our days.

Gladden us for the days in which Thou hast afflicted us, for the years during which our eyes have rested on evils.

May Thy work be manifest to Thy servants, and Thy glory to their sons.

And may the goodness of the Lord our God be upon us, and do Thou prosper for us the work of our hands — yea, the work of our hands do Thou prosper!

REFLECTIONS

Viewed in comparison with the timeless duration, without beginning or end, which we call eternity, the longest span of human life is but a breath; it is as nothing. Suddenly, out of the darkness man appears upon the stage of life, briefly to play a little part, and then as swiftly vanishes as he came. He is like the grass of the field that springs up in the night and in the morning is fresh and green, but is cut down and dead at eventide; like the flowers of the meadow that open their petals to the rising sun, and flourish for a short time, only to fade and disappear; like leaves of the forest, soon withered and strown.

"A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave."

And as with the individual, so with the generations. One after another they follow in endless procession. Like the succeeding crops that spring from the soil, they yield their harvest, whatever it may be, and pass



away, for the most part little remembered, and soon forgotten. The fruits of their labors, the achievements of their strength, the triumph of their struggles, great or small, they leave behind, soon also to blur and fade, like ink on a printed page, and ere long, as a rule, they are buried in oblivion.

How pathetic, therefore, vain and futile would be man's life on earth if it ended here! What could it all mean? Why all the toil and worry, the rush and anxiety, the strife and contention, the noise and turmoil, if it all ended with death and terminated in the grave? What compensation here below for sorrows and tears, for wasted strength and faded beauty, for love frustrated or unrequited, for foiled hopes and blasted high ambitions, if there were nothing better to follow, no way or place to realize all our dreams, to still the thousand voices that clamor within us throughout our days, to quiet the ceaseless appetites that gnaw at our vitals from youth to death?

True, there is also much good in our present life, much to love and to please; but it is not enough. All the good things of the world put together could not satisfy the heart and soul of man. No, human life would be purposeless; it would be a dismal failure, a mockery, a disaster, if its earthly span were the whole of it.

But what a different aspect life presents when considered fully, in its entirety, under all its phases, present and to come! How differently its fleeting days and years appear when it is viewed as a river that has had its rise in the eternal mountains, and is flowing, rushing on to the sea, which is God; when looked upon as a pilgrimage whose end is a heavenly dwelling-place and home, prepared for it before the mountains and hills were set on their bases, or ever the earth and the world were made; when considered as a brief space leased to mortal man in which to lay up everlasting treasures far out of the reach of peril or loss; when seen as a short but golden period, of which every hour is precious beyond calculation, fraught and charged with limitless possibilities for good, through work and prayer and sacrifice, in behalf of God, ourselves and all our brethren of the human family!

Thus conceived, man's life on earth is priceless. And just because his days and years are few, the necessity of using every one of them to the best advantage becomes compelling, and the need is imperative of removing every obstacle that can hinder their usefulness. The Psalmist did not have the clear and thrilling prospect of immortality which is ours, but he saw vividly the bane of sin which could waste and spoil his allotted time, rendering him unfit to enjoy the divine friendship here and now,

changing God's smile into a frown, changing the sweet music of his days into weeping and mourning, making of fertile fields a desert waste.

There is so much we can do, with God's help, in our short life, if we have the intention and zeal to do it; first by physical and mental labor and toil as far as our feeble strength will carry us, and then by fervent daily prayer, which can reach to the very ends of the world. The fruits of our mental and physical faculties are limited; they do not extend very far, either as to time or space. But there is no limit to fervent and constant prayer to God, imploring Him to supplement our poor efforts, and to do for ourselves and others, living and dead, and yet to live to the end of time, what lies beyond our powers.

And such should be our love and charity for each and every member of the human family, near and far, living now and throughout all time to come, that we should want and pray God to do for them all, according to their state and needs, just what we desire and ask Him to do for ourselves. This attitude towards all human beings, brethren of ours in God and in Christ, without distinction, who have lived, who are living, and who are yet to live, should be a vigorous and active habit with us.

And when this is so, how immensely rich does our life become, how precious every hour, every moment of every day! Its very brevity then takes on an eternal meaning and character, and a single day may contain within it the worth of an age. Thus do the fast-flying days of earthly life merge into the eternal years, and the winding, swiftly flowing rivers wend their way to the deep and boundless ocean.

#### PSALM 90 (Heb. 91)

#### GOD THE MOST HIGH, PROTECTOR OF THE JUST

(This Psalm, anonymous in the Hebrew, is ascribed to David in the Greek)

#### INTRODUCTION

The exact author of this exquisite didactic Psalm is unknown. Since there are many points of similarity in thought and language between Psalms 89, 90 and 91, it has been thought that all three were written by the same author. As to the time of the composition of this present one, it is variously assigned to the reign of David or of Solomon, or to the post-exilic period. It is further disputed whether it is national in its aim, as addressed to Israel in some crisis of its history; or individual, as portray-



ing the security of the just man under Jehovah's protection amid all the perils of life. It is perhaps best to regard this tender expression of confidence in God's protection as an antiphonally arranged hymn addressed to any godly Israelite.

*The Man Who Trusts in God Is Protected by Him and Guarded by Angels (1-13)*

1. Qui degis in praesidio Altissimi, qui sub umbra Omnipotentis commoraris,

2. Dic Domino: "Refugium meum et arx mea, Deus meus, in quo confido."

3. Nam ipse liberabit te de laqueo venantium, a peste perniciosa.

4. Pennis suis proteget te, et sub alas eius confugies: scutum et clipeus est fidelitas eius.

5. Non timebis a terrore nocturno, a sagitta volante in die,

6. A peste quae vagatur in tenebris, a perniciie quae vastat meridie.

7. Cadant a latere tuo mille, et decem milia a dextris tuis; ad te non appropinquabit.

8. Verumtamen oculis tuis spectabis et mercedem peccatorum videbis.

Thou that dwellest in the shelter of the Most High, that abidest under the shadow of the Almighty,

Say to the Lord: "Thou art my refuge and my citadel, my God, in whom I trust."

For He will deliver thee from the snare of the hunters, from the deadly plague.

Under His pinions He will protect thee, and under His wings thou shalt seek refuge: His faithfulness is a shield and a buckler.

Thou shalt not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

The plague that strides in the dark, nor the destruction that ravages at noonday.

Let a thousand fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: *evil* shall not come nigh to thee.

But with thine eyes thou shalt behold and see the wages of sinners.

1. "In praesidio," in the *shelter*, or *hiding place*, that is, the bosom of God. The just man reposes on the bosom of God, like an infant in its mother's arms.

2. "Dic Domino," i.e., you can with right say to the Lord.

5. 6. "Terrore" and "sagitta" stand respectively for secret attacks of enemies by night and open assaults by day.—"A peste." The night is regarded as a time favorable for the spread of disease.—"A perniciie, etc." This refers perhaps to the fiery glow of the sun, or more probably to the pestilential simoon of the southern deserts, which are most deadly at noon. It has been pointed out that the Jews personified this death-bearing wind as a demon dwelling in Arabia, and that this perhaps suggested to the Greek translators the phrase "demoniac attack at midday."

9. Nam refugium tuum est Dominus, Altissimum constituisti munimen tuum.

10. Non accedet ad te malum, et plaga non appropinquabit tabernaculo tuo,

11. Quia Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.

12. In manibus suis portabunt te, ne offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum.

13. Super aspidem et viperam gradieris, conculcabis leonem et draconem.

For the Lord is thy refuge; thou hast made the Most High thy bulwark.

Evil shall not approach thee, no plague shall come near thy tent,

For He has given His Angels charge over thee, that they may protect thee in all thy ways.

In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread on the asp and the viper, thou shalt trample on the lion and the dragon.

*God Is Represented as Confirming the Promises Made to the Psalmist (14-16)*

14. Quoniam mihi adhaesit, liberabo eum; protegam eum, quia cognovit nomen meum.

15. Invocabit me et exaudiam eum; cum ipso ero in tribulatione, eripiam eum et honorabo eum.

16. Longitudine dierum satiabo eum, et ostendam ei salutem meam.

Because he has clung to Me, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he has known My name.

He shall call upon Me and I will answer him; I will be with him in tribulation, I will rescue him and honor him.

With length of days I will satisfy him, and I will show him My salvation.

REFLECTIONS

The singer here begins by extolling the blessedness of dwelling with God. His purpose is to stimulate and encourage personal trust in the

11. "Quia Angelis suis." It is an ancient teaching of the Old Testament that God has appointed angels to care for men. See Gen. 24:7; Exod. 23:20; Ps. 33 (34):8.

12, 13. The guardianship of the angels over the just man will so protect him that he will be preserved in his journey both from minor evils (such as stumbling over a stone in his path) and from grave perils (like the attack of wild beasts).

14. "Adhaesit . . . cognovit," i.e., not only with the mind but with love (so the Heb.).



Almighty (vv. 2, 9a). Verses 3-8 and 9b-13 give assurances and advantages of a refuge like that, and verses 14-16 express God's acceptance of such a trust and His confirmation of the promises previously given.

The divine blessings here cited as a reward of trust in God are special protection and safety against evils; first, against enemies and diseases in vv. 3-8; and secondly, against dangers in general, both public and private, open and secret, in vv. 9b-13. It is noticeable that only physical and temporal evils are here explicitly mentioned, though moral and spiritual perils may be included, particularly, in the wider expressions and assurances of vv. 10, 11, 15. Such is the sweeping protection which he will enjoy who puts his trust in Jehovah.

But applying this Psalm to actual life here on earth, we must ask: Where and how are its generous promises and assurances verified? Who among the holy have enjoyed them? Have the saints of God in any age, under the Old Testament or under the New, literally experienced the protection here specified and promised? Was the Psalmist himself, were the Prophets, and righteous men and women of the Old Law, or the Apostles, martyrs and saints of the New Law, exempt from the evils here enumerated? On the contrary, were they not all subjected practically throughout their lives to these or to countless other similar dangers and sufferings, such as those referred to by St. Paul as trials of the saints in Heb. 11:33-38? Did not the Master Himself say: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Luke 9:23)?

It would seem better, therefore, to understand the special protection here promised by the Psalmist as referring to spiritual rather than to physical safety, and to interpret some of his words more figuratively than literally. Physical and temporal perils and sufferings, in truth, can hardly be regarded as evils at all unless they endanger the soul and its welfare; and what can do harm to a soul whose trust is firmly fixed in God? When a soul is thus spiritually secure, all physical and temporal misfortunes lose their harmfulness and become salutary means of spiritual discipline and perfection, instead of hindrances; they become the occasion, the raw material and stuff, out of which virtue, good character and holy life are produced and developed. The very hardship and danger to the soul which come from temporal and physical misfortune provide the trial and test of faith which are necessary to spiritual development and progress, and without which spiritual life remains soft, languid, weak and unfruitful. According to the nature we have and the world we live in, it is not good for us, individually or collectively as private or public persons, as societies or nations, when the conditions and cir-

cumstances of life are too easy, indulgent and free from opposition. No saint, no great character, no outstanding people, has ever come from any but the hard and trying way of life. There is no easy or pleasant road to the high prizes of this world, let alone the higher and better world to come.

When therefore a soul's trust in God is implicit and absolute, so as to establish it in the keeping of the Most High, it is safe and secure against any danger or evil that may befall, whether from without or from within. The only question, then, is how to acquire such a fruitful trust. The answer can be gathered from vv. 14 and 15, where the Lord Himself says that He will grant this favor to those who *hope* in Him, or more literally, according to the Hebrew word here used, who *cling* to Him *by love*; who *know* Him as He really is; and *call* upon Him. If therefore we would possess that absolute trust in God which secures against all evils, we must exert ourselves and discipline ourselves so as to abide in Him at all cost, we must cultivate that holy intimacy with Him which will make us understand Him as the God of love and mercy, and we must learn to converse with Him as a friend with a friend.

Under such conditions a soul can be certain that God will be with it in time of tribulation, will rescue it from all evil and will crown it with honor. Even more, such a soul will be blessed with length of days in this world—that is, with a spiritual richness that will fulfill a long period in a short time, and with the overflowing and perfectly satisfying possession of God in the world to come.

### PSALM 91 (Heb. 92)

#### PRAISE OF GOD, WHO GOVERNS THE LOT OF MEN WISELY AND JUSTLY

##### INTRODUCTION

We have here a song of praise and thanksgiving to the all-holy and just Providence of God, which, in the last analysis, never fails to reward good and punish evil. This Psalm is dealing with the problem which perplexed the writer or writers of Psalms 36, 48 and 72; only here there is a tone of triumph which foreshadows the complete solution of the questions only partly solved in those other Psalms.

1. Psalmus. Canticum. Pro die      A psalm. A canticle. For the  
sabbati.      Sabbath day.



*An Invitation to Praise the Goodness and Fidelity of God (2-5)*

2. Bonum est celebrare Dominum, et psallere nomini tuo, Altissime:

3. Annuntiare mane misericordiam tuam et fidelitatem tuam per noctes

4. Psalterio decachordo et lyra, cum cantico ad citharam.

5. Nam delectas me, Domine, factis tuis, de operibus manuum tuarum exulto.

It is good to praise the Lord, and to sing to Thy name, O Most High;

To declare Thy mercy in the morning and Thy faithfulness during the nights

With the ten-stringed psaltery and a lyre, with a canticle on the harp.

For Thou dost delight me, O Lord, with Thy deeds; because of the works of Thy hands I exult.

*The Destruction of Sinners and the Triumph of the Just Show that God Governs the Fate of Men with Consummate Wisdom (6-12)*

6. Quam magnifica sunt opera tua, Domine, quam profundae cogitationes tuae!

7. Vir insipiens non cognoscit, et stultus non intellegit haec.

8. Etsi impii floreant ut herba, et splendeant omnes male agentes,

Excidio destinantur sempiterno: (9) tu autem in aeternum excelsus es, Domine.

10. Nam ecce inimici tui, Domine, nam ecce inimici tui peribunt: dispergentur omnes male agentes.

11. Extulisti sicut cornu bubali cornu meum; perfudisti me oleo purissimo.

How magnificent are Thy works, O Lord, how profound are Thy designs!

The senseless man does not know, and the fool does not understand these things.

Even though the godless flourish like grass, and all evil-doers glitter,

They are destined for everlasting destruction; but Thou, O Lord, art exalted for ever.

For behold, Thine enemies, O Lord — for behold, Thine enemies shall perish; all evil-doers shall be scattered.

Thou hast exalted my strength like the strength of a wild ox, Thou hast poured over me the purest oil.

5. "Factis tuis," i.e., the doings of Providence.

6. "Cogitationes tuae," i.e., Thy designs in governing the world.

7. "Insipiens . . . stultus" are those who deny God's Providence.

11. "Extulisti cornu." Raising the horn is a sign of strength and vigor in animals. Oil was used at festivals, and was a symbol of youthful vigor.

12. Et oculus meus despexit inimicos meos, et de insurgentibus contra me malignis laeta audierunt aures meae.

And mine eye has looked down on my foes, and mine ears have heard glad tidings regarding the malignant ones that rise up against me.

*The Psalmist Extols the Extraordinary Goodness Which God Shows towards the Just (13-16)*

13. Iustus ut palma florebit, sicut cedrus Libani crescet.

The just man shall flourish like a palm tree; like a cedar of Lebanon he shall grow up.

14. Plantati in domo Domini, in atriis Dei nostri floreant.

They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

15. Fructum ferent etiam in senectute, sucosi et vegeti erunt,

They shall bear fruit even in old age, they shall be fresh and green,

16. Ut annuntient, quam rectus sit Dominus, Petra mea, neque iniquitatem esse in eo.

That they may declare how righteous is the Lord, my Rock, and there is no iniquity in Him.

## REFLECTIONS

Both the height and depth of human emotion are sounded in the Psalms. At one time the singer is wrapt in the thickest darkness and dejection of spirit, at another he is borne aloft in a rapture of joy. This latter mood is expressed in the present Psalm, and the reason is the greatness of God's works and purposes as manifested in the divine government of the world. The divine goodness or mercy is a theme for singing every morning, as we begin each day; and likewise the divine faithfulness, every evening, as a prayerful acknowledgment of God's help during the day.

Although reviewing the same subject as in Psalm 72, the Psalmist now (if the author is the same) is no longer troubled by the perplexities which were present there. Here the writer bows in profound and trustful adoration of God's marvellous deeds and of the unsearchable purposes which lie behind and direct those deeds. He cannot see the whole picture nor take in more than a fragment of the divine works and plans in governing the world and dealing with man, but he is satisfied that it is all right. If defects are discerned, he knows they must be in him, in his limited vision and understanding, and not in the all-perfect God



or the work of divine Providence. This peaceful and comforting conclusion was doubtless the fruit of prayer, rather than of speculation and study.

Foolish and stupid people object and complain about the things they see in the world and experience in life largely because they do not understand and are unwilling to submit their finite minds and wills to the infinite mind and will of God. They claim for reason and intellect the right and power to pronounce on all subjects, human and divine, natural and supernatural, and deny to faith and trust any realm or domain for legitimate exercise. The real trouble, however, in many cases at least, is not reason and intellect, but enslavement to sense and animal instincts. People are mostly ruled by what they like; their wishes are fathers to their thoughts. And when these are earthly, and even sinful, there can be little sympathy for things holy and divine, or willingness to try to understand them.

The Psalmist again warns that sin and wickedness not only dull the mind and harden the heart to perception of higher things and a relish for them, but that the aims and efforts of evil men are futile and vain, doomed to early destruction. God's friends, on the contrary, though tried and harassed for a time, are destined to live and flourish, bearing rich fruit even in old age, as witness to the justice of God and the righteousness of divine Providence.

## PSALM 92 (Heb. 93)

### THE LORD, THE POWERFUL KING OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

#### INTRODUCTION

This is a song of thanksgiving in which the Psalmist celebrates Jehovah's sovereignty, not only over Israel, but over the whole world. Israel had been trodden down and cruelly persecuted by her enemies, but now the Lord has intervened and rescued His people from their bitter foes. Jehovah is here depicted as dominating the enemies of His people as He ruled the elements at the dawn of creation. It is said that this Psalm was sung by the Jews on Fridays at the morning offering as a hymn in honor of the completion of the creation on the sixth day.

The Psalm has no title.

*The Psalmist Sees in a Vision God Reigning in Majesty and Power, and Seated on a Throne from All Eternity (1, 2)*

1. Dominus regnat, maiestatem indutus est, indutus est Dominus potentiam, praecinxit se, et firmavit orbem terrarum, qui non commovebitur.	The Lord reigns, He is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in power, and has girded Himself, yea, He has made firm the world, which shall not be shaken.
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2. Firma est sedes tua ab aevo, ab aeterno tu es.	Firm is Thy throne from of old; Thou art from eternity.
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*The Psalmist Contemplates the Mighty Billows of the Sea and Their Roar; God Is Far More Powerful than These (3, 4)*

3. Extollunt flumina, Domine, extollunt flumina vocem suam, extollunt flumina fragorem suum.	The floods lift up, O Lord, the floods lift up their voice, the floods lift aloft their roar.
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4. Potentior voce aquarum multarum, potentior aestibus maris: potens in excelsis est Dominus.	Mightier than the voice of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea; mighty on high is the Lord.
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*God's Testimonies Merit Our Full Faith and His Habitation on Earth Must Be Held Sacred (5)*

5. Testimonia tua fide digna sunt valde; domum tuam decet sanctitas, Domine, in longitudinem dierum.	Thy testimonies are exceedingly reliable; holiness becomes Thy dwelling, O Lord, unto length of days.
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#### REFLECTIONS

In times of affliction, or when the conditions of life, whether personal or general, are not to our liking, it is helpful to reflect that a change will come, and perhaps for the better. "While there's life, there's hope"; and so, however badly off we ourselves or the world around may be at any particular period, we can look forward to possible relief sometime in the future. Were it otherwise, the state of man on earth would often be intolerable. But on the other hand, the very fact that human life and the world in which we live are subject to constant change, that there is

1. "Dominus regnat." The Lord has proclaimed Himself King of the world whose creation He has completed.

3. The thundering of the sea and the roaring of the floods symbolize the raging of God's enemies.



nothing connected with our present existence which can be counted on as fixed or permanent, leaves us disquieted and takes much of the pleasure and peace out of the best that we have. Even when all is well and joy seems unconfined, we know that we sit at a passing feast. If we could neither remember nor reflect, it would be different. Then we could rejoice to the full in the good we have when we have it, regardless of recollections or forebodings which can largely spoil it.

All in all, then, in a tumultuous world like this, of which the restless sea is a fair symbol, we cannot but often sigh for a fixed abode which will soothe our fretful natures and comfort our troubled spirits. Some objects and aspects even of the inanimate world can excite our envy. As we contemplate the ancient hills and mountains and look up to the stars and shining spheres of heaven, age after age the same in their solemn peace and glory, we must often wish that our natures and the conditions of our lives had something of their enduring constancy and permanence.

Of course human beings are persons, and nothing short of personality can really and lastingly satisfy them. And more than that, they each have capacities for knowledge, for love, for manifold good, so vast, that only the infinite Being can finally give them all they want and need. How comforting, therefore, amid the clamor, the uproar, the tumult of earth, to reflect with the Psalmist that God is our King, clothed with majesty and girded with power, that He is the same from eternity to eternity, and that He has given us abiding testimonies and laws to guide our troublous lives through an ever-changing world to His kingdom and home above of perfect peace and everlasting happiness! Faith guarantees the reality and certainty of this prospect, and keeping our eyes habitually fixed on it will steady us now.

### PSALM 93 (Heb. 94)

## INVOCATION OF GOD, THE JUST JUDGE, AGAINST UNJUST OPPRESSORS

### INTRODUCTION

Here, as in Psalm 35, the sacred singer is reviewing the problem which confronts the just man, who is surrounded by arrogant, boastful sinners that oppress God's people, despise His law and deny His Providence. Why does God permit such a state of things? What is to be the stay of the righteous under such conditions? The answer is: God. Happy

the man who has the discipline of the divine law, teaching him calmly to await in patience the manifestation of judgment upon the wicked; and who has learned by experience that God is his abiding and best friend, his ever-present help and comfort in times of need. Evil-doers cannot have the Eternal for an ally; He will be their avenger in due time.

The Psalm is without title.

### *The Psalmist Invokes God's Vengeance against Unjust Oppressors (1-4)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Deus ultor, Domine, Deus ultor, affulge.                          | O God the avenger, O Lord God the Avenger, shine forth.                    |
| 2. Exsurge, qui iudicas terram; redde, quod merentur, superbis.      | Arise, Thou Judge of the earth; render to the proud what they deserve.     |
| 3. Quousque impii, Domine, quousque impii gloriabuntur,              | How long, O Lord, shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked boast,       |
| 4. Effutient, loquentur insolenter, iactabunt se qui patrant iniqua? | How long shall the workers of iniquity chatter, talk insolently and vaunt? |

### *The Psalmist Openly Exposes the Crimes and Blasphemies of the Oppressors (5-7)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 5. Populum tuum, Domine, conculcant, et hereditatem tuam affligunt; | They trample on Thy people, O Lord, and afflict Thine inheritance;          |
| 6. Viduam et peregrinum trucidant, et occidunt pupillos.            | They kill the widow and the stranger, and slay the orphans.                 |
| 7. Et dicunt: "Non videt Dominus, neque advertit Deus Iacob."       | And they say: "The Lord does not see, nor does the God of Jacob give heed." |

### *The Psalmist Rebukes the Folly and Perversity of the Oppressors, since God Knows Everything (8-11)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 8. Intellegite, stulti in populo, et insipientes, quando sapietis?       | Understand, you fools among the people; and you senseless ones, when will you be wise?    |
| 9. Qui plantavit aurem, non audiet? aut, qui finxit oculum, non videbit? | He that planted the ear, will He not hear? Or He that fashioned the eye, will He not see? |



10. Qui erudit gentes, non castigabit? qui docet homines scientiam?

11. Dominus novit cogitationes hominum: sunt enim inanes.

He that instructs the nations, will He not chastise? He that teaches men knowledge?

The Lord knows the thoughts of men; for they are vain.

*The Psalmist Has Placed All His Trust in God, Who Will Not Desert the Just (12-15)*

12. Beatus vir, quem erudis, Domine, et instruis lege tua,

13. Ut des ei requiem a diebus malis, donec impio fovea fodiatur.

14. Neque enim reiciet Dominus populum suum, et hereditatem suam non derelinquet;

15. Sed ad iustitiam redibit iudicium, eamque sequentur omnes recti corde.

Blessed is the man whom Thou dost teach, O Lord, and instruct by Thy law,

That Thou mayest give him rest from evil days, till a pit be dug for the wicked man.

For the Lord will not cast off His people, nor forsake His inheritance;

But judgment shall again become justice, and this all the right of heart shall pursue.

*God's Grace and Consolation Sustain the Psalmist (16-19)*

16. Quis consurget pro me contra male agentes? quis stabit pro me contra patrantes iniqua?

17. Nisi Dominus iuvaret me, brevi habitaret in loco silentii anima mea.

18. Cum cogito: "Vacillat pes meus," gratia tua, Domine, me sustentat.

19. Cum anxietates multiplicantur in corde meo, consolationes tuae delectant animam meam.

Who will rise up for me against evil-doers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

Had the Lord not helped me, my soul had soon dwelt in the place of silence.

When I think, "My foot is slipping," Thy help, O Lord, sustains me.

When anxieties are multiplied in my heart, Thy consolations cheer my soul.

17. "In loco, etc.," i.e., in the silent dwelling-place of the dead.

19. God's comforts were in proportion to the Psalmist's sufferings.

*The Unjust Cannot Escape Destruction (20-23)*

20. Num sociabitur tecum tribunal iniquum, quod vexationes creat sub specie legis?

21. Invadant animam iusti, et sanguinem innocentem condemnent:

22. Dominus certe erit praesidium mihi, et Deus meus petra refugii mei.

23. Et rependet illis iniquitatem eorum, et ipsorum malitia perdet eos, perdet eos Dominus Deus noster.

Shall the tribunal of the unjust, which creates hardships under the guise of law, have fellowship with Thee?

They may assail the soul of the just man, and condemn innocent blood;

But the Lord will surely be a fortress for me, and my God my rock of refuge.

And He will repay them their iniquity, and through their own malice He will destroy them, the Lord our God will destroy them.

REFLECTIONS

Sometimes we might be tempted to question the objective truth of the Psalmist's description of personal and national enemies, if we did not otherwise know how barbarous and cruel in many respects was the age in which he lived, and if we did not have in our own days people just as bad as the wicked persons he describes, if not worse. The height and depth of evil and degradation of which human nature is capable are at once appalling and frightening. Alas that it should be so, but there are men and women in this world, and in every age of it, who appear to have no belief in God and no moral sense, who delight in oppression, cruelty, bloodshed, torture and all manner of outrageous crimes against their fellowman, and especially the innocent, the meek, the poor, the helpless and the good.

Sometimes these lawless and conscienceless persons are in public life, even as rulers over others; sometimes they lurk in private. It is against the former class that the Psalmist is here complaining. They enacted unholy laws, outraged justice, oppressed the people, condemned the innocent and preyed on the defenseless and helpless. It is rulers and people like these that encourage lawlessness and crime, and bring on rebellion, revolution, economic crises, wars and apostasies of classes and nations. And when such lawlessness goes on in public, it is paralleled and surpassed by similar and related sins and crimes in private, as a natural consequence.

20. "Tribunal iniquum" refers to unjust judges who try to shelter their evil acts under the divine authority.



No wonder the Psalmist asked, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Nor is it strange, in view of the enormity and continuance of evils in the world at large, that the prosperous and arrogant authors and perpetrators of them, should say, "The Lord does not see, the God of Jacob does not take notice." And yet, it cannot be that He who made human eyes and human ears, and gave man understanding, cannot Himself see and hear and understand. What then are believing people to think and to do in a world so bad in many ways and places? How are they to face the evil flood, retain their footing and keep their heads above the fierce billows and towering waves? How preserve their faith in God and His righteous government of the world?

The Psalmist's reply to these questions is that all our present life is a school, a place of training and education for higher things—the virtues of patience, fortitude, humility, resignation, faith, trust, hope and the like, which we need to know and cultivate in order to prepare ourselves for the higher, holier life to come. Every real school, all true education and discipline, are hard and disagreeable to our weak and flabby natures, but when properly accepted and made use of, they yield their wholesome fruit. This training of character and development of human personality seems long, because it must last throughout life; it seems endless, because it is necessary for each generation as it comes along, and so must be continuous.

But the Psalmist warns that God who permits the trying processes of our earthly training has His purpose and knows what He is doing; and His very nature forbids that He should do wrong or in any way fail His beloved ones who submit to His will. The Psalmist is convinced of this also by his past experience. Many a time he felt his feet slipping, but God stayed him; often his thoughts were in confusion and his mind dismayed, but mercy came and comforted him; long ago he would have gone down in the fight and been buried in the grave, had the Lord not helped him. Therefore does he proclaim Jehovah his refuge, his high tower and the rock of his hope.

In practical life, then, we have to realize the kind of world we live in. It is a mysterious state in which good and evil are arrayed against each other and engaged in unending deadly conflict. We have been brought into it without consultation or consent on our part; we find ourselves in it, in the arena, on the battle field. Sometimes we are favored, sometimes handicapped, by the unchosen start we get—with our particular and individual nature, our parents and ancestors, inherited traits and tendencies, country and place of birth, early environment and conditions of life and the like. But whoever we may be or whatever our lot and

circumstances, it is our plain duty resolutely, as best we can, to face the facts of life, to realize that a higher will has placed us here in the midst of good and evil, and to be fully aware that a solemn obligation rests on each one of us, in his own place, with the means at his disposal, to do his part, to the best of his ability, alone and in cooperation with others, towards the alleviation and extirpation of all physical and moral evils, while trying to derive from them, for himself and others, all the possible good they may occasion in any way; and thus, by individual and corporate effort, to endeavor to make this world a better place to live in for everybody.

As to the workers of iniquity whose misdeeds add so much to the burden and sorrow of life, they play an unholy and pitiable part in this strange world. For their own and others' good they should be put away, removed from the possibility of continuing to hurt and harm. The Psalmist, as usual, looks forward with satisfaction to their punishment and destruction. Christians likewise cannot but rejoice when evil men and women are stopped in their course, and their vicious plans, schemes and works are overthrown and ended. Evil-doers should also bear punishment for their deeds and the consequences of them, in this world or in the next, or in both; but beyond this, we must leave their fate with God, while praying Him, in spite of all the evil those unfortunate creatures have done in life, to remember mercy. As He alone can know all the circumstances of their nature, life and actions, He only can determine their formal culpability.

### PSALM 94 (Heb. 95)

#### INVITATION TO PRAISE AND OBEY GOD

##### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is attributed to David in both the Greek and Latin Psalters; and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes verse 8 as belonging to David (Heb. 4:7). Most probably this poem was intended to be sung at the beginning of the Sabbath worship, in order to awaken the fervor of the people who were attending the sacred functions. From the time of St. Benedict (480-543) it has been used as an Invitatory Psalm in the Divine Office, where we find it according to St. Jerome's Roman Psalter. In the Vulgate, it is given according to the Gallican Psalter.

The Psalm has no title.



*We Should Praise God because He Is the Great King and Creator of the Whole Earth (1-5)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Venite, exsultemus Domino, acclamemus Petrae salutis nostrae:</p> <p>2. Accedamus in conspectum eius cum laudibus, cum canticis exsultemus ei.</p> <p>3. Nam Deus magnus est Dominus, et Rex magnus super omnes deos:</p> <p>4. In manu eius sunt profunda terrae, et altitudines montium ipsius sunt.</p> <p>5. Ipsius est mare: nam ipse fecit illud, et terra sicca, quam formaverunt manus eius.</p> | <p>Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation;</p> <p>Let us come into His presence with praises, and let us exult to Him with canticles.</p> <p>For a great God is the Lord, and a great King above all gods:</p> <p>In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the heights of the mountains belong to Him.</p> <p>His is the sea, for He made it, and the dry land, which His hands have formed.</p> |
|--|--|

*God Is the Pastor of Israel, and Those Who Disobey Him Shall Be Rejected Like the Fathers in the Desert (6-11)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>6. Venite, adoremus et proci- damus, et genua flectamus Domino qui fecit nos.</p> <p>7. Nam ipse est Deus noster, nos autem populus pascuae eius et oves manus eius.</p> <p>Utinam hodie vocem eius audiat: (8) "Nolite obdurate corda vestra ut in Meriba, ut die Massa in deserto,</p> <p>9. Ubi tentaverunt me patres vestri, probaverunt me, etsi viderant opera mea.</p> <p>10. Quadraginta annos taeduit me generationis illius, et dixi: 'Po-</p> | <p>Come, let us adore and fall down, and kneel to the Lord who made us.</p> <p>For He is our God; but we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.</p> <p>Would that to-day you would hear His voice: "Harden not your hearts as at Meriba, as on the day of Massa in the wilderness,</p> <p>"Where your fathers tempted Me; they tested Me although they had seen My works.</p> <p>"For forty years I was wearied of that generation, and I said:</p> |
|---|---|

3. The Roman Psalter adds to this verse: "Quoniam non repellet Dominus plebem suam," which is perhaps taken from v. 14 of the preceding Psalm.

4. "Ipsius sunt." Rom. Psalter: "Ipse conspicit."

5. "Et terra sicca." Rom. Psalter: "Et aridam fundaverunt manus ejus," that is, the dry land as distinct from the sea.

7. "Populus pascuae, etc." Rom. Psalter: "Populus eius, et oves pascuae eius."

pulus errans corde sunt, et non noverunt vias meas. "They are a people erring in heart, and they have not known My ways.

11. Ideo iuravi in ira mea: non introibunt in requiem meam.' "Therefore, I swore in My wrath; they shall not enter into My rest.'"

REFLECTIONS

The first 7 verses of this Psalm are a joyous and swelling call to the people to praise and thank Jehovah for His greatness as the only God, and His marvelous works in creation and in behalf of His Chosen People. Jehovah holds in His hand the deeps; the mountains, the sea and the earth are His, because He made them all. It is especially becoming that His Chosen People should bow down in worship and kneel before Him, because they are His special creation, the work of His grace, the people for whom He has made singular provision, the sheep that feed from His hand.

The closing verses are a warning, in the midst of exultant worship, that all praise must be accompanied by proper dispositions of the heart, or else it is useless and vain. Israel's sin of long ago, during the wanderings in the wilderness, are recalled to enforce this thought. There, in the desert, her people were hard of heart, they tempted God by their lack of faith, they murmured against His Providence for them, they were unmoved either by His blessings or His chastisements, they refused to walk in His ways and chose their own, they became an abomination to Him. Straying farther and farther from God in paths of their own choosing, they at length missed the land that was promised them and the rest for which they longed. Their choice was the desert and its wastes, and in them they wandered and erred, ever more widely, until they perished.

The Holy Land and the rest in it which was promised the people of ancient Israel were symbols and types of the heavenly country and the eternal rest which are in store for all Christians and faithful souls. But there is a warning to Christians and all who would be saved in the fate which befell Israel in the desert. The warning is this, that it is God's ways, not their ways, that lead to the promised rewards. However hard this may be at times, there is no other safe course. Many other roads and paths of earth are frequently inviting and attractive, often powerfully so; but they lead to the desert, with its burning sun and parched sands. The self-denial and restraint which we need to practice now, the toil and weariness which we suffer, are not forever after all; they



are only for a short while at longest. But the rest and refreshment for which we were made, towards which we are moving, for which we are longing, are eternal and satisfying.

# PSALM 95 (Heb. 96)

## PRAISE THE LORD, KING OF EVERY LAND

### INTRODUCTION

The occasion for which this Psalm was composed was the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obedom into the tent which David had prepared for it on Mount Sion, the history of which event is given in 1 Paralipomenon 15-16, and in 2 Kings 6. Later this same Psalm seems to have been adapted for the solemnity of the restoration of the Temple (1 Esdras 3:11), following the Babylonian captivity, as the title would suggest.

The series of Coronation Anthems (Psalms 95-98) opens with this Psalm. These songs are a response to the invitation to adore God of Psalm 94, and they constitute a lyrical counterpart of Isaias' promises of the fall of heathendom and the establishment of universal salvation in the Messianic kingdom (Isa. 40-46). They are called "Coronation Psalms," because they celebrate the crowning of Jehovah as Messianic-King of the world.

The Psalm is without title.

*Visioning the Advent of the Lord to Institute the Reign of the Messiah, the Psalmist Exhorts All to Praise This Great King (1-3)*

1. Cantate Domino canticum novum, cantate Domino omnes terrae. Sing to the Lord a new canticle; sing to the Lord, all lands.

2. Cantate Domino, benedicite nomini eius, annuntiate de die in diem salutem eius. Sing you to the Lord, bless His name; proclaim His saving aid day after day.

3. Enarrate inter gentes gloriam eius, in omnibus populis mirabilia eius. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wondrous deeds among all peoples.

1. "Canticum novum," because the old canticles were inadequate to celebrate this new and unheard-of revelation of God as King of all the earth.—"Omnes terrae," i.e., all the inhabitants of the earth.

*The Lord Alone Is God, Full of Majesty, Power and Splendor (4-6)*

4. Nam magnus est Dominus et laudandus valde, timendus magis quam omnes dii. For the Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised, He is to be feared more than all gods.

5. Nam omnes dii gentium sunt figmenta; Dominus autem caelos fecit. For all the gods of the heathen are fabrications; but the Lord made the heavens.

6. Maiestas et decor praecedunt eum; potentia et splendor sunt in sede sancta eius. Majesty and beauty go before Him; power and splendor are in his holy dwelling.

*Let All Peoples Praise and Adore the Messiah for His Reign Is About to Begin (7-10)*

7. Tribuite Domino, familiae populorum, tribuite Domino gloriam et potentiam; (8) tribuite Domino gloriam nominis eius. Give to the Lord, you families of the peoples, give to the Lord glory and power; give to the Lord the glory due His name.

Offerte sacrificium et introite in atria eius; (9) adore Dominum in ornatu sacro. Offer sacrifice and enter His courts; adore the Lord in holy array.

Contremisce coram eo, universa terra; (10) dicite inter gentes: "Dominus regnat." Tremble before Him, all the earth; say among the heathen: "The Lord reigns."

Stabilivit orbem, ut non moveatur: regit populos cum aequitate. He has made firm the world that it be not shaken; He rules the peoples with equity.

*Let Nature Herself Exult for the God Who Comes to Rule the Earth (11-13)*

11. Laetentur caeli, et exsultet terra; insonet mare et quae illud implent; gestiat campus et omnia quae in eo sunt. Let the heavens be glad and the earth exult; let the sea resound and the things that fill it; let the field and all that is in it be transported.

12. Tum gaudebunt omnes arbores silvae coram Domino, quia venit, quia venit regere terram. Then shall all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord, for He comes, for He comes to rule the earth.

9. "In ornatu sacro," which was used in celebrating sacred solemnities.

10. "Dominus regnat," giving stability to the earth and justice to men.



13. Reget orbem terrarum cum iustitia, et populos cum fidelitate sua. He will rule the world with justice, and the peoples with His faithfulness.

## REFLECTIONS

In this coronation song the singer is looking forward to the distant, happy era when Jehovah, the God of special revelation, shall rule over all the world, and all men and nations shall acknowledge His worldwide dominion and accept Him as their King. Verses 1-3 are a summons to Israel and to all the earth to praise Jehovah, to make known His salvation and to recount among all peoples and nations His glory and His wondrous works in preparation for His world enthronement. In verses 4-6 His majesty and might, beauty and strength, are contrasted with the inanities which the pagans call gods. The next four verses are a call to the outside nations to join with their offerings and their homage in the universal worship of the one true God; and the three closing verses are a summons to heaven and earth, the sea and the land, and all nature to add their shouts and joyous cries to the universal chorus of praise which will greet the establishment of Jehovah's grand rule of righteousness.

The Psalmist here had a prophetic vision of the Messianic era. It was the acceptance of Christ as the Messiah and the foreseen blessings of that happy age that furnished the reasons for the rejoicing and the praising of God called for in this Psalm. And assuredly no one can deny that the redemption wrought by our Lord, and the spiritual treasures revealed in the New Testament and given to the world through the Saviour and His Church, are sufficient warrant for this universal summons to exceeding exultation and unrestrained expression of thunderous praise of the Giver of such bounties. Those blessings are indeed enough to renovate the world, and to bring in "the new heaven and the new earth" seen by St. John (Apoc. 21:1).

But what is the actual situation as we find it in the world? Is there anything on earth which corresponds to the picture painted in this Psalm?

In the first place, it should be noted that the Psalmist was neither dreaming nor exaggerating when he wrote this poem. He was speaking as God's messenger and declaring realities to come. The means for the realization of his vision are here, but the realization itself tarries; it is not yet, nor has it ever been, in our midst save in individual instances and on a small scale. The multitudes still either do not know the Christ, or do not acknowledge Him as their King and leader; they are unaware of the spiritual treasures brought to the world by Him, or

else they remain untouched and uninfluenced by them. Will the situation ever be different? Will humanity ever become enlightened enough, will human nature ever become weary enough of its wanderings and devious ways, to turn in mass to Christ and His teachings, and thus usher in here below a happy world of justice and charity for everyone? Such a renovation seems surely far off. Of course, by reason of its very magnitude and supernatural character it can never be effected short of special divine help, which will move mankind to make use of the means ready at hand; but will the multitudes ever do what lies in their own power to make the remote preparation necessary for that divine help?

There appears little in sight to give hope for such a change; but if it is according to the divine plan that the Psalmist's vision should be verified in this temporal part of the Messianic era, it must finally come. Meanwhile each one of us individually can do much in his own way, by trying to lead a Christ-like life and thus spread the influence of good example, to hasten the coming of that blessed time, when men and nations, land and sea, and all nature shall live and rejoice in peace and harmony, and join in a new universal and unending song of love and fellowship.

## PSALM 96 (Heb. 97)

## THE LORD KING CONFOUNDS FALSE GODS AND EXALTS JUST MEN

## INTRODUCTION

As in Psalm 95, so in the present one the theme of the writer is the accession of Jehovah to His Messianic throne. But while there the external glory of the event was chiefly pictured, here the prominent thought is the triumph of truth and righteousness in the reign of the Messiah.

According to the title given this Psalm in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate, it would seem that it was composed by David after he had subjugated the surrounding nations and caused the name of Jehovah to be revered by them. Some scholars, however, and among them certain Catholics, think it is Davidic only inasmuch as its thoughts and language were borrowed from Psalm 17 and other Psalms of David, but that it was skillfully put together by a later writer. But whether or not the occasion of the Psalm was some particular blessing, such as David's triumph over his enemies or the restoration from the Babylonian cap-



tivity, it must be admitted that its central thought is the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom.

The Psalm has no title.

*In a Magnificent Theophany, God Appears for Judgment (1-6)*

1. Dominus regnat: exsultet terra, laetentur insulae multae.

The Lord reigns; let the earth exult, let the many islands be glad.

2. Nubes et caligo circumdant eum, iustitia et ius fundamentum sunt solii eius.

Clouds and mist surround Him, justice and right are the foundation of His throne.

3. Ignis ante ipsum praecedit, et comburit in circuitu inimicos eius.

Fire goes before Him, and consumes His enemies round about.

4. Fulgura eius collustrant orbem; terra videt et contremiscit.

His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles.

5. Montes ut cera liquescunt coram Domino, coram dominatore universae terrae.

Mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the ruler of the whole earth.

6. Caeli annuntiant iustitiam eius; et omnes populi vident gloriam eius.

The heavens proclaim His justice, and all peoples behold His glory.

*The Messiah Confounds the Worshippers of Idols, and Grants to the Just Security from Their Enemies, Light and Joy (7-12)*

7. Confunduntur omnes qui colunt sculptilia et qui gloriantur in idolis; ante eum se prosternunt omnes dii.

Confounded are all that worship graven images and that glory in idols; before Him all gods fall prostrate.

8. Audit, et laetatur Sion, et exsultant civitates Iuda propter iudicia tua, Domine.

Sion hears and is glad, and the cities of Juda exult because of Thy judgments, O Lord.

9. Nam tu, Domine, excelsus es super omnem terram, summe eminens inter omnes deos.

For Thou, O Lord, are exalted above every land, towering supremely among all gods.

10. Dominus diligit eos, qui oderunt malum, custodit animas sanctorum suorum, de manu impiorum eripit eos.

The Lord loves those that hate evil, He protects the souls of His holy ones, He rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

1. "Regnat," i.e., has proclaimed Himself King.—"Insulae," i.e., of the Mediterranean.

11. Lux oritur iusto, et rectis corde laetitia.

Light dawns for the just man, and gladness for the righteous of heart.

12. Laetamini, iusti, in Domino, et celebrate nomen sanctum eius.

Be glad, you just, in the Lord, and praise His holy name.

REFLECTIONS

The preceding Psalm closed with a note of gladness and eager anticipation at the thought that Jehovah is coming to judge the earth in righteousness and the peoples in truth. This Psalm in language like that which pictures the appearance of God on Sinai long ago, begins with a description of the manner of that coming (vv. 1-3): God is King; His reign gladdens all the earth, even the distant islands of far-away seas. Clouds of mystery surround Him, as becomes His infinite nature. Fire goes before Him to consume all evil. And yet we need not fear, for holiness and justice are at the core of His being.

Next the writer proceeds vividly and graphically, in highly poetical language, to note the effects of Jehovah's advent, first, on the material world, and then on the heathen and Sion respectively (vv. 4-9): at the appearance of Jehovah lightnings light up the world, the earth trembles, the mountains melt, the heavens utter praise, and all peoples are witnesses of the glorious event; while heathen gods and their worshippers, ashamed and confounded, bow down in adoration of the one true God, and Sion and her people rejoice in the possession of Jehovah and His special revelation to the world.

In view of what has just been said about the appearance of the great King, the Psalmist closes with an exhortation to love God and hate evil (vv. 10-12): the souls of His beloved ones are in His keeping. No harm will come to them. He gives them light to know His will and the way they should go. He fills them with gladness, and therefore let them rejoice and give thanks to the God whose holy name reveals His lovable nature.

All holy souls, as well as those who are aspiring to holiness, understand that they should love God above all else, and that the keeping of the first commandment is therefore at once their chief duty and their highest privilege and perfection. And if they were to analyze this conviction, and give the reasons why they were so persuaded, they would doubtless proceed as follows: We should love God first and above everything else, (a) because He is altogether lovable in Himself, and therefore deserving of all love; (b) because He has loved us first and chosen



us, before we could know or love or choose Him; (c) because of the innumerable benefits, natural and supernatural, which He has conferred on us in time; (d) because we know that everything lovable in this world is so because it comes from God and is a reflection of Him; (e) because of the perfect happiness He is prepared to give us in eternity. These reasons are sufficiently complete and convincing. Why is it, then, that in practice people find it difficult to love God and are so easily and so generally led away from Him to the glimpses and shadows of Him which creatures reflect?

The answer to this question is doubtless to be found first in the poor nature which we inherit, with its darkened intellect, its perverse will and its disordered and unruly appetites and inclinations. Also, as a consequence of the nature we have and the way we are made and circumstanced, we are more easily and more generally led and ruled by sense than by reason. While therefore we know that God is supremely good and lovable, and the source of all we want and love, we cannot now make sensible contact with Him, or see and enjoy Him directly. Whereas the perceptions of Him which we see and experience in creatures come directly to us, they are on a level with us as we are now, they are proportioned and accommodated to our present state and respond in a measure to our immediate and pressing wants and needs.

Our relations to God now, in this world, may be likened somewhat to our relations with the sun, which is the chief source of our natural light and heat. We know that the sunshine, which gives warmth and cheer to our homes, which lights up and gladdens all nature, is but a dim and far-off reflection of the great sun in the heavens; and yet it is better suited to our present condition and needs than the sun itself. We could not in our present state endure direct and immediate contact with the latter; it would be too much for us in many ways. And so we are more attracted by the sunshine than by the sun, while knowing full well that the first would be impossible without the second.

Holy souls, therefore, and all who are truly wise, find dissatisfaction with our present life, and long for the blessed time to come when they shall be purified, elevated and strengthened in a supernatural state, so as to be able to see and possess and enjoy God as He is in Himself. Nothing short of that can ever give them rest. Then their love and affections will be properly ordered—from the source downwards, from the center outwards. Then they will be able to enjoy to the full what now they want but cannot have, and could not now endure. Then the rapturous possession of the infinite Being will so engage and captivate all their faculties that the limited reflections of God which are in crea-

tures, while being more fascinating and attractive than they can ever be in this world, and being appreciated at their real worth, will have no power to distract or unduly divert the blissful soul from the one perfect object of its thought and love.

## PSALM 97 (Heb. 98)

### THE LORD AS VICTOR, KING AND JUST JUDGE

#### INTRODUCTION

The ascription of this Psalm to David in the Septuagint seems to mean, as in the case of the one that preceded, that it was built up on Psalms written by David. As to thought and language, it is closely related to Psalm 95, and both these Psalms bear also a marked similarity in ideas and literary form to Isaiah 40, 46. Some authors assign the composition of this present Psalm to the time of Isaiah, or even to the period following the Babylonian exile.

This Psalm was probably occasioned by some special victory of Jehovah over the enemies of Israel, perhaps that of the release from captivity. It is, therefore, a canticle of thankfulness. This recent intervention of Jehovah in behalf of His people is regarded by the Psalmist as a beginning or foreshadowing of the Messianic rule; and hence the predominant thought here, as in the other Coronation Anthems, is the reign of the Messiah over all peoples. The Psalmist pictures the Lord as ascending His throne after victory over His foes, the heathen as joining Israel in acclaiming Him as King, and Jehovah on His part as revealing salvation to all.

1. Psalmus.

A psalm.

*The Psalmist Celebrates a Magnificent Victory Attained by God without Human Collaboration (1-3)*

Cantate Domino canticum novum, quia mirabilia fecit. Victori-  
am paravit ei dextera eius, et brac-  
chium sanctum eius.

Sing to the Lord a new canticle,  
for He has wrought wondrous  
deeds. His right hand and His  
holy arm have won Him victory.

2. Notam fecit Dominus salu-  
tem suam; in conspectu gentium  
revelavit iustitiam suam.

The Lord has made known His  
saving aid; in the sight of the  
heathen He has revealed His jus-  
tice.

1. "Victoriam," which will usher in the Messianic age.



3. Recordatus est bonitatis et fidelitatis suae in gratiam domus Israel. Viderunt omnes fines terrae salutem Dei nostri.

He has remembered His goodness and faithfulness in behalf of the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

*All Peoples Are Exhorted to Rejoice (4-6)*

4. Exsultate Domino, omnes terrae, laetamini et gaudete et psallite.

Exult in the Lord, all lands; be glad and rejoice and sing.

5. Psallite Domino cum cithara, cum cithara et sonitu psalterii,

Sing to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of the psaltery,

6. Cum tubis et sono bucinae: exsultate in conspectu regis Domini.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn; exult in the presence of the Lord King.

*Let Nature Herself Exult for the Just Judge Who Is Come (7-9)*

7. Insonet mare et quae illud replent, orbis terrarum et qui habitant in eo.

Let the sea resound and the things that fill it, the world and those that dwell in it.

8. Flumina plaudant manibus, simul montes exsultent

Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains exult together

9. Coram Domino, quia venit, quia venit regere terram.

Before the Lord, for He comes, for He comes to rule the earth.

Reget orbem terrarum cum iustitia et populos cum aequitate.

He will rule the earth with justice and the peoples with equity.

REFLECTIONS

It was some special divine action in behalf of Israel, which brightened the vision and strengthened the assurance of Messianic rule to come, that occasioned the outburst of praise and thanksgiving expressed in this Psalm. After long darkness, light has dawned; after crushing sorrow, joy has come; after heavy weariness, relief and rest. Again Jehovah has been true to His part of the covenant He made with His Chosen People, and has blessed them exceedingly. All the nations and the ends of the earth are witnesses of the glorious event; and so, once more, the singer calls on the whole world and its dwellers, the sea and its fullness, the

streams and the mountains everywhere, to shout Jehovah's praises to the skies, to sing and make melody to Him whose recent marvellous blessings to His people are a harbinger of a reign of universal righteousness when the Messiah takes His throne.

To the Psalmist fresh blessings were always an earnest of others to follow, and all were stepping stones and signs along the way to the final crowning one of the benign and happy rule of Christ over the entire world and all peoples. Anticipation of that far-off divine event eased the burden of life for him; it was a light in dark places, joy in sadness, solace in grief, strength in weakness; it wrested victory from defeat many a time, and gave assurance of life in the presence of death.

Without something good in prospect human life would be intolerable for all of us. Fortunately there is always something attainable, even though hard, which we desire and the quest of which sustains and lures us on. This is what we call hope, and it is as necessary for our natural well-being as it is for our supernatural salvation. Remove hope, and there remains only despair, and that means stagnation and death. If there were no end to toil and tears, or pain and sorrow, or darkness and storm, or wars and bloodshed, and no compensation for these and many other cruel hardships of life, who could endure them? These heavy, and often crushing, loads of our earthly journey are made bearable only by the hope that they will not last, or continue unchanged forever, or that some good will come from them, either for ourselves or for others, now or in the future.

There are also many positive aspects and features of our daily life which we should often consider and reflect upon for our happiness and progress. Think of the heavenly graces and golden opportunities of each day, to do and to achieve, to work and pray, to exercise patience and self-denial, to grow into the likeness of our divine Model, to love and assist the poor, the needy, the sick and the dying members of our common human family! If, for any reason, the circle of our actual ministrations is small and limited, we can yet reach all the world by fervent prayer to God in behalf of His children everywhere. Consider the possible great relief and help we can in this way give perhaps to innumerable souls in far-distant lands, whom we shall never meet or know on earth but whom we hope to see in Heaven, and who will praise and bless us in all ages to come for our aid in bringing them to that state of endless happiness!

Time for each of us is short and passes quickly; and there is so much to be done for souls that we can do! We cannot afford to waste a single hour of the precious duration which the Master has allotted to us. And



while thus filling each day for God and our human brethren throughout the world, there is the further thrilling thought that we are at the same time enriching our own lives and souls for time and eternity. While drawing ever, and rapidly, nearer the peace and happiness we crave for ourselves and others, we are piling up imperishable spiritual treasures against the dawn of the glorious era about which the Psalmist is singing in this Psalm.

# PSALM 98 (Heb. 99)

## THE LORD, THE HOLY KING

### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm celebrates the triumph of Yahweh, Israel's God, over the heathen nations, and His enthronement in Sion as King of the whole world. It refers to some such occasion as the capture of the city of the Jebusites, and the consequent transfer of the Sanctuary to Mount Sion (2 Kings 6). It bears a close resemblance to Psalms 92 and 97, and therefore can be regarded as Davidic in origin. The Psalm has a threefold division, marked off by a refrain. It has no title.

*Present in the Temple and Seated on Cherubim, the Lord Rules over All Peoples (1-3)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Dominus regnat: tremunt populi; sedet super Cherubim: movetur terra. | The Lord reigns; the people fear; He is enthroned above the Cherubim; the earth is shaken. |
| 2. Dominus in Sion magnus et excelsus super omnes populos.              | The Lord is great in Sion and exalted above all peoples.                                   |
| 3. Celebrent nomen tuum magnum et tremendum: sanctum est illud.         | Let them praise Thy name, great and terrible; it is holy.                                  |

*Justice Marks the Lord's Reign: Let the People Prostrate Themselves before Him (4, 5)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 4. Et regnat potens qui iustitiam diligit: tu stabilisti quae recta sunt, iustitiam et ius tu exerces in Iacob. | And He who loves justice reigns with power: Thou hast established things that are upright, Thou dost exercise justice and right in Jacob. |
|---|---|

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 5. Extollite Dominum Deum nostrum, et procumbite ad scabellum pedum eius: sanctum est illud. | Extol the Lord our God, and prostrate yourselves towards His footstool; it is holy. |
|--|---|

*Characteristic of the Lord's Reign Is the Favor Which He Showed Moses, Aaron and Samuel (6-9)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 6. Moyses et Aaron sunt inter sacerdotes eius, et Samuel inter eos qui invocabant nomen eius: invocabant Dominum, et ipse exaudivat eos. | Moses and Aaron are among His priests, and Samuel among those that used to invoke His name; they used to invoke the Lord, and He answered them. |
| 7. In columna nubis loquebatur ad eos: audiebant mandata eius, et praeceptum quod dedit eis.   | In the pillar of cloud He spoke to them; they heard His commands and the precept He gave them.  |
| 8. Domine, Deus noster, tu exaudisti eos; Deus, propitius fuisti eis, sed ultus es iniurias eorum.                                       | O Lord, our God, Thou didst answer them; O God, Thou wast propitious to them, but Thou didst avenge their injuries.                             |
| 9. Extollite Dominum Deum nostrum, et procumbite ad montem sanctum eius: nam sanctus est Dominus, Deus noster.                           | Extol the Lord our God, and prostrate yourselves towards His holy mountain; for holy is the Lord our God.                                       |

### REFLECTIONS

In the preceding Psalms of this group of Coronation Anthems the singer's theme has been the manifestation to the world of Jehovah's rule of righteousness. Here, however he is absorbed in that which is at the center and heart of the divine government, namely holiness. Praise of God's holiness, as manifested in His dealings with His Chosen People, is the joyous duty and function which all the world is here called upon

5. "Scabellum pedum." The Ark of the Covenant was so termed (Ps. 131:7; 1 Par. 28:2).

6-8. It is not clear whether or not the Psalmist is here alluding to the prayers and intercessions of Moses, Aaron and Samuel in behalf of the people of their time, or to those of more recent saints who, like those ancient heroes, interceded for the people of their generation. In either case the meaning is the same, namely, that God delivered His people from their enemies because He had regard for the intercessory prayers of His saints.

7. "In columna nubis" refers, not only to Moses and Aaron, but also to those pious Israelites after them who were favorably answered by God.

8. Some would refer the "eorum" of this verse to Moses, Aaron and Samuel, as if the Lord punished *their* transgressions, even though He heard and answered their prayers. It is better, according to other authorities, to understand "eorum," and "eis" that precedes, as referring to the people.



to perform. Jehovah is perfect, infinite, high and lifted up above all creatures; but He has an earthly seat in Sion from which His glory shines and is seen afar. His deeds of justice and equity in behalf of Israel have won for Him a name, holy, great and dread; and His name is a revelation of His character. Therefore let the people bow before Him in awesome worship as befits His inaccessible holiness.

When His servants of old—Moses, Aaron, Samuel—called on Jehovah, He answered them, in spite of His loftiness and their lowliness, because they kept the laws He had given them. He answered them and forgave the people their sins, though in justice and holiness He was obliged to punish their misdeeds.

It is precisely because He is holy that God is willing and eager to hear the prayers of His humble offspring and pardon their sins, while He punishes deliberate and unrepented wrong. This twofold divine action, forgiving and punishing, arises from the very nature of God and of sin. Wilful wrong-doing is intrinsically and diametrically opposed to the divine nature, and so cannot be otherwise than hateful to God, cannot but tend to separate the soul from its Maker, more or less according to its gravity. And since separation from God is the penalty—indeed the greatest penalty of grave sin—it follows that punishment is the natural and automatic consequence of transgression. And yet so much is love a part of God's character that He delights in pardoning the sinner whenever the latter is truly sorry and repentant. As we delight in doing good to those we love, so does God delight in being good to His human creatures, even to the pardoning of their sins.

The worship, therefore, which the Psalmist here invites all mankind to render to Jehovah is prostrate awe and reverence, passing into petition and praise. High and holy though He is, the Lord is *our* God, and we can come to Him with joy and confidence. For salutary and practical purposes, however, it is well to be mindful that, while pardon remits the guilt of sin, it does not of itself take away the natural effects and results of sin, such as increased moral weakness, the force of bad habit, decline in faith and fervor and the like. These are dreaded consequences of wilful transgression which the sinner must expect to endure, and which increase with each deliberate lapse into sin.

## PSALM 99 (Heb. 100)

## HYMN OF THOSE ENTERING THE TEMPLE

## INTRODUCTION

From the contents of this Psalm we can infer that it was used as a processional hymn to be chanted by the people as they went up to the Temple for the joyful thanksgiving sacrifices. The chief benefits which it commemorates are Israel's election as God's favored people and their later deliverance from the Babylonian captivity. It was, therefore, especially used in connection with the restored Temple; for it calls on the whole earth to join in Israel's worship of Jehovah, the only true God, whose recent mercy to Israel is a proof of His power and sovereignty over all mankind.

1. Psalmus. Ad gratiarum actionem. A psalm. In thanksgiving.

*Not Only the Israelites, but All Inhabitants of the Earth Are Invited to Enter the Temple (1-4)*

Exsultate Domino omnes terrae;	Exult in the Lord, all lands;
2. Servite Domino cum laetitia;	Serve the Lord with gladness;
introite in conspectum eius cum exultatione.	enter into His presence with exultation.
3. Scitote Dominum esse Deum: ipse fecit nos et ipsius sumus;	Know that the Lord is God; He made us and we are His, His people and the sheep of His pasture.
populus eius et oves pascuae eius.	
4. Introite portas eius cum laude, atria eius cum hymno; celebrate eum, benedicite nomini eius.	Enter His gates with praise, His courts with a hymn, praise Him, bless His name.

*God Is Both Good and Merciful (5)*

5. Nam bonus est Dominus, in aeternum misericordia eius, et in generationem et generationem fidelitas eius.	For the Lord is good, His mercy is for ever, and His faithfulness from generation to generation.
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3. "Dominum," i.e., Jehovah, the God of special divine revelation.



## REFLECTIONS

Without mentioning in particular any special instance of divine favor, the Psalmist, in this song of swelling praise and exuberant gladness, is celebrating, and calling on all the world to celebrate with him, God's goodness and lovingkindness to His Chosen People. The worship of Jehovah is no longer the privilege of one small nation, but of all peoples everywhere on the broad earth. The fire which was first kindled in Israel was intended ultimately to warm every heart, as the light which gleamed of old from Sion was at length to shine for all men; the blessings conferred on the few in the beginning were a foretaste of what all should receive in due time. God's merciful dealings with His people throughout their long and varied career are at once a proof of His loving designs and a revelation of His benign character. Therefore let all the earth come before Him, enter His gates and throng His Sanctuary, singing His praise, giving thanks and blessing His name.

Every mood of the devout life is reflected in the Psalms; and since joy is a characteristic of all true religion and real piety, it is found not infrequently in the Psalter. Deep sorrow and sadness, indeed, are also expressed in many Psalms, as likewise they are often the experience of holy souls; but their cause is not God nor religion rightly understood. How could the source of all good and happiness be the cause of sorrow? We could as well say that darkness comes from light, or death from life.

But how is it, then, that saints and holy people are often sad? Their life is a mingling of sunshine and cloud in the spiritual as well as in the material order. One would think that they should be always happy. Why are they not so? There are many reasons. In the first place, their own sins and imperfections are constantly retarding, or seeming to retard, their progress, constantly threatening their security and trying to get between them and the one fountain of real happiness. And while they make an effort to put full trust in God at all times, their weakness betrays them too frequently; and implicitly at least they often become victims of uncertainty, anxiety, fear and foreboding. Moreover, they are not, and can never be, entirely satisfied and at peace in this world. Faith at best is too dim and dark, hope too far from possession, to satisfy love. The lover is not happy away from his beloved, nor the exile and weary pilgrim far from his home.

And this is not all. Holy souls do not rest in themselves; they are concerned about others, for they love all mankind as their own fellow-creatures and brethren. They therefore look out upon the world and into life, and their eyes often fall on awful sights and scenes; their minds are

often in dismay over the dreadful happenings of earth—the distressing poverty, suffering, misery, sin, so widespread in the world! They think of the countless myriads of peoples and races that have come and gone, of the innumerable multitudes now living, of the generations yet to be born into a world of perils; and they cannot but be deeply moved over the fate of all these members of the one human family. If they could only feel that all were safe, or would be somehow, somewhere safe at last, how much more peaceful and happy would they be! If the final lot of human kind depended only on the will and goodness of God, these anxious souls could be in peace; but unfortunately and mysteriously it also depends on unstable human wills, and there is the reason for anxiety, worry, fear. Of course they try to be resigned to God's will, but they know that it is also God's will that all men should be saved. God is not indifferent to what may happen to men.

Thus, people striving for holiness cannot be entirely happy, especially because they realize only too well that their own life is not what they would have it be in God's sight, and because there are always too many of their fellow-mortals in the world who are unhappy. While therefore it is true that joy and gladness are a part of all true religion and piety, it is, alas, also true that, as long as we live here below, sorrow and sadness cannot be entirely excluded even from the holiest lives. And nowhere has this somber fact been more truly experienced and verified than in the lives of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

There are, then, many causes and occasions of spiritual sorrow here on earth; they constitute no small portion of the present life. But this very fact affords us another great incentive and provides a vast new theater for ceaseless labor and prayer on our part, that the causes of unhappiness may be removed or mitigated, and its victims relieved and saved. Happily, it is in this way that present sorrow can become the abundant source of greater joy to come.

## PSALM 100 (Heb. 101)

## RESOLUTION OF THE MODEL PRINCE

## INTRODUCTION

This Psalm was written by King David, as the title says, apparently when he was preparing to transfer the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Sion. The Ark was a symbol of the divine presence, and hence, in preparation for so great an event as the coming of the Ark to his city, the royal



ruler is resolved to cleanse his own heart of all baseness and to rid the city of evil-doers.

1. Davidis. Psalmus.

Of David. A psalm.

*The Model Ruler Sings the Praise of God and Cultivates a Purity of Life Worthy of the Divine Presence (1, 2)*

Gratiam et iustitiam cantabo;  
tibi, Domine, psallam.

Of kindness and justice I will  
sing; to Thee, O Lord, I will make  
music.

2. Incedam in via immaculata:  
quando venies ad me?

I will pursue the spotless way:  
O, when wilt Thou come to me?

Ambulabo in innocentia cordis  
mei in domo mea.

I will walk in the innocence of  
my heart within my house.

*The Model Ruler Shuns All Injustice, All the Godless, Detractors and the Proud (3-5)*

3. Non ponam ante oculos meos  
rem iniustam;

I will bar from my sight any-  
thing that is unjust;

Facientem praevaricationes odio  
habeo: non adhaerebit mihi.

The worker of deceit I view  
with hate; he shall not cleave to  
me.

4. Cor pravum erit procul a  
me; quod malum est, non cognos-  
cam.

The depraved heart shall be far  
from me; what is evil I will  
not approve.

5. Detrahentem occulte proxi-  
mo suo: hunc perdam.

Him that slanders his neighbor  
in secret I will destroy.

Superbum oculis et inflatum  
corde: hunc non tolerabo.

Him that is haughty in look and  
proud of heart I will not endure.

*The Model Ruler Selects the Faithful and Upright as His Ministers (6)*

6. Oculi mei respiciunt fideles  
terrae, ut habitent mecum.

Mine eyes shall be on the faith-  
ful of the land, that they may  
dwell with me.

Qui ambulat in via immaculata,  
hic mihi ministrabit.

He that follows the spotless  
way shall be my minister.

2. "Quando venies ad me?" The Psalmist desires God's presence and fellowship.

5. "Perdam." Some authorities translate: *I will reduce to silence*; but *destroy* is the more likely meaning of the original word here.

*The Model Ruler Passes Stern Judgment on Sinners and Purges the City of All Evil-doers (7, 8)*

7. Non habitabit in domo mea,  
qui facit dolum.

He that works deceit shall not  
dwell in my house.

Qui loquitur mendacia, non  
subsistet coram oculis meis.

He that utters lies shall not  
abide in my sight.

8. Cotidie perdam omnes pec-  
catores terrae,

Daily I will destroy all the sin-  
ners of the land,

Exterminans de civitate Domi-  
ni omnes male agentes.

Purging the city of the Lord of  
all evil-doers.

#### REFLECTIONS

Apparently David had only recently ascended the throne when he wrote this poem. Grateful to God and conscious of the heavy responsibility that now rested upon him, he was zealous to rid the Holy City and his court of the abuses and corruption that had darkened the closing years of Saul's reign. All honest and upright men could count on his favor; but slanderers, liars and evil-doers of all kinds should take warning. He was God's viceroy, and he was determined to make his rule a worthy imitation of God's and Jerusalem a suitable habitation for the Ark, the symbol of the divine presence.

But first, like a true ruler of men, the new king would begin with himself, and strive after personal perfection. He wanted the symbol of the divine presence to come to him, to take up its abode in his city; and he knew that the immediate thing to be done on his part was to make himself worthy of so great a blessing and privilege. Therefore he would cleanse his own heart, he would be upright in his home and private life, he would permit no evil around him. And as to his public life, that would be a reflection of his home and personal conduct. There he would seek and protect people like himself, but bad men and their sins and crimes would receive swift and certain justice. Not only his palace, but his whole city and realm, must be purged of workers of iniquity, and this not merely once, or now and then, but repeatedly, every day.

Such were David's noble resolutions at the beginning of his reign, and for some time. But, sad to recall, the sequel fell short of this high program. We know from his subsequent history that in his private life David at length yielded to human frailty, and that in the public discharge of his exalted and holy office he later permitted some evil men to darken and disgrace himself and his throne.



King David and his kingdom were types of the perfect Man and the ideal Kingdom to come; but they were human types, mere shadows, and therefore fragile and defective. And yet, in spite of his sins and faults, we know that, for his age and condition of human society, he was a saint, a man of God. If at times he consented to weakness, he was habitually on fire with love of God and eaten up with zeal for the Sanctuary. And for the sins to which he unfortunately gave way, he afterwards shed bitter tears and uttered many contrite words. Psalm 50 is an admirable example of the sincerity of his confession and contrition.

From King David's life and experience we can see that the progress and end of life and of undertakings are far more important than their beginning. "All is well that ends well" is an expression of a great and enduring wisdom. Breakdown or failure at the commencement of anything is bad, but it is worse if it occurs later, before the desired end is attained. Not to have made use of energy and opportunity is a pity; much worse to have abused them or used them in vain.

Again, it is natural that ardor, hope, ambition, should be high at the beginning of any congenial and worth-while endeavor. Both in the order of nature and of grace God gives this helpful start. In the world of affairs people are lured to labor and sacrifice by the hope and prospect of temporal gain, such as wealth, pleasure, love, honor, fame, power and the like; and similarly in the higher sphere they are led on by the good to be done and the present spiritual and eternal rewards for themselves and others that are in view. But while these incentives and the power they arouse are likely to be strong at the outset of life and of work, and should persist in sufficient measure until their goal is reached, they tend to weaken and blur under the strain of custom and repetition, age and toil. Herein lies the necessity of high principles, vigilance, the strength of good habits, formed and cultivated from the beginning, and much prayer, which, with God's special help, will ensure unabating perseverance when freshness and glamor have abated and human frailty and unforeseen difficulties combine to weaken, threaten and even destroy the full fruitage of earlier hopes and promises.

#### PSALM 101 (Heb. 102)

#### LAMENTS AND PRAYERS OF A GRIEVOUSLY AFFLICTED PERSON

##### INTRODUCTION

The writer of this Psalm is suffering on account of Israel, his own nation, which, because of its sins, has been punished with ruin and

desolation, and has had its people carried away captive to Babylon. These national sorrows and calamities the Psalmist feels as if they were his own; and hence he is wasted with grief and suffering, mourning and tears are his food and drink, and his life is fast ebbing away. But in the midst of his depression and anguish he is consoled at the thought of the eternal and unchangeable God, who cannot fail in His promises made to Israel through the prophets (cfr. Isa. 30, 49; Jer. 25, 29, 30, 31); He will yet restore Sion to the praise and glory of His name in future generations.

This is the fifth of the Penitential Psalms. Many scholars believe that verses 14-23 constitute a separate national poem, written during the closing years of the exile in Babylon, which was inserted here between the parts of an older and purely individual and personal Psalm. The opinion is very probable, though the Psalm as it stands fits harmoniously together.

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|--|---|
| 1. Preces afflicti qui defessus<br>angorem suum ante Dominum<br>profundit. | Prayers of an afflicted one who,<br>in weariness, pours out his anguish<br>before the Lord. |
|--|---|

#### *Afflicted and Sick, the Psalmist Bewails His Misery (2-12)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Domine, exaudi orationem<br>meam, et clamor meus ad te veniat.             | O Lord, hear my prayer, and<br>let my cry come unto Thee.                        |
| 3. Noli abscondere faciem tu-<br>am a me die angustiae meae.                  | Hide not Thy face from me in<br>the day of my distress.                          |
| Inclina ad me aurem tuam:<br>quando te invoco, velociter exaudi<br>me.        | Incline Thine ear to me; answer<br>me speedily when I call to Thee.              |
| 4. Nam dies mei evanescent ut<br>fumus, et ossa mea ut ignis ardent.          | For my days are vanishing like<br>smoke, and my bones burn like fire.            |
| 5. Exustum, ut herba, arescit<br>cor meum, obliviscor comedere<br>panem meum. | My heart, burnt up like grass,<br>withers away; I forget to eat my<br>bread.     |
| 6. Propter vehementiam gemit-<br>us mei, adhaerent ossa mea cuti<br>meae.     | Because of the violence of my<br>groaning my bones cling to my<br>skin.          |
| 7. Similis sum pelicano deserti,<br>factus velut noctua in ruinis.            | I am like a pelican of the wild-<br>erness, I am become like an owl<br>in ruins. |
| 8. Insomnis sum et ingemisco,<br>sicut avis solitaria in tecto.               | I am sleepless and I groan, like<br>a lonely bird on the housetop.               |



9. Perpetuo insultant mihi inimici mei; qui furunt contra me, imprecantur nomine meo.

10. Nam cinerem comedo tamquam panem, et potum meum misceo cum fletu,

11. Propter indignationem et furorem tuum, quia me extulisti et deiecisti.

12. Dies mei similes sunt umbrae protensae, et ego sicut herba aresco.

*Meditating on the Sad Fate of the Holy City and the Exiles, the Psalmist Begs God in His Mercy to Restore the People and the City (13-23)*

13. Tu autem, Domine, in aeternum manes, et nomen tuum in omnes generationes.

14. Tu exsurge et propitius esto Sion, quia tempus est, ut miserearis eius, quia venit hora.

15. Nam servi tui diligunt lapides eius, et ruinas eius commiserantur.

16. Et revere buntur gentes nomen tuum, Domine, et omnes reges terrae gloriam tuam,

17. Cum Dominus instauraverit Sion, apparuerit in gloria sua,

18. Converterit se ad orationem inopum, nec reiecerit orationem eorum.

19. Scribantur haec pro generatione ventura, et populus qui creabitur, collaudet Dominum.

10. "Cinerem, etc." Orientals expressed their sorrow by sitting in ashes and covering their head with them. And so it was unavoidable that ashes should at times drop into their food.

11. The Psalmist is contrasting his state of present misery with his former prosperity, like Job.

Mine enemies deride me without ceasing; they that rage against me curse by my name.

For I eat ashes as bread, and I mingle tears with my drink,

Because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath, for Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.

My days are like a protracted shadow, and I am withering away like grass.

But Thou, O Lord, abidest forever, and Thy name unto all generations.

Arise Thou, and be merciful to Sion, for it is time to show her mercy; yea, the hour is come.

For Thy servants love her stones, and commiserate her ruins.

And the gentiles shall revere Thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory,

When the Lord shall have restored Sion, and appeared in His glory,

When He shall have turned to the prayer of the needy, and rejected not their prayer.

Let these things be written for a coming generation, and let a people yet to be born praise the Lord.

20. Nam Dominus respexit de excelso sanctuario suo, de caelo prospexit in terram,

21. Ut audiret gemitus captivorum, ut liberaret addictos morti,

22. Ut nomen Domini annuntietur in Sion, et eius laus in Ierusalem,

23. Quando populi congregabuntur simul et regna, ut serviant Domino.

*Reverting to His Own Affliction, the Psalmist Implores God to Preserve Him from an Untimely Death (24-29)*

24. Consumpsit in via vires meas, praecidit dies meos.

25. Dico: "Deus meus, ne abstuleris me in dimidio dierum meorum; per omnes generationes durant anni tui.

26. In primordiis terram fundasti, et opus manuum tuarum est caelum.

27. Ista peribunt, tu autem permanebis, et universa sicut vestis veterascent.

28. Sicut vestimentum mutas ea, et mutantur: tu autem es idem, et anni tui non habent finem.

29. Filii servorum tuorum habitabunt securi, et semen eorum coram te durabit."

For the Lord has looked down from His sanctuary on high, from heaven He has looked upon the earth,

To hear the groans of the captives, that He might deliver those doomed to death,

That the name of the Lord may be declared in Sion and His praise in Jerusalem,

When the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

He has consumed my strength in the way, He has shortened my days.

I say: "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; Thy years endure for all generations.

"In the beginning Thou didst establish the earth, and heaven is the work of Thy hands.

"These things shall perish, but Thou wilt remain, and all things shall grow old like a garment.

"As raiment Thou dost change them, and they are changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years have no end.

"The sons of Thy servants shall dwell in peace, and their seed shall endure before Thee."



## REFLECTIONS

The singer here speaks as if he were a representative of his nation. At least he is one to whom the sorrows and calamities of his people have become as his own. Mourning and weeping have taken the place of food and drink for him and have worn his physical frame to a skeleton. He is sleepless and alone, like a pelican of the desert, an owl among ruins, a lonely bird on the housetop; and yet he is not out of hearing of enemies who mock him and curse him, wishing his condition on those they hate. Worst of all, he feels he is an object of divine displeasure and is paying the penalty of his sins; he and his nation are in grief because they have sinned.

But sad as the Psalmist is in himself, the ebb and flow of his nation's fortunes are his chief concern and the theme of his song. Israel has suffered much, but the day of her deliverance is at hand. From the cherished ruins about him the singer lifts his weary and tear-dimmed eyes to Heaven, and there beholds enthroned for evermore Jehovah, the covenant-God, who has loved His Chosen People and made promises to them which He will never forsake. Therefore there is hope in the time to come. In response to the sighs and pleadings of His faithful servants Jehovah will yet gather up the scattered stones and ruined dust of His holy city and land, and will restore the faded glory of Sion, thus evoking the wonder and fear of the nations and kings of the earth and the grateful praise of future generations of His people.

The Psalmist looks to the future. Prolonged sorrow has not only worn down his health and strength, but it has shortened his life. Soon he will be gone. Therefore he redoubles his plea to Jehovah. He hardly expects to see the restoration of his country and people, but that will not matter. His unfaltering hope rests on the eternity of God. There he finds the assurance and pledge of all divine promises. Man's days are brief at longest; and even the earth with its ages and the heavens with their aeons, however permanent they seem, are perishable and perishing, transient and fast-flying, when compared with Jehovah and the eternal years, alike without beginning, without change, without end. At length, then, in God's own time, the divine promises to Israel will be fulfilled, and all will be well with the chosen ones.

The Psalmist did not know either the exact time or the precise manner of his peoples' restoration; he was certain only of the fact that their fortunes were safe in God's keeping. More than that had not been revealed to him. Nor was he greatly concerned about the part he would personally play in the re-created Israel. He himself was one of God's faithful ser-

vants, and that was enough for him; he also was in the keeping of the Most High. He was consumed with charity for others, and in that all-embracing love his own welfare was absorbed and would be taken care of. Likewise when he pleaded the shortness of his life, and the fewness of his remaining days, he was doubtless thinking, not so much of the urgency of a restoration which he might live to see, as of the need of doing all in his power while there was time left him to make sure of his own part in the accomplishment of that great event, whenever in the future it might be.

One world at a time was enough for the writer of these lyric lines. His present duties and opportunities were clear; he would concentrate on them. There was not only much actually to be done here and now; but there was also much sorrow, hardship and suffering to be borne. It all made up that part of a divine plan which fell to him to carry out, and that he was determined to do with unwavering faith and confidence in the final happy issue, however trying and dark the process might be. While, therefore, he would omit nothing that he could actually do to console and help his people as long as he was with them, he was aware that that would not last long, nor long be felt or remembered. But his daily prayers and pleadings to the eternal God on behalf of his brethren was another matter; they could embrace and outlast all time. God would never forget them, nor cease to be impressed by them. Long after his body had returned to dust and the very memory of his life had been erased, the devout prayers he had said while here would be fresh and potent in God's hearing.

Every servant of God should find much consolation in the universal sweep and eternal value of good prayer. When one has done in actual labor all within reason that duty and opportunity call for and provide, the results are often far from satisfying. Spiritual workers rarely see sure, lasting and great fruits of their toil. The benefits of their efforts, like themselves, are mostly short-lived and uncertain. It is different with constant and fervent prayer. Though long delayed, its harvest will never fail. What therefore cannot now, or in the visible future, be accomplished by physical and mental effort, may easily be within the reach of prayer, but in God's time and in His way, and that means the best time and the best way.



## PSALM 102 (Heb. 103)

## PRAISE OF GOD'S MERCY

## INTRODUCTION

In no passage of the Old Testament are the enduring goodness and mercy of God more tenderly and beautifully set forth than in the present Psalm, which is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God for His many benefits and blessings to the Psalmist himself, to his nation, and to all frail mortals who try to keep the divine commands. This God who is so gracious to men is the mighty King of the universe, enthroned in Heaven, and waited on by angelic beings. Let earth and Heaven, therefore, join the Psalmist in singing the divine praises.

In thought the Psalm is Davidic, but the Aramaic coloring of the language causes most modern scholars to place its composition after the exile.

1. Davidis.

Of David.

*The Psalmist Praises God for the Mercy Shown to Himself (1-5)*

Benedic, anima mea, Domino,  
et omnia, quae intra me sunt, no-  
mini sancto eius.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and  
let all within me bless His holy  
name.

2. Benedic, anima mea, Domi-  
no, et noli oblivisci omnia beneficia  
eius,

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and  
forget not all His benefits,

3. Qui remittit omnes culpas  
tuas, qui sanat omnes infirmitates  
tuas,

Who pardons all thy faults, who  
heals all thine infirmities,

4. Qui redimit ab interitu vi-  
tam tuam, qui coronat te gratia et  
miseratione,

Who redeems thy life from de-  
struction, who crowns thee with  
favor and compassion,

5. Qui satiat bonis vitam tuam:  
renovatur, ut aquilae, iuventus tua.

Who satisfies thy life with good  
things; thy youth is renewed like  
the eagle's.

*The Psalmist Then Proclaims God's Favors to His People (6-10)*

6. Opera iustitiae patrat Domi-  
nus, et omnibus oppressis ius red-  
dit.

The Lord works deeds of jus-  
tice, and renders right to the op-  
pressed.

7. Notas fecit vias suas Moysi,  
filiis Israel opera sua.

He made known His ways to  
Moses, His works to the sons of  
Israel.

8. Misericors et propitius est  
Dominus, tardus ad iram et ad-  
modum clemens.

The Lord is merciful and graci-  
ous, slow to anger and very kind.

9. Non in perpetuum conten-  
dit, neque in aeternum succenset.

He is not always contentious,  
nor is He angry for ever.

10. Non secundum, peccata no-  
stra agit nobiscum, neque secun-  
dum culpas nostras retribuit nobis.

He deals not with us according  
to our sins, nor does He requite  
us according to our faults.

*The Psalmist Extols the Magnitude of the Divine Mercy (11-18)*

11. Nam quantum eminent cael-  
um super terram, tantum praevalet  
misericordia eius erga timentes  
eum;

For as far as heaven towers  
above the earth, so does His mercy  
prevail towards them that fear  
Him;

12. Quantum distat oriens ab  
occidente, tam longe removet a  
nobis delicta nostra.

As far as the east is from the  
west, so far does He remove our  
offenses from us.

13. Quemadmodum miseretur  
pater filiorum, miseretur Dominus  
timentium se.

As a father has pity on his sons,  
so has the Lord pity on those that  
fear Him.

14. Ipse enim novit, cuius fac-  
turae simus: recordatur nos pul-  
verem esse.

For He knows of what forma-  
tion we are; He remembers that  
we are dust.

15. Hominis dies sunt similes  
faeno; sicut flos agri, ita floret:

Man's days are like the grass;  
as a flower of the field, so he  
flourishes.

16. Vix ventus perstrinxit eum,  
non iam subsistit; neque ultra cog-  
noscit eum locus eius.

Scarcely has the wind swept  
over it, when straightway it is no  
more; nor does its place know it  
any more.

17. Misericordia autem Domi-  
ni ab aeterno in aeternum erga  
timentes eum, et iustitia eius erga  
filios filiorum,

But the mercy of the Lord is  
from eternity to eternity towards  
those that fear Him, and His jus-  
tice to children's children,

18. Erga eos qui servant foedus  
eius, et memores sunt praeceptor-  
um eius, ut faciant ea.

Towards those that keep His  
covenant, and are mindful of His  
precepts, to fulfill them.



*All the Angels and the Whole World Are Summoned to Praise God*  
(19-22)

19. Dominus in caelo statuit sedem suam, et regnum eius gubernat universa.

20. Benedicite Domino, omnes Angeli eius, potentes virtute, facientes iussa eius, ut oboediatis sermoni eius.

21. Benedicite Domino, omnes exercitus eius, ministri eius, qui facitis voluntatem eius.

22. Benedicite Domino, omnia opera eius, in omnibus locis potestatis eius: benedic, anima mea, Domino.

The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His dominion governs all things.

Bless the Lord, all His Angels, you mighty in strength who execute His commands in obedience to His word.

Bless the Lord, all His hosts, you His ministers, that do His will.

Bless the Lord, all His works, in every realm of His dominion: bless thou the Lord, O my soul.

#### REFLECTIONS

The poet is here contemplating the nature of God as revealed in His works, first to the Psalmist himself who speaks from personal experience; then to the Chosen People and all men, who have been objects of divine beneficence; and finally, to the whole universe, including angels and ministering spirits, who hearken to God's word and do it. The singer is in ecstasy as he thus meditates; his soul overflows with love and admiration of so great a God, and with gratitude for such vast and lavish bounty. God has forgiven his sins, healed his diseases, saved his life from the yawning grave, crowned him with love and mercy and satisfied his soul with Himself, the greatest and all-inclusive good.

Jehovah's kindness and goodness have likewise been experienced by the Chosen People, from Moses, their lawgiver and leader, down to the least and last of them. Even when they sinned and provoked Him to anger, His love for them and gentleness towards them were unabated and greatly restrained the chastisements they deserved and needed. Towards any and all of His human creatures who revere Him God cannot be severe, save for the moment. The guilt of their repented transgressions He obliterates as if it had never been. His anger is like a flash of lightning; His love, like the enduring sunshine. And the reason for all this is that human beings are His children and He is their Father. He made them and brought them into being. He knows how frail and fragile

they are, how one blow from His almighty hand would instantly reduce them to the dust from which He drew them. They are like grass, which soon withers in the burning sun; like a fading flower of the field, easily whirled away to forgetfulness by a passing wind. Their very weakness and frailty endear them to Him and make strongest appeal to His love and compassion for them, and for their children's children after them, if only they continue to revere Him and try to keep the laws He has made for their guidance and safety. And since His love and mercy for His revering offspring are beyond all bounds, and stretch out beyond all time into everlasting duration, they also will forever be blessed by Him and enjoy Him. It is He that has endowed them with a capacity and a longing for something which He only can supply, and it cannot be that He will either fail or fool the nature He has given them.

But still more, Jehovah's dominion reaches beyond sunrise and sunset to the far-off stars, and beyond them to the end of all creation, to the blissful kingdom where He Himself dwells and where angels and heavenly hosts attend upon His wishes and execute His behests. All these He rules over and blesses. And therefore let all creatures, high and low, animate and inanimate, of earth and Heaven, join with the Psalmist in praise of their munificent Maker and Lord.

Blessed beyond expression are those souls, who, like the Psalmist here, are able, by God's help, to rise above the material and grosser aspects and conditions of life on earth, to contemplate and praise with supreme delight the plenteous Bestower of the gifts of nature and grace. To be thus spiritually minded is in itself an extraordinary heavenly grace which no one can merit or acquire. God gives it to whom He will. Those who have it are able to love and praise the divine Being without effort, as the birds sing and the flowers bloom and the stars give their light. They have a foretaste of Heaven, but for that very reason they are receiving something of their eternal reward here and now. For those who possess not this gift, life's journey is naturally harder and darker; but theirs is the joy and merit of quest, of striving, of blissful anticipation of a boon which God in His goodness may yet confer on them even in this time, but surely in the world to come. Unlike worldlings who are ever restless and dissatisfied in their search of something they cannot find, these seeking souls know what and where their treasure is, and they thrill with rising hope and confidence as they press on to their goal.



## PSALM 103 (Heb. 104)

## PRAISE OF GOD THE CREATOR

## INTRODUCTION

As the preceding Psalm was a hymn of praise to the divine mercy as manifested in God's dealings with men, so this one glorifies the Creator's magnificent power and goodness as exhibited in creating and sustaining the world. This Psalm is then a hymn on the work of creation, following in general the narrative of Gen. 1, but using that material with poetic freedom.

To the Psalmist the universe is a vast and open book in which are plainly discerned and described the invisible attributes of God, especially His incomparable majesty, His infinite power and His everlasting faithfulness and goodness. He begins by picturing God as robed in light and dwelling above the waters of the firmament, with the foundations of His abode anchored in the upper waters of the sky; as stretching out the vault of heaven like a tent; as making the clouds His chariot, the winds His messengers, and fire and flame His servants. Then creation on the earth is described.

The grandeur and magnificence of the Psalm is unsurpassed in the Psalter; and its similarity in tone and language to the preceding poem points to the same author and the same time.

The Psalm has no title.

*Heaven Is God's Seat, the Light His Cloak, the Clouds His Chariot, the Winds His Messengers (1-4)*

1. Benedic, anima mea, Domino! Domine, Deus meus, magnus es valde! Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, Thou art exceeding great!

2. Maiestatem et decorem indutus es, amictus lumine sicut pallio. Thou art arrayed in majesty and beauty, robed with light as with a cloak.

3. Extendisti caelum sicut aulaeum, extruxisti super aquas conclavia tua. Thou hast stretched out heaven as a curtain, Thou hast built Thy chambers above the waters.

Nubes constituisti currum tuum, ambulas super alas venti. Thou makest the clouds Thy chariot, Thou walkest on the wings of the wind.

3. "Exstruxisti, etc." This seems to imply that the dwelling of God is a place supported, like a lake-dwelling, above the waters by great beams resting somehow on the waters (Boylan).

4. Nuntios tuos facis ventos, et ministros tuos ignem ardentem. Thou makest the winds Thy messengers, and the glowing fire Thy servants.

*God's Power Formed and Gave Order to the Earth (5-9)*

5. Fundasti terram super bases eius: non vacillabit in saeculum saeculi. Thou didst found the earth on its bases; it shall not be shaken for ever and ever.

6. Oceano ut vestimento texisti eam, super montes steterunt aquae. Thou didst cover it with the ocean as with a garment, the waters stood above the mountains.

7. Increpante te fugerunt, te tonante trepidarunt. At Thy rebuke they fled, at Thy thunder they were scared.

8. Ascenderunt montes, descenderunt valles in locum quem statuisti eis. The mountains rose up, the valleys descended to the place which Thou didst establish for them.

9. Terminum posuisti, quem non transgrediantur, ne iterum operiant terram. Thou didst set a bound which they may not pass, lest they should again cover the earth.

*God Made the Rivers and Sends Rain to Nourish the Plants, Which Feed Man and Shelter Animals (10-18)*

10. Fontes defluere iubes in rivos qui manant inter montes, Thou dost order the springs to run down in streams which flow between the mountains;

11. Potum praebent omni bestiae agri: onagri exstinguunt sitim suam; They furnish drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses slake their thirst.

12. Iuxta eos habitant volucres caeli, inter ramos edunt vocem. Near them dwell the birds of heaven, among the branches they pour forth their song.

4. Besides the interpretation of the translation, this verse is also rendered: (a) "Who makes His angels winds, His ministers a flaming fire," that is, He clothes His spiritual agents with the forms of physical phenomena, with the wind and the lightning. This would seem to be the meaning of the LXX and Vulgate; (b) "Who makes His messengers swift as winds, His ministers strong as flaming fire" (so the Targums). Dr. Bird combines these two interpretations, and gets: (c) "Who makes His angels (swift as) wind, His ministers (as) flaming fire," which seems to be the meaning in Heb. 1:7.

6-8. The abyss (Gen. 1:2, 9) in the beginning covered the whole earth, including the highest hills; but at God's command the waters retired, and the hills seemed to rise up, while the valleys sank down.

12. "Iuxta eos," that is, by the streams grow the trees where the birds dwell and sing.



13. Rigas montes de conclavibus tuis, fructu operum tuorum satiatur terra.

14. Producis gramen iumentis et herbam, ut serviat homini,

Ut trahat panem de terra, et vinum quod laetificet cor hominis;

15. Ut faciem exhilaret oleo, et panis reficiat cor hominis.

16. Saturantur arbores Domini, cedri Libani quas plantavit.

17. Illic volucres nidum ponunt; ciconiae domus sunt abietes.

18. Montes excelsi ibicibus, petrae hyracibus perfugium praestant.

*God Also Created the Sun and Moon to Mark the Periods of Activity for Man and Beast (19-23)*

19. Fecisti lunam ad tempora signanda; sol cognovit occasum suum.

20. Cum facis tenebras et oritur nox, in ea vagantur omnes bestiae silvae.

21. Catuli leonum rugiunt ad praedam, et petunt a Deo escam sibi.

22. Cum oritur sol, recedunt, et in cubilibus suis recumbunt.

23. Homo exit ad opus suum et ad laborem suum usque ad vespereum.

13. "De conclavibus tuis," i.e., from the waters that are above.

Thou dost water the mountains from Thine *upper* chambers, the earth is replenished by the fruit of Thy works.

Thou bringest forth grass for the cattle, and herbage for the service of man,

That he may draw bread from the earth, and wine to gladden man's heart;

That he may cheer his face with oil, and bread may refresh man's heart.

The trees of the Lord have their fill, the cedars of Lebanon which He has planted.

There the birds place their nests; the fir-trees are the home of the stork.

The lofty mountains offer refuge to the wild goats, *and* the rocks to the conies.

Thou didst make the moon to mark the divisions of time; the sun has known its setting.

When Thou makest darkness and night arises, in it all the beasts of the wood wander.

The young lions roar for prey, and seek their food from God.

When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens.

Man goes out to his work and to his labor until evening.

*The Sea, with Its Teeming Life and Its Ships, Is the Work of God (24-26)*

24. Quam multa sunt opera tua, Domine! omnia cum sapientia fecisti: plena est terra creaturis tuis.

25. Ecce mare magnum et late patens: illic reptilia sine numero, animalia parva cum magnis.

26. Illic naves perambulant, Leviathan, quem fecisti, ut ludat in eo.

*The Beginning and End of All Life Depend on God's Will (27-30)*

27. Omnia a te expectant ut des eis escam tempore suo.

28. Dante te eis colligunt; aperiente te manum tuam, implentur bonis.

29. Si abscondis faciem tuam, turbantur; si aufers spiritum eorum, decedunt et revertuntur in pulverem suum.

30. Si emittis spiritum tuum, creantur, et renovas faciem terrae.

*All the Good Should Praise the Powerful God; Let the Impious be Extirpated from the Earth (31-35)*

31. Gloria Domini sit in aeternum: laetetur Dominus de operibus suis,

26. "Leviathan" in pagan mythology was a sea-monster that fought with the gods, but with the Psalmist it is an animal created by God "to play in the sea."

30. "Emittis spiritum tuum." The spirit of God is the principle and cause of all life, especially of men (Gen. 2:7).

How manifold are Thy works, O Lord! With wisdom Thou hast made all things; the earth is full of Thy creatures.

Behold the sea, great and widely expanding. In it are crawling things without number, small animals and great.

There the ships pass through, *there is* the Leviathan, which Thou hast made to play therein.

All anxiously look to Thee, to give them food in their season.

When Thou dost give it to them, they gather it up; when Thou dost open Thy hand, they are filled with good things.

If Thou hidest Thy face, they are dismayed; if Thou takest away their breath, they cease to be and return to their dust.

If Thou sendest forth Thy breath, they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord remain for ever; may the Lord rejoice in His works,



32. Qui respicit terram, et tremat; tangit montes, et fumant.

Who looks upon the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

33. Cantabo Domino, donec vivam; psallam Deo meo, quamdiu ero.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will make music to my God as long as I shall be.

34. Iucundum sit ei eloquium meum: ego laetabor in Domino.

May my song be pleasant to Him; I will rejoice in the Lord.

35. Tollantur peccatores de terra, et impii ne sint ultra; benedic, anima mea, Domino! Alleluia.

Let sinners be taken away from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul! Alleluia.

#### REFLECTIONS

Reflection on the works of creation furnishes a convincing proof of the existence of God—of an all-powerful, all-wise, magnificent Creator, who has brought all things into being and arranged them in beautiful order and harmony. They would not be, if He had not made them; they could not continue in existence, if He did not sustain them; the music and charm of their mutual and shining relationship would not exist, if He had not planned it and conferred it upon them. As from nothing, nothing comes, so everything that is requires and harks back to a cause; and such as is the effect, so also must be the cause, only more so, in its role as cause at least. Our reason makes this clear. But it is also a matter of personal experience that everything we know in the world has had a cause of some kind; and our experience in this respect is common to all men. No human mind has ever known anything which came into being without its adequate cause. It is logical, then, to conclude that everything that is, that has been and that is yet to be must be traced or traceable to some cause; and this, in the last analysis, is what we call God.

Moreover, it is evident that no created power known or knowable to man could have caused the universe as a whole; the task is too vast for anything conceivable short of the Infinite. And the power which the act and sum of creation would require in its cause is equalled and paralleled by the wisdom which has superintended and conserved its infinitely varied parts. Who but God could have so ordered the kingdoms of nature and so flooded the world with beauty? Reflecting therefore on the immense number and variety of God's works on earth and in the sky, and on the wisdom that has ordered and shaped them all, providing for their vastly different natures and needs, the Psalmist in wonder can only

exclaim: "How manifold are Thy works, O Lord! With wisdom Thou hast made all things" (v. 24).

But from the immensity, order and beauty of the universe, and the fact that ultimately and radically it is all from God, it would be false to conclude that it is perfect in every way. Only God is absolutely perfect; and because He is so, we designate Him as the Infinite, the Absolute, the Supreme Being. These are but different terms to express what we mean by the word *God*. Nor can we suppose more than one such being. In the first place, all other things have had a beginning, and as such, lack the perfection of eternity which belongs to God. Moreover, if we could suppose a plurality of gods, they would either all be equally perfect, and therefore identical and one; or they would all be different, and those lacking in something would thereby be imperfect, and so not infinite, not God. The works of creation then are not and cannot be perfect, for the simple reason that they are not God.

The defects and imperfections which are found in created things are of two classes, physical and moral; those, namely, which come from the natural limitations inherent in all creatures, and those that result from transgression or sin. The former defects are mostly a consequence of the latter, directly or indirectly. Those which are not, which are altogether independent of man's will, such as earthquakes, cyclones and certain other terrestrial and astronomical disturbances, are rare and are generally restricted as to location. The one great blot, therefore, on creation, the one blaring discordant note in the music of the universe, is sin, or the deliberate rebellion on the part of human kind against the laws which God has made to govern the world. And so the Psalmist closes his grand symphony of praise to the Maker, Sustainer and Ruler of all things, with a prayer that sin and sinners may be removed, that the wicked may cease to disturb the sweet harmony of God's work and the completeness of His delight in His creation.

Although Christianity makes the notable distinction between the sinner and his sin, and enjoins upon us to love the former and hate the latter, it is not inconsistent in Christians to desire that transgressors be punished according to their deliberate evil deeds, and that, when necessary, they be removed altogether, while at the same time praying for them all and wishing the best for them in time and eternity. On the contrary, it is precisely because we love sinners and all mankind, that we Christians wish sin and sinners to be punished as they deserve. Besides offending God and injuring society and his fellow-man, the transgressor is his own worst enemy, ever injuring himself and increasing the weight



of his sins; and so it is a mercy to him, as well as justice to God and to other people, when he is restrained or stopped in his wrong-doing. It is a dreadful pity that hard measures and harsh treatment should be necessary for any of God's children, for any of the members of our common human family, but so is human nature made, such is the natural and acquired perversity of our race, such the actual situation in which we find ourselves in this world, that severity cannot always be avoided without incurring and suffering greater evils than those we seek to curb or cure. We must, therefore, in the larger charity which embraces God, mankind in general and the greater good of the sinner himself, sincerely desire and resolutely seek to have sin and sinners punished everywhere according to their deserts. Poison should not be allowed to spread. A diseased member must often be cut off or cut out, lest the whole body perish. Trifling with illness means trifling with health and with life itself.

#### PSALM 104 (Heb. 105)

#### GOD FULFILLS THE PROMISES GIVEN TO ABRAHAM

##### INTRODUCTION

We have here a national hymn of thanksgiving, grounded on Jehovah's marvellous deeds in behalf of Israel throughout her past history from patriarchal times down to the settlement in the Promised Land. The author is showing how God has been faithful to the covenant He made with Abraham and the Patriarchs; he is giving an account of the Lord's part in a long period of the history of Israel. In the following Psalm will be given Israel's part in that same history. Psalm 77 treats together the two aspects of Israelitic history which this and the next Psalm develop separately.

Scholars are not agreed as to whether or not this present Psalm was written after the return from Babylonian exile, when poverty and disappointment left the people in sore need of hope and encouragement; or for the occasion of the transference of the Ark of the Covenant to Sion, as stated in 1 Par. 16, which symbolized the formal occupation of Canaan by the Israelites and celebrated the solemn inauguration of Jehovah as King in Palestine. It would be appropriate for either time, but Catholic authorities are in favor of the second occasion, and consequently of Davidic authorship.

The Psalm is without title.

#### *The Psalmist Invites the People to Praise the Works of God (1-7)*

1. Celebrate Dominum, acclamare nomini eius, nota facite inter gentes opera eius.

Give praise to the Lord, acclaim His name, make known His works among the heathen.

2. Cantate ei, psallite ei, enarrate omnia mirabilia eius.

Sing to Him, make music to Him, relate all His wondrous works.

3. Gloriamini de nomine sancto eius; laetetur cor quaerentium Dominum.

Glory because of His holy name; let the heart of those be glad that seek the Lord.

4. Considerate Dominum et potentiam eius, quaerite faciem eius semper.

Contemplate the Lord and His power; seek His face always.

5. Mementote mirabilia eius quae fecit, prodigia eius, et iudicia oris eius,

Remember the wonders He has done, His portents and the judgments of His mouth,

6. Semen Abraham, servi eius, filii Iacob, electi eius!

You offspring of Abraham, His servant, you sons of Jacob, His elect!

7. Ipse Dominus est Deus noster, in universa terra valent iudicia eius.

The Lord Himself is our God; His judgments prevail in all the earth.

#### *The Psalmist Recalls the Covenant Made with the Fathers and the Promise of the Land of Canaan (8-11)*

8. Memor est in aeternum foederis sui, promissi quod disposuit in mille generationes,

He is mindful for ever of His covenant, the promise He made for a thousand generations,

9. Foederis quod iniit cum Abraham, et iuris iurandi quod dedit Isaac,

The covenant He made with Abraham, and the oath He gave to Isaac,

10. Quod statuit pro Iacob firmum decretum, pro Israel foedus aeternum,

Which He established for Jacob as a fixed decree, for Israel as an eternal covenant,

1. "Celebrate." This psalm, like Pss. 105-107 (106-108) and 135 (136) begins with the same word, which, in the Hebrew, means: *Give thanks*, or *profess*, *acknowledge*. The LXX mistranslated it to mean *confess*, *confitemini* in the Vulgate.

6. "Semen Abraham . . . filii Iacob," i.e., the people of Israel.

8. "In mille generationes," i.e., for ever.

9. "Abraham . . . Isaac." See Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 22:16-18; 26:2 sqq.

10. "Iacob." See Gen. 28:13 sqq.; 35:9 sqq.



11. Dicens: "Tibi dabo terram Chanaan in sortem hereditariam vestram."

Saying: "To thee I will give the land of Canaan as your hereditary lot."

*The Psalmist Tells How God Protected the Patriarchs (12-15)*

12. Cum essent numero pauci, exigui et peregrini in terra illa,

When they were few in numbers, a meagre few and strangers in that land,

13. Et migrarent de gente in gentem, et de regno hoc ad populum illum,

And were passing from nation to nation, and from this kingdom to that people,

14. Nemini permisit opprimere eos, et propter eos corripuit reges:

He permitted no one to oppress them, and for their sakes He rebuked kings,

15. "Nolite tangere unctos meos, nec prophetis meis intuleritis malum."

Saying: "Touch not Mine anointed ones; harm not My prophets."

*The Psalmist Relates Briefly the Story of Joseph (16-22)*

16. Et vocavit famem super terram; et omne subsidium panis subtraxit.

And He called a famine on the land, and took away every reserve of bread.

17. Miserat ante eos virum; in servitutem venundatus erat Ioseph.

He had sent a man before them; Joseph had been sold into slavery.

18. Strinxerant vinculis pedes eius, ferro ligatum erat collum eius,

They had confined his feet with fetters, his neck was bound with iron,

19. Donec impleta est praedictio eius, verbum Domini comprobavit eum.

Until his prediction was fulfilled, the word of the Lord tested him.

20. Misit rex, et solvit eum, princeps populorum, et liberavit eum.

The king, the ruler of the peoples, sent and released him, and let him go free.

14. "Reges," like Pharaoh (Gen. 12:10 sqq.) and Abimelech (Gen. 20:7; 26:9).

15. "Unctos meos," anointed ones, that is, the patriarchs who were consecrated to execute God's designs.—"Prophetis meis." The patriarchs were also called prophets, because they had received divine revelations to communicate to others (cfr. Gen. 20:7).

16. "Vocavit famem, etc." as recorded in Gen. 12:10-20; 12:55.

19. "Praedictio eius," that is, Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41:39).—"Verbum, etc.," that is, God's revelation of the meaning of Joseph's dream.

21. Constituit eum dominum super domum suam, et principem super omnem possessionem suam,

He appointed him lord over his house, and ruler over all his possession,

22. Ut erudiret procures eius pro beneplacito suo et senes eius sapientiam doceret.

That he might instruct the nobles as he pleased, and teach wisdom to his elders.

*Entrance of the Israelites into Egypt (23, 24)*

23. Tum Israel intravit in Aegyptum, et Iacob hospes fuit in terra Cham.

Then Israel went into Egypt, and Jacob was a guest in the land of Cham.

24. Et multiplicavit populum suum valde, et fecit eum fortiolem inimicis eius.

And He increased His people exceedingly, and made them stronger than their foes.

*The Office Entrusted to Moses and Aaron (25-27)*

25. Convertit cor eorum, ut odio haberent populum eius et dolose agerent in servos eius;

He turned their hearts to hate His people and deal deceitfully with His servants;

26. Tum misit Moysen, servum suum, Aaron, quem elegerat.

Then He sent Moses, His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen.

27. Patnaverunt inter eos signa eius, et prodigia in terra Cham.

They wrought His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Cham.

*Extended Description of the Plagues of Egypt (28-38)*

28. Misit tenebras, et facta est caligo, sed restiterunt verbis eius.

He sent darkness and there came gloom, but they resisted His words.

29. Convertit aquas eorum in sanguinem, et occidit pisces eorum.

He turned their waters into blood, and killed their fish.

30. Scatuit terra eorum ranis, usque in penetralia regum eorum.

Their land swarmed with frogs, even into the chambers of their kings.

31. Dixit, et venit agmen mu-

He spoke, and there came a

22. "Pro beneplacito suo," that is, Joseph was given authority to imprison even the princes of Egypt, and to teach the scholars of Egypt.

23, 27. "Terra Cham" means Egypt (Gen. 10:16).



scarum, culices in omnes fines eorum.

32. Dedit eis pro pluvia grandinem, ignem flammantem per terram eorum.

33. Et percussit vites eorum et ficus eorum, et confregit arbores in finibus eorum.

34. Dixit, et venerunt locustae, et bruchi sine numero;

35. Et devoraverunt omnem herbam in terra eorum, et devoraverunt fructus agri eorum.

36. Et percussit omnes primogenitos in terra eorum, primitias omnis roboris eorum.

37. Et eduxit eos cum argento et auro, nec fuit in tribubus eorum infirmus.

38. Laetati sunt Aegyptii de profectione eorum, quia timor eorum ceciderat super illos.

*Miracles Marking the Departure from Egypt and the Journey through the Desert (39-43)*

39. Expandit nubem in tegumentum, et ignem, ut luceret per noctem.

40. Petierunt, et adduxit coturnices, et pane caeli saturavit eos.

41. Scidit petram, et manavit aqua, cucurrit in deserto ut flumen.

42. Nam memor fuit verbi sancti sui, quod dederat Abrahae, servo suo.

41. "Ut flumen," a poetic hyperbole.

swarm of flies, gnats into all their territories.

He gave them hail for rain, flaming fire throughout their land.

And He struck their vines and their fig-trees, and shattered the trees in their territories.

He spoke, and there came locusts and cankerworms without number;

And they ate up every herb in their land, and devoured the fruits of their field.

And He struck down all the first-born in their land, the firstlings of all their strength.

Then He led them forth with silver and gold, nor was there a weakling among their tribes.

The Egyptians were glad at their going, for fear of them had fallen upon them.

He spread out a cloud for a covering, and fire, to shine through the night.

They asked, and He brought quails and filled them with bread from heaven.

He cleft the rock, and water flowed forth; it ran in the desert like a river.

For He was mindful of His holy word, which He had given to Abraham, His servant.

43. Et eduxit populum suum cum gaudio, cum exultatione electos suos. And He led forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with exultation.

*Fulfillment of the Promises Made to the Israelites (44, 45)*

44. Et dedit eis terras nationum, et opibus populorum potiti sunt, And He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the riches of the peoples,

45. Ut custodiant praecepta eius, et leges eius observent. Alleluia. That they might keep His precepts and observe His laws. Alleluia.

REFLECTIONS

In this poem the Psalmist wishes to recall and emphasize God's gratuitous goodness to His Chosen People, and through them to all nations and mankind. God's deeds in behalf of Israel were a revelation of His nature and character; they made known what He was like, they disclosed something of what He is in Himself. And Israel in turn was God's messenger to the world, to declare to all peoples what God had done for her throughout her history—how out of goodness and love He had chosen her at the outset in the person of Abraham, weak and insignificant, and through her forefathers entered into a covenant with her; how faithful He was to that compact, protecting her leaders and teachers and providing for her needs in marvelous ways; how He punished her foes and oppressors, and finally settled her, relatively strong and independent, in the land He had promised to the Patriarchs. All this God did that He might receive from His people a loyal and loving service, which would be at once an expression of gratitude for many and great favors and a lesson to succeeding generations and all the world as to the nature of the God of Israel.

Rehearsal of God's deeds of love and mercy, whether to nations or individuals, and reflection upon them, are among the best ways by which to arrive at a correct knowledge of the divine Being, as well as reasons for loving and serving Him. In our present state it is not easy to know God as He is in Himself, and consequently not easy to love and serve Him as we are required to do. Nor is this strange, when we consider that, with the exception of the simplest and most ordinary things around us, we find it difficult to know very much about anything, even in the natural world, including ourselves and our fellow-man. In many



respects we are a mystery to ourselves, and man and nature are often a riddle to us. All our knowledge at best is incomplete and fragmentary, and it is acquired only after proportionate effort and labor.

How much harder, then, it naturally is to know and understand the great God of the universe and of revelation! Plainly as He has declared Himself in the books of nature and of revealed religion, He is still little known to men; light as He is in Himself, He is yet darkness to our feeble eyes; closely as He has come to us, He remains in His nature ever far away. More or less than this we could not expect from the limitless Being. The gulf between infinity and the finite can never be less than infinite. And besides the obstacles to a right understanding of God which arise from His very nature, there is creation, the work of His hands, which, by reason of its many defects and limitations, often conceals more than it reveals of its first great Cause.

And since love and service follow upon knowledge and largely depend on it, they will be in proportion to it—ignorant or instructed, weak or strong, barren or fruitful, lifeless or living. We love and serve what we know and as we know. Things that obscure or detract from our knowledge correspondingly cool our devotion and weaken our efforts. Consequently, the more creatures and the material world, with their alternately alluring and repelling characteristics, are allowed to get between us and God, the harder it is for us to know and love God as He is in Himself.

How necessary, therefore, it is frequently to reflect on all we know about God and on His manifold goodness and blessings to us and to others, and to thank Him for His generous kindness, while turning away our minds and thoughts from the sin, pain and ugliness all around us in the world! The words in which the Psalmist intones his joyful retrospect are appropriate for us also: "Give praise to the Lord, acclaim His name, make known His works among the heathen. Sing to Him, make music to Him, relate all His wondrous works."

But however much we may know about God, and be moved, as a result, to love and serve Him, we shall not thereby escape the hardships and trials inseparable from life on earth. The Chosen People, the saints of the Old and the New Law, even the Saviour Himself, did not escape them. Rather, they had to endure them to an extraordinary degree. It is according to the divine plan that we should be tried and tested here, in order that we may prove the genuineness and firmness of our reliance on God and our adherence to Him, that we may be kept from greater evils, and that, through self-discipline and the development of character, we may fit ourselves for a better life hereafter.

Hardship is common to all earthly life. Some people have more of it; others, less. But no one can escape it altogether. If we think certain souls are free from the sorrows and trials of life, that is because we are not in their place and not living their life. The practical question, therefore, is, not whether we can escape the crosses common to everyone in our present existence but whether in bearing them we shall derive spiritual and eternal profit from them, or nothing at all; and that question each individual person only, with the help of God, can answer.

### PSALM 105 (Heb. 106)

## SINS AND PUNISHMENTS OF AN UNGRATEFUL PEOPLE

### INTRODUCTION

Covering the same period of Jewish history as the preceding Psalm, this present one gives us an account of Israel's part in that history; how, namely, in contrast to God, she was unfaithful all along to her side of the covenant which she made with her Lord. This Psalm is, then, a penitential admission of Israel's unfaithfulness and ingratitude to God from the outset down to the settlement of Canaan. The Psalmist begins with a summons to praise Jehovah for His goodness and mercy, because, before and after he has enumerated in detail Israel's sins, he will make an appeal for further mercy and forgiveness in behalf of his wayward people.

The first and last verses of this poem are quoted by the Chronicler as sung when the Ark was brought to Sion (1 Par. 16:34-36; 2 Par. 5:13; 7:3, 6); and, because of the close connection between this and the preceding Psalm, it would seem that they both belong to the same period and to the same author. Verse 47 here is regarded by some as post-exilic.

#### 1. Alleluia.

#### Alleluia.

### *Exhortation to Praise the Mercy and Power of God (1-5)*

Celebrate Dominum, quia bonus est, quia in aeternum misericordia eius.

Give praise to the Lord, for He is good, for His kindness is for ever.

2. Quis eloquetur opera potentiae Domini, enarrabit omnes laudes eius?

Who shall declare the mighty works of the Lord, who shall recount all His praises?



3. Beati qui observant praecepta, faciunt, quod iustum est, omni tempore!

4. Memento mei, Domine, pro benevolentia in populum tuum; visita me auxilio tuo,

5. Ut delecter felicitate electorum tuorum, ut gaudeam de gaudio populi tui, ut glorier cum hereditate tua.

Blessed are they that keep the precepts, that do what is just at all times.

Remember me, O Lord, in Thy benevolence towards Thy people; visit me with Thine aid,

That I may enjoy the happiness of Thy chosen ones, that I may rejoice because of the joy of Thy people, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.

*The Psalmist Enumerates Eight Rebellions of the People against God: Sins Committed by the Fathers in Egypt and during the Exodus (6-12)*

6. Peccavimus sicut patres nostri, iniquitatem fecimus, impie egimus.

7. Patres nostri in Aegypto non consideraverunt mirabilia tua, non fuerunt memores multitudinis gratiarum tuarum, sed rebel- larunt contra Altissimum ad Mare Rubrum.

8. Sed salvavit eos propter nomen suum, ut manifestaret poten- tiam suam.

9. Et increpuit Mare Rubrum et exsiccatum est, et duxit eos per fluctus velut per desertum.

10. Et salvavit eos de manu osoris, et liberavit eos de manu inimici.

11. Et aquae operuerunt ad- versarios eorum: ne unus quidem ex eis remansit.

We have sinned like our fathers, we have done evil, we have acted impiously.

Our fathers in Egypt heeded not Thy wonders, they were un- mindful of the multitude of Thy favors, but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.

Yet He saved them for His name's sake, that He might mani- fest His power.

And He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up, and He led them through the waves as through a desert.

And He saved them from the hand of the hater, and delivered them from the power of the foe.

And the waters closed over their adversaries; not even one of them remained.

5. Some authorities understand Israel as the subject of verbs here rather than God as in the Vulgate, or the Psalmist as in St. Jerome.

8. "Propter nomen suum," i.e., for His own glory. See Exod. 14:10-14; Ezech. 20:9, 14.

10. "De manu inimici." The reference is to Pharaoh.

12. Et crediderunt verbis eius, et cantaverunt laudes eius.

And they believed His words, and sang His praises.

*Sins of Concupiscence (13-15)*

13. Cito obliti sunt opera eius: non sunt confisi consilio eius.

14. Et indulserunt concupis- centiae in deserto, et tentaverunt Deum in solitudine.

15. Et concessit eis petitionem eorum, sed tabem immisit eis.

Quickly they forgot His works: they did not trust His counsel.

And they indulged their ap- petite in the desert, and tempted God in the wilderness.

And He granted them their petition, but sent a plague upon them.

*Rebellion against Moses and Aaron (16-18)*

16. Et inviderunt Moysi in castris, Aaron, sancto Domini.

17. Aperta est terra et deglut- itivit Dathan, et operuit catervam Abiron.

18. Et exsarsit ignis in cater- vam eorum: flamma combussit iniquos.

And they became envious of Moses in the camps, and of Aaron, the holy one of the Lord.

The earth opened and swal- lowed up Dathan, and closed over the company of Abiron.

And fire blazed against their company; a flame consumed the wicked ones.

*Adoration of the Golden Calf (19-23)*

19. Fecerunt vitulum in Horeb, et adoraverunt idolum ex auro fusum.

20. Et commutaverunt gloriam suam cum effigie tauri comeden- tis faenum.

21. Obliti sunt Dei, qui sal- vavit eos, qui fecit portenta in Aegypto,

22. Mirabilia in terra Cham, stupenda ad Mare Rubrum.

They made a calf at Horeb, and worshipped the idol of melted gold.

And they exchanged their glory for the image of a grass-eating bull.

They forgot God who saved them, who wrought portents in Egypt,

Marvels in the land of Cham, stupendous things at the Red Sea.

14. See Num. 11:4-7.

16, 17. See Num. 16.—"Sancto Domini," the one whom Jehovah had consecrated.

18. This verse describes the fate of Core (Korah) and his followers (Num. 16:35).

20. "Gloriam suam," i.e., God.



23. Et cogitabat disperdere eos, nisi Moyses, electus eius, intercessisset apud eum, ut averteret iram eius, ne disperderet eos.

And He was thinking of destroying them, had not Moses, His chosen one, interceded with Him, to avert His wrath, lest He destroy them.

*Scorn for the Promised Land (24-27)*

24. Et spreverunt terram desiderabilem; non crediderunt verbo eius.

And they spurned the desirable land; they believed not His word.

25. Et murmuraverunt in tabernaculis suis, non oboedierunt Domino.

And they murmured in their tents, they obeyed not the Lord.

26. Et erecta manu iuravit eis se prostraturum eos in deserto,

And with uplifted hand He swore to them that He would lay them low in the desert,

27. Et dispersurum semen eorum inter nationes, et dissipaturum eos per terras.

And would disperse their seed among the nations, and scatter them throughout the lands.

*Sacrifices to Beelphegor (28-31)*

28. Et adhaeserunt Beelphegor, et comederunt sacrificia deorum mortuorum.

And they became adherents of Beelphegor, and ate the sacrifices of lifeless gods.

29. Et provocaverunt eum facinoribus suis, et irruit in eos plaga.

And they provoked Him with their crimes, and a plague rushed upon them.

30. Sed surrexit Phinees et iudicavit, et plaga cessavit.

But Phinees rose up and gave judgment, and the plague ceased.

31. Et imputatum est ei in meritum in omnes generationes usque in aeternum.

And it was reckoned to him for merit unto all generations for evermore.

*The People Led Moses into Sin (32, 33)*

32. Et irritaverunt eum ad Aquas Meriba, et male evenit Moysi propter eos,

And they provoked Him at the Waters of Meriba, and misfortune befell Moses on account of them,

24. "Terram desiderabilem," i.e., the Promised Land.

28. "Beelphegor," i.e., Baal of Mount Peor or Kemosh, the chief deity of Moab (Num. 25).—"Sacrificia deorum mortuorum," i.e., sacrifices offered to heathen gods.

33. Quia exacerbaverunt spiritum eius, et inconsulte locutus est labiis suis.

Because they exasperated his spirit, and he spoke imprudently with his lips.

*Failure of the People to Extirpate the Canaanites, Their Adoption of Canaanite Gods and Human Sacrifices (34-39)*

34. Non disperdiderunt gentes, quas Dominus iusserat eos.

They did not destroy the heathen, as God had bidden them.

35. Et commiscuerunt se gentibus, et didicerunt opera eorum;

And they mingled with the heathen, and learned their practices;

36. Et coluerunt sculptilia eorum, quae laqueus facta sunt eis.

And they worshipped their graven idols, which became a snare to them.

37. Et immolaverunt filios suos et filias suas daemoniis.

And they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons.

38. Et effuderunt sanguinem innocentem: sanguinem filiorum filiarumque suarum quos immolaverunt sculptilibus Chanaan.

And they shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they immolated to the graven idols of Canaan.

39. Et terra polluta est sanguine, et contaminati sunt operibus suis, et fornicati sunt facinoribus suis.

And the land was polluted by blood, and they were defiled by their deeds, and they fornicated in their crimes.

*God Delivered His Rebellious People into the Hands of Their Enemies (40-42)*

40. Et exarsit furor Domini in populum suum, et abominatus est hereditatem suam.

And the fury of the Lord was kindled against His people, and He abhorred His inheritance.

41. Et tradidit eos in manus gentium, et dominati sunt in eos, qui oderunt eos.

And He delivered them into the hands of the heathen, and they that had hated them had dominion over them.

36. "Laqueus facta sunt eis." Their idols became a snare to them, so that they sacrificed their children to them.

37. Cfr. Deut. 12:31; 18:9, 10; 32:17.

39. "Fornicati sunt." Israel was the spouse of Yahweh, and her unfaithfulness to Him was spiritual adultery. The Church is likewise the spouse of Christ.

40-46. These verses give a summary review of Israel's infidelity during the period of the Judges.



42. Et tribulaverunt eos inimici eorum, et oppressi sunt sub manu eorum.

And their enemies oppressed them, and they were crushed under their hand.

*Nevertheless, despite the Peoples' Repeated Sins, God Was Mindful of His Covenant and Spared Them (43-46)*

43. Saepenumero liberavit eos; ipsi autem exacerbaverunt eum consiliis suis, et prostrati sunt ob iniquitates suas.

Again and again He delivered them, but they exasperated Him with their counsels and were brought low because of their sins.

44. Sed respexit tribulationem eorum, cum audisset orationem eorum.

But He considered their distress when He heard their appeal.

45. Et recordatus est in gratiam eorum foederis sui, et paenituit eum propter multam misericordiam suam.

And in their favor He remembered His covenant, and was sorry because of His great mercy.

46. Et misericordiam conciliavit eis apud omnes qui captivos duxerant eos.

And He procured mercy for them with all who had made them captives.

*Prayer for Return from Exile (47)*

47. Salvos nos fac, Domine, Deus noster, et congrega nos de nationibus, ut celebremus nomen sanctum tuum, et gloriemur de laude tua.

Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may extol Thy holy name, and glory in Thy praise.

*Doxology Closing Book IV of Psalms (48)*

48. Benedictus Dominus, Deus Israel, a saeculo in saeculum: et omnis populus dicat: Amen! Alleluia!

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for ever and ever; and let all the people say: "Amen! Alleluia!"

REFLECTIONS

The New Testament revelation has made very much clearer than ever before the relationship between God and mankind. Now, in the shining light of the Gospel, we can all see and understand, beyond doubt or question, that God is really our Father and we His children, and that

all men are brothers in Christ, receiving special graces here in this life in preparation for a glorious life to come in another world.

But it has always been a fact that God, as Creator, is the Father of the human race, and human beings His children. It is He that brought all men into existence and gave them their life, as it is also He that has provided for them throughout their earthly course, as a father for his offspring. And not only in the natural order, as regards man's body and spirit and his many temporal needs, has God made him and provided for him from the beginning, but also in the supernatural order, as a rational being having a capacity for grace and all things necessary for the attainment of his spiritual and eternal destiny. There has never been a time when our race was left without the means of reaching the supernatural end to which it was elevated and ordained in its creation. So much has always been true of God's relations with man, whether clearly understood or not, whether men regulated their lives according to this fact or not.

But the Psalmist here is speaking of the Chosen People, to whom of old God gave a special revelation and many special blessings, and to whom therefore He was a Father in a particular manner, as they were His favored children. From such a close relationship we might reasonably expect unusual devotedness to God and religion on the part of Israel; and so it was in many respects. There, in Israel, was known at least the one true God; there, the only place in the world of those centuries, an appropriate divine worship was offered up; there also were found, more than in any other place of the ancient world, holy men and women, whose chief concern in life was the service of their Lord through the keeping of His commandments and devotion to their personal duties. But the best that the Chosen People did as a nation was not enough. Their service was not in proportion to the gifts they had received; and the long, doleful tale of unfaithfulness reviewed in this Psalm is a proof of it. It is a pathetic record. We may well ask why it was so. What is the explanation?

The Psalmist's answer here is, that Israel forgot Jehovah's mighty deeds, His many acts of lovingkindness in her behalf (v. 7.). But the faults of the Chosen People were manifold and grievous. All divine gifts were received eagerly, enjoyed ravenously and forgotten speedily. The oft-repeated favors seemed never to be enough. When hardships and privations were encountered, they were bitterly resented. Self-denial and sacrifice were unwelcome to that people as a whole. They wanted only to get, never to give. Their minds and hearts were fixed on present, earthly goods. Selfishness and personal indulgence with



them overruled every higher purpose and consideration. Even chastisements had no good effect, made no improvement among them. Experience taught them nothing. They preferred their own will, in spite of awful consequences, and went from bad to worse, even after entering the Promised Land.

Such was the bitter harvest that grew from the seeds of selfishness and ingratitude. It is appalling, if we pause to ponder it. Far better not to have received so much, than to have abused so much. What was at the root of such badness and perversity? The story would seem incredible if we did not otherwise know how true it is, if it were not duplicated over and over again throughout Israelitic history and since, even in Christianity.

In proportion to their much greater gifts and blessings, it may be questioned whether Christians are any better than those ancient Jews. Selfishness, ingratitude, forgetfulness of benefits received, indulgence of fleshly appetites, unwillingness to do and to suffer, worldiness and like earthly tendencies, are perhaps as rampant today as they ever have been, at least relatively speaking, when weighed against the greater blessings provided by Christianity and the modern world.

What, then, is the radical cause of this frowardness and waywardness of human beings? Is it just malice, the desire to do wrong for wrong's sake, to be bad for badness' sake? No, that cannot be the answer. Such a conclusion would be against nature, which always seeks, wisely or unwisely, its own good and preservation, not its destruction. "Nemo intendens ad malum operatur," said Aristotle so long ago.

Doubtless, therefore, the root cause of the perversity in question is to be found in the intrinsic lowness and native perversity of fallen human nature. The tendency of our nature, even after Redemption and all the heavenly blessings bestowed upon it, is often more to evil than to good, or, at least, more to the things of earth than to the things of Heaven. Its inclination, as a rule, is still downward, not upward. And this is doubtless why, as the Psalmist says in the closing verses here (vv. 44-46), that the Lord took pity on His erring children, remembering His covenant with them, and why the Psalmist himself is encouraged to close his poem with a prayer for the restoration of his people to divine favor.

But however perverse or wayward our human nature may be in its constitution, it is far from being wholly bad. Individuals are still capable of much good, even without special divine help; and so they cannot be exonerated of all responsibility when they do wrong. Much less are they excusable if we consider what they can accomplish when

they are willing to submit to the influence of divine grace, or make an effort to enlist that influence. The great trouble with human beings, as they are, is not that they are bad, but that their inclinations are mostly away from the spiritual and the supernatural. Goods of the higher order, generally speaking, do not make the strong appeal to them that natural goods make. They have not the taste for the former that they have for the latter. Compare, for example, the numbers who attend Mass and religious devotions in church with the multitudes that throng public theatres and places of amusement. What a difference! To know, to love and to do the things that are pleasing to God and good for the soul, is therefore much harder, without the aid of a special grace, than to know, to love and to do the things that please the natural man and his appetites and that often lead away from God and harm the soul. Were the situation reversed, how happy we should be! Were the appeal of the supernatural and the natural, of the spirit and the flesh, of the eternal and the temporal, of God and the world, even of equal strength and force to us, how different would be our struggle, how different the story and issue of our lives! As it is, there is nothing left us but to implore the divine help to face the grim battle, to make the best of what we are and what we have, to remember gratitude for gifts bestowed, to be willing to make at least the effort and the sacrifices which worldlings make for earthly prizes, and to trust that God in His goodness will in the end take pity on us and make up for our deficiencies, mindful that He is our Father and we His children.



# THE FIFTH BOOK OF THE PSALTER

(Pss. 106-150)

## PSALM 106 (Heb. 107)

### ACT OF THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM PERILS

#### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is intended to illustrate God's goodness in answering men's prayers when they appeal to Him in their trials and distresses, and the consequent duty of thanksgiving on the part of those thus assisted.

After an introduction (vv. 1-3), in which the Psalmist calls upon the "redeemed of the Lord" to give thanks for their deliverance from the hand of the enemy, he cites four classes of persons, either actual or typical, who, when in extreme trouble and danger, called upon the Lord for help and were saved: (a) travellers through a desert who had lost their way and were in danger of dying of hunger and thirst (vv. 4-9); (b) exiles or prisoners who had been suffering punishment for their sins (vv. 10-16); (c) sick men who had been chastised for their transgressions (vv. 17-22); (d) sailors who had almost perished at sea (vv. 23-32). Each of these four groups of verses terminates with a double refrain, which includes a call to praise the Lord for His goodness to men.

Then the refrains disappear, the structure of the poem changes, and the Psalmist reflects on the ways of divine Providence in disposing the fortunes of men and countries according to their sins or virtues: (a) a fruitful land becomes a barren waste on account of the sins of its inhabitants; and, contrariwise, a wilderness is turned into a fertile tract for the poor and needy just (vv. 33-38); (b) the good are protected against the wicked, to the joy of the former and the confusion of the latter (vv. 39-41). Verses 42 and 43 are a conclusion, inviting meditation on these manifestations of divine justice and mercy.

If, as some maintain, this Psalm was written after the return from

exile, and is the logical conclusion of the two Psalms that immediately precede, then those two Psalms must have been composed around the close of the captivity. Or it may be that verses 1-3 of this poem are a post-exilic introduction to an older one.

Because of differences in structure and style, there are scholars who regard verses 33-43 here as a later addition to an older Psalm. This opinion, however, is hardly necessary, as the connection in thought between the two parts is sufficiently natural and clear. The Psalm has no title.

#### *Thank God for His Favors (1-3)*

1. Celebrate Dominum, quoniam bonus, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

O praise the Lord for He is good, for His kindness is for ever.

2. Sic dicant qui redempti sunt a Domino, quos redemit de manu inimici,

So let the redeemed of the Lord say, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,

3. Quosque congregavit ex terris, ex oriente et occasu, ex aquilone et austro.

And whom He has gathered out of lands, from the east and the west, from the north and the south.

#### *The Lord Saved Wanderers in the Desert (4-9)*

4. Erraverunt in deserto, in solitudine, viam ad civitatem habitabilem non invenerunt.

They wandered in the desert, in the wilderness; they found no way to an inhabitable city.

5. Esuriebant et sitiebant, vitae eorum deficiebat in ipsis.

They were hungry and thirsty; their life was failing within them.

6. Et clamaverunt ad Dominum in angustiis suis; a tribulationibus eorum eripuit eos.

Then they cried to the Lord in their distress, and He rescued them from their troubles.

7. Et duxit eos via recta, ut venirent in civitatem habitabilem.

So He led them by a right way, that they might come to an inhabitable city.

8. Gratias agant Domino pro misericordia eius, et pro mirabilibus eius erga filios hominum,

Let them give thanks to the Lord for His kindness, and for His wonders towards the sons of men,

2. "Redempti" seems to refer to the exiles who have been delivered from Babylon; or the reference may be general, to all who have been rescued from any perils in life's journeys.



9. Quia satiavit animam famelicam, et animam esurientem implevit bonis.

For He has satisfied the famished soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with good things.

*The Lord Liberated the Imprisoned (10-16)*

10. Sederunt in tenebris et in obscuro, ligati miseria et ferro.

They sat in darkness and in gloom, bound in misery and iron.

11. Nam rebellaverant contra eloquia Dei, et despexerant consilium Altissimi.

For they had rebelled against the words of God, and had despised the counsel of the Most High.

12. Et humiliavit aerumnis cor eorum, vacillarunt nec fuit qui subveniret.

Therefore He humbled their heart with hardships; they stumbled, and there was none to help.

13. Et clamaverunt ad Dominum in angustiis suis; a tribulationibus eorum liberavit eos.

Then they cried to the Lord in their distress, and He delivered them from their troubles.

14. Et eduxit eos e tenebris et ex obscuro, et vincula eorum dirupit.

So He led them forth from darkness and gloom, and burst their bonds asunder.

15. Gratias agant Domino pro misericordia eius, et pro mirabilibus eius erga filios hominum,

Let them give thanks to the Lord for His kindness, and for His wonders towards the sons of men,

16. Quod confregit portas aereas et vectes ferreos contrivit.

For that He has broken gates of brass, and shattered iron bars.

*The Lord Restored the Sick to Health (17-22)*

17. Aegrotabant propter iniquitatem suam, et propter delicta sua affligebantur;

They were ill because of their iniquity, and were afflicted because of their sins;

18. Omnem escam abominabatur anima eorum, et appropinquaverunt ad portas mortis.

Their soul abhorred all food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

19. Et clamaverunt ad Dominum in angustiis suis; a tribulationibus eorum liberavit eos.

Then they cried to the Lord in their distress, and He delivered them from their troubles.

20. Misit verbum suum, ut snaret eos, et ex interitu eriperet eos.

He sent forth His word to heal them and to snatch them from destruction.

20. "Verbum suum." The word of Yahweh is here set forth as a delivering angel. Cfr. Wis. 16:12; 18:15.

21. Gratias agant Domino pro misericordia eius, et pro mirabilibus eius erga filios hominum.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for His kindness, and for His wonders towards the sons of men.

22. Et sacrificent sacrificia laudis et enarrent opera eius cum exultatione.

And let them offer sacrifices of praise, and declare His works with exultation.

*The Lord Rescued the Shipwrecked (23-32)*

23. Qui descenderant navibus in mare, mercaturam facturi in aquis magnis,

They that had gone down to the sea in ships, to do business in great waters,

24. Hi viderunt opera Domini, et mirabilia eius in pelago.

These have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.

25. Dixit, et concitavit ventum procellosum, qui in altum extulit undas eius.

He spoke, and stirred up a stormy wind, which lifted up the waves thereof.

26. Ascendebant usque ad caelos, descendebant usque ad ima; anima eorum tabescebat in malis.

They rose up to the heavens, and sank down even to the depths; their soul fainted away because of evils.

27. Titubabant et nutabant ut ebrii; et absorpta est omnis peritia eorum.

They staggered and reeled like drunken men, and all their skill was exhausted.

28. Et clamaverunt ad Dominum in angustiis suis, et e tribulationibus eorum eduxit eos.

Then they cried to the Lord in their distress, and He led them out of their troubles.

29. Sedavit procellam in auram lenem, et conticuerunt fluctus maris.

He calmed the storm to a gentle breeze, and the waves of the sea grew still.

30. Et laetati sunt, quod siluerunt, et deduxit eos ad portum optatum.

Then they were glad because they were quiet, and He led them to the desired haven.

31. Gratias agant Domino pro misericordia eius, et pro mirabilibus eius erga filios hominum,

Let them give thanks to the Lord for His kindness, and for His wonders towards the sons of men.

24. "Mirabilia ejus," i.e., His marvels in calming storms and rescuing sailors.

26. A description of the storm and the seasick sailors.

27. "Absorpta est," was swallowed up, i.e., forgotten.



32. Et celebrent eum in coetu populi, et in consessu seniorum laudent eum.

Yea, let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the gathering of the elders.

*God's Providence towards Sinners and towards the Just (33-41)*

33. Convertit flumina in desertum, et fontes aquarum in terram sitientem,

He turned streams into desert land, and fountains of water into thirsty ground;

34. Terram frugiferam in saluginem, propter malitiam habitantium in ea.

A fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those that dwelt in it.

35. Convertit desertum in lacum aquarum, et terram aridam in fontes aquarum.

He turned a desert into a pool of water, and a dry land into fountains of water.

36. Et collocavit illic esurientes, et condiderunt civitatem habitabilem.

And there He placed the hungry, and they founded a city to dwell in.

37. Et seminaverunt agros et plantaverunt vineas, et obtinerunt proventus frugum.

And they sowed fields and planted vineyards, and obtained yields of crops.

38. Et benedixit eis et multiplicati sunt valde, et pecora non pauca tribuit eis.

Yea, He blessed them, and they increased greatly, and He gave them many cattle.

39. Et pauci facti sunt et abiecti ob pressuram malorum et afflictionis;

Then they were diminished and brought low through the pressure of evils and affliction;

40. Sed qui effundit contemptum super principes eosque errare facit per invia deserta,

But He that pours contempt upon princes and makes them to wander through pathless wastes,

41. Sublevavit egenum de miseria, et familias fecit numerosas ut greges.

Has lifted up the needy from misery and made their families as numerous as flocks.

32. "In consessu seniorum," i.e., at the gate of the city, where elders were wont to gather for dijudication of cases.

33-41. These verses are to be understood especially as referring to God's providence for His people returning from exile to the Promised Land.

33, 34. Is the reference here to Sodom and Gomorrha, as some scholars think?

36. "Illic," i.e., in the land of Canaan.

37. "Proventus frugum," that is, *fruitful produce*.

*Let All Ponder These Divine Benefits (42, 43)*

42. Vident recti et laetantur, et omnis malitia claudit os suum.

The upright behold and are glad, and all malice stops its mouth.

43. Quis est sapiens, qui observet haec, et probe perpendat misericordias Domini?

Who is wise that he may heed these things, and rightly consider the manifold kindness of the Lord?

REFLECTIONS

Pain and sorrow, distress and trouble, are inseparable from human life on earth. The world in which we have to pass our days is made that way; the situation is a part of the divine plan. Facing this stern reality, the Psalmist would teach in the first part of this poem that God hears the cries of His children in their miseries, whatever they may be, and delivers them. Then it will be their duty to praise and thank Him for His kindness and mercy. Thus, the loving mercy of Jehovah, who hears and rescues His pleading servants, and the consequent obligation of praise and thanksgiving on their part, is the theme of verses 1-32. The remaining verses of the Psalm describe the effects on lands and men of cooperation with divine Providence or failure to do so. Both parts of the poem aim to teach that lovingkindness is God's final act towards all who submit to His ways.

That God always hears His servants who, with proper dispositions, call to Him for help may be accepted without reservation; but that He always delivers them from their present trouble is not according to human experience. What we may depend upon, however, is that, in response to good prayer for deliverance of any kind, God will always rescue or preserve His servants from real and lasting harm that their misfortunes might inflict on them; and this He will do by giving them either actual deliverance from the evils they suffer, or the strength to bear their distress in humility and submission to the divine will, thus turning their crosses to their spiritual profit.

This is a beautiful and consoling solution of the troubles of life, but it is more easily propounded than carried out. Not that it is visionary or unpractical, for it has been the rule and practice of all the saints. But it is hard, and presupposes an uncommon degree of spirituality, in those at least who, as so often happens, are subjected to prolonged and crushing burdens of many kinds. Will such as these ask for the help they need? and will they ask with proper dispositions? Will they be inclined to do so?



The difficulty arises in the first place from the fact that the help in question is a grace of God, and, like all grace strictly considered, can neither be merited nor acquired by mere human effort; and secondly, from the further fact that man is able to place obstacles in the way of that grace. It is strangely and sadly true, that while we can do nothing of ourselves in a positive way to obtain grace, we do have the power to refuse it, to frustrate it.

As regards this second difficulty much can depend on the individual nature and circumstances of the sufferer. If a person is naturally docile and patient, submissive and humble, he is in a favored condition to start with; he is more easily disposed to prayer and to submission to God's will, even when severely tried. But if, on the other hand, he is natively nervous and impatient, irascible and rebellious, proud and high-strung, or the like, he will have a much harder time, under stress, controlling himself and cultivating those qualities which are a remote and negative disposition for the divine help which he needs in order to supernaturalize his burdens.

With the grace of God, of course, any handicaps can be overcome and all things are possible; and not only that, but under the buoyant and inspiring influence of God's special aid, all things become easy and delightful. The one thing necessary, therefore, is to get the needed grace. How can that be done? Although grace cannot be merited by any natural work or effort of ours, it is offered in some measure to everyone. And yet, many do not receive it. Why is that? The reasons may be many, either positive or negative, or both. A person's life and actions may be so bad as to seem to him inconsistent with asking God's help; or he may simply have no inclination to seek or accept divine aid.

The reason, then, why many persons do not receive the favors they need is that they do not ask for them or do not accept them; and they do not ask for or accept them because they are somehow indisposed to do so. Thus, their indisposition to seek the help they need, or to yield themselves to supernatural persuasion, or to do what lies in their power to make their souls fit for such holy visitations, accounts for the failure of many people to receive the supernatural help they require.

This fatal indisposition can come, as said above, from native bent and temperament, left to itself, and from such other influences as wrong education, evil surroundings, pernicious companions, bad habits and many other adverse circumstances. In such conditions people become like the sick to whom the most appetizing foods are distasteful and nauseating. Dreadful state of soul, in which that is deliberately refused

which is best for it, which it needs most! Such souls either do not understand or have become hardened against the good to which they are indifferent or opposed.

However generously offered are the graces of God—such as faith, hope, patience, resignation, trust, the gift of prayer and the rest—they are not forced upon anyone, but must be freely accepted and cooperated with, to be of any avail. If therefore the disposition of the subject is such that he does not wish to accept any or all of these proffered divine helps, it is easy to understand why he does not receive them and profit by them.

The closing verses of the Psalm (vv. 33-43) give a vivid picture of the happy or dismal results of cooperating or of failing to cooperate with God's gifts and the ways of divine Providence. In view of these results, who will question the supreme importance and necessity of watching one's peculiar nature, temperament, habits, dispositions and the many other accidents and circumstances of life which affect so powerfully one's ways of thinking, feeling and acting, and thus determine one's eternal destiny?

## PSALM 107 (Heb. 108)

### PRAISE OF GOD AND PRAYER FOR HELP IN BATTLE

#### INTRODUCTION

We have here a composite poem, verses 2-6 being from Psalm 56:8-12, and verses 7-14 from Psalm 59:7-14. That this Psalm is borrowed from those other two, and not vice versa, is evident (a) from the difference in character of the two parts here joined, and (b) from the use of *Elohim* for God, which is contrary to the regular usage of Book V of the Psalter, but according to the usage of the Elohist group to which Psalms 56 and 59 belong.

The first part (vv. 2-7) is a song of thanksgiving and a prayer that God show himself as the supreme Ruler over all the earth, and grant aid against a threatened attack by some neighboring country. In the second part (vv. 8-14) the Psalmist recalls God's promise to give Israel possession of Canaan and supremacy over her surrounding nations, and he is confident of the fulfillment of the divine word.

This present Psalm was adapted, perhaps by the returned exiles, for liturgical purposes.



1. Canticum. Psalmus. Davidis. A canticle. A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Asserts the Confidence with Which He Asks Help (2-7)*

2. Firmum est cor meum, My heart is unshaken O God,  
Deus, firmum cor meum; cantabo my heart is unshaken; I will sing  
et psallam. and make music.

3. Evigila, anima mea; evigilate, psalterium et cithara! excite, O my soul, awake psalter and harp! I will awake the  
tabo auroram. dawn.

4. Laudabo te in populis, Domine, et psallam tibi in nationibus, I will praise Thee among the  
peoples, O Lord; I will make music to Thee among the nations,

5. Quoniam magna est usque ad caelum misericordia tua, et usque ad nubes fidelitas tua. For great even to heaven is  
Thy mercy, and Thy faithfulness even to the clouds.

6. Excelsus appare super caelos, Deus; super omnem terram sit gloria tua. Exalted above the heavens, appear, O God; may Thy glory be  
above every land.

7. Ut liberentur dilecti tui, adiuva dextera tua, et exaudi nos. That Thy loved ones may be  
delivered, help with Thy right hand, and answer us.

*Recalling God's Promise, the Psalmist Implores His Help (8-14)*

8. Deus locutus est in sanctuario suo: "Exsultabo et partibor Sichem, et vallem Succoth dime-  
tiar; God has spoken in His holy place: "I shall exult and I will divide up Sichem, and measure  
out the valley of Succoth;

9. Mea est terra Galaad, et mea terra Manasse, et Ephraim galea capitis mei, Iuda sceptrum meum. "Mine is the land of Galaad,  
and Mine the land of Manasses, and Ephraim is the helmet of My head, Iuda My scepter;

10. Moab pelvis lotionis meae; super Edom ponam calceamentum meum, de Philistaea triumphabo." "Moab is My wash-basin; upon  
Edom will I cast My shoe, over Philistia I will triumph."

11. Quis adducet me in civitatem munitam? quis deducet me usque in Edom? Who will lead me into the  
fortified city? Who will lead me even into Edom?

12. Nonne tu, Deus, qui repulisti nos, nec iam egrederis, Deus, cum exercitibus nostris? Wilt not Thou, O God, who  
hast cast us off, Thou, O God, who no longer goest forth with our armies?

13. Da nobis auxilium contra inimicum, quia vanum est subsidium hominum. Give us help against the enemy,  
for vain is the help of men.

14. Per Deum fortiter agemus, et ipse conculcabit inimicos nostros. Through God we shall do  
mightily, and He will trample upon our foes.

#### REFLECTIONS

See Reflections on Psalms 56 and 59.

#### PSALM 108 (Heb. 109)

#### AGAINST UNJUST AND PERFIDIOUS ENEMIES

#### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist here tells us that he has been the object of hate, persecution, calumny and slander on the part of treacherous and merciless enemies, and all this not for any cause, but rather as a return of evil for the good he has done his persecutors.

The great difficulty of this Psalm is in the interpretation which is to be given of the violent imprecatory verses 6-19, whether or not, namely, we are to understand these verses as curses spoken by the Psalmist against his enemies, or as quoted by the Psalmist as a description of the words and conduct of his enemies against him. The latter interpretation is the opinion of some good modern scholars, and has for its arguments: (a) the imprecations in vv. 6-19 are directed against an individual, whereas in the rest of the Psalm a group of enemies is spoken of; (b) v. 20 seems to say: "Such are the words and conduct of mine adversaries."

If, however, we follow the older opinion and adopt the first interpretation, we must explain these imprecations as stated above (see on Ps. 34), and say that in vv. 6-19 the Psalmist is singling out for special denunciation the leader of the gang that is pursuing him. But the Psalmist's words go beyond his personal experience; they have a deeper meaning. This is made quite certain in view of what our Lord said at the Last Supper about the son of perdition (John 17:12), and of St. Peter's interpretation of this Psalm in Acts 1:16, 20. Hence, the Fathers have



all regarded this Psalm as Messianic, as a prophecy of the betrayal of the innocent Saviour by Judas. The persecuted one, therefore, would be Christ, and vv. 6-19 would be descriptive of the traitor's fate. We prefer this older interpretation, although the Psalm is well explained by the modern opinion.

1. Magistro chori. Davidis. For the choir-master. A psalm. Psalmus. Of David.

*An Appeal to God for Help (2-5)*

2. Deus, laus mea, ne tacueris, quia os impium et dolosum contra me aperuerunt. O God, my praise, be not silent; for they have opened against me a wicked and a deceitful mouth.

3. Locuti sunt mecum lingua mendaci, et sermonibus odii circumdederunt me, et impugnaverunt me sine causa. They have spoken to me with a lying tongue, and have encompassed me with words of hatred, and have fought against me without cause.

4. Pro dilectione mea accusabant me: ego vero orabam. In return for my love, they have accused me; while I prayed.

5. Et retribuerunt mihi mala pro bonis, et odium pro dilectione mea. And they have returned to me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

*Imprecations against a Certain Special Foe (6-19)*

6. Suscita impium contra eum, et accusator stet a dextris eius. Raise up a wicked man against him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand.

7. Cum iudicabitur, exeat condemnatus, et deprecatio eius irrita sit. When he is judged, let him go forth condemned, and let his plea be vain.

8. Dies eius fiat pauci, munus eius accipiat alter. Let his days be few, and let another take his office.

9. Filii eius orphani fiant, et uxor eius vidua. Let his children be orphans, and his wife a widow.

10. Instabiles vagentur filii eius et mendicent, eiciantur e domibus suis devastatis. Let his children be vagabonds and beg; let them be cast out of their ruined homes.

6. "Impium" is *Satan* in Heb.; but the meaning here is slanderer, that is, an accuser in a trial, who stood at the right hand of the accused (Zach. 3:1).

11. Faenerator insidiatur omni possessioni eius, et alieni diripiant fructum laboris eius. Let a creditor search out all that he has, and let strangers plunder the fruit of his labor.

12. Nemo exhibeat ei misericordiam, nec sit qui misereatur pupillorum eius. Let no one show him kindness, nor pity his fatherless children.

13. Posteritas eius tradatur excidio; in generatione altera deleatur nomen eorum. Let his posterity be cut off; in another generation let their name be blotted out.

14. Memoretur culpa patrum eius apud Dominum, et peccatum matris eius ne deleatur. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out;

15. Praesentia sint Domino semper, et exstirpet e terra memoriam eorum. Let them be always in the sight of the Lord, and may He cut off the memory of them from the earth.

16. Neque enim cogitavit exercere misericordiam, sed persecutus est hominem miserum et inopem et afflictum corde, ut eum occideret. For he never thought to show kindness, but persecuted the wretched and needy man and the afflicted in heart, to kill him.

17. Et dilexit maledictionem: veniat ei; noluit benedictionem: recedat ab eo. Yea, he loved cursing, may it come upon him; he would not have blessing, be it far from him.

18. Et induatur maledictione sicut vestimento: intret, sicut aqua, in interiora eius, et, sicut oleum, in ossa eius. And let him be clothed with cursing as with a garment; let it, like water, go into his inward parts, and, like oil, into his bones.

19. Sit ei quasi vestis quae operit eum, et zona qua cingitur semper. Let it be to him as the garment which covers him, and as a girdle wherewith he is always girded.

*The Psalmist Pleads for Deliverance from Evils and for the Confusion of His Enemies (20-31)*

20. Haec merces sit eis a Domino, qui me accusant, et qui loquuntur mala adversus animam meam. Let this be the reward from the Lord of those that accuse me, and that speak evils against my soul.

20. "Haec merces sit, etc.," *Let this be the reward, etc.* But if we understand the Psalmist here in vv. 6-19 to be quoting what his enemies say about him, then the Vulgate reading, "hoc opus," would mean: *Such is the conduct, etc.*



21. Sed tu, Domine, Deus, age mecum propter nomen tuum; quia benigna est misericordia tua, salva me.

22. Nam ego sum miser et inops, et cor meum sauciatum est in me.

23. Sicut umbra, quae declinat, evanesco, et excutior ut locusta.

24. Genua me vacillant ob ieiunium, et caro mea macie tabescit.

25. Et ego factus sum opprobrio illis; videntes me movent caput suum.

26. Adiuva me, Domine, Deus meus; salva me secundum misericordiam tuam.

27. Et sciant tuam hanc esse manum, te, Domine, haec fecisse.

28. Maledicant illi, sed tu benedicas; insurgentes in me confundantur, servus autem tuus laetetur.

29. Induantur, qui accusant me, ignominia, et operiantur, sicut pallio, confusione sua.

30. Celebrabo Dominum ore meo valde, et in medio multorum laudabo eum:

31. Nam astitit a dextris pauperis, ut a iudicibus salvum faceret eum.

But deal Thou with me, O Lord God, for Thy name's sake; save me, for kind is Thy mercy.

For I am needy and poor, and my heart is wounded within me.

Like a lengthening shadow I am vanishing, and I am shaken off like a locust.

My knees shake from fasting, and my flesh wastes away with leanness.

And I am become a reproach to them; when they see me they shake their head.

Help me, O Lord my God; save me according to Thy mercy.

And let them know that this is Thy hand, that Thou, O Lord, hast done these things.

Let them curse, but do Thou bless; let those be confounded that rise up against me, but let Thy servant be glad.

Let those that accuse me be clothed with dishonor, and be covered with their shame as with a cloak.

I will extol the Lord exceedingly with my mouth, and in the midst of many I will praise Him;

For He stands at the right hand of the poor man, to save him from judges.

#### REFLECTIONS

Old Testament teaching was not devoid of love or charity any more than New Testament teaching is wanting in strict justice; but the Old Law emphasized the latter, while the law of the Gospel stresses the

former virtue. The progress of revelation has been upward, from lower to higher levels; and in the New Testament it has attained a perfection which is God-like. All that was good in the Old Law has been retained in the New, but freed from imperfection, elevated, spiritualized, perfected. To expect the perfection of Christ's teaching in the former Covenant would be like expecting the full-blown flower in the bud, or the ripe fruit in the blossom. Higher and beyond the holiness and blessedness of the New Testament there now remains only the state of the saints in Heaven.

We must keep these differences in mind when passing judgment on the harsh thoughts and language of this, the most terrible of Imprecatory Psalms. We must also be mindful that the Psalmist was speaking not as a private person, but as one who represented Jehovah and whose cause was the same as Jehovah's. He passionately desires the destruction of evil, because it is opposed to his Lord; he would destroy all that could harm or impede the reign of God's will on earth, because the divine will seeks the good of all men and all things.

True to Old Testament conceptions of evil and the evil-doer, the Psalmist here does not distinguish between the two; but that is but another imperfection of the ancient code. This distinction is vital in Christianity. But even there, in dealing with evil and its perpetrators, we must strive to avoid the extremes of softness and hardness. There are too many people, especially in the United States, who are always ready to defend and plead the cause of crime and criminals, and are quite unconcerned about the innocent victims of those malefactors. Such benighted persons are ruled by a perverted sentimentality. Perhaps they are not intelligent enough to understand that, while evil of any kind may be the occasion of some good, it always remains bad and undesirable in itself, as being a lack, a privation, an absence of good; and as such it is an injury to the subject in which it is found, rendering that subject unwholesome and undesirable according to the extent of its badness or deficiency. Evil is like rot or decay, and thus it harms the person or thing which it infects. It must therefore be curbed and eradicated wherever possible; and since this cannot be done in human beings without dealing with evil-doers, they should be restrained, or punished, or somehow arrested in their wrong course for their own good, as well as for God's sake and the good of other people. It is both unjust and uncharitable to the sinner himself, when he can be stopped by any lawful means, to allow him to go on digging ever deeper and deeper his own grave for time and eternity. A stern attitude towards evil and evil-doers is therefore at once reasonable and Christian.



But on the other hand, we must remember that evil is found only in created things and is radically the result of the limitations which are naturally inseparable from them as creatures. As evil means defect, lack of fullness and completeness, and defect comes from limitation, it follows that evil is really more or less to be expected in all creatures left to themselves. And as they are limited and deficient in their natures, so are they inclined to be in their operations and acts, for actions follow the nature, *agere sequitur esse*, necessarily in necessary things, contingently in contingent things, free in free beings. Only God can make it otherwise; and this He can do, and often does, not by changing the natures of His creatures, but by supplementing their deficiencies with His grace or special help. But it is not according to the divine plan supernaturally to supply in the present world for all the defects of creatures. For the most part they are left with the usual graces and divine helps, under a general Providence and the immediate divine assistance which they must have in order to exist and move at all, to the natures they have and to the innumerable circumstances and influences which surround and bear upon them throughout their temporal existence.

The handicaps which beset all creatures by reason of their origin and natural limitations are emphasized in man, first, because he is able to know and to choose between good and evil; and secondly, because his nature comes into the world especially harmed and wounded by the fall of his first parents which has left him in many respects more prone to evil than to good, to wrong than to right. And while God continually offers man, in the form of grace, help to supplement his natural and inherited deficiencies, that help does not for the most part overbalance the proneness and inclination to the material and the temporal which so often lead him away from God to the forbidden and to sin. It is not that man prefers wrong to right, sin to virtue, evil to good, as such, precisely as wrong, sin, evil; but that, in given circumstances, these make stronger appeal to his wounded nature and perverted judgment than do their opposites, and so, left to himself and his inclinations, he is apt to choose them. His will and choice will likely, though not necessarily, be the objects which make the stronger appeal here and now, all things being considered. On the other hand, if God intervenes with His grace, or supplementing motion, so as to make right, virtue and good have the stronger appeal to man's judgment and will than their sinful opposites, he may be counted upon to choose them, again, however, not necessarily but freely.

These are some of the considerations that must not be overlooked

in judging and dealing with sinners and evil-doers. They call for pity and for mercy, and explain why God's mercy is said to be above all His works. Only God can know the degree of culpability and responsibility attaching to any evil act or action, because He alone can know and properly weigh all the elements that enter into it and affect it.

### PSALM 109 (Heb. 110)

## THE MESSIAH IS A KING, A PRIEST AND A CONQUEROR

### INTRODUCTION

On account of its energetic brevity, its grandeur and profundity, this Psalm ranks among the noblest songs of the Old Testament. It has been called "the pearl of the Messianic Psalms," and must be regarded as Messianic in its literal sense. This is evident from its extraordinary contents, from Jewish tradition and the teaching of our Lord (Matt. 22:41-45; Mark 12:35; Luke 20:41, 42), and from the doctrine of the Apostles (Acts 2:33-36; 5:31; 1 Peter 3:22; I Cor. 15:24-28; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 1:3, 13; 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21; 8:1; 10:13).

That its author was David is proved by the title, by our Lord Himself in His dispute with the Pharisees (Matt., Mark and Luke, as cited above), by St. Peter (Acts 2:33-36), by the Fathers, and by a Decree of the Biblical Commission of May 1, 1910.

When the pious and valiant King David had organized on Mount Sion the worship of Jehovah and triumphed over his enemies, the prophet Nathan came to promise him in the name of God that his royal house should have no end. David, therefore, in the present lyric, inspired from on high, hymns the fulfillment of this promise in his Lord and future Son, the Messiah. We may divide the Psalm as follows:

I. David announces an oracle which he has heard from God by which Jehovah summons the Messiah, His Son, to share His throne in Heaven, thus participating in the glory and power which belong to God alone (v. 1); the scepter of power, that is, the Messianic rule is to go forth from Sion and conquer all opponents (v. 2); for the Messiah is the Son of God and King by birth, begotten of the Eternal Father before the day-star was made, before creation's dawn (v. 3).

II. The Messiah is not only the eternal Son of God, a King and



Ruler of the world, but He is also, by Jehovah's solemn oath, an eternal priest after the type of Melchisedech (v. 4).

III. David, addressing Jehovah, declares that when the Messiah-King exercises final judgment on the world, He shall smite kings, judge nations and completely triumph over all His foes (vv. 5-7).

Psalm 2 and this present one should be studied together, as they are companion Psalms.

1. Davidis. Psalmus.

A psalm. Of David.

*The Messiah Is a King (1-3)*

Dixit Dominus Domino meo:  
"Sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum."

The Lord said to my Lord:  
"Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies the stool of Thy feet."

2. Sceptrum potentiae tuae protendet Dominus ex Sion: "Dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum!"

From Sion the Lord will extend the scepter of Thy power, saying: "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies!"

3. Tecum principatus die ortus tui in splendore sanctitatis: ante luciferum, tamquam rorem, genuite."

"With Thee is princely power on the day of Thy birth in the beauty of holiness; before the day-star, as the dew, I begot Thee."

*The Messiah Is a Priest (4)*

4. Iuravit Dominus et non paenitebit eum: "Tu es sacerdos in

The Lord has sworn and He will not repent: "Thou art a priest

1. "Dixit" introduces the divine oracle which David has heard Yahweh address to His Son, the Messiah, David's Lord—"Dominus Domino." The first word in Heb. is *Yahweh*, the second *Adonai*. Thus we may render: "I heard Yahweh, the Eternal Father, say unto my Lord, the Messiah, etc."—"Donec ponam, etc.," i.e., while I subject Thine enemies to Thine authority as a sign of Thy dignity and power.

2. "Sceptrum potentiae, etc." This first line seems to be from the Psalmist, while the second—"Dominare, etc."—continues the divine oracle. Some authorities, however, make Yahweh the speaker who issues a command to the Messiah to proceed to exercise from Sion His royal power.

3. The Hebrew of this verse differs much from the versions, especially the LXX. The text as reconstructed above is very probable.—"In splendore, etc." Various renderings: (a) *in holy array*, referring to the priestly adornment of the Messiah, or to the armor of His warriors; (b) *on the holy mountains* (so St. Jer. and many MSS.), that is, on the hills where Jerusalem stands, the reference being either to the Messiah's actual establishment there as King (Boylan), or to the mustering there of His army.

4. The Psalmist now gives that part of the divine oracle which declared the Messiah to be a priest, not according to the rite of the Levite family of Aaron, which was temporary and offered bloody sacrifices; but according to the rite of Melchisedech, who offered an unbloody sacrifice of bread and wine, and who appeared without temporal beginning or end, and was therefore a type of the eternal priesthood of the Messiah.

aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech."

for ever according to the order of Melchisedech."

*The Messiah Is a Conqueror (5-9)*

5. Dominus a dextris tuis: conteret in die irae suae reges.

The Lord is at Thy right hand; He will strike down kings on the day of His wrath.

6. Iudicabit nationes, acervabit cadavera; conteret capita late per terram.

He will judge the nations, and heap up corpses; He will shatter heads widely throughout the land.

7. De torrente in via bibet, propterea extollet caput.

He will drink of a torrent in the way; therefore He will lift up the head.

REFLECTIONS

We are assured by this Psalm of the final triumph of the Messiah and His rule in spite of all other powers and appearances to the contrary. In a world like this, where evil so often seems to prevail, many souls are troubled not infrequently about the outcome. At times the visible fruits of honest labor and of virtue are so poor and in such arresting contrast to the success of wickedness that one is tempted to murmur, and to ask whether the results are worth the effort, whether the victory is adequate compensation for the battle.

Discouragement of this kind was not unknown to the Psalmist and other writers of the Bible, nor has it been to many similar holy persons down the ages. One principal reason for this is our short and limited view of the vast divine plan according to which the world was made and is governed. If we could grasp creation as a whole and in its parts, we should feel different about the incidents of our personal experience. We should then see how we ourselves, and even the entire world that we know, are but smallest parts of one immense design which required that we in the present world should be made in a particular way, and how evils of all sorts are in the first place the natural consequences of the

5. The Psalmist here begins a description of the Messiah's world-judgment.—"In die irae suae," i.e., when He executes His final judgment of men.

7. "De torrente, etc." Besides the translation given above, some of the Fathers understand these words figuratively, of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, who during His passion was bowed down like a poor man to drink of a wayside stream, but lifted His head in victory at the Resurrection. Dr. Boylan makes "capita" (which is singular in Heb.) the subject of "bibet." Thus, the heads of the foes would be lying in the wayside brooks as if drinking there.



limitations inherent in all creatures. Next we should understand how the things about which we complain, and which we are unable to remedy, often can be and are the occasion and rich source of much that is finest in life and human character, if not for ourselves then for others, while being at the same time a needed discipline and preparation for the perfect life to come for which we hope. Manures are not attractive things in themselves; but how abundant the crops and fruits, how sweet and beautiful the flowers that spring from the soil in which they are mixed!

Thus, in the nature of things, the working out of God's great plan is bound to be heavy and hard for at least some of the agents who are privileged to have part in it, but the result intended is their ultimate greater good and a final perfection for the work as a whole. Losses of many kinds and degrees are unavoidable in the process, but these are not to be unduly lamented if they do not involve the lasting loss of human souls. Rejoicing becomes the triumph of right over wrong, of justice over injustice, of love over hate, of divine success over all opposition; but there is no place in Christianity for rejoicing over the eternal loss of one sheep of the flock, of a single human soul.

### PSALM 110 (Heb. 111)

## THE GREAT WORKS OF GOD IN ISRAEL

### INTRODUCTION

This is a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving for the benefits of God to the Hebrew people. It celebrates the holiness, power and goodness of Jehovah. In the Hebrew it consists of twenty-two lines, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in the regular order.

This Psalm is strikingly similar to Psalm 111, having the same alphabetical structure and being very much the same in language and content. There is, however, this difference between them, that, whereas Psalm 110 eulogizes the attributes of Jehovah, Psalm 111 describes the benefits that accrue to those that fear and obey Jehovah. It would seem that both Psalms are connected with the return from the Babylonian exile. Their author is unknown.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

### *Praise for Blessings in General (1-4)*

Celebrabo Dominum toto corde,  
in coetu iustorum et congrega-  
tione.

I will praise the Lord with *my*  
whole heart, in the assembly of  
the just and in the congregation.

2. Magna sunt opera Domini,  
scrutanda omnibus qui diligunt  
ea.

Great are the works of the Lord,  
worthy to be studied by all who  
delight in them.

3. Maiestas et magnificentia  
opus eius; et iustitia eius manet  
in aeternum.

Majesty and splendor are His  
work, and His justice abides for  
ever.

4. Memoranda fecit mirabilia  
sua; misericors et clemens est Do-  
minus.

He has made his wonders to be  
remembered; merciful and kind  
is the Lord.

### *Praise for Blessings in Particular (5-10)*

5. Escam dedit timentibus se;  
memor erit in aeternum foederis  
sui.

He has given food to those  
that fear Him; He will be mind-  
ful of His covenant for ever.

6. Potentiam operum suorum  
manifestavit populo suo, ut daret  
eis possessionem gentium.

The power of His works He  
has shown to His people, that He  
might give them the possession  
of the nations.

7. Opera manuum eius sunt  
fidelia et iusta; firma sunt omnia  
praecepta eius,

The works of His hands are  
faithful and just; firm are all his  
precepts,

8. Stabilita in saecula, in aeter-  
num, facta cum firmitate et aequi-  
tate.

Established for ever and ever,  
made in firmness and equity.

2. This verse gives the reason for the praise of the preceding verse. The doings of the Lord on behalf of His people and His works in nature and throughout history make Him exceedingly worthy of praise.—"Scrutanda, etc." St. Jer.: *Exquirenda cunctis volentibus eum*. The words may also be explained as follows: the works of the Lord have been especially wrought so as to manifest His will and all His purposes.

3. The works of the Lord are a revelation of His divine character.

4. The Passover was a memorial of the deliverance of the people from Egypt, and this memorial was to be handed down from generation to generation.—"Memoranda fecit." The sense here can also be: (a) the wonderful works of the Lord will never be forgotten; or (b) by His wonderful works the Lord has won for Himself imperishable renown.

5. "Escam" may refer directly to the manna, but, the Hebrew word here being a general term, there is doubtless question of God's providential care for all the wants of His people.

7. "Fidelia et iusta." God's works are here called "faithful," because they were faithful to the promise made to the patriarchs that He would give their descendants the land of Canaan; they are said to be "just," because the expulsion of the heathen from Canaan was a just punishment for their sins.



9. Redemptionem misit populo suo, statuit in aeternum foedus suum; sanctum et venerabile est nomen eius.

10. Initium sapientiae timor Domini: prudenter agunt omnes, qui colunt eum; laus eius manet in aeternum.

He has sent redemption to His people; He has set up His covenant for ever; holy and venerable is His name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all they act wisely that cherish it; the praise thereof endures for ever.

#### REFLECTIONS

Israel throughout her long history had much to suffer, partly because of her unfaithfulness and sins, partly because of her goodness and privileges as God's Chosen People. Sometimes it appeared, even to her sainted spokesmen, that she was being punished and made to suffer beyond measure; but one thing her sacred singers never forgot was God's goodness to His people and their consequent duty of praise and thanksgiving. Jehovah had done so much for his chosen ones: He had selected them from the rest of human kind in the beginning, had given them a favored spot of earth, had been with them in their exiles and wanderings, had fed them in their hunger and famine, had delivered them from their enemies and oppressors, had given them wise and holy teachers and laws, had worked miracles and wonders in their behalf, had repeatedly pardoned their sins and transgressions, and through all these gracious deeds had manifested to them His heavenly character of love and mercy. These manifold benefits Israel was never allowed to forget. The present Psalm is one of many vigorous and beautiful reminders of them. God's deeds reveal the majesty and splendor of His character, and His laws, the rectitude and holiness of His nature.

Of course there were many persons in Israel, as everywhere at all times, who accepted God's favors and blessings without reflection, and to whom the mighty deeds of Jehovah in nature and in grace passed unnoticed. It is likely no exaggeration to say that the majority of people in the world are always prone, not only to accept the good things of life without ever thinking to thank God for them, but that their minds are habitually set far more on what they have not than on what they have. Good things are taken for granted without thought, while the bad are

9. "Sanctum et venerabile, etc." God's acts in delivering the people from the bondage of Egypt and the captivity of Babylon showed that He was both holy and to be feared.—"Nomen," according to Hebrew usage, stands for the person.

10. "Prudenter agunt," i.e., they show themselves to be wise.—"Eum" may refer to the fear of the Lord, or to the will of the Lord.

consciously felt and often resented. Moreover, few people, bemoaning their privations and misfortunes, ever advert to the much greater evils others around them encounter and have to endure. They fail to consider that, while they do not enjoy much that they would like, they are nevertheless spared many evils.

And what is the result of this way of thinking? Such a state of mind is barren. It does not relieve, but rather adds to, burdens. It is a fruitful source of discontent and unhappiness. How much happier here and now, and more meritorious for the future, are the lives of those who have formed and cultivated the virtue of gratitude, who have schooled themselves to reflect on the many benefits they enjoy and constantly receive, and to thank God for them frequently! As the divine goodness and bounty never cease to manifest themselves to man, so man's praise and thanksgiving should be unceasing.

#### PSALM 111 (Heb. 112)

#### THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE JUST MAN

##### INTRODUCTION

This is a Didactic Psalm celebrating, like Psalm 1, the happiness of the just man. In the Introduction to Psalm 110, we called attention to the remarkable similarity of that Psalm to the present one. They seem to have had the same author and to have been written about the same time—after the return from captivity, during the time of Aggeus and Zachary. In both we have the same acrostic arrangement. What is said of God and His attributes in the preceding Psalm, is here applied to the God-fearing man who orders his life in conformity with those divine attributes. Hence, as Psalm 110 terminates with praise of the fear of God as the highest wisdom, so Psalm 111 begins with the praise of the man who makes that holy fear the standard of his life.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

#### *The Reverent Man Is Happy (1-3)*

Beatus vir qui timet Dominum, qui mandatis eius delectatur multum.

Blessed is the man that fears the Lord, that delights greatly in His commands.

2. Potens in terra erit semen

Mighty on earth shall be his

2. "Semen," i.e., offspring.—"Generacioni," i.e., race, class; it is parallel to "semen."



eius; generationi rectorum benedicetur.

3. Opes et divitiae erunt in domo eius, et munificentia eius manebit semper.

*The Charitable Man Is Happy (4-10)*

4. Oritur in tenebris ut lumen rectis, clemens et misericors et iustus.

5. Bene est viro qui misereatur et commodat, qui disponit res suas cum iustitia.

6. In aeternum non vacillabit; in memoria aeterna erit iustus.

7. A nuntio tristi non timebit; firmum est cor eius, sperans in Domino.

8. Constans est cor eius, non timebit, donec confusos videat adversarios suos.

9. Distribuit, donat pauperibus, munificentia eius manebit semper; cornu eius extolletur cum gloria.

10. Peccator videbit et indignabitur, dentibus suis frendet et tabescet; desiderium peccatorum peribit.

3. In the Old Testament temporal blessings were promised as a reward for holiness of life. In Psalm 110:3, the same thing is said of the justice of God. The just man through grace participates to a certain extent in the nature of God.

4. "Oritur, etc." It is also possible to understand this verse as follows: (a) He (the Lord) arises as a light in the darkness of trouble to the upright, because He is merciful; or (b) there arises a light in darkness to the upright, for him that is merciful, etc.

6. "In memoria aeterna." In Psalm 110:4, it is said that God has made Himself remembered for His wonderful works, while here the just man is made memorable by his gracious deeds.

9. "Cornu." Among the Hebrews the word "horn" is used metaphorically for strength, because the power of certain animals, like the ox and the bull, is exercised through their horns. Here it is used as a symbol of the power of the just man through prosperity and influence.

seed; the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Riches and wealth shall be in his house, and his bounty shall endure for ever.

He arises in darkness as a light to the upright; he is kind and merciful and just.

It is well with the man that shows mercy and lends, that orders his affairs with justice.

He shall never falter; the just shall be in everlasting remembrance.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

His heart is firm; he shall not be afraid until he sees his foes confounded.

He distributes, he gives to the poor; his bounty shall endure for ever; his horn shall be exalted with glory.

The sinner shall see and be angry; he shall gnash with his teeth and wither away; the desire of the wicked shall perish.

REFLECTIONS

Since all men are made in the image and likeness of God as to the nature and spiritual faculties of their souls, it must be said that the just man, though to a created and finite degree, reflects in a special manner the character and qualities of his Maker. Through loving and habitual obedience to the divine commands he becomes ever more and more like the Master whose company he keeps and in whose service he finds his delight. Love is the root and foundation of all his thoughts and actions; it is the source and spring of his joy and happiness. He fulfills duties, performs functions and obeys laws, not out of fear of punishment, but because he loves his Lord and dreads anything that might lessen the divine favor in his regard, that might dim the sunshine of his life. And the blessedness he himself enjoys overflows in acts of kindness and generosity to others.

The Psalmist describes here, according to Old Testament conceptions, the blessed consequences of godliness. The godly man is blessed in his prosperity, riches and abundance fill his home, light illumines for him the dark ways of the world, he fears neither condemning judgments nor evil tidings, his deeds of love and mercy are in everlasting remembrance, his life is rooted in God, steadfast and secure forever, while he sees wicked men, grieving in envy and despair, fade away and perish.

If the Psalmist's promises and predictions are not always literally experienced by the just in this world, their spiritual fulfillment cannot be questioned. And even if some of them seem not to have any fulfillment in the present world, we must remember that earthly life is but one act in the great drama of our existence. Whether the inspired singer understood this or not, makes no difference. It was not necessary that the Psalmist should always know the full meaning of his words. Often he did not.

PSALM 112 (Heb. 113)

PRAISE OF GOD, EXALTED AND BENIGN

INTRODUCTION

With this Psalm begins the Great Hallel, or Hymn of Praise, embracing Psalms 112-117, which the Jews were accustomed to sing at their chief festivals of Pasch, Pentecost and Tabernacles, and at other times; and which was probably chanted by our Lord and the disciples at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:30). The present Psalm is a song of thanks-



giving, perhaps to express Israel's gratitude for her restoration from Babylonian captivity.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

*Let the Servants of God Praise Him Always and Everywhere (1-3)*

Laudate, servi Domini, laudate nomen Domini.

2. Sit nomen Domini benedictum et nunc et usque in aeternum.

3. A solis ortu usque ad occasum eius laudetur nomen Domini.

O praise, you servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, both now and for evermore.

From the rising of the sun to its going down, let the name of the Lord be praised.

*God Is Exalted above Earth and Heaven (4-6)*

4. Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus, super caelos gloria eius.

5. Quis sicut Dominus, Deus noster, qui sedet in alto (6) et oculos demittit in caelum et in terram?

High above all the nations is the Lord, His glory is above the heavens.

Who is like the Lord our God, who sits on high and looks down upon heaven and earth?

*God Is Kind to the Needy and Despised (7-9)*

7. Sublevat a pulvere inopem, e stercore erigit pauperem,

8. Ut collocet eum cum principibus, cum principibus populi sui.

9. Habitare facit eam, quae sterilis erat, in domo, matrem filiorum laetantem.

He lifts up the needy from the dust, and raises the poor from the dunghill,

That He may set him with princes, with the princes of His people.

He makes her that was barren to dwell in a home, the glad mother of sons.

#### REFLECTIONS

Two reasons have prompted the burst of praise which fills this poem, and they are: Jehovah's unapproachable loftiness and His profound con-

7, 8. These verses are from the Canticle of Anna (1 Kings 2:8).

9. See 1 Kings 2:5.

descension to his creature man. So far is Jehovah above the highest heavens as to render them indiscernible except to His all-searching and penetrating gaze, and yet He has stooped to the least of His lowly human creatures. Let Israel therefore praise her dread and gracious Lord throughout all time and all space. Jehovah's words and deeds in behalf of His Chosen People have revealed His character, and the recipients of those mercies should sing His praises to all the world and forever. Lofty beyond words to express Him, as is Jehovah in His nature and being, His infinite condescension has made it possible for man to praise Him. He has stooped so low that He might lift His children up to Himself, that He might delight in the music of their prayers and praises.

Our appreciation of God's loving condescension becomes more real and fervent when we remember that none of us has any intrinsic or natural right to the supernatural gifts which He bestows on us here and has prepared for us hereafter. In all justice He could have left us to our natural state and its needs; more we could not have claimed. But that was not enough to satisfy a Father's heart. Nor is He content until our blessedness is complete. He wills that where He is we also may be, that we all may at length share in the bounty of His eternal kingdom.

If we keep these thoughts in mind, we shall find the long, hard journey home shorter and easier. And if the way to Heaven at times seems beyond our utmost strength and endurance, in spite of all God's helps, this is explained by the very loftiness of that state and the preciousness of the joys awaiting us here. Great treasures are always costly.

#### PSALM 113A (Heb. 114)

#### WONDERS PERFORMED BY GOD IN THE EXODUS

#### INTRODUCTION

This is an Impetratory Psalm in which Israel implores the help of God against the pagans who confide in their vain idols and despise the true and almighty God. In the Massoretic text, verses 1-8 form Psalm 114, and the remaining verses are Psalm 115; and the differences of tone, structure and style would seem to indicate that originally these parts were distinct poems. In the Vulgate, Syriac, Septuagint and certain Hebrew texts, the two parts constitute but one Psalm, although the verse-numbering begins over again with verse 9 in the Vulgate. The first part (vv. 1-8) is a hymn to the glory and power of God as manifested in the



Exodus, and is universally admitted to be one of the finest passages of the Psalter—regular in construction, swift in movement and singularly fresh and vivid in its imagery. It seems like a sequel to Psalm 112. That Psalm extols the love of Jehovah in helping the afflicted; this emphasizes the signal instance of Jehovah's condescending love in delivering Israel from Egypt.

The second part of this Psalm (vv. 9-26) seems to have been intended as a liturgical song for use by alternate groups of singers in the Temple services. It voices Israel's faith in Jehovah, to whom alone she can look for help in her needs. Most modern authors place the composition of both parts of this Psalm after the exile.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

*The Might of Israel's God (1-8)*

Cum exiret Israel de Aegypto,  
domus Iacob de populo barbaro,

When Israel went forth out of  
Egypt, the house of Jacob from  
a barbarous people,

2. Factus est Iuda sanctuarium  
eius, Israel regnum eius.

Juda became His sanctuary,  
Israel His Kingdom.

3. Mare vidit et fugit, Iordanis  
vertit se retrorsum.

The sea saw, and fled; the Jor-  
dan turned backward.

4. Montes saltarunt ut arietes,  
colles ut agnelli.

The mountains skipped like  
rams, the hills like little lambs.

5. Quid est tibi, mare, quod  
fugis? Iordanis, quod vertis te re-  
trorsum?

What ailest thee, O sea, that  
thou fleest? Thou Jordan, that  
thou turnest backward?

1. "De populo barbaro." The word "barbarian" originally meant one who spoke a foreign tongue. As Greek was the language of culture in the ancient world, all those who spoke a different language came to be called barbarians. The Latin text here imitates the Greek. The sense of the verse, therefore, is that the Egyptians spoke a language different from the Hebrew.

2. "Iuda . . . Israel." These are the names of the two divisions into which the whole nation came to be divided. They are not used here for any purpose of contrast, but as synonymous for the whole people, for the sake of poetical parallelism.—"Sanctuarium," that is, the place of God's Temple; or, His chosen and consecrated people.—"Regnum," that is, the country or territory subject to theocratic rule.—"Eius," i.e., the Lord's.

3. The object of the verb "vidit" is here left unexpressed, to heighten the dramatic effect; but it is clearly meant to be the triumphant Exodus of Israel, or God's power manifested in the Exodus.—The two miracles referred to in this verse are the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea (Exod. 14:21) and the turning back of the Jordan (Josue 3:16).

4. Here the poet describes the earthquake which shook Sinai and the surrounding hills during the giving of the Law (Exod. 19:16-25).

5, 6. The present tense is here used because the past events become present to the poet's mind.

6. Montes, quod saltatis ut  
arietes, colles, ut agnelli?

You mountains, that you skip  
like rams? You hills, like little  
lambs?

7. A facie Domini contremisce,  
terra, a facie Dei Iacob,

Tremble, O earth, at the pres-  
ence of the Lord, at the presence  
of the God of Jacob,

8. Qui convertit petram in stag-  
num aquarum, rupem in fontes  
aquarum.

Who turned the rock into a pool  
of water, the stony hill into foun-  
tains of water.

PSALM 113B (Heb. 115)

THE MAGNITUDE AND GOODNESS OF THE TRUE GOD

*Our Almighty God in Heaven Is Alone Worthy of Praise (1-3: 9-11)*

1 (<sup>9</sup>). Non nobis, Domine,  
non nobis, sed nomini tuo da glo-  
riam, propter misericordiam tuam,  
propter fidelitatem tuam.

Not to us, O Lord, not to us,  
but to Thy name give glory, be-  
cause of Thy mercy and Thy  
faithfulness.

2 (<sup>10</sup>). Quare dicant gentes:  
"Ubinam est Deus eorum?"

Wherefore should the heathen  
say: "Where is their God?"

3 (<sup>11</sup>). Deus noster in caelo  
est; omnia, quae voluit, fecit.

Our God is in heaven; He has  
done all that He wished.

*The Idols of the Heathen Are Vain and Powerless (4-8: 12-16)*

4 (<sup>12</sup>). Idola eorum sunt ar-  
gentum et aurum, opus manuum  
hominum.

Their idols are silver and gold,  
the work of men's hands.

8. "Qui convertit, etc." The Psalmist refers to the two miracles by which water was produced from the rock during the wanderings in the desert (Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:8-11), as proofs of God's power over nature.

1 (<sup>9</sup>). "Non nobis, etc." The Psalmist wishes to say that, if God does not vindicate the honor of His name by helping His people in their distress, the heathen will taunt them: "Where is the God of whom you boast?" The implication will be that either Israel has no God or, if she has, He is powerless now to help.—Verses 1 (<sup>9</sup>) and 2 (<sup>10</sup>) were probably a song of the people assembled for worship.—"Misericordiam . . . fidelitatem." The reference is to Jehovah's love for His people and the promises He had made to help them against their enemies (Exod. 34:6; Deut. 7:7, 8).

3 (<sup>11</sup>). This is an example of the sudden transitions so characteristic of the Psalms. Without any connecting phrase the Psalmist often passes to something quite different from what he had been saying in a previous verse, or gives a reply which the context would suggest should come from someone else.—Verses 3 (<sup>11</sup>)-8 (<sup>16</sup>) were perhaps sung by a choir of special singers.

4 (<sup>12</sup>). The Psalmist here replies to the mockery of the heathen by describing their gods, who are destitute of ordinary senses, let alone intellect and will.



5 (13). Os habent, et non loquuntur; oculos habent, et non vident.

6 (14). Aures habent, et non audiunt; nares habent, et non odorantur.

7 (15). Manus habent, et non palpant; pedes habent, et non ambulant; sonum non edunt gutture suo.

8 (16). Similes illis erunt, qui faciunt ea, omnis qui confidit in eis.

They have a mouth, but they speak not; they have eyes, but they see not.

They have ears, but they hear not; they have noses, but they smell not.

They have hands, but they feel not; they have feet, but they walk not; they utter no sound with their throat.

They that make them shall be like to them, everyone that trusts in them.

*Israel Trusts in the Lord, and So She Is Blessed by Him (9-18: 17-26)*

9 (17). Domus Israel confidit in Domino: adiutor eorum et clipeus eorum est.

10 (18). Domus Aaron confidit in Domino: adiutor eorum et clipeus eorum est.

11 (19). Qui timent Dominum, confidunt in Domino: adiutor eorum et clipeus eorum est.

12 (20). Dominus recordatur nostri et benedicet nobis; benedicet domui Israel, benedicet domui Aaron.

13 (21). Benedicet iis qui timent Dominum, tam pusillis quam maioribus.

14 (22). Dominus multiplicabit vos, vos et filios vestros.

The house of Israel trusts in the Lord; He is their helper and their shield.

The house of Aaron trusts in the Lord; He is their helper and their shield.

They that fear the Lord trust in the Lord; He is their helper and their shield.

The Lord is mindful of us and will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron.

He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.

The Lord will multiply you, you and your sons.

8 (16). "Illis," "ea," "eis," i.e., idols.

9(17)-11(19). "Domus Israel," "domus Aaron," "qui timent Dominum," represent the different classes of worshippers present: the people in general, the priestly class, the proselytes (cfr. Psalm 117:2-4). The first part of each of these verses is supposed to have been sung by the Levites; the second part is the reply of the people.

12 (20), 13 (21). Here we have the blessing of the priests over the three groups mentioned in verses 17-19.

14 (22)-16 (24). In these verses the blessing just given by the priests is perhaps repeated by a group of singers. The increase of blessings here refers to an increase in the population, or perhaps in the number of the proselytes. God has chosen the heavens for Himself, and has given the earth to men.

15 (23). Benedicti vos a Domino, qui fecit caelum et terram.

16 (24). Caelum est caelum Domini, terram autem dedit filiis hominum.

17 (25). Non mortui laudant Dominum, neque ullus qui ad inferos descendit.

18 (26). Sed nos benedicimus Domino, et nunc et usque in aeternum.

Blessed are you by the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Heaven is the heaven of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the sons of men.

The dead praise not the Lord, nor anyone that goes down to the underworld.

But we bless the Lord, both now and for evermore.

REFLECTIONS

The liberation of the Chosen People from the bondage of Egypt and the thrilling experiences which attended that deliverance were symbolic of the passing of redeemed souls from a troublous world and their entrance into bliss. Israel was on her way to the Promised Land. A glorious prospect lay before her. The birthday of a nation was at hand. The trials, the hardships, the fears, the degradations of former years were passed, and in retrospect, compared with the glory of the vision now dawning, seemed trivial and fast-flying, fading into insignificance as they receded. The long, dark night of exile and suffering which appeared to have no end suddenly came to a close, and Israel was free. The God of nature, at whose presence the Red Sea and the Jordan River rolled back their floods and the hills and mountains of Sinai heaved and trembled, was still the God of Jacob; the sovereign ruler of the world was also the protector of His people.

He who was with His chosen ones in the past is even nearer to His loved ones now. As He delivered those, so He will deliver these. The Promised Land which the former visioned was at best only an earthly abode, whereas the eternal mansions of Heaven are the glowing prospect of the latter.

Israel learned in exile, as perhaps she could have never learned at home, the difference between the true God and false gods. She did not

17 (25), 18 (26). The Psalm closes with a prayer for help on the ground that, unless assisted, the people will be destroyed and Jehovah will be left without worshippers on earth.—"Ad inferos." To the Psalmist, Sheol (or the grave) did not mean the end of existence, but the end of the praise and worship of God. Heaven, closed by the sin of Adam, had not yet been opened; hence, for those who died before the coming of Christ the beatific vision and praise of God were impossible. The doctrine of the future life of rewards and punishments was revealed in the Psalms and other parts of the Old Testament, but a clear understanding of that teaching was only gradually given as time went on, the fullness of the revelation and its better understanding being reserved for the New Testament dispensation.



appreciate the goodness of her Lord and the privileges of her state until she had lost them. The gods of the heathens were dumb, blind, deaf, bereft of every sense, capable only of degrading and leading astray; and worst of all, their worshippers became like them. So it is with all idolators, whether the object be wealth, or pleasure, or any other vain and worldly thing or pursuit. But how different the one true God who has made all things and who rules supreme throughout time and eternity! He it is who is able to bless and to save, and His faithful servants ever grow and increase in likeness to Him. Let Israel praise and worship Him now while there is time.

To this Psalmist, with his limited vision and imperfect revelation, the joy of worshipping his Lord was confined to the present life. Hence his desire to live and his dread of death. And while we know better from New Testament revelation, it still is true that this is the only life in which, by praise and worship and good works, we can merit and lay up treasures for the eternal life to come. What we can do for ourselves and others in the life beyond the grave we do not entirely know, but we do know what we can do now. One life at a time is enough for us. Are we as zealous to make the best use of our present time, health and opportunities as was this Psalmist?

#### PSALMS 114 and 115 (Heb. 116)

#### THANKSGIVING OF ONE PRESERVED FROM DEATH

##### INTRODUCTION

These Psalms, which are printed as two separate poems in the Vulgate and in the Septuagint Psalter, appear as one Psalm in the Hebrew or Masoretic text. The Hebrew arrangement seems better, and therefore the "Alleluia" before Psalm 115 is probably an addition of the Greek translators when they divided the original Psalm into two.

Taken together, these two Psalms are a song of thanksgiving to God for favors received, and an expression of triumphant faith in the Helper of the poor and needy. The Psalmist had been dangerously ill or in extreme peril of some kind, and with unshaken faith he called upon the Lord, not trusting men, and was delivered and put at rest (114:1-9). When his condition was at its worst, he mistrusted men and put all his hope in God, promising a thanksgiving sacrifice for his rescue (115:1, 2); and now that his prayer and faith have been answered, he will fulfill

his vow and celebrate a eucharistic offering publicly in the Temple (115:3-10).

#### A (Vulg. Ps. 114)

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

#### *The Psalmist's Peril and Prayer (1-4)*

Diligo Dominum: quia audivit  
vocem obsecrationis meae,

I love the Lord because He has  
heard the voice of my supplication,

2. Quia inclinavit aurem suam  
mihi, quo die invocavi eum.

Because He has inclined His  
ear to me on the day when I called  
to Him.

3. Circumdederunt me funes  
mortis, et laquei inferorum super-  
venerunt mihi, in angorem et ae-  
rumnas incidi.

The cords of death encompassed  
me, and the snares of the under-  
world came upon me; I met with  
trouble and hardships.

4. Et nomen Domini invocavi:  
"O, Domine, salva vitam meam!"

Then I called on the name of  
the Lord: "O Lord, save my life!"

#### *Remembering the Divine Goodness, the Psalmist Is at Peace (5-9)*

5. Benignus est Dominus et  
iustus, et Deus noster misericors.

Kind is the Lord and just; yea,  
our God is merciful.

6. Custodit simplices Dominus:  
miser fui et salvavit me.

The Lord preserves the simple;  
I was in need and He saved me.

7. Redi, anima mea, ad tran-  
quillitatem tuam, quia Dominus  
bene fecit tibi.

Return to thy rest, O my soul,  
for the Lord has dealt well with  
thee.

8. Etenim eripuit animam me-  
am a morte, oculos meos a lacrimis,  
pedes meos a lapsu.

For He has rescued my soul from  
death, mine eyes from tears, my  
feet from stumbling.

9. Ambulabo coram Domino in  
regione viventium.

I shall walk before the Lord in  
the land of the living.

#### B (Vulg. Ps. 115)

#### *In Thanksgiving the Psalmist Will Offer Sacrifices (10-19: 1-10)*

10 (1). Confisus sum, etiam cum  
dixi: "Ego afflictus sum valde";

I was confident, even when I  
said: "I am greatly afflicted";

10 (1). "Confisus sum, etc." This is a better rendering; but St. Paul in 2 Cor. 4:13, was following LXX: "I believe; therefore I speak."



11 (<sup>2</sup>). Ego dixi in pavore meo: "Omnis homo fallax!"

12 (<sup>3</sup>). Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae tribuit mihi?

13 (<sup>4</sup>). Calicem salutis accipiam, et nomen Domini invocabo.

14 (<sup>5</sup>). Vota mea Domino redem coram omni populo eius.

15 (<sup>6</sup>). Pretiosa est in oculis Domini mors sanctorum eius.

16 (<sup>7</sup>). O Domine, ego servus tuus sum, ego servus tuus, filius ancillae tuae: solvisti vincula mea.

17 (<sup>8</sup>). Tibi sacrificabo sacrificium laudis, et nomen Domini invocabo.

18 (<sup>9</sup>). Vota mea Domino redam coram omni populo eius,

19 (<sup>10</sup>). In atriis domus Domini, in medio tui, Ierusalem.

I said in my dismay: "Every man is deceitful."

What shall I return to the Lord for all He has given to me?

I will take up the cup of salvation, and I will call on the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people.

Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints.

O Lord, I am Thy servant; I Thy servant, the son of Thy handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds.

I will offer to Thee a sacrifice of praise, and I will call on the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people,

In the courts of the house of the Lord, in thy midst, O Jerusalem.

#### REFLECTIONS

The situation of the Psalmist here is a familiar one: recent great danger, unshaken faith in Jehovah in the midst of peril, deliverance, thanksgiving. The singer alternates between detailed descriptions of his plight and praises of his Lord with promises of devout offices for his rescue. Many resemblances link this poem with previous Psalms, especially Psalm 17.

The most impressive thoughts here are the Psalmist's unwavering confidence of divine help when things were worst for him, and his profuse expression of gratitude for deliverance. It is easier to admire such spiritual qualities than to imitate them. They seem simple enough to the casual observer, but they are rare endowments which presuppose much. In the first place, of course, they are supernatural gifts, the effect of spe-

11 (<sup>2</sup>). "In pavore meo," that is, in his dismay or excitement over his condition.—"Omnis homo, etc." He had lost all confidence in human aid.

13 (<sup>4</sup>). "Calicem salutis, etc.," i.e., he will offer a thanksgiving sacrifice for his rescue.

16 (<sup>7</sup>). The Psalmist has a special claim on Yahweh; he is like a slave who is the son of a master's handmaid, born in the master's house, and therefore entitled to special care and protection.

cial grace. But not only so, for they imply also a degree of cooperation on the part of their possessor which could only be the fruit, either of a very special divine gift in a particular instance, or the result of long-developed habits of trusting God in all things and at all times, and of rendering thanks regularly for favors received.

God can and does work miracles as it suits His good-pleasure. He can bestow His special graces as He wishes. But we must not expect Him to perform miracles for us in times of crisis if we have neglected our duty at other times. If we would withstand the violence of the storm, we should strengthen our resources during periods of calm. Summer is the season in which to gather harvests for winter. The surest way to prevent war, or to win it when it comes, is to be prepared for it in advance. It is when we are well and strong, rather than when we are weak and dying, that we should say our prayers, worship God, be good to our fellow-man and repent of our sins.

Thus, this Psalmist's firm faith in great peril and his gratitude for rescue were simply the outgrowth of a life of faith and the holy habit of thanking God frequently for all His favors.

#### PSALM 116 (Heb. 117)

#### A HYMN OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

#### INTRODUCTION

In this, the shortest of all the Psalms and also one of the grandest, we have an invitation to all nations to praise Jehovah for His goodness to Israel. The occasion was either the restoration from exile, or some other signal manifestation of God's mercy and fidelity towards His people.

The call upon pagan nations to praise the God of Israel is remarkable, inasmuch as it shows that the blessings accorded the Chosen People were intended ultimately for the whole world. This brief Psalm, then, is eminently Messianic in its message, and it is quoted by St. Paul (Rom. 15:11) as a proof that God's mercy was to be extended to the Gentiles through Christ.

#### 1. Alleluia.

Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes, praedicate eum, omnes populi,

2. Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia eius, et fidelitas Domini manet in aeternum.

#### Alleluia.

Praise the Lord, all you nations, proclaim Him, all you peoples,

For His mercy is confirmed upon us, and the faithfulness of the Lord abides for ever.



## REFLECTIONS

There are three remarkable thoughts in this short poem, namely, that God's salvation is for all mankind, that His mercy or lovingkindness prevails over us all, and that His faithfulness guarantees the permanence of that divine mercy or lovingkindness.

The Jews as a nation came to misunderstand their privilege and mission as depositories of God's special revelation. Instead of gratefully rejoicing in the unique graces which were theirs and desiring that others might share in them, they grew to regard their election as the Chosen People as something due to their own excellence and merits, and in their zeal to protect the revelation they had received from surrounding corruption they strove to exclude all others from a part in it, as if it had been intended for themselves alone. Prophets and Psalmists frequently reminded them of their duty and the real import of their calling; but their pride, selfishness and exclusiveness made them both blind and deaf, and turned their heaven-sent privileges into a snare for them.

Christians, clergy and laity alike, are always in danger of falling into the errors and committing the sins which ruined the Jews. Not so much that they may wish positively to exclude outsiders from the graces and privileges which they enjoy, but that, by bad example and lack of zeal to bring others into the fold, they are negatively responsible for the exclusion of many of those others. Too often Christians of all classes do not appreciate their blessings. If they really did, they would want all others to share in them. Like the Jews, they do not understand that there is but one human family to which all mankind belongs, that God's salvation is for all, that the divine mercy embraces all, and that there is an obligation on those who are especially blessed of doing what they can, according to their state and circumstances—through prayer, good works and example, as agents and missionaries of the divine bounty—that all their human brethren everywhere in the world may have part in God's special graces and blessings now and forever.

## PSALM 117 (Heb. 118)

## AN ACT OF THANKSGIVING FOR SALVATION

## INTRODUCTION

This is a song of jubilant thanksgiving. It is the last of the Psalms that formed the Hallel or Hymn of Praise (Psalms 112-117), which the Jews were accustomed to sing at the three great feasts of Passover, Pente-

cost and Tabernacles, at the Dedication festival and at the New Moons.

The present Psalm was most probably sung for the first time in connection with the special celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in 444 B.C. after the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemias 8). In spite of violent opposition on the part of the Samaritans and neighboring tribes, Nehemias had succeeded in completing the walls of the Holy City; and he tells us that the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated the following month with exceeding great joy. Psalm 117 was composed and sung as an expression of that joy. It seems to have been chanted by alternate choirs, but it is difficult to determine the precise parts assigned to the separate groups. It was also intended to be a processional hymn chanted by the marchers as they went up Sion to the gates of the Temple and entered its courts. Verse 25 became the festal cry of the people as they moved about the altar of holocausts bearing leafy branches during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

*An Invitation to Give Thanks (1-4)*

Gratias agite Domino, quia bonus est; quia in aeternum misericordia eius.

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His kindness is for ever.

2. Dicat domus Israel: "In aeternum misericordia eius."

Let the house of Israel say: "His kindness is for ever."

3. Dicat domus Aaron: "In aeternum misericordia eius."

Let the house of Aaron say: "His kindness is for ever."

4. Dicant qui timent Dominum: "In aeternum misericordia eius."

Let those that fear the Lord say: "His kindness is for ever."

*All Confidence Is To Be Put in the Lord (5-9)*

5. De tribulatione invocavi Dominum; exaudivit me Dominus et liberavit me.

In my trouble I called to the Lord; the Lord answered me and delivered me.

4. "Qui timent" may refer to all faithful Israelites, or to proselytes, or to the laity among the Israelites as distinct from the priests and Levites, who are addressed in v. 3.

5. "De tribulatione" refers to the distresses of the exile and of the century that followed the return to Palestine. Previously the Israelites in their distress had been, as it were, hemmed in and harassed by enemies; but when they were delivered from their foes, they were as prisoners set free, no longer coerced and restrained by the narrowness of prison limits. They now enjoyed the spaciousness of liberty.



6. Dominus mecum est: non timeo; quid faciat mihi homo?

7. Dominus mecum est, adiutor meus, et ego confusos videbo inimicos meos.

8. Melius est confugere ad Dominum, quam confidere in homine.

9. Melius est confugere ad Dominum, quam confidere in principibus.

*Everywhere Enemies Pressed upon Him, but the Lord Saved Him (10-18)*

10. Omnes gentes circumvenerunt me: in nomine Domini contrivi eos.

11. Undique circumvenerunt me: in nomine Domini contrivi eos.

12. Circumvenerunt me sicut apes; adusserunt, sicut ignis spinas: in nomine Domini contrivi eos.

13. Pulsus, impulsus sum, ut caderem; sed Dominus adiuvit me.

14. Robur meum et fortitudo mea est Dominus; et factus est mihi salvator.

15. Vox exultationis et salutis in tabernaculis iustorum:

16. Dexterā Domini fortiter egit, dexterā Domini erexit

The Lord is with me, I do not fear; what can man do to me?

The Lord is with me, my helper, and I shall see mine enemies confounded.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord, than to trust in men.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord, than to put trust in princes.

All nations encompassed me; in the name of the Lord I destroyed them.

On every side they encompassed me; in the name of the Lord I destroyed them.

They encompassed me like bees; they burned, as a fire does thorns; in the name of the Lord I destroyed them.

I was pressed, driven that I might fall; but the Lord came to mine aid.

The Lord is my strength and my courage; yea, He is become my saviour.

The voice of exultation and salvation is in the dwellings of the just, *singing*:

The right hand of the Lord has exercised power, the right hand of

9. "In principibus." The Persian King Artaxerxes had given Nehemias permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem; but this did not prevent plots and violence on the part of hostile neighbors. It was only through the intervention of God that this opposition was defeated.

10. "Omnes gentes" here refers to Arabians, Ammonites, Samaritans, etc., spoken of in Neh. 4:7 sqq.; Esdras 4:7-23.

12. The foes addressed are the hostile peoples mentioned in verse 10.

15. "Iustorum" refers to the Israelites.

me, dexterā Domini fortiter egit.

17. Non moriar, sed vivam; et enarrabo opera Domini.

18. Castigavit, castigavit me Dominus, sed morti non tradidit me.

*A Colloquy between the Psalmist, Priests and People, As They Enter the Temple (19-25) and also in the Temple (26-29)*

19. Aperite mihi portas iustitiae: ingressus per eas gratias agam Domino.

20. Haec porta Domini, iusti intrabunt per eam.

21. Gratias agam tibi, quod audisti me, et factus es mihi salvator.

22. Lapis, quem reprobaverunt aedificantes, factus est caput anguli.

23. A Domino factum est istud; est mirabile in oculis nostris.

24. Hic est dies quem fecit Dominus; exsulemus, et laetemur de eo.

25. O Domine, salvum fac; O Domine, da prosperitatem!

26. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini; benedicimus vobis e domo Domini.

the Lord has lifted me up, the right hand of the Lord has exercised power.

I shall not die, but live; and I shall declare the works of the Lord.

The Lord has severely chastised me, but He has not given me over to death.

Open to me the gates of justice; having entered through them, I will give thanks to the Lord.

This is the portal of the Lord, the just shall enter through it.

I will give thanks to Thee, because Thou hast heard me and art become my saviour.

The stone which the builders rejected has been made the head corner-stone.

This has been done by the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes.

This is the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and be glad because of it.

O Lord, save us, O Lord, give prosperity!

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord; we bless you from the house of the Lord.

18. "Castigavit, castigavit." The repetition of the word according to the Hebrew idiom expresses intensity. The Israelites now realized the divine purpose in their sufferings, which was that they should be purified, not destroyed.

19. "Portas iustitiae," i.e., the gates of the Temple, where God imparted the gifts of justice and holiness to worshippers.

22, 23. This passage was applied by our Lord to Himself on Palm Sunday against the Pharisees and those who rejected Him (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17). Israel was a type of the Messiah, and as she was despised by the great heathen nations, so was our Lord rejected by the Jewish leaders and teachers. And just as Israel was chosen to play a principal part in the kingdom of God, since from her was to come forth the Messiah, so likewise our Lord was chosen to be the corner-stone of the Church, which was to embrace the two walls of the human race, Jews and Gentiles, since it was to rest on His teaching, grace and authority.



27. Deus est Dominus, et illuxit nobis.

Ordinate pompam cum frondibus densis usque ad cornua altaris.

28. Deus meus es tu, et gratias ago tibi; Deus meus, laudibus te extollo.

29. Gratias agite Domino, quia bonus est; in aeternum misericordia eius.

The Lord is God, and He has given us light.

Prepare a solemn procession with leafy boughs, even to the horns of the altar.

Thou art my God, and I give thanks to Thee; My God, I exalt Thee with praises.

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His kindness is for ever.

#### REFLECTIONS

Repeated sad experience, both personal and national, had taught the Psalmist many spiritual truths. Putting his trust in God he had learned, first of all, not to fear men or what men could do to him. Since God was for him and his helper, what could mortals do to him? Of course they could persecute him and make him suffer in various ways, but they could not inflict any lasting evil upon him. On the contrary, their worst efforts against him would only redound to his greater spiritual good, since he was enduring them in faith and resignation, as permitted by his Lord for high and holy purposes.

In the second place, experience had taught the Psalmist not to put his trust in men, not to take refuge in them in times of trial and peril, but only in Jehovah. Men could not be relied upon. They were too weak, physically and morally. Even if they had the good will to help, often they could not; and sometimes when they could, they would not for various reasons of their own. But in Jehovah there was always a helper, all-powerful and all-good. Of course even He, the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, did not always and soon come to the Psalmist's rescue. But in such cases the Psalmist knew it was better so. He knew that if help was refused or delayed, it was for his greater good: affording him an opportunity to do penance for his sins, to strengthen and discipline himself in many virtues, to increase the fervor of his prayers and pleas to his Lord, to grow into the divine likeness of his Master. And at length, ex-

27. "Illuxit nobis." After the dark night of calamity, God showed His people the light of His favor. The Hebrew text here is very difficult. Probably the meaning is that the people performed a sacred dance about the altar of holocausts, waving about it the branches of foliage which they were accustomed to carry on the Feast of Tabernacles. See on this verse W. H. McClellan, in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, April 1943, pp. 211-213.

perience had also convinced him, deliverance of some kind was sure to come, if not at the time and in the manner he had wished and expected, then at some other time and in some other better way.

Moreover, the Psalmist had learned in the school of Jehovah that the purpose of his trials and sufferings went far beyond the direct personal benefit they conferred on him; they were world-wide in scope. In praise and thanksgiving he was to make known to all the world what Jehovah had done for him and his nation. By thus publishing the gracious works of his Lord and revealing the record of his own spiritual experiences, he would be performing the role of a missionary, unfolding to other nations and peoples a knowledge of the nature and character of the one true God of the world. Realizing, therefore, all that Jehovah had done for him and his people in diverse and often mysterious ways, the Psalmist expresses his boundless gratitude in the exuberant prayer of this exquisite poem.

If we, in our hardships and misfortunes, do not enjoy the sense of security and calm repose in God which the Psalmist had, the immediate reason can only be the weakness of our faith as compared with his. If we are really convinced that God is our loving Father who wishes only our good and that nothing can befall us without His permission, whom or what should we fear? in whom or what should we put our trust save in Him? But such faith is both a precious gift of God and the ripe fruit of our own efforts. If we would have it, we must pray for it, we must strive for it, we must do the works of faith, we must live by it. Such faith is not a help which we can summon only in times of great need, and neglect at other times. It must be the ruling principle of our life at all times.

#### PSALM 118 (Heb. 119)

#### PRAISE OF THE DIVINE LAW

#### INTRODUCTION

We have here the longest Psalm of the Psalter, in which instruction and prayer are admirably conjoined. It is disputed whether it was intended as a compendium of doctrine for young Israelites, or whether it was rather the expression of heartfelt devotion towards God's law. It is further questioned whether an individual is speaking of his own experiences and aspirations, or of those of the nation.

Who the author was is not known; but it may be inferred from the contents of the Psalm that he was a pious youth, not without much ex-



perience, however, who was suffering persecution and imprisonment, and who, in the midst of a degenerate and wicked society, sought in an inviolable attachment to God's law the sole consolation of his captivity and trials.

As to the time of its composition it seems certain that the Psalm was written during or, more probably, after the Babylonian captivity. This we gather from its tone and language. From the fact that the Psalmist speaks of his imprisonment, and makes no mention of the Temple and its worship, some have concluded that the poem was written during the Babylonian exile, perhaps by Daniel. Others, on account of the similarity of the circumstances described in the Psalm to the evils spoken of in Esdras and Nehemias, believe that it was composed during the time of reconstruction after the captivity. Still others see in the contents of the Psalm many things that remind one of the Machabean period.

The purpose of Psalm 118 is to inculcate and express loyalty and devotion to God's law, so that wholehearted obedience to the divine will, as opposed to self-will and the service of the world, may become the guiding principle of life. It was also intended to kindle the enthusiasm of the people for their religion, and thus to preserve them from the contamination of their pagan neighbors and degenerate countrymen.

The thought of allegiance to the law is repeated unceasingly in the verses of this Psalm, but with an inexhaustible variety of expression. The thoughts at first glance appear very simple, but familiar acquaintance with them discloses a wondrous profundity and richness of conception, which was observed long ago by St. Augustine. The fervor and devotion which breathes forth from every verse of this poem has caused it to be called "The Psalm of the Saints," and "The Alphabet of Divine Love."

In every verse, except 122, there is mention, under different names, of the divine law; and by this law is to be understood the whole of divine revelation as the guide of life. It will be convenient here to explain once for all the various terms which the Psalmist employs to denote the law of God. These designations in the New Psalter are:

- (a) *lex*, the authoritative declaration of duty;
- (b) *eloquium*, speech, discourse, utterance, oracle, promise (*promissum*);
- (c) *verbum*, word;
- (d) *statuta*, the law as written, enacted;
- (e) *mandatum*, definite commands as imposed by authority;
- (f) *decretum*, decree, edict, decision, sentence, judgment;
- (g) *monitum*, admonition, advice, counsel, instruction;

- (h) *praescriptum*, order, rule, direction;
- (i) *praecepta*, commandments, decision, maxims;
- (j) *via Dei*, way of living prescribed by God's laws.

The Psalm is composed of twenty-two stanzas or strophes of eight verses each. All the verses of a strophe in the Hebrew begin with the same letter, and these letters follow from strophe to strophe the order of the Hebrew alphabet. This alphabetical arrangement was perhaps intended to assist the memory in learning the Psalm by heart. A similar construction is found in the third chapter of Lamentations.

While the Psalmist does not develop his thoughts according to a rigorously logical order (either in the poem as a whole or in the individual strophes), yet, it will aid attention in reading the Psalm to group the parts under certain ideas that dominate more or less throughout a section.

The Psalm has no title.

*Aleph. Blessed Are They Who Observe the Law of God (1-8)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Beati quorum immaculata est via, qui ambulant in lege Domini.            | Blessed are they whose way is undefiled, who walk in the law of the Lord.                          |
| 2. Beati qui observant praescripta eius, toto corde quaerunt eum,           | Blessed are they who observe His orders, <i>who</i> seek Him with all their heart,                 |
| 3. Qui non faciunt iniquitatem, sed ambulant in viis eius.                  | Who do no iniquity, but walk in His ways.  |
| 4. Tu dedisti praecepta tua, ut custodiantur valde.                         | Thou hast given Thy precepts, that they might be observed diligently.                              |
| 5. Utinam firmae sint viae meae ad custodienda statuta tua!                 | O that my ways may be steadfast in keeping Thy statutes!   |
| 6. Tunc non confundar, cum intendero ad omnia mandata tua.                  | Then I shall not be put to shame, when I reflect on all Thy commands.                              |
| 7. Celebrabo te in rectitudine cordis, cum didicero decreta iustitiae tuae. | I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learnt the decrees of Thy justice. |
| 8. Statuta tua custodiam: ne dereliqueris me omnino.                        | I will keep Thy statutes; O do not utterly forsake me.   |

1. "Via," i.e., the way of life, the manner of living.



*Beth. I Shall Gladly Observe Thy Law (9-16)*

9. Quomodo puram servabit adulescens viam suam? custodiendo verba tua.

10. Toto corde meo quaero te; ne siveris me aberrare a mandatis tuis.

11. In corde meo recondo eloquium tuum, ne peccem contra te.

12. Benedictus es, Domine; doce me statuta tua.

13. Labiis meis enarro omnia decreta oris tui.

14. De via praescriptorum tuorum laetor, sicut de omnibus divitiis.

15. De praeceptis tuis meditabor, et considerabo vias tuas.

16. Statutis tuis delectabor: non obliviscar verba tua.

How shall a young man keep his way pure? By observing Thy utterances.

With all my heart I seek after Thee; let me not go astray from Thy commands.

Thy word I treasure within my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes.

With my lips I declare all the decrees of Thy mouth.

I rejoice in the way of Thy precepts, as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on Thy precepts, and I will consider Thy ways.

I shall delight in Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy words.

*Ghimel. Give Me Help to Observe Thy Law Even among Persecutions (17-24)*

17. Bene fac servo tuo, ut vivam et custodiam verba tua.

18. Aperi oculos meos, ut considerem mirabilia legis tuae.

19. Hospes ego sum in terra, noli a me abscondere mandata tua.

20. Deficit anima mea, desiderans decreta tua omni tempore.

21. Increpasti superbos; maledicti qui declinant a mandatis tuis.

Deal kindly with Thy servant that I may live, and I will keep Thy words.

Open Thou mine eyes, that I may consider the wonders of Thy law.

I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not Thy commands from me.

My soul faints, longing for Thy decrees all the time.

Thou hast rebuked the proud; accursed are they that turn aside from Thy commands.

17. "Vivam." This word, so often used in the present Psalm, refers, first, to physical well-being and to all that it implies—viz., preservation in life, and also joy, happiness, prosperity. But the Psalmist desires to live and enjoy his existence mainly as a means to greater service of God.

22. Aufer a me opprobrium et contemptum, quia praescripta tua observo.

23. Etsi considunt principes et contra me loquuntur, servus tuus meditatur de statutis tuis.

24. Nam praescripta tua sunt deliciae meae, consilarii mei statuta tua.

Take from me reproach and contempt, for I keep Thy orders.

Though princes sit and talk against me, Thy servant meditates on Thy statutes.

For Thy orders are my delight, and Thy statutes my counsellors.

*Daleb. Oppressed with Sadness, I Ask that Thou Teach and Console Me (25-32)*

25. Prostrata est in pulvere anima mea: redde mihi vitam secundum verbum tuum.

26. Vias meas exposui et exaudisti me: doce me statuta tua.

27. Via praeceptorum tuorum institue me, et meditabor mirabilia tua.

28. Stillat lacrimas anima mea ex maerore: erige me secundum verbum tuum.

29. A via erroris arce me, et legem tuam largire mihi.

30. Viam veritatis elegi, decreta tua proposui mihi.

31. Adhaereo praescriptis tuis: Domine, noli me confundere.

32. Viam mandatorum tuorum curram, cum dilataveris cor meum.

My soul is bowed down to the dust; O give me life according to Thy word.

I have set forth my ways, and Thou hast answered me; teach me Thy statutes.

Instruct me in the way of Thy precepts, and I will meditate on Thy wonders.

My soul is in tears from sadness; lift me up according to Thy word.

Keep me from the path of error, and bestow on me Thy law.

I have chosen the way of truth; Thy decrees I have set before me.

I adhere to Thy orders; O Lord, put me not to shame.

I will run the way of Thy commands, when Thou shalt have enlarged my heart.

*He. Give Me Light and Help, that I May Follow Thy Law Faithfully (33-40)*

33. Ostende mihi, Domine, viam statutorum tuorum, et servabo eam ad amussim.

32. "Dilataveris" means to free from restraint, trouble and anxiety, and to fill one with freedom, joy and comfort.

Show me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I will observe it perfectly.



34. Instrue me, ut observem legem tuam, et custodiam illam toto corde meo.

35. Deduc me in semita mandatorum tuorum, quia ipsa delector.

36. Inclina cor meum in prae-scripta tua, et non in avaritiam.

37. Averte oculos meos, ne videant vanitatem; per viam tuam da mihi vitam.

38. Adimple servo tuo promissum tuum, quod datum est timen-tibus te.

39. Aufer opprobrium meum, quod formido, quia decreta tua iucunda.

40. Ecce desidero praecepta tua: secundum aequitatem tuam tribue mihi vitam.

*Vau. With Thy Help I Shall Profess Truth Even before the Powerful*  
(41-48)

41. Et veniant super me miserationes tuae, Domine, auxilium tuum, secundum promissum tuum.

42. Et respondebo verbum exprobrantibus mihi, quia spero in verbis tuis.

43. Noli auferre de ore meo verbum veritatis, quia in decretis tuis spero.

44. Et custodiam legem tuam semper, in saeculum et in sempiternum.

45. Et ambulabo in via spatiosa, quia praecepta tua exquiro.

46. Et loquar de praescriptis tuis in conspectu regum, et non confundar.

47. Et delectabor mandatis tuis, quae diligo.

Instruct me, that I may observe Thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart.

Lead me in the path of Thy commands, for in it I delight.

Incline my heart to Thy orders, and not to avarice.

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; quicken Thou me by Thy way.

Fulfill Thy promise to Thy servant, which is given to those that fear Thee.

Take away my reproach, which I dread, for Thy decrees are sweet.

Behold, I long for Thy precepts; give me life according to Thy equity.

Let Thy mercies come upon me, O Lord, Thine aid according to Thy promise.

So shall I give answer to them that taunt me, for I hope in Thy words.

Take not from my mouth the word of truth, for I trust in Thy decrees.

So shall I always observe Thy law, for ever and for ever.

And I shall walk in a spacious way, because I seek Thy precepts.

And I will speak of Thy orders before kings, and I shall not be put to shame.

And I shall delight in Thy commands, which I love.

48. Et attollam manus meas ad mandata tua et meditabor statuta tua.

*Zain. In Affliction and Sorrow Thy Law Is My Solace and My Joy*  
(49-56)

49. Memor esto verbi tui servo tuo, quo mihi spem dedisti.

50. Hoc est solacium meum in afflictione mea, quod eloquium tuum largitur mihi vitam.

51. Superbi insultant mihi vehementer; a lege tua non declino.

52. Memor sum antiquorum iudiciorum tuorum, Domine, et solacium est mihi.

53. Indignatio tenet me propter peccatores, qui derelinquunt legem tuam.

54. Carmina facta sunt mihi statuta tua in loco peregrinationis meae.

55. Memor sum nocte nominis tui, Domine, et custodiam legem tuam.

56. Hoc factum est mihi, quia praecepta tua servavi.

*Heth. I Have Firmly Resolved to Observe the Law, against the Bad and for the Good* (57-64)

57. Portionem meam dixi, Domine, custodire verba tua.

58. Deprecor faciem tuam toto corde, miserere mei secundum promissum tuum.

59. Perpendi vias meas, et converti pedes meos ad prae-scripta tua.

60. Festinavi et non sum cunctatus custodire mandata tua.

61. Funes peccatorum circum-

Yea, I will lift up my hands to Thy commands, and I will meditate on Thy statutes.

Remember Thy word to Thy servant, by which Thou hast given me hope.

This is my solace in mine affliction, that Thy word gives me life.

The proud deride me vehemently, *but* I swerve not from Thy law.

I am mindful of Thy judgments of old, O Lord, and it is a solace to me.

Indignation takes hold of me, because of sinners who forsake Thy law.

Thy statutes have been made my songs in the place of my sojourn.

In the night I am mindful of Thy name, O Lord, and I will keep Thy law.

This has happened to me because I have kept Thy precepts.

I said, This is my portion, O Lord, to keep Thy words.

I entreat Thy favor with *my* whole heart; have mercy on me according to Thy promise.

I have weighed my ways, and I have turned my feet to Thy orders.

I made haste and hesitated not to keep Thy commands.

The cords of sinners have



plexi sunt me: legem tuam non sum oblitus.

62. Media nocte surgo ad celebrandum te de iustis decretis tuis.

63. Amicus sum omnium timentium te et custodientium praecepta tua.

64. Gratia tua, Domine, plena est terra; statuta tua doce me.

*Teth. The Afflictions Which Thou Hast Sent Me Have Taught Me to Observe Thy Law (65-72)*

65. Bene fecisti servo tuo, Domine, secundum verbum tuum.

66. Iudicium et scientiam doce me, quia mandatis tuis confido.

67. Priusquam afflicti sum, erravi; nunc vero eloquium tuum custodio.

68. Bonus es tu et benefaciens; doce me statuta tua.

69. Machinantur fraudes contra me superbi, ego toto corde observo praecepta tua.

70. Incrassatum est ut adeps cor eorum; ego lege tua delector.

71. Bonum mihi, quod afflicti sum, ut discam statuta tua.

72. Melior est mihi lex oris tui, quam milia auri et argenti.

*Iod. Having Been Proved by Afflictions, I Ask that Thou Console Me and Confound My Foes (73-80)*

73. Manus tuae fecerunt me et formaverunt me; instrue me, ut discam mandata tua.

wrapped me round, *but* I have not forgotten Thy law.

At midnight I rise to praise Thee, because of Thy just decrees.

I am a friend of all that fear Thee, and that observe Thy precepts.

The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy kindness; O teach me Thy statutes.

Well hast Thou dealt with Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word.

Teach me judgment and knowledge, for I believe in Thy commands.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy word.

Good Thou art and dost good; O teach me Thy statutes.

The proud frame lies against me, *but* with whole heart I keep Thy precepts.

Their heart is as gross as fat, *but* I delight in Thy law.

It is good for me that I am afflicted, that I may learn Thy statutes.

The law of Thy mouth is better for me than thousands of gold and silver.

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; O instruct me, that I may learn Thy commands.

70. In the Old Testament a gross or thick heart meant moral hardness.

74. Qui timent te, videbunt me et laetabuntur, quod in verbum tuum speravi.

75. Scio, Domine, iusta esse decreta tua, et iure afflixisti me.

76. Adsit misericordia tua, ut consoletur me, secundum promissum quod dedisti servo tuo.

77. Veniant mihi miserationes tuae, ut vivam, quia lex tua delectatio mea est.

78. Confundantur superbi, quia immerito affligunt me: ego meditabor de praeceptis tuis.

79. Convertantur ad me timentes te, et qui curant praescripta tua.

80. Sit cor meum perfectum in statutis tuis, ut non confundar.

*Caph. Grievously Oppressed by Enemies, I Ardently Desire and Implore Thy Help (81-88)*

81. Deficit desiderio auxilii tui anima mea; in verbum tuum spero.

82. Deficiunt oculi mei desiderio eloquii tui: quando consolaberis me?

83. Nam, factus sicut uter in fumo, statuta tua non sum oblitus.

84. Quot sunt dies servi tui? quando facies de persequentibus me iudicium?

They that fear Thee shall see me and be glad, because I have hoped in Thy word.

I know, O Lord, Thy decrees are just, and Thou hast rightly afflicted me.

Let Thy mercy be near to comfort me, according to the promise which Thou gavest to Thy servant.

Let Thy mercies come to me that I may live, for Thy law is my delight.

Let the proud be confounded, for they unjustly afflict me; *but* I will meditate on Thy precepts.

Let those that fear Thee turn to me, and those that care for Thy orders.

Let my heart be perfect in Thy statutes, that I may not be put to shame.

My soul faints pining for Thy help; in Thy word I do hope.

Mine eyes fail longing for Thy word; when wilt Thou comfort me?

For I am become like a wine-skin in the smoke, *yet* I have not forgotten Thy statutes.

How many are the days of Thy servant? When wilt Thou judge those that persecute me?

83. "Uter in fumo." Affliction and suffering have so wrinkled and disfigured the Psalmist's appearance that he has become like an old, discarded wine-skin, hung up among the rafters of the building, blackened and wrinkled by smoke; or the meaning may be that, as smoke was used to mature and mellow wine in a skin bottle, so sorrow and affliction have been given the Psalmist as a discipline for fuller and deeper knowledge of the law.



85. Foderunt mihi superbi foveas, qui non secundum legem tuam agunt.

86. Omnia mandata tua sunt fidelia; immerito persequuntur me: adiuva me.

87. Propemodum confecerunt me in terra; ego autem non dereliqui praecepta tua.

88. Secundum misericordiam tuam serva me vivum; et custodiam praescripta oris tui.

*Lamed. Thy Law Is Firm, Delightful, of Inexhaustible Perfection, Limitless (89-96)*

89. In aeternum, Domine, est verbum tuum stabile ut caelum.

90. In generationem et generationem est fidelitas tua; condidisti terram, quae permanet.

91. Secundum decreta tua constant omni tempore, quia universa serviunt tibi.

92. Nisi lex tua delectatio mea esset, iam perissem in afflictione mea.

93. In aeternum non obliviscar praecepta tua, quia ipsis dedisti mihi vitam.

94. Tuus sum ego: salvum me fac, quoniam praecepta tua quae-sivi.

95. Me exspectant peccatores ut perdant me; ad praescripta tua attendo.

96. Omnis perfectionis vidi esse terminum: latissime patet mandatum tuum.

The proud, who do not act according to Thy law, have dug pits for me.

All Thy commands are faithful; unjustly they persecute me; do Thou help me.

They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken Thy precepts.

According to Thy mercy keep me among the living, and I will observe the orders of Thy mouth.

For ever, O Lord, is Thy word, immovable as the heavens.

Thy faithfulness is from generation to generation; Thou hast established the earth, which abides.

They stand for ever according to Thy decrees, for all things serve Thee.

Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should already have perished in mine affliction.

Thy precepts I will never forget, for by them Thou hast given me life.

I am Thine, O save me; for I have sought Thy precepts.

Sinners wait for me, to destroy me, *but* I give heed to Thy orders.

I have seen that there is an end of all perfection, but Thy command is very broad.

*Mem. Thy Law Gives Highest Wisdom and Joy (97-104)*

97. Quam diligo legem tuam, Domine! toto die meditatio mea est.

98. Inimicis meis sapientiores me fecit mandatum tuum, quia in aeternum mecum est.

99. Omnibus doctis me prudentior sum, quia de praescriptis tuis meditatio mea est.

100. Senibus intellegentior sum, quia praecepta tua observo.

101. Ab omni via mala cohibeo pedes meos, ut custodiam verba tua.

102. A decretis tuis non declino, quia tu docuisti me.

103. Quam dulcia palato meo eloquia tua! super mel sunt ori meo.

104. Praeceptis tuis intellegens fio, propterea odi omnem viam iniquitatis.

*Nun. Thy Law, Which Is My Light, I Always Observe, Even When Afflicted and Oppressed (105-112)*

105. Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum, et lumen semitae meae.

106. Iuro et statuo custodire iusta decreta tua.

107. Afflictus sum vehementer, Domine: vivum me serva secundum verbum tuum.

108. Oblationes oris mei accipe, Domine, et decreta tua doce me.

109. Vita mea periclitatur semper, sed legem tuam non obliviscor.

110. Posuerunt peccatores laqueum mihi, sed a praeceptis tuis non aberravi.

How I love Thy law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day.

Thy command has made me wiser than mine enemies, for it is ever with me.

I am wiser than all my teachers, for Thy orders are my meditation.

I understand more than the aged, because I observe Thy precepts.

I refrain my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Thy words.

I turn not aside from Thy decrees, for Thou hast taught me.

How sweet to my palate are Thy utterances! They are more than honey to my mouth.

By Thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every way of iniquity.

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

I swear and I resolve to keep Thy just decrees.

I am afflicted exceedingly, O Lord; preserve me among the living according to Thy word.

Accept, O Lord, the offerings of my mouth, and teach me Thy decrees.

My life is ever in peril, but I do not forget Thy law.

Sinners have laid a snare for me, yet I have not swerved from Thy precepts.



111. Hereditas mea praescripta tua in aeternum, quia gaudium cordis mei sunt.

112. Inclinavi cor meum ad statuta tua implenda: perpetuo, ad amussim.

*Samech. I Sincerely Detest the Wicked Whom Thou Dost Abominate*  
(113-120)

113. Duplices corde odio habeo, et diligo legem tuam.

114. Protector meus et clipeus meus es tu: in verbum tuum spero.

115. Discedite a me maligni, et observabo mandata Dei mei.

116. Sustenta me secundum promissum tuum, et vivam; noli confundere spem meam.

117. Adiuva me et salvus ero, et attendam ad statuta tua semper.

118. Spernis omnes discedentes a statutis tuis, quia mendax est cogitatio eorum.

119. Scorias reputas omnes peccatores terrae, ideo diligo praescripta tua.

120. Horrescit timore tui caro mea, et decreta tua timeo.

*Ain. Since I Love Thy Law, Delay Not to Help Me against the Proud*  
(121-128)

121. Exercui ius et iustitiam: noli me tradere opprimentibus me.

122. Sponde pro servo tuo in bonum, ne opprimant me superbi.

113. "Duplices corde." *Half-ones*, or *divided ones*, that is, those who are half Israelites and half heathen.

Thy orders are my heritage for ever, for they are the joy of my heart.

I have inclined my heart to fulfill Thy statutes perfectly to the end.

I hate those of a double heart, but I love Thy law.

Thou art my protector and my shield; in Thy word I do hope.

Depart from me, you wicked, and I will observe the commands of my God.

Uphold me according to Thy promise, and I shall live; do not confound my hope.

Help me and I shall be saved, and I will give thought to Thy statutes for ever.

Thou dost reject all that depart from Thy statutes, for their thought is a lie.

Thou dost regard as dross all the sinners of the earth; therefore I love Thy orders.

My flesh shudders for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of Thy decrees.

I have practised right and justice; give me not over to those that oppress me.

Be surety for Thy servant in good, lest the proud oppress me.

123. Oculi mei deficiunt desiderio auxilii tui, et iusti eloquii tui.

124. Fac cum servo tuo secundum bonitatem tuam, et statuta tua doce me.

125. Servus tuus sum ego, instrue me, ut cognoscam praescripta tua.

126. Tempus agendi est Domino: violaverunt legem tuam.

127. Ideo diligo mandata tua, plus quam aurum et obryzum.

128. Ideo omnia praecepta tua elegi mihi; omnem viam falsam odio habeo.

*Phe. Instruct and Protect One Who Admires and Loves Thy Law*  
(129-136)

129. Mirabilia sunt praescripta tua, ideo observat ea anima mea.

130. Declaratio verborum tuorum illuminat, docet inexpertos.

131. Os meum aperio et attraho auram, quia mandata tua desidero.

132. Convertere ad me et miserere mei, ut soles erga diligentes nomen tuum.

133. Gressus meos dirige secundum eloquium tuum, neque ulla dominetur in me nequitia.

134. Libera me ab oppensione

Mine eyes fail longing for Thine aid, and for Thy just word.

Deal with Thy servant according to Thy goodness, and teach me Thy statutes.

I am Thy servant, instruct me, that I may know Thy orders.

It is time for the Lord to act, for they have violated Thy law.

Therefore I love Thy commands, more than gold, even the finest.

Therefore I have chosen for myself all Thy precepts, and I hate every false way.

Thy orders are wonderful; therefore my soul observes them.

The unfolding of Thy words gives light; it teaches the unexperienced.

I open my mouth and draw breath, because I long for Thy commands.

Turn to me and have mercy on me, as Thou art wont to do toward those that love Thy name.

Direct my steps according to Thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.

Deliver me from the oppression

130. "Inexpertos." The simple ones (those not instructed in this world's learning), when taught of God, really know more about things that matter than do the wise of the world who are devoid of religious instruction.

132. Those who love God's law and revelation have, as it were, a claim upon His grace and mercy.

134. "Ab oppensione, etc." He who is calumniated is thereby oppressed, and in so far is impeded from the observance of the commandments.



hominum, et custodiam praecepta tua.

135. Serenum praebe vultum tuum servo tuo, et doce me statuta tua.

136. Rivi aquarum fluxerunt de oculis meis, quia non custodierunt legem tuam.

*Sade. Thy Law Is Just, Firm and Pure (137-144)*

137. Iustus es, Domine, et rectum iudicium tuum.

138. Cum iustitia imposuisti praescripta tua et cum firmitate magna.

139. Consumit me zelus meus, quia obliviscuntur verba tua adversarii mei.

140. Probatum est eloquium tuum valde, et servus tuus diligit illud.

141. Parvulus sum et contemptus: praecepta tua non obliviscor.

142. Iustitia tua est iustitia aeterna, et lex tua firma.

143. Angustia et tribulatio venerunt super me, mandata tua deliciae meae sunt.

144. Iustitia praescriptorum tuorum aeterna est, instrue me et vivam.

*Coph. With My Whole Heart I Cry: Give Me Grace to Observe Thy Law (145-152)*

145. Clamo ex toto corde meo: exaudi me, Domine; statuta tua observo.

146. Clamo ad te; salvum me fac, et custodiam praescripta tua.

147. Venio diluculo et auxilium imploro; spero in verba tua.

of men, and I will keep Thy precepts.

Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant, and teach me Thy statutes.

Streams of water have run from mine eyes, because men have not kept Thy law.

Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is upright.

Thou hast imposed Thy orders with justice and with great firmness.

My zeal consumes me, because mine adversaries forget Thy words.

Thy word is purified exceedingly, and Thy servant loves it.

I am small and despised, *but* I do not forget Thy precepts.

Thy justice is an everlasting justice, and Thy law is firm.

Distress and anguish have come over me, *yet* Thy commands are my delight.

The justice of Thy orders is eternal; instruct me and I shall live.

I cry out from my whole heart: answer me, O Lord; I observe Thy statutes.

I call to Thee; O save me, and I will keep Thy orders.

I come at dawn and implore help; I hope in Thy words.

148. Praeveniunt oculi mei vigilias noctis, ut mediter eloquium tuum.

149. Vocem meam audi secundum misericordiam tuam, Domine, et secundum decretum tuum da mihi vitam.

150. Appropinquant persecuentes me inique; a lege tua longe absunt.

151. Prope es tu, Domine, et omnia mandata tua fidelia.

152. Pridem cognovi ex praescriptis tuis te in aeternum fundasse ea.

*Res. Save Me from Persecutors and Deceivers (153-160)*

153. Vide afflictionem meam et eripe me, quia legem tuam non sum oblitus.

154. Defende causam meam et redime me; secundum eloquium tuum largire mihi vitam.

155. Longe a peccatoribus salus, quia statuta tua non curant.

156. Miserationes tuae multae, Domine; secundum decreta tua largire mihi vitam.

157. Multi persequuntur me et tribulant me: a praescriptis tuis non declino.

158. Vidi praevaricantes et tae-duit me, quia eloquium tuum non custodierunt.

159. Vide, praecepta tua diligo, Domine; secundum misericordiam tuam vivum me serva.

160. Verbi tui caput constantia est, et aeternum est omne decretum iustitiae tuae.

Mine eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Thy word.

Hear my voice according to Thy mercy, O Lord, and give me life according to Thy decree.

They draw near that persecute me wickedly; they are far from Thy law.

Thou art near, O Lord, and all Thy commands are faithful.

Of old I have known of Thy orders, that Thou hast founded them for ever.

See mine affliction and rescue me, for I am not unmindful of Thy law.

Defend my cause and redeem me; give me life according to Thy word.

Salvation is far from sinners, because they care not for Thy statutes.

Many are Thy mercies, O Lord; give me life according to Thy decrees.

Many persecute me and trouble me; *yet* I turn not aside from Thine orders.

I have seen the faithless and have been wearied, because they kept not Thy word.

See, O Lord, I love Thy precepts; according to Thy mercy preserve my life.

The sum of Thy word is firmness, and every decree of Thy justice is for ever.



*Sin. Thy Law Fills Me with Reverence, Joy, Love, Peace, Confidence*  
(161-168)

161. Principes persequuntur me sine causa, verba autem tua veretur cor meum.

162. Laetor de eloquiis tuis, sicut qui invenit praedam multam.

163. Iniquitatem odio habeo et detestor; diligo legem tuam.

164. Septies in die laudem dico tibi propter iusta iudicia tua.

165. Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam, neque ullum est illis offendiculum.

166. Praestolor auxilium tuum, Domine, et facio mandata tua.

167. Custodit anima mea prae-scripta tua, et diligit ea valde.

168. Custodio praecepta et iussa tua, quia omnes viae meae in conspectu tuo.

Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart reveres Thy words.

I rejoice because of Thy words, as one who has found great spoil.

I hate and detest iniquity, *but* I love Thy law.

Seven times a day I praise Thee, because of Thy just judgments.

Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing is a stumbling-block to them.

I look for Thy help, O Lord, and I keep Thy commands.

My soul keeps Thy orders, and loves them very much.

I keep Thy precepts and Thy ordinances, for all my ways are before Thee.

*Tau. Let My Prayer Come to Thee; Deliver Me and Instruct Me, for without Thee I Am a Wandering Sheep* (169-176)

169. Clamor meus ad te veniat, Domine: secundum verbum tuum instrue me.

170. Perveniat precatio mea ad te, secundum eloquium tuum eripe me.

171. Fundant labia mea hymnum, cum docueris me statuta tua.

172. Cantet lingua mea eloquium tuum, quia omnia mandata tua sunt iusta.

173. Adsit manus tua, ut adiuvet me, quia praecepta tua elegi.

Let my cry come before Thee, O Lord; instruct me according to Thy word.

Let my supplication come to Thee; rescue me according to Thy word.

Let my lips pour forth a hymn, when Thou teachest me Thy statutes.

Let my tongue sing of Thy word, because all Thy commands are just.

Let Thy hand be present to help me, for I have chosen Thy precepts.

174. Cupio salutem a te, Domine, et lex tua delectatio mea est. I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my delight.

175. Vivat anima mea et laudet te, et decreta tua adiuvent me. Let my soul live and praise Thee, and may Thy decrees help me.

176. Oberro ut ovis quae periiit; quaere servum tuum, quia mandata tua non sum oblitus. I wander like a sheep that has been lost; seek Thy servant, for I have not forgotten Thy commands.

#### REFLECTIONS

Verses 1-8.—The Psalmist is enamored with the surpassing excellence of the divine law, and is thrilled at the thought of the deep sense of peace and blessedness that is theirs who observe its precepts. God's law is a manifestation of His will in our regard; and, being our loving Father, He cannot but desire our greatest good. His will is the secret of our peace, and His commands made known His will. Allured and deceived by other attractions and passing delights we may disregard the divine law, but in so acting we forfeit the blessedness of peace and enter upon ways that can only lead to pain and grief.

Verses 9-16.—But God's laws, being naturally very high and holy, are not easy to obey; their perfect observance is beyond our unaided nature. Hence we need to study and ponder, not only the divine precepts, but also ourselves in relation to them. With mind and heart it is easy to admire and love the true, the good, the pure, the beautiful; but to pursue these treasures in practice and to make our actual life conform to them, we must constantly implore divine aid. We know we need this special help, and that we shall receive it if we earnestly seek it.

Verses 17-24.—The great purpose of our lives is to make them useful and pleasing in God's sight. Anything else is not worth the while.

175. The Psalmist prays that the divine ordinances may be a help to him, either as affording him a rule and guide of life or as punishing his enemies.

176. "Oberro, etc." Two explanations are possible here: (a) the Psalmist confesses that, in spite of his love for God's law, he has not always been faithful to it, but he insists that his aberration has been only temporary and the result of frailty, and that therefore God will not forsake him—his will and purpose have been right, but his flesh has been weak; (b) the Psalmist is not describing his spiritual state and moral failures, but his outward circumstances and physical condition. Like a sheep lost and wandering in the wilderness of the world, he is in constant danger, but in all his difficulties he does not forget God's law; and therefore he has a right to expect God's help in accordance with the divine promise. This latter explanation is more probable, as being more in harmony with the spirit of the Psalm.



Were we to accomplish all else and miss this, we should be failures in God's sight. Moreover, this is the one end of life here below which alone can still the longing which haunts us all our days; and the way to this end is revealed in the commandments of the divine law. If we would escape the fate of sinners and be strengthened against their attacks, God's law is our protection and our shield. Consciousness of personal integrity is a source of inward peace and calm in a world of tumult and war.

Verses 25-32.—When bowed down with sorrow, the Psalmist told God all about it, he took his heavenly Father into his confidence; and he was answered and made to see that the way out of trouble for him was to be found only in the divine statutes and precepts. When his soul was weeping itself away for grief, he did not seek relief in the dissipation of sin, but in prayer and faithfulness to God's judgments and testimonies, knowing that wrong ways always lead away from the true source of help and soon terminate in greater grief. And not only did the Psalmist, in times of distress, choose the way of law and obedience, but he put his choice into practice, and his heart overflowed with inward peace and spiritual joy.

Verses 33-40.—God's special revelation to the world and a general conviction that the divine will must be done are not enough for us; we must also be enlightened as to the meaning of that revelation and the requirements of that will. And such knowledge is more than we can attain to of ourselves. We need therefore often to pray for divine light and guidance, that we may be given to know, and to love, and to do things that are pleasing to God. Herein is the soul's true delight, which in ignorance frail mortals too often seek through unjust gain and worldly vanities.

To the uninstructed and the earthly the divine commands seem hard and God's ways laborious, but other ways to the happiness for which we yearn and for which we were made there are none. This much reason and experience can teach, but to feel it and to act upon it, we need God's help. Nor can He be forever deaf and irresponsible to our longing desire to know Him and to please Him.

Verses 41-48.—The Psalmist pleads that God may keep His promise and come to him in visits of lovingkindness; and that so, a knowledge of truth as disclosed in the divine law may not be taken from him. Then he will be able to bear witness to God and have an answer for carpers and scoffers; then it will be easy and delightful to keep the

divine precepts, and to understand that true liberty consists, not in doing as one pleases, but in doing what one ought to do according to one's state and obligations. Obedience to law and the exercise of freedom within the restraints which law imposes give one strength to face either adversaries or rulers unabashed, and fills the soul with a sense of security and calm delight.

Verses 49-56.—In the face of trials the Psalmist pleads the relation of a servant in the household of his Lord, and he is encouraged to hope for help by reason of a promise already given him by his Master. He is comforted, also, by remembering the past power of God's word in his behalf. When the proud have ridiculed him for his simple faith and fidelity, the ancient and enduring divine words have been his solace and his peace, though at times he has burned with righteous indignation on account of the lawlessness of the wicked. The brevity of his life is saddening, but God's law fills it with song. Likewise, the darkness of his nights is oppressive, but remembrance of the divine Name illumines it. But whether his life in itself has been sad or happy, or his nights dark or lightsome, the Psalmist is satisfied with his lot, since he has been blessed with obedience and fidelity to the requirements of the divine law. That, he knows, is what really matters in the last analysis.

Verses 57-64.—Consciousness of divine friendship and fellowship makes the keeping of God's law easy and delightful, instead of hard and forbidding. And while we can do nothing in a positive way to merit and obtain so great a gift, we can and we must do all in our power by cooperating with God's grace to retain it, once we have it. The effort thus required of us must be wholehearted, thoughtful and prompt, both because of the preciousness of the treasure we guard and because of the presence all around, within us and without, of manifold enemies who would despoil us. If our wakeful thoughts are habitually what they ought to be, they will be God-ward even in the solitude and dead of night, and we shall prefer as our regular companions those whose minds are like our own.

Despite the moral ugliness of men, God's lovingkindness floods the world, and it is especially manifested in the admonitions, precepts, counsels and perfections of the divine law, all of which are intended for our greatest good in this world and our eternal happiness in the next. Whether or not the Psalmist understood the vast and glorious meanings and implications of God's special revelation to man, we of the Gospel dispensation understand them, and yet it would seem too often our enthusiasm for them and appreciation of them are much less than his.



Verses 65-72.—Briefly reviewing his whole life, the Psalmist sees that the Lord has been good to him all along. Many times perhaps in the course of the years he had not grasped this consoling truth. Now he appreciates the great value of that knowledge and judgment which instinctively and quickly discern good from evil. His afflictions also have exercised a salutary discipline upon him, calling him back to virtue when he went astray, and teaching him holy restraint in time of trial. Being schooled in the divine law and aware of the tranquil joys it brings to the observer's heart, he is unmoved either by the slanders of his enemies or the gross and cheap delights of the wicked. Yes, he is now sure, God is always good and doing good, and His holy law is precious above all gold and silver.

Verses 73-80.—It is not enough that God should have made and fashioned us. We are frail and incomplete beings without supplementary help. Even when we understand what we have to do to please God and save our souls, we cannot do it unless God aids us. Neither can we rightly bear the afflictions inseparable from our mortal nature and earthly existence and necessary for our temporal welfare and spiritual well-being, however much permitted by God's love, without the sustaining and soothing assistance of divine mercy and lovingkindness. These extra gifts, therefore, we must constantly implore for our own sake, as well as for others, who, seeing the help which God gives His servants in answer to their prayers, may be gladdened and encouraged to put their trust in Him and keep His commandments.

Verses 81-88.—The Psalmist here shows himself a model for all holy souls in time of adversity. For some reason he has been severely persecuted. His soul has pined for deliverance, his eyes are weary looking up to Heaven for help, his body is wasted and worn. And yet he has not become rebellious nor impatient. He only pleads the more fervently to be delivered and comforted, alleging his faithfulness. His life is short and his days are growing fewer. If God does not soon avenge the wrongs he is suffering, it will be too late, he will be gone. God is just and true to the laws He has given; and yet the wicked go on, they have their way, they have almost made an end of this patient sufferer! In the face of it all the Psalmist remains faithful, meekly begging for help. He longs to be relieved so as to be able to serve God without hindrance, and in gratitude for this blessing he promises that his piety and devotion will increase.

Verses 89-96.—This singer is consoled by contemplating the universe.

He beholds the firmament above and the earth beneath, and he sees how steadfast and constant they are in all their parts, season after season and generation after generation; how faithful they are to the laws that govern them, how obedient to the will of Him who made them. But the material and irrational world cannot know or love its Creator and Ruler; it cannot understand the holy nature and purpose of His laws. For the most part its creatures are unknown and irresponsible even to one another. The stars shine forever in the heavens, the grasses and trees grow on the earth, the flowers bloom, the rivers and streams wind their way to the sea; but they are all unconscious alike of one another and of their Maker. Not so the Psalmist. He is on a much higher plane than these. He can know God, and he loves the divine law, which has strengthened him in affliction and revived him in weakness. He feels he can ask God to save him because he belongs to God in a special manner and has sought His precepts. When the wicked have tried to destroy him, he has simply turned his eyes away from them to the divine assurances and testimonies. During his life he has seen much of created beauty and perfection, and has delighted in them as images and shadows of their Creator. But he has found also that they are all limited, and as such unsatisfying, inadequate to the requirements of his soul. He therefore turns to the ideal as pictured in the divine law. There he finds a vision limitless and undimmed by dross or imperfection of any kind, unreached by any creature, stretching away from all time into eternity.

Verses 97-104.—The superior knowledge and wisdom which the Psalmist here claims for himself are due to the sources of his instruction. He has been taught primarily by God through the divine law; whereas his enemies, his human and aged instructors, have drawn their knowledge from worldly fountains. The wisdom of these latter teachers is transient and often uncertain at best; his is as lasting and unshakable as its divine Author. The school in which he has learned and the spiritual food on which he has fed have filled his life with good things and have satisfied his soul. The tortures of mind and conscience which sinners experience as a result of their pursuits, the disappointing harvests of worldlings, the disillusionments of those who put their trust in temporal accomplishments, have all been unknown to this poet of heavenly wisdom and light. Those others are unwilling to miss or forego material gains and fugitive pleasures, they have no taste for the higher and purer delights of the spirit, they believe not in things unseen. He, on the contrary, instructed from above, has given his mind and heart to the



understanding of the divine law and has discovered the secret and purpose of the present life, which is to know God and to love and serve Him only, and consequently to hate everything and every way that would take or keep him from God.

Verses 105-112.—The divine law is a reflection of the divine nature, and so it cannot be other than good. And since it has been given for man, it must have as its purpose man's higher well-being, however much it may forbid at times lower and lesser goods. The Psalmist has found it so. For him God's law has been a sure guide and a shining light in all places and at all times. Therefore he has made its observance his lasting choice, even though this decision has meant many privations, much self-denial, misunderstandings, persecutions. If the keeping of the law has not removed all his afflictions, it has taught him how to bear them and how to learn from them many lessons which he has needed to know; it has made him understand that sometimes pains are better for our spiritual welfare than pleasures, sorrows sweeter than joys, losses richer than gains. He has found that the conscientious observance of the divine law has done for him what no material or temporal good has been able to do; it has given him an inner spiritual peace and joy of heart which transcend all time and earthly circumstances. Therefore he has determined to adhere to those heaven-sent statutes as long as life lasts.

Verses 113-120.—Breakers of God's laws can never know the love for the divine commandments in which the Psalmist rejoices. His raptures are inconceivable to them, even foolish, perhaps. Man becomes like the food on which he feeds. Sinners are without the love of the divine law; they never know its strengthening, consoling, life-giving effects, because they do not give it a chance to prove its worth. They do not love its Author and Giver. He is a stranger to them and they to Him. They seek to satisfy the hunger and thirst of their souls by violating God's commands and precepts, but all in vain. They are ever yearning, ever seeking the fullness which they crave, without finding it. Their satisfaction is only in God, but they look for it in things which are opposed to Him and which lead away from Him.

The Psalmist loves the divine law; it has been his shelter and his shield. He avoids evil-doers, because they would lead him away from the divine commands and would endanger his soul. He does not presume on his own strength but trusts in God's promises and helps. He is awed and made to tremble at the fate of sinners, whose hopes and plans are vain and futile, and whose end is everlasting ruin.

The Psalmist's feelings and frame of mind are clear to spiritual people. They who are really in love with any person or thing are filled with dread at the thought of losing that person or thing.

Verses 121-128.—The sacred singer is being oppressed by evil-doers. He has done them no harm, but his good life and holy practices are a standing reproach to them and their ways, and they dislike him. They would do away with him and his kind, that they might feel more free in their wickedness. Though the Psalmist's service of his Lord has not been perfect, he has done his best in work and prayer according to his frailty. He has loved holiness and all the precepts of law because they lead to holiness. His oppressors, on the contrary, have flouted the divine law; they hate it and all its restraints. Why then does God let him suffer at their hands? Why does he permit evil men, like evil weeds, to flourish? The Psalmist did not know the full answer which Christians have, that thus he was being tried and purified, like gold by fire, for a supreme and unimaginable blessedness to be conferred hereafter; but in his implicit faith and confidence in God's word and promises he was certain that it was all right, and that all would yet be well with him somehow, somewhere, when Jehovah in His wisdom and mercy would arise with power in his behalf.

Verses 129-136.—The fundamental reason for the Psalmist's intense love of the divine law with its many doctrines and implications was his all-absorbing love of the Author and Revealer of that law. Real and profound love draws the heart of the lover to everything connected with the beloved object, and especially to anything which gives deeper insight into that object, thereby increasing and intensifying the lover's desire for it and enjoyment of it. That is why the Psalmist strives with delight to penetrate ever more and more the depths and profundities of God's law, why he prays for better understanding of it, why he longs for the divine commands, why he fears the tarnish of sinners and iniquity, why he weeps at the sight of the transgressions of men. Endowed with this precious gift of intense love of his Creator, he not only finds the observance of the divine precepts easy and delightful, but he searches unceasingly for every slightest expression and intimation of his Lord's will and good pleasure.

Thus, it is the divine will in all its manifestations, and not the inner joy and peace which accrue to him from his holy life and actions, which constitutes the Psalmist's primary quest in his study and observance of God's law. It is God Himself that he craves, and the divine will, manifested in the holy law, is the key to the heart of the divine Being.



Real love is likewise unselfish. Seeking principally the good of others, it unwittingly procures its own most precious good; giving its life in selfless devotion to the lives and souls of others, it finds its own life more surely and more abundantly.

Verses 137-144.—The Psalmist loves the law because it is a mirror of God and His righteousness, a shining light which at once reflects the divine nature and leads undeviatingly to it. God has freely assumed a special care for man and ordered him to a lofty destiny, and in faithfulness He has given the law as a guide and means to these ends. Like Himself, the law in its essential teaching and characteristics is eternal. It is the spring and source of real life now and forever; and the Psalmist here seems faintly to anticipate New Testament revelation, and to feel that a life on earth which is lived in accordance with the eternal testimonies must be unceasing in its duration. Why this extraordinary love and zeal for the divine Being and His righteousness, and of the law which reflects Him and leads to Him, if death terminates it all? Why all this yearning and striving to be like God, to shun sin, to suffer persecution and contempt, to endure distress and anguish, if the grave is to bury it all?

Verses 145-152.—It seems clear that the sacred singer throughout this long Psalm was a chosen soul whose whole being was aflame with love of One whom he had never seen, but for whom alone he felt that he had been made and brought into being, whose spiritual companionship was the very breath of his nostrils, and without whose fellowship there would be nothing else on earth worth living for. His entire life, therefore, was given over to devout prayer and reflection, to a study of God's words and the desire to know the divine will, and to faithful observance of every requirement or counsel of the revealed law. With such a temperament and disposition, conversation with his Lord was more attractive and refreshing than sleep, and meditation more strengthening and invigorating than bodily rest.

To such a soul, so completely and habitually absorbed with the spiritual, the pleasures and allurements of the material world made no appeal; they hardly existed at all; there was no felt need for them. The appetite and desire which would have led to them were consumed by a fire within which impelled to the heavenly and the divine. And yet this holy man had foes, who not only disliked him and his way of life, but who sought to do him harm! They even came near him with evil purpose; but he feared them not. Far closer to him, he felt, and stronger, was Jehovah, his God, and the everlasting assuring promises of the

divine law. With such helps ever at his side whom or what could he fear, in life or in death?

Verses 153-160.—In this section of his poem the Psalmist shows us how excessive temporal trouble can for a time and to some extent upset, even dismay, the holiest life and the most solid virtue. Human enemies and lawless sinners have so encompassed him and disturbed the spiritual peace and joy of his life, that he is forced to plead to Jehovah over and over in these verses for help, for rescue, for deliverance from his adversaries and the calamities they have brought upon him. Of course, with God as his assured Helper and Friend, those evil ones cannot finally triumph over him or bring on him lasting harm. But, for the time being, they do greatly interfere with his spiritual life and inject discord into the sweet music of his days. He wants only to be left alone, so as peacefully to commune with his divine Friend, to read and ponder the divine law, and to be able to work and pray, and to do the will of his Lord at all times. But those wicked ones care nothing for such things. They ignore and despise God's precepts and judgments, they hate everyone who is not like themselves, they would drag all others down to their own condition and state of degradation.

Why does God permit these things to happen? Assuredly it can only be for the good of His chosen ones—to develop their virtue, to prove their worth, and in the end to make them better and more pleasing to Himself.

Whenever in extreme distress, the Psalmist is always consoled and strengthened by recalling the revealed eternal goodness and fidelity of God, the assuring promises of the divine law, and his own past experiences of relief and deliverance. His recorded practices have become instructions for devout souls in all succeeding ages.

Verses 161-168.—The battle between religion and irreligion, between virtue and sin, which raged in the preceding section, has yielded here to spiritual force. The Psalmist is as calm and joyous now as he was troubled and depressed then. Through all his agitation and suffering he clung faithfully and tenaciously to God's word and laws, and now he has his reward in peace and gladness of heart, all the more felt and appreciated because of the recent conflict. His struggle for good against evil has won him great spiritual booty and deepened his love for the divine law. All day long he is singing the praises of his Lord. More than ever he now realizes that love of God, shown in obedience to His commands, brings peace to the soul, removing causes of unrest, making material and outward things servants instead of masters of one's



heart, and subordinating all lesser goods to the sway of the one absolute Good for which he was brought into the world.

Warfare of any kind is always hard and painful. But here on earth it seems necessary for the proper awareness and appreciation of the treasures of peace. Unless we have to fight ever so often for our ideals and the goods we cherish, we become indifferent to them and cease to value them. Also, too much peace, enjoyed for long, in a world like this, seems to lull human nature into a sense of false security, producing inactivity and decay.

Verses 169-176.—Again in this last section of his long poem the Psalmist asks for understanding and deliverance. He seeks light to know and strength to do what is pleasing to God, and also freedom from hindrances which would foil his best efforts. He has devoutly prayed for these favors many times before, and as often he has been answered.

His next thought here therefore is of praise. His lips and tongue will extol the divine statutes and commands for all the blessings they have brought him. In the future as in the past, he is sure Jehovah will help and save him, for he has chosen as his guide the divine precepts and has found his delight in God's law. His desire to live is only to praise and serve his Master. And yet, in spite of all his holy wishes and practices, he is sadly aware of his inborn weakness, of his inclination to stray like a lost sheep; and so he prays his Lord to be with him at all times, as a shepherd with the least of his flock.

### PSALM 119 (Heb. 120)

#### AGAINST WICKED TONGUES

##### INTRODUCTION

This is the first of a group of fifteen Psalms (119-133), called "Gradual Psalms" or "Songs for the Goings-Up." The Vulgate title for each of them is *Canticum graduum*. There are various explanations of this title. (a) Some say these Psalms were called "Songs of the Steps," because they were sung on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles by Levitical singers who stood on the fifteen steps that led from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Men in the Second Temple; but the Talmud passages cited in support of this opinion are not to the point. (b) Others think the title of these Psalms refers to their "ascending" struc-

ture, according to which each verse rises on the thought of the preceding verse; but this is really not the case except in Psalm 120. (c) Still others, basing their theory on Esdras 7:9, suppose these Psalms were sung by the returning exiles, going up from the plains of Babylon to the highlands of Judea; but this cannot be, since Psalm 121 shows that the city and Temple were restored, and Psalm 133 represents the liturgy of the Temple as fully carried out. (d) The most probable explanation is that these Psalms were called "gradual," or "Songs of Ascents," or "Songs for the Goings-Up," because they were sung by the Jewish pilgrims as they went up from distant lands to the Holy City for the great annual feasts.

We have perhaps in this first Gradual Psalm the expression of the sufferings of a pious Israelite as he proceeded through hostile surroundings to Jerusalem for worship in the Temple. His peaceful salutations as he journeyed met only with harsh rebukes from the unsympathetic and barbarous nomads whom he encountered. The Psalmist is therefore complaining to God against the persecution and calumny of the godless people that surround him.

1. Canticum ascensionum. A Song of Ascents.

*The Psalmist, Living among Evil Men, Asks God to Be Delivered from Their Snares and Foretells Their Punishment (1-4)*

Ad Dominum, cum tribularer,  
clamavi et exaudivit me.

I called to the Lord in my  
distress, and He answered me.

2. Domine, libera animam me-  
am a labio iniquo, a lingua do-  
losa.

O Lord, deliver my soul from  
the evil lip, and from a deceitful  
tongue.

3. Quid dabit tibi aut quid ad-  
det tibi, lingua dolosa?

What will He give to thee, or  
what will He add to thee, O  
deceitful tongue?

4. Sagittas potentis acutas et  
carbones genistarum.

Sharp arrows of the mighty,  
and hot coals of broom-wood.

3. This and the following verse are differently interpreted, but the rendering gives the obvious and more probable meaning.

4. "Carbones genistarum," i.e., a fierce fire. The Hebrew has *coals of broom*, that is, coals made from broom-wood. Broom was a desert shrub. "Sharp arrows" and "coals" are metaphors signifying divine chastisements.—Some interpreters think this verse is a description of the deceitful tongue, which, like a deadly bow in the hands of an experienced archer, shoots forth wounding words that do not miss their mark (Dr. Bird).



*The Psalmist Laments His Long Sojourn among Sinners (5-7)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 5. Heu mihi, quod dego in Mosoch, habito in tentoriis Cedar! | Woe is me that I sojourn in Mosoch, that I dwell among the tents of Cedar! |
| 6. Nimium habitavit anima mea cum iis, qui oderunt pacem.    | My soul has dwelt too long with them that hate peace.                      |
| 7. Ego pacem cum loquor, illi urgent ad bellum.              | When I speak of peace, they press for war.                                 |

## REFLECTIONS

It is uncertain whether the Psalmist's complaint here is against actual foes who at particular times made life miserable for him, or against the uncongenial surroundings of his earthly sojourn in general. In either case he is now on pilgrimage to the great Temple in Jerusalem. It is here he is longing to be. He can hardly wait until he reaches that hallowed spot, to pour out his soul in worship before the symbol of Jehovah's real presence here on earth. It is his Lord and God for whom his heart is yearning, and the Holy City and its Temple as enshrining the special divine presence. Coarser people are all around, and do not share this singer's aspirations and sentiments; they have no sympathy with him. Nay more, they regard him as a fool and a nuisance, and their feelings against him are often manifested in rude and abusive words and actions. They are for the material world and its pleasures, honors, gifts, rewards; he seeks rather the God who made all things, material and spiritual, temporal and eternal, and of which this present visible creation and all it can bestow are but mere shadows and unsubstantial pageants, incapable of ever completely satisfying the cravings of the human heart and soul, even for the briefest time. The Psalmist therefore is a pilgrim, and feels the loneliness of his condition and the uncongeniality of his surroundings, whether he is on his way to the Temple in Jerusalem, or just making his longer journey through life.

The experience and sentiments of this poet are common to spiritual people and holy souls in every age. They have felt and they feel as he did; their view and estimate of the world are the same as his. They know that this earthly scene of fading splendor and its votaries, when allowed to get out of control, become a deception and a snare, like deceitful tongues and lying lips, which would rob man's soul of its true goal and

5. "Cedar" refers to the descendants of Ismael (Gen. 25:3), who were wild tribes that roamed through the Arabian desert. The Psalmist is deeply grieved that he has to encounter the hostility of people like these barbarians.

inheritance, dragging it away to perdition. And yet they also know that it is necessary of course to remain here for one's allotted time and to complete the appointed tasks; but who that is wise would care to tarry longer?

## PSALM 120 (Heb. 121)

## THE LORD IS THE CUSTODIAN OF HIS PEOPLE

## INTRODUCTION

If the pious Israelites, who from far-off countries journeyed yearly to Jerusalem for the great festivals, experienced the distress of exile described in the preceding Psalm, they were surely comforted in chanting this present one, which is a splendid picture of the paternal goodness of God and His watchful Providence over His people. As the pilgrims drew near to the Holy City and their wearied eyes caught the first glimpses of Mount Sion outlined against the horizon, their joyful enthusiasm found expression in the strains of this beautiful poem sung by alternating groups. What a happiness to be again approaching Jerusalem, the center of national life and worship, and there to realize the loving nearness of Jehovah to Israel and to every individual Israelite in all the vicissitudes of life!

- |                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Canticum ascensionum. | A Song of Ascents. |
|--------------------------|--------------------|

*The Psalmist Is Confident of Help from God Who Always Protects His People (1-6)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Attollo oculos meos in montes: unde veniet auxilium mihi?        | I lift mine eyes to the mountains; from whence shall come my help?        |
| 2. Auxilium meum a Domino, qui fecit caelum et terram.           | My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.                      |
| 3. Non sinet nutare pedem tuum, non dormitabit, qui custodit te. | He will not suffer thy foot to slip, nor will He slumber that keeps thee. |
| 4. Ecce non dormitabit neque dormiet, qui custodit Israel.       | Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.             |
| 5. Dominus custodit te, Domine.                                  | The Lord keeps thee; the Lord   |

5. "A latere dextro tuo." The left side of the soldier in battle was protected by the shield.



minus protectio tua a latere dextro tuo. is thy protection upon thy right side.

6. Per diem sol non feriet te, neque luna per noctem. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

*The Lord Will Preserve His People from All Evil (7, 8)*

7. Dominus custodiet te ab omni malo: custodiet animam tuam. The Lord will preserve thee from every evil; He will keep thy soul.

8. Dominus custodiet exitum tuum et introitum tuum, et nunc et usque in saeculum. The Lord will guard thy going out and thy coming in, both now and for evermore.

REFLECTIONS

The lessons of this Psalm are quite the same, whether we take it as an antiphonal song sung in parts by different singers, or all by one singer, who, after the first two verses, is uttering to himself the assurances which confirm his own faith; and these lessons are: strength bravely to meet and courage cheerfully to bear the difficulties and hardships of our earthly exile and pilgrimage in view of glories to come.

The Psalmist's long, hard pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Sanctuary which he sought there were symbols respectively of our journey through life and the Heaven we hope for at the end. The prospect which gave him hope and cheer was feeble and faint compared to ours; and yet it enabled him at all times to look above and beyond his present low estate of the visible and the transient to the unseen heights of his soul's true home. Six times in these few verses he speaks of Jehovah as the Keeper of Israel or of the single soul. Firmly fixing his trust in so great a Helper, he is convinced that nothing can really harm his life, his soul, his most precious possession, now or in the future. He knows of course that many strange and unguessed hardships may lie ahead in wait for him; but he will neither worry nor fear. Perhaps he will never live to encounter them at all; or if he does, they will not be so many or so formidable as he might have expected. At any rate, whatever may be his lot, Jehovah is his Keeper; and in the strength of that assurance he will go bravely and cheerfully on to the end, confident that all will be finally well for his soul.

6. "Feriet." In Oriental countries travellers are in danger of sunstroke in the daytime; and it was said that much exposure to the moon's rays caused cruel ophthalmia and cerebral inflammation.

PSALM 121 (Heb. 122)

SALUTE TO JERUSALEM, THE HOLY CITY

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding Psalm the inspired singer was full of confident longing for the Holy City and the House of God, as he and his companions journeyed thither; here the pilgrims have arrived at the gates of Jerusalem. One of them relates to his fellow-travellers with what joy he heard it said: "We shall go into the House of the Lord." Now in the presence of the Holy City, the pilgrims, filled with admiration, marvel at its beauty and strength, recall its past glories and pray for its future welfare.

1. Canticum ascensionum. Davidis. A Song of Ascents. Of David.

*The Psalmist at the Gates of the City Rejoices over His Journey and the Sight of Jerusalem (1-3)*

Laetatus sum, quia dixerunt mihi: "In domum Domini ibimus." I was glad, because they said to me: "We shall go into the House of the Lord."

2. Iam consistunt pedes nostri in portis tuis, Ierusalem, Already our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem,

3. Ierusalem quae aedificata est ut civitas, in se compacta tota. Jerusalem which is built as a city, all united together.

*Jerusalem Is the Seat of the Worship of the True God and of the Highest Court of the People (4, 5)*

4. Illuc ascendunt tribus, tribus Domini, secundum legem Israel, ad celebrandum nomen Domini. Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, according to a law for Israel, to praise the name of the Lord.

5. Illic positae sunt sedes iudicii, sedes domus David. There have been set the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

3. "Quae aedificata, etc." The meaning of the Hebrew is that Jerusalem is built as a city whose parts are completely united, its structure is compact and beautiful to look at.

4. See Exod. 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 16:6.

5. "Sedes domus David." This recalls the fact that King David chose Jerusalem as his capital city, and there centered the supreme legal authority of the kingdom.



*Prayer for the Peace and Security of the City (6-9)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 6. Rogate quae ad pacem sunt<br>Ierusalem, securi sint qui dili-<br>gunt te! | Pray for the things that are for<br>the peace of Jerusalem! May they<br>be safe that love thee! |
| 7. Sit pax in moenibus tuis,<br>securitas in palatiis tuis!                  | Let peace be within thy walls,<br>safety within thy palaces!                                    |
| 8. Propter fratres meos et so-<br>dales meos loquar: "Pax in te!"            | For the sake of my brethren<br>and my companions I will say:<br>"Peace be within thee!"         |
| 9. Propter domum Domini,<br>Dei nostri, precabor bona tibi.                  | For the sake of the house of<br>the Lord our God, I will ask good<br>things for thee.           |

## REFLECTIONS

The singer's cup of gladness overflows in this poem. He has reached his journey's end. The long pilgrimage to the Holy City and the Sanctuary of his God is over. His soul is in rapture with the sights that meet his eyes.

Dear to the Psalmist, beyond words to express it, was Jerusalem, because it was Jehovah's city; it had been the seat of the Davidic monarchy, there were the Temple and the Sanctuary of the one true God, there a hallowed people lifted up their hands and souls in prayer and worship to Jehovah, the Creator and Lord of all things. It was enough for the pilgrim just to be there, in the special presence of the Lover of his soul. Forgotten now were the hardships of the journey, the long rough road, the many perils, the fatiguing days and weary nights, the enemies and obstacles met along the way—all had receded and faded away, and there were present only joy and a fruition far surpassing fondest anticipations. If the singer had not experienced this happiness before, in other years when he made the same journey, he could not have imagined a reward so far in excess of the sacrifice made. Overcome with a rapturous realization of the long-sought prize which was his at last, he turns in gratitude to his pilgrim companions and bids them pray for the peace and prosperity of the Holy City and of all who love her, because the House of God is within her.

Again the Psalmist's long and eager pilgrimage to the Holy City and the rest and peace, the joy and happiness, which he experienced there, are symbols, weak images, of the faithful soul's journey through the present life and the unspeakable rewards that await it in the after-life. If a mere shadow of Divinity could so ravish the ancient pilgrim's

soul, who can imagine the bliss in store for the saved in the unveiled presence of the Divine Being Himself, the fountain and the ocean of every good and delight? We need to keep this prospect in mind when the journey seems hard and endless, and the way all dark and beset with perils.

## PSALM 122 (Heb. 123)

## CONFIDENCE IN GOD

## INTRODUCTION

The people of Israel, God's chosen nation, had been suffering the jests and mockeries of cruel and insolent enemies in punishment for their sins. The Psalmist, therefore, first on behalf of himself as the representative of the people and then on behalf of all the members of the community, utters this touching prayer of faith and patience in the face of great humiliation and suffering.

1. Canticum ascensionum.                      A Song of Ascents.

*The Psalmist Appeals to God (1, 2)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Ad te attollo oculos meos, qui<br>habitas in caelis.   | Unto Thee I lift up mine eyes,<br>O Thou who dwellest in the<br>heavens.   |
| 2. Ecce, sicut oculi servorum<br>ad manus dominorum suorum,<br>sicut oculi ancillae ad manus do-<br>minae suae: ita oculi nostri ad<br>Dominum Deum nostrum, donec<br>misereatur nostri. | Behold, as the eyes of servants<br><i>look</i> to the hands of their masters,<br>as the eyes of a maid <i>look</i> to<br>the hands of her mistress, so do<br>our eyes <i>look</i> to the Lord our God,<br>until He have mercy on us. |

*With Confidence He Begs to Be Delivered from Oppression and Contempt (3, 4)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 3. Miserere nostri, Domine,<br>miserere nostri, quia multum sa-<br>tiati sumus despectione; | Have mercy on us, O Lord,<br>have mercy on us, for we are<br>utterly sated with contempt;     |
| 4. Multum satiata est anima<br>nostra irrisione abundantium,<br>despectione superborum.     | Our soul is utterly sated with<br>the derision of the rich, and the<br>contempt of the proud. |



## REFLECTIONS

On behalf of himself and his companions in suffering, the Psalmist here humbly pleads to Jehovah in Heaven for help. They are His willing servants, His loyal slaves; and they realize the happiness and privilege of their state. But they are also human and naturally weak, and they are pained and sorely tried by the contempt shown them in their poverty by those who are at ease with an abundance of this world's goods, and by the proud who scorn them in their lowliness. Therefore, in patient submission and loving trust they meekly raise their eyes and hands in prayer to their bountiful and gracious Lord; and the Psalmist is satisfied that He will do what is best for them, that no harm will befall them.

The rich and haughty of this world who disdain the poor and the lowly are, of all people, the most to be pitied. They are in deadly peril and seem not to know it. The material and other temporal goods which they enjoy they appear to take as their own, as earned and deserved by them; whereas those gifts are merely lent them to be used carefully and in moderation for themselves and with becoming generosity for their less-favored brethren of God's one human family. The selfish rich and the blinded proud are spiritually in dire poverty, and so in greatest need of the prayers of the poor and the weak.

## PSALM 123 (Heb. 124)

## THE LORD IS THE DELIVERER FROM GREATEST PERIL

## INTRODUCTION

Here we have a description of some imminent calamity which had suddenly threatened God's people with complete ruin, but which had been providentially averted. Full of fresh remembrance of singular deliverance from this catastrophe, the Psalmist wrote this spirited song.

1. Canticum ascensionum. Davidis. A Song of Ascents. Of David.

*What Would Have Happened if God Had Not Helped (1-5)*

Nisi Dominus fuisset pro nobis, dicat iam Israel, If the Lord had not been for us, let Israel now say,

2. Nisi Dominus fuisset pro nobis: cum insurgerent homines in nos, (3) tunc vivos deglutissent nos.

Cum excandesceret furor eorum in nos, (4) tunc aqua submersisset nos;

Torrents transisset super nos; (5) tunc transissent super nos aquae tumentes.

If the Lord had not been for us, when men rose up against us, then had they swallowed us up alive.

When their fury was kindled against us, then had water overwhelmed us;

The torrent had gone over us, then had the raging waters gone over us.

*Thanks for Deliverance (6-8)*

6. Benedictus Dominus, qui non dedit nos in praedam dentibus eorum.

7. Anima nostra sicut avis erepta est de laqueo venantium: laqueus contritus est, et nos liberati sumus.

8. Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini, qui fecit caelum et terram.

Blessed be the Lord who has not given us as prey to their teeth.

Our soul has been snatched as a bird from fowlers' snare; the snare has been broken, and we are free.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

## REFLECTIONS

The experience of God's Chosen People, as described in this Psalm, has been repeated countless times in the lives of spiritual persons in every age. Israel was the servant of Jehovah, and in many respects she was a type of all subsequent servants of God. What happened to her has often occurred in some degree to others striving to lead a holy life.

The singer here speaks of Israel's adversaries as wild animals that would have swallowed his people alive, as a raging torrent that would have overwhelmed and swept them away, as hunters who had ensnared them and were about to devour them; when lo, Jehovah intervened and saved them! Plaintive cries to God for help, like that of the preceding Psalm, were not in vain; they could not go forever unanswered. The divine response had been long delayed, but it would come; if not

5. The torrent and the water here symbolize the enemies of the Psalmist. Here and in the two preceding verses, those enemies are compared first to a sea-monster that would have swallowed up the Psalmist and his people alive (v. 3); then to a torrent which would have overwhelmed them (v. 4); and finally to raging waves and irresistible waters that would have swept them away to death (v. 5).



as petitioned, then in some better way. At some crisis of life or history, when all seemed lost, suddenly and swiftly the mighty Maker of heaven and earth would show His power, and His people would be snatched from the grasp of the enemy, from the very jaws of death and destruction.

As the Psalmist reiterates the peril of his people, so he twice repeats their marvelous escape. He is as profuse in praise and thanksgiving as he was in petition. The delivering mercy of His Lord is not stressed less than the danger that threatened the Chosen People. There is in his prayer a correspondence and a proportion between petition and gratitude for favors which should characterize all good prayer.

### PSALM 124 (Heb. 125)

## GOD IS THE HELPER OF HIS PEOPLE AGAINST WICKED ENEMIES

### INTRODUCTION

At the time this Psalm was written, it seems that God's people were sorely tried by the oppression of cruel strangers from without and by doubts and disloyalty on the part of some of their own brethren from within. The author, therefore, wishes to console and hearten the true and faithful Israelites, and at the same time to warn traitorous renegades. As the hills about Jerusalem safeguard the city, so does the presence of Jehovah protect the just from all harm; only sinners need fear.

1. Canticum ascensionum.      A Song of Ascents.

*God Protects His People as the Surrounding Mountains Protect Jerusalem, and So the Wicked Shall Not Prevail (1-3)*

Qui confidunt in Domino, sicut mons Sion, qui non commovetur, qui manet in aeternum.

2. Ierusalem circumdant montes: ita Dominus circumdat populum suum, et nunc et in aeternum.

3. Neque enim manebit sceptrum impiorum super sortem iustorum, ne extendant iusti ad iniquitatem manus suas.

They that trust in the Lord are as Mount Sion, which is not moved, which abides for ever.

Mountains are round about Jerusalem; so is the Lord round about His people, both now and for evermore.

For the scepter of the wicked shall not remain upon the lot of the just, lest the just put forth their hands to iniquity.

## May God Soon Help (4, 5)

4. Benefac, Domine, bonis et rectis corde.

5. Qui autem declinant in vias suas obliquas, abigat eos Dominus cum male agentibus: pax super Israel!

Do good, O Lord, to the righteous, and to the upright of heart.

But those that turn aside to their crooked ways, may the Lord drive away with the workers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel!

### REFLECTIONS

Answer to prayer strengthens faith and trust in God. Some recent great favor to His people had moved the Psalmist to illustrate Jehovah's care and protection of Israel by an example which all could see and appreciate. As the Holy City of Jerusalem sits calm and secure on Mount Sion, surrounded by mighty hills and lofty mountains which guard it against all enemies and dangers, so are the Chosen People girded round about by the ever-present and irresistible power of their Lord. And what is said here of God's people of old is equally true of His faithful servants everywhere and at all times, whether as groups or as individuals.

If Israel's emancipation from alien rule is not yet complete, new signal events in her favor place her future freedom beyond doubt. God permits His chosen ones to be sorely tried at times, and even for long periods, but He will not allow them to be tempted in excess of their strength to bear, lest in weakness they give up the struggle, fall away and cast in their lot with the wicked. He knows their frail nature, for He made it.

Therefore the Psalmist prays for the good and the upright, while warning evil men of the fate that awaits them. Final just punishment is as certain for the unrepenting sinner as blessedness is for the persevering righteous. The justice of God demands so much.

### PSALM 125 (Heb. 126)

## A PRAYER FOR THE FULL RESTORATION OF THE PEOPLE

### INTRODUCTION

In 587 B.C. Jerusalem had been taken by the Chaldeans and the greater part of its inhabitants led into captivity to Babylon, where for many long years they bewailed the hardships of their exile. But at last



came relief; for in 536 Cyrus, King of Persia, after the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, granted the Jews permission to return to their fatherland. At first the news seemed so marvelous to the exiles that they could hardly believe it; but, when they realized that it was true, their rejoicing was unbounded, and even the pagans were forced to confess the greatness of Jehovah's fidelity to His people.

But upon their return the joy of the exiles was suddenly changed to grief, as they beheld their country fallow and barren, and their city and Temple a heap of ruins. However, they returned in faith to Jehovah, pleading that He would complete the work so graciously begun in their favor.

1. Canticum ascensionum.

A Song of Ascents.

*Joy after the Liberation from Babylonian Exile (1-3)*

Cum reduceret Dominus captivos Sion, fuimus sicut somniantes.

When the Lord brought back the captives of Sion, we were as if dreaming.

2. Tunc repletum est risu os nostrum, et lingua nostra exultatione. Tunc, dixerunt inter gentes: "Magnifice fecit Dominus cum eis."

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with exultant joy. Then said they among the heathen: "The Lord has done greatly for them."

3. Magnifice fecit Dominus nobiscum: facti sumus laetantes!

Yea, the Lord has done great things for us; we are made glad!

*May the Lord Complete Israel's Joy (4-6)*

4. Verte, Domine, sortem nostram, sicut torrentes in terra australi.

Change our lot, O Lord, as streams in the southland.

5. Qui seminant in lacrimis, in exultatione metent.

They that sow in tears shall reap in exultation.

6. Euntes eunt et plorant, semen spargendum portantes: venientes venient cum exultatione, portantes manipulos suos.

Going forth they go and weep, bearing their seed for sowing; but returning they shall come with exultation, bearing their sheaves.

REFLECTIONS

Extraordinary gifts and treasures of any kind are often not thoroughly appreciated until lost. So it was with God's Chosen People. However

much they loved their many special privileges—their fair land of milk and honey, their fortress city on Mount Sion, their glorious Temple and its heavenly worship, the singular revelations and manifestations of divine favor with which they had been blessed—it was not until they had been deprived of the enjoyment of them all by captivity in a strange and hostile land that they realized to the full the blessedness which had been theirs. Then were their eyes filled with tears and their hearts wrung with sorrow, as they recalled past mercies and felt the real measure of their loss. Thus bereft and bowed in grief, humiliated and disgraced in the eyes of the pagan world, not knowing when, if ever, their bondage and exile should end, they were stunned when they learned that their captivity was over and that they were to return to their beloved country. The news was so sudden and unexpected, so overflowing with joy and gladness, that it seemed as if they were waking from a rapturous dream; they could hardly believe the reality of tidings so gladsome.

But when the first flush of joy had subsided, and the returned exiles had time to comprehend the task that confronted them in rehabilitating their country, rebuilding their city and Temple, and reestablishing their worship, tears were mingled with their laughter and strains of sadness with their songs. Nevertheless, they set about their toil with earnestness and confidence that the Lord who had done so much for them would bless their efforts and help them to complete their work. They were satisfied that there would yet be a full return of their companions in exile, that those who were now sowing in tears would reap with joy, that the handfuls of seed at first scattered would grow into an abundant harvest. For the present it was enough that they were again free and at home. They understood that life in this world was never intended to be all joy and rest, but rather that it is a time for action, for toil, for accomplishment; and that happy respites or brief periods of refreshment are vouchsafed us to facilitate and further the execution and completion of our allotted duties and tasks.

PSALM 126 (Heb. 127)

PROSPERITY IS A BLESSING FROM GOD

INTRODUCTION

Upon their return from the Babylonian captivity, the Jews, finding their country bereft of inhabitants and Jerusalem in ruins, were likely to be over-anxious about the work of restoration, and at the same time



forgetful of their dependence on God's assistance. The Psalmist, therefore, here warns them that labor without divine blessing is vain, and that among all the gifts of God that of a numerous family is one of the greatest.

1. Canticum ascensionum. Salomonis.

A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.

*Labor Is Vain without God's Help (1, 2)*

Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laborant qui aedificant eam. Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, in vanum vigilat custos.

2. Vanum est vobis surgere ante lucem, sedere in multam noctem, qui manducatis panem duri laboris: quoniam largitur dilectis suis in somno.

Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps vigil in vain.

It is vain for you to rise before dawn, to sit down late at night, you that eat the bread of hard toil; because He provides for His loved ones in sleep.

*Children and Domestic Prosperity Are Gifts of God (3-5)*

3. Ecce donum Domini sunt filii, merces est fructus ventris.

4. Sicut sagittae in manu bel-latoris, ita filii iuventutis.

5. Beatus vir qui eis implevit pharetram suam: non confundentur, cum contenderint cum inimicis in porta.

Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.

As arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are sons of youth.

Blessed is the man that has filled his quiver with them; they shall not be put to shame when they strive with their enemies at the gate.

REFLECTIONS

The principal thought in this beautiful little poem is that all labor and care are vain without God's blessing. It is vain to build houses or

2. The Hebrew of the verse is rendered by Fr. McClellan: "'Tis vain for you who are early to rise, who are late to sit down, who eat the bread of toil: as much He gives to His friend in repose."

4. "Filii iuventutis," that is, sons born while the parents are still young. In the Orient sons are often compared to arrows.

5. The meaning is that he is a lucky father who has many sons; they will be his defense *at the gate*, that is, at the city gates, where public gatherings took place, and where the courts were held.

guard cities, to rise early or retire late, without divine help and protection. Not that human efforts and natural labors bear no fruits in this life. To say that would be contrary to experience. We have all known rich or well-to-do people who seemed to have no faith or religion of any kind. But when God is left out of one's life and work, the results, however impressive in the eyes of the world, are almost certain to be disappointing and unsatisfying to their possessor. First of all, when earthly goods have at length been amassed, there is no rest; the same amount of labor and vigilance which were necessary to acquire them must be continued if they are to be retained. Then again the time and effort expended in getting such unstable treasures often destroy in advance the capacity to enjoy them. Frequently also a person finds after long years of godless toil that he has become so enslaved by his labors that he cannot give them up without being miserable; he cannot rest and be quiet; the little contentment and happiness he has are bound up with ceaseless activity. Finally, as he surveys his hoard, the rich worldling can hardly avoid a sense of futility and disgust as he reflects that soon he must leave it all.

Very different are the feelings of those who work with God in mind, with a loving awareness of their dependence on Him, and a realization that He alone can give them peace and contentment. Whether the results of their labors are great or small, they are satisfied. Such people will do the best they can, will use the gifts and opportunities they have to the best advantage, and then be quiet and resigned in the thought that the fruits of their life are what God wants them to be.

PSALM 127 (Heb. 128)

DOMESTIC HAPPINESS OF A DEVOUT ISRAELITE

INTRODUCTION

When the Jewish exiles returned to Palestine from their captivity in Babylon, there was much to discourage them. The prophets had promised that they should enjoy peace and plenty, together with a numerous population; but for a long time the facts seemed all to the contrary. Hence, the Psalmist would teach them in this beautiful song that the happiness and prosperity which they seek will follow upon fear of God and obedience to His laws.

1. Canticum ascensionum.

A Song of Ascents.



*The Happiness of Him Who Reveres the Lord (1-4)*

Beatus, quicumque times Dominum, qui ambulas in viis eius!

2. Nam laborem manuum tuarum manducabis, beatus eris et bene tibi erit.

3. Uxor tua sicut vitis fructifera in penetralibus domus tuae, filii tui ut surculi olivarum circa mensam tuam.

4. Ecce sic benedicatur viro, qui timet Dominum!

Blessed thou, whosoever that fearest the Lord, that walkest in His ways!

For thou shalt eat of the labor of thy hands; blessed shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Thy wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of thy house, thy children like young olive plants around thy table.

Behold, thus is blest the man that fears the Lord.

*May His City Be Prosperous and His Life Be Long (4, 5)*

5. Benedicat tibi Dominus ex Sion, ut videas prosperitatem Ierusalem omnibus diebus vitae tuae;

6. Ut videas filios filiorum tuorum: pax super Israel!

The Lord bless thee from Sion, that thou mayest see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of thy life,

And see thy children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

## REFLECTIONS

In the preceding Psalm a man's prosperity and domestic happiness were considered to be gifts of God; here they are regarded as results of a devout life, led in conformity with the teachings of the divine law. In either case God is the source of the success and the happiness, often not apparent in outward and material ways, which are fitful and transitory, but always in development of character and spiritual power, which are enduring.

The fear of Jehovah of which the poet speaks is that which is born of love and reverence. This is the fear which is the beginning of wisdom. Far from being something repellent, it is altogether desirable. It makes observance of the commandments, obedience to the divine will and the

2. Among the Hebrews it was a disgrace to live on the toil of others, not to be able to support oneself.

3. "In penetralibus," as also in St. Jer., *inmost parts*, that is, in the privacy of her own home.

5, 6. To the temporal goods already promised the just man in this Psalm two more are here added, namely, the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem and length of life.

5. "Ex Sion," i.e., from the Sanctuary on Mount Sion.

fulfillment of one's temporal duties easy and delightful, instead of hard and repulsive.

Since the happiness and prosperity which the Psalmist is extolling come from God and are the fruit of real religion, they move their possessor to look beyond himself and his immediate circle to Jerusalem, the Holy City, and to his nation. He wants others to enjoy what he enjoys, and to have what he has. It is selfishness, not love, which is unwilling to share.

## PSALM 128 (Heb. 129)

## ISRAEL, OPPRESSED FROM YOUTH, IMPLORES GOD'S HELP

## INTRODUCTION

Scarcely had the people of Israel after their return from the captivity of Babylon settled down in their own land to enjoy the peace of their liberation, when their bitter foes, the Samaritans, began to harass them, trying to prevent the rebuilding of their city and Temple. This was discouraging, and hence the Psalmist in the following poem wishes first to remind his people that these new afflictions are but a repetition of the distress experienced throughout their long history, from which, however, their faith in Jehovah has enabled them each time to emerge victorious. Let them be confident, therefore, that once again Israel's foes shall perish before their wicked plots are matured.

1. Canticum ascensionum. A Song of Ascents.

*The Psalmist Has Endured Much, but Has Never Been Overcome (1-4)*

Multum oppugnaverunt me a iuventute mea, dicat nunc Israel: "Much have they fought against me from my youth," let Israel now say;

2. Multum oppugnaverunt me a iuventute mea, sed non devicerunt me. "Much have thy fought against me from my youth, but they have not conquered me."

3. Supra dorsum meum araverunt aratores, longos duxerunt sulcos suos. Plowmen have ploughed upon my back; they have made long their furrows.

1, 2. Israel is personified. From the beginning of her history she has been persecuted by enemies. Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, Assyrians and Babylonians, one after another, have wounded and scarred her.



4. Dominus autem iustus concidit funes impiorum.

But the just Lord has cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

*May the Enemies Be Again Confounded (5-8)*

5. Confundantur et cedant retro omnes qui oderunt Sion.

Let all that hate Sion be put to shame and fall back.

6. Similes fiant gramini tectorum, quod, prius quam evellatur, arescit,

Let them be as grass upon the housetops, which withers before it is plucked up;

7. Quo non implet manum suam, qui metit, nec sinum suum, qui manipulos colligit.

Wherewith the reaper fills not his hand, nor the binder of the sheaves his bosom.

8. Nec dicunt qui praetereunt: "Benedictio Domini super vos!" "Benedicimus vobis in nomine Domini."

Neither do they say that pass by: "The blessing of the Lord be upon you!" "We bless you in the name of the Lord."

REFLECTIONS

The history of Israel was symbolic both of the history of the Christian Church and of faithful souls in all ages. As her long story was one of constant suffering and affliction offset by eventual, if not immediate, sure deliverances, so has it been with the true Israel's anti-type, the Church of Christ, and with individual souls who have tried to please God and follow in the steps of their Master. The struggle has been, and is, unceasing; and, despite the survival of the Church, and the certain ultimate triumph of all her faithful children, it would be expecting too much of our weak human nature to suppose that even the best people do not at times become weary and sigh for release as they witness and contemplate the ever-existing or recurring misunderstandings and quarrels between individuals, fights and feuds in families, conflicts and violence in society, and bloodshed and destruction among the nations. And to make the problem worse and more insoluble, strange as it might seem, it is

4. "Funes," that is, the fetters by which Israel had been enslaved have been sundered.

6. Grass on the flat tops of Oriental houses had no depth of soil, and so quickly withered and dried up under the blaze of the sun.—"Prius quam evellatur," *before it bursts into bud*, that is, before it can grow and mature. But "evellatur," literally, means *pulled up*; and so the meaning can be: *Which withers before it grows enough to be pulled up*.

7. "Sinum," that is, the folds of the harvester's garments.

8. In the Orient it was a kindly custom for those who passed by harvesters to wish a blessing on their work, and for the reapers to reply: "The Lord bless you!" (cfr. Ruth 2:4).

often the innocent and the good that suffer most from these unholy disturbances and disastrous occurrences.

Nor is it beyond dispute that the world as such has greatly improved morally and religiously since ancient days. Injustice, immorality and crimes of all kinds are doubtless more concealed today than formerly; but it is perhaps not saying too much to maintain that the general situation has remained substantially very much the same throughout the centuries. In our own times some conditions and aspects of life have been improved, but others have become much worse. Progress in knowledge and science has taught mankind how to make the world a better place in which to live, but it has also provided ways and means of evil unguessed at in generations past. It would be difficult to say whether modern inventions and discoveries are more productive of good or of evil, and consequently whether mankind as a whole is today better or worse off than in former days.

However that may be, it seems safe to conclude that, in spite of all our best efforts, the present world will never be a paradise. By constant striving to put the teachings of the Gospel into practice much can be accomplished; and yet, as the poor will always be with us, as a measure of sickness and certain death are unavoidable, so there will always be plenty of sin and strife, suffering and affliction, among men. In fact, considering the way the world is made and the kind of nature we have, we cannot expect things to be greatly otherwise. It would seem that God wanted our present life to be a warfare, since He permits it to be as it is. All things considered, it must be better so. The world as we have it fits into the divine plan of creation, but our duties and responsibilities, both as individuals and as groups, to do all we reasonably can to improve the world and better man's condition, remain.

PSALM 129 (Heb. 130)

MAN'S SIN AND GOD'S MERCY

INTRODUCTION

This is one of the seven Penitential Psalms. Whether speaking for himself or for his nation, the Psalmist is here deeply conscious of sin and of the wretchedness of soul that sin entails. He feels that he does not deserve pardon, but he knows it will be granted, for his Lord is the God of mercy and forgiveness.



Some authorities think this Psalm was composed or adapted as a prayer for the day of public repentance appointed by Esdras after the return of the exiles from Babylon. The people had been severely punished for their sins, and the Psalmist is here confessing that, if Jehovah is to take strict account of those sins, there will be no hope for Israel. But, since Jehovah has manifested Himself as a merciful God, both the Psalmist and his people can wait in patient confidence for the redemption that will surely come.

1. Canticum ascensionum. A Song of Ascents.

*The Psalmist Appeals to God as the Only Hope of All Sinners (1-4)*

2. De profundis clamo ad te, Domine, Domine, audi vocem meam! Fiant aures tuae intentae ad vocem obsecrationis meae. Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

3. Si delictorum memoriam servaveris, Domine, Domine, quis sustinebit? If Thou, O Lord, wilt remember iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?

4. Sed penes te est peccatorum venia, ut cum reverentia serviatur tibi. But with Thee is forgiveness of sins, that Thou mayest be served with reverence.

*For This Pardon the Sinner Confidently Hopes (5-6a)*

5. Spero in Dominum, sperat anima mea in verbum eius; I hope in the Lord, my soul hopes in His word;

Exspectat (6) anima mea Dominum, magis quam custodes auroram. My soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen for the dawn.

*Israel Cherishes the Same Hope for Pardon and for Complete Redemption (6b-8)*

Magis quam custodes auroram, More than watchmen for the  
(7) exspectet Israel Dominum, dawn, let Israel wait for the Lord,

3-5. "Quis sustinebit," that is, who will be able to stand the anger of God, or defend himself before God's judgment seat? But God will not refuse to pardon, because with Him there is forgiveness.—"Ut cum reverentia, etc." Heb.: *That Thou mayest be feared*, which the Massoretes read in connection with the preceding clause thus: *With Thee there is forgiveness that Thou mayest be feared*, that is, God shows mercy so that man, seeing it, may worship Him the more.

6. In the Hebrew this verse goes with the preceding, thus: *My soul (hopes) for the Lord, more than watchmen for the morning*. The Massoretes repeat: *Watchmen for the morning*.

Quia penes Dominum misericordia et copiosa penes eum redemptio: For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption;

8. Et ipse redimet Israel ex omnibus iniquitatibus eius. And He will redeem Israel from all her iniquities.

REFLECTIONS

The "depths" from which the Psalmist here cries to God for help and deliverance are not so much physical or psychical as moral and spiritual. He is profoundly conscious of his sinfulness, and doubtless also of the sins of his people. He has tasted the dregs of the bitter cup of sin, has reaped the woeful harvest of his own bad sowing, and now there is no escape from his misery, except through the merciful help of his offended Lord. Like all deliberate sinners, he understands now how free we often are to do wrong, or to fail to do right when we can and should do right, but how we are not free to avoid the consequences of those acts of commission or omission.

The depths of depravity to which human nature can fall are at once most humiliating and appalling. The very thought of it, of which we are only too frequently reminded by the crimes, cruelties and inhumanities of men, is enough to fill us with fear and cover us with shame; for if others of our fellow-mortals can do such terrible things as we often hear and read about, so could we, if we had been made and circumstanced as they have been. Likely this is the explanation of the saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, that he would have been the worst of sinners except for the grace of God.

In view of these somber and revolting facts of life and human nature, it is only natural that reflecting people should sometimes reverently wonder why God made us as He did, why He ever gave us a nature capable of such depths of degradation. He could have constituted us so different. And that He should have made us incapable of moral evil would have been only what we might expect from an all-powerful and all-holy Maker. But of course if He had thus fashioned our nature, we should not be the kind of creatures we are, and so should not have fitted in with the present world and the plan which the Creator had in mind when He formed it and us. God made our human nature as He did, because just so do we respond to the part required of us in the vast edifice of creation. As an architect and builder chooses and arranges his materials according

8. "Redimet Israel," i.e., He will redeem Israel with the dawn of the Messianic era and salvation, as the prophets had promised (Jer. 3:21-23; 24:7; 32:37-40; Ezech. 11:17-20).



to his plans and the purposes they are to serve in the whole structure, so has God made and placed us in the universe.

But here then it may also be asked, why God should be so strict and exacting with the poor nature He has given us. Why does He punish us, or permit us to be punished, so severely for the wrongs we do, since we are much more prone to evil than to good, or at least far less inclined to the higher than to the lower? True, He offers us His graces, but men generally seem to have as little desire and taste for them as they have for the good works to which those graces prompt. We need grace to accept grace, as well as to perform the perfect work.

Why then does God seem to require so much from so little? A reply to this question is to be found by reflecting, first, that God's infinite holiness and justice must demand the best from His creatures, all things considered; and secondly, that His equally infinite mercy and goodness temper and restrain, so to speak, the divine requirements in accordance with the nature we have and the conditions and circumstances of our life. Just because our nature and life are what they are, there will always be more reasons for the manifestation of God's goodness and mercy towards us than of His strict justice. Hence the Psalmist says: "If Thou, O Lord, wilt remember iniquities, Lord, who shall stand" the scrutiny and the judgment? But He will not so deal with the frail creatures He loves, since with Him "there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption." Therefore let not only Israel, but all the world, have hope and confidence in God.

### PSALM 130 (Heb. 131)

## HUMBLE AND FILIAL REST IN GOD

### INTRODUCTION

We have here a fitting sequel to the preceding Psalm. Israel was naturally proud, and upon the return of her captives from Babylon, relying upon the promises of the prophets which she misunderstood, she expected great temporal prosperity; but the actual condition was one both of disillusionment and of sore disappointment. But Israel has now learned through the discipline of suffering that it is humility, and not ambition, that God wants of her. Therefore, with cheerful faith she penitently accepts her lowly and despised position, and resigns herself to the will of God.

But it may well be that Israel, the nation, is not speaking here, at least directly; but that some righteous soul is expressing the sentiments of his own heart and of those who feel as he does, looking at the condition of the nation after the return from exile. At any rate, what was salutary for the national outlook of the individual, under the existing conditions, was also salutary for the nation as a whole.

1. Canticum ascensionum. Davidis. A Song of Ascents. Of David.

*Putting Away All Great and Lofty Things and Thoughts, the Psalmist Will Rest in God as a Child on Its Mother's Bosom (1-3)*

Domine, non superbit cor meum, neque extolluntur oculi mei, nec prosequor res grandes aut altiores me ipso.

Lord, my heart is not proud, nor are mine eyes lofty; neither do I strive after great matters, nor things beyond me.

2. Immo composui et pacavi animam meam, sicut parvulus in gremio matris suae: sicut parvulus, ita in me est anima mea.

Nay rather, I have composed and quieted my soul as a little child on its mother's bosom; as a little child, so is my soul within me.

3. Spera, Israel, in Domino, et nunc et usque in saeculum.

O Israel, hope in the Lord, both now and for evermore.

### REFLECTIONS

The deliverance from conscious sin for which the Psalmist pleaded in the preceding prayer has been obtained. The fretful anxiety which so disturbed him before has passed, and his soul is at peace. He is at last calm and quiet with that holy joy and sense of love received and given which cast out fears and put to rest troublous desires and hopes. God has been so good to him, not dealing with him according to his haughty heart and vain ambitions, but in accordance with love and forgiveness! By the help of divine grace he has been able to give up his worldly aims, to bring under control his unruly nature, to still the clamors of his many distracting desires and passions and to direct his gaze from earthly to heavenly objects; and now, that the struggle is over, he enjoys a spiritual calm and blessed repose which only self-mastery, aided from above, can secure. Wishing others to share in his blessedness, he exhorts all his people to hope in God, whose mercy delivers from sin and whose all-sufficient goodness is able to supply the wants of every soul.

2. The Psalmist is stating in an emphatic manner that he is humble.



## PSALM 131 (Heb. 132)

## DAVID'S PROMISE TO THE LORD AND THE LORD'S TO DAVID

## INTRODUCTION

This is the longest of the Gradual Psalms. Very probably it was composed for and chanted at the dedication of Solomon's Temple (10th century B.C.). Its Messianic character is admitted by all scholars, since it deals with the promises concerning David's son and David's kingdom, which have found their fulfillment in Christ and the Church. Expressing, therefore, as it does, the Messianic hopes, this Psalm was most suitable for the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem and recalling on the way all the sacred memories connected with the City of David.

1. Canticum ascensionum. A Song of Ascents.

*What David Promised with an Oath (1-5)*

Memento, Domine, in gratiam David omnis sollicitudinis eius:

2. Quomodo iuraverit Domino, votum voverit Potenti Iacob:

3. "Non intrabo in habitaculum domus meae, non ascendam in stratum lecti mei,

4. Non concedam somnum oculis meis, palpebris meis quietem,

5. Donec invenero locum Domino, habitationem Potenti Iacob."

O Lord, in behalf of David, remember all his solicitude;

How he swore to the Lord, and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:

"I will not enter the dwelling of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed;

"I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *nor* rest to mine eyelids,

"Until I shall have found a place for the Lord, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."

1. The reference is to David's care and solicitude for the building of the Sanctuary on Mount Zion (cfr. 2 Kings 6, 7; 1 Par. 22:14).

2. The Psalmist is recalling an oath of David's which was handed down by tradition, but is not recorded in the historical books.—"Potenti Iacob." God is called the *Mighty One of Jacob* in Gen. 49:24; Isa. 1:24; 49:26; 60:16.

*How David Fulfilled His Vow (6-10)*

6. Ecce, audivimus de illa in Ephrata; invenimus eam in campis Iaar.

7. Intremus in habitationem eius, procidamus ante scabellum pedum eius.

8. Surge Domine, in locum quietis tuae, tu et arca maiestatis tuae.

9. Sacerdotes tui induant iustitiam, et sancti tui exsultantes exsultent.

10. Propter David, servum tuum, noli repellere faciem uncti tui.

Behold, we heard of it in Ephrata; we found it in the fields of Jaar.

Let us go into his dwelling, let us fall down before the stool of his feet.

Ascend, O Lord, into Thy resting-place, Thou and the ark of Thy majesty.

Let Thy priests be clothed with justice, and let Thy saints shout aloud for joy.

For the sake of David, Thy servant, reject not the face of Thine anointed.

*What God Promised to David with an Oath (11-13)*

11. Iuravit Dominus David promissum firmum a quo non recedet: "Subolem generis tui ponam super solium tuum.

12. Si custodierint filii tui pactum meum, et praecepta quae docebo eos,

Etiam filii eorum in sempiternum sedebunt super solium tuum."

13. Nam Dominus elegit Sion, eam optavit sedem sibi.

The Lord swore to David a firm promise, from which He will not turn back: "The offspring of thy race I will place upon thy throne.

"If thy sons will keep My covenant, and the precepts which I shall teach them,

"Their sons also for evermore shall sit upon thy throne."

For the Lord has chosen Sion, He has desired it for His seat.

6. It is disputed, (a) whether "illa" . . . "eam" here refer to David's oath or to the Ark (most likely to the Ark); (b) whether "Ephrata" means Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19; Ruth 4:11; Mich. 5:2), or Ephraim, whose chief town was Silo where the Ark rested from the time of Josue to Samuel, or the district in which Cariathiarim was situated; (c) whether "campis Iaar" stands for a proper name parallel to Ephrata, and so for Cariathiarim, the *Forest-Town* (Heb.: *Forest-Fields*), where the Ark lay in neglect until transferred to Sion (1 Kings 7:1, 2), or for Northern Palestine, as Ephrata might be taken for the southern part of the country, the two places representing all of Palestine.

7. The ark was called the *stool of His feet* because of the Lord's presence above it.

8. "Quietis." The Ark had not yet a fixed abode since its removal from Silo (1 Sam. 4:3 ff.).

10. "Uncti tui" refers to the King who was reigning when this Psalm was composed.



*How God Fulfilled His Promise (14-18)*

14. "Haec est requies mea in sempiternum, hic habitabo, quoniam optavi eam.

15. Victui eius benedicens benedicam, pauperes eius saturabo pane.

16. Sacerdotes eius induam salute, et sancti eius exsultantes exsultabunt.

17. Illic David suscitabo cornu, parabo lucernam uncto meo.

18. Inimicos eius induam confusione, super ipsum autem fulgebit diadema meum."

"This is My resting-place for evermore; here will I abide for I have desired it.

"I will bless her with abundant food, I will satisfy her poor with bread.

"Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

"There will I raise up a power for David; I will prepare a lamp for Mine anointed.

"His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon himself My crown shall gleam."

## REFLECTIONS

In spite of his natural frailty and faults, King David was a man dear to the heart of God. According to the standards of his age, he was a saint. His holiness was especially manifested in his love of his Creator and his zeal for the divine glory.

We are reminded of these characteristics of the royal poet in this song, which was most likely written in honor of the completion and dedication of Solomon's Temple. Here are recalled David's long-cherished purpose to build a House for Jehovah, the many wanderings of the Ark, the sacred symbol of the divine presence, God's promises to him in connection with his wish and design of building a Temple, and finally his anxiety and determination to do everything in his power to accomplish that glorious work for his Lord, even though he had been assured by the Prophet Nathan that he should never see its completion. He could not bear the thought of his own ease and comfort so long as there was no fixed dwelling-place here on earth for his God. It made no difference to him that he would not live to behold the finished work. He was concerned only that he should do all he could while living for the divine glory, and he was satisfied that others of his posterity would enjoy the fruits of his labors. He did live to see the Ark rescued from its wanderings and placed in the tabernacle which he had provided on Mount Sion, but that was all.

Now, however, the great Temple has been erected and adorned. Its towers and pinnacles, its pillars and porticoes, its trimmings of white marble and gold, all in fresh beauty and majesty, stand shimmering and gleaming in the sunshine of heaven. But not until the Ark enters it and takes up its place in the Shrine, the Holy of Holies, does glory fill the vast edifice. Without the Divine Presence, all would be cold and bare and lifeless, like a body without a soul, like a festival without joy and song.

But this also has been accomplished. Jehovah has taken His place of rest amid fitting pomp and ceremony, acclaimed by myriad voices and magnificent music. There He abides for evermore; no longer now on Mount Sion and in its Temple, but through Christ of the seed of David in the Christian Church, which has succeeded to the ancient Synagogue and the Temple, and through the Real Presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist on our altars, of which the Ark in the Shrine was but a symbol and a type. Beyond and better than what we now have there remain only the glory and enjoyment of the unveiled Divine Presence in Heaven. For that we wait and hope.

## PSALM 132 (Heb. 133)

## THE SWEETNESS OF FRATERNAL CONCORD

## INTRODUCTION

This short but beautiful poem is a plea for national unity and fraternal charity, with special reference to the periodical gatherings of the people in Jerusalem for the great feasts. The Psalmist compares the influence of brotherly unity upon the nation, first, to the oil of consecration poured out upon Aaron, and, secondly to the abundant dew that fell nightly upon Mount Hermon. As the precious ointment poured out on Aaron's head when he was consecrated to the office of high-priest diffused its sweet perfume over all his garments, and as the dews of lofty Hermon refreshed and invigorated the surrounding hills and country, so says the Psalmist, the harmonious dwelling together of the people consecrates to the service of the Lord the whole nation, refreshing and quickening its social and religious spirit.

1. Canticum ascensionum. Davidis.

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum, habitare fratres in unum:

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!



2. Sicut oleum optimum in capite, quod defluit in barbam, barbam Aaron, quod defluit in oram vestimenti eius;

3. Sicut ros Hermon, qui descendit super montem Sion: nam illic largitur Dominus benedictionem, vitam usque in saeculum.

It is like the precious oil on the head that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, that ran down to the collar of his garment;

Like the dew of Hermon that falls upon Mount Sion; for there the Lord gives His blessing, life for evermore.

#### REFLECTIONS

The singer is rejoicing here over the reunion of his brethren—a reunion not only as to place, but in mind and heart. They have known the blight of schism, the awfulness of exile in a foreign land, the loneliness and coldness of enforced separation; and now they can appreciate the blessedness of unity, not so much as to temporal affairs but as regards religion and the divine worship. It is a goodly sight to see the multitudes home again and gathered around the altar of God. The manifest zeal, devotion and good works of each member will be a help and an inspiration to all the rest. What they could never hope to achieve by themselves individually, will now be comparatively easy as a corporate community, if only they are also truly united in spirit. Bodily or external unity alone will be of little use without the inner harmony of heart and soul.

What the Psalmist says here in praise of unity and harmony among his own people is equally true in its degree of all associations of men and women, everywhere and always. If a family, a religious or civil society, or a nation, set about its duties and work with singleness of mind and will, with common aim and loyalty, there is nothing that can easily impede its success. If it comes short of its purpose and goal, in spite of moral and spiritual solidarity, the failure must be ascribed to some superior opposition from without, beyond the control of the members.

Perhaps the greatest danger to internal harmony in any group of people, large or small, is to be found in the individuality, the distinct characteristics, of the persons who compose it. When these differences are strong and very marked, unity of action and consequent success are greatly imperiled. Nor can these difficulties always be foreseen. In married life the parties have had a chance to become acquainted and to learn something of each other's particular traits and habits in advance of

2. "Barbam Aaron." At the consecration of the High Priest oil was poured over his head (Exod. 30:30).

3. "Ros Hermon, etc." This is a metaphorical way of expressing the abundance of dew that fell on Hermon.

their union, and thus to make their choice with a fair prospect of compatibility. But even so, they often discover later that they are too different in mind and heart to succeed. In other human associations whose members have had little or no opportunity of knowing one another beforehand, who have not chosen one another as companions in life and work, but find themselves together by chance or authority, the likelihood of friction, disagreement, separation and failure is naturally much more to be feared. The surest hope of unity and success in cases of this kind depends upon an over-all interest in the common aim and good of the whole body as such, and the willing subordination of personal and individual likes, tastes, ambitions, etc., to that one aim.

#### PSALM 133 (Heb. 134)

#### NIGHTLY PRAISES IN THE TEMPLE

##### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm forms a fitting conclusion to the collection of Gradual Psalms, or Pilgrim Songs. It appears to be a farewell on the part of the pilgrims, who are about to leave the Holy City. It is addressed to the priests and Levites, whose duty it was to perform the night service of praise to Jehovah, exhorting the latter to zeal and fervor. To this exhortation the priests respond with a blessing upon the departing worshippers.

1. Canticum ascensionum. A Song of Ascents.

*Let the Lord Be Praised through the Night (1, 2)*

Ecce benedicite Domino, omnes servi Domini; qui statis in domo Domini horis nocturnis. Behold, bless you the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, you that stand in the house of the Lord during the night hours.

2. Extollite manus vestras ad sancta et benedicite Domino. Lift up your hands to the Sanctuary, and bless the Lord.

*A Blessing (3)*

3. Ex Sion benedicat tibi Dominus qui fecit caelum et terram. May the Lord, who made heaven and earth, bless thee from Sion.

1, 2. For reference to night service in the Temple see Isa. 30:29; 1 Par. 23:30.  
3. See the priestly blessing in Num. 6:24 sqq.



## REFLECTIONS

The joyous feast has come to a close. Pilgrims from near and far who have been crowding the courts of the Temple are about to depart for their homes, and they turn with this parting salutation to the ministers of the Sanctuary who remain behind to continue their sacred functions.

Though the festival day has ended and darkness will soon be falling, the praise of Jehovah must go on. It is the holy and exalted privilege of the priestly life and office to lift up the voice of praise, adoration, thanksgiving and petition at all times, night as well as day, to the God who rules and blesses all His children, and desires to save them all. Let the priests of the Sanctuary always remember this; and, when performing their sacred duties, let them not forget to include in their prayers God's people everywhere.

## PSALM 134 (Heb. 135)

PRAISES OF GOD, THE LORD OF ALL THINGS, AND THE  
BENEFactor OF ISRAEL

## INTRODUCTION

A call to the ministers of the Temple—the priests and Levites—and to the people in the courts of the Sanctuary to sing the praises of the Lord, who has chosen Israel as His own inheritance. Jehovah is above all heathen gods, and His omnipotence is proclaimed by nature. He it was who worked the wonders in Egypt, and settled Israel in Canaan, destroying Sehon, Og and all her adversaries there. He will forever be with His people to help them, whereas the idols of the pagans are useless and powerless. Therefore, let all the people praise the Lord who dwells on Sion.

The Psalm is mostly a mosaic of other Psalms and Scriptures, and was probably put together after the exile for liturgical use in the Second Temple. Verses 15-20 are a substantial reproduction of Psalm 113:12-19.

1. Alleluia. Alleluia.

*Let God, the Lord of Nature, Be Praised (1-7)*

Laudate nomen Domini; laudate, servi Domini, Praise the name of the Lord, praise, you servants of the Lord,

2. Qui statis in domo Domini, in atriis domus Dei nostri.

3. Laudate Dominum, quia bonus Dominus; psallite nomini eius, quoniam suave

4. Nam Iacob elegit sibi Dominus, Israel in peculium suum.

5. Novi equidem hoc: magnus est Dominus, et Dominator noster prae omnibus diis.

6. Quaecumque vult Dominus, facit in caelo et in terra, in mari et in omnibus profundis aquarum.

7. Adducit nubes ab extremo terrae, fulguribus pluviam facit, promittit ventum de receptaculis suis.

*The Lord Has Powerfully and Kindly Helped His People (8-14)*

8. Percussit primogenita Aegypti, homines aequae ac pecora.

9. Edidit signa et portenta in te, Aegypte, in Pharaonem et in omnes servos eius.

10. Percussit gentes multas et occidit reges potentes:

11. Sehon, regem Amorrhaeorum, et Og, regem Basan, et omnes reges Chanaan.

12. Et dedit terram eorum in possessionem, in possessionem Israel, populo suo.

13. Domine, nomen tuum in aeternum manet, Domine, memoria tua in generationem et generationem.

4. "Peculium suum." The people of Israel are often spoken of in the Old Testament as God's special possession (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18).

5. "Omnibus diis," i.e., those who were called gods, but were really nothing.

You that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.

Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing to His name, for it is sweet.

For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special possession.

I myself know this, that the Lord is great, and our Ruler is before all gods.

Whatsoever the Lord pleases He has done in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all the depths of waters.

He brings up clouds from the end of the earth; He makes rain for the lightnings; He draws the wind from His storehouses.

He smote the firstborn of Egypt, men as well as beasts.

He brought forth signs and wonders in thee, O Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants.

He smote many nations, and slew mighty kings:

Sehon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kings of Canaan.

And gave their land as a possession, as a possession to Israel, His people.

O Lord, Thy name endures forever, Thy memorial, O Lord, from generation to generation.



14. Nam Dominus tuetur populum suum, et servorum suorum miseretur. For the Lord protects His people, and pities His servants.

*Idols Are Powerless (15-18)*

15. Idola gentium argentum et aurum, opera manuum hominum: The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the works of men's hands.

16. Os habent, et non loquuntur; oculos habent, et non vident; They have a mouth, but they speak not; they have eyes, but they see not;

17. Aures habent et non audiunt; et non est halitus in ore eorum. They have ears, but they hear not; and there is no breath in their mouth.

18. Similes illis fiunt, qui faciunt ea, omnis qui confidit in eis. They that make them become like them, and everyone that trusts in them.

*Let the God of Israel Be Praised (19-21)*

19. Domus Israel, benedicite Domino; Domus Aaron, benedicite Domino. O house of Israel, bless you the Lord; O house of Aaron, bless you the Lord.

20. Domus Levi, benedicite Domino; qui colitis Dominum, benedicite Domino. O house of Levi, bless you the Lord; you that worship the Lord, bless the Lord.

21. Benedictus Dominus ex Sion, qui habitat in Ierusalem. Blessed be the Lord from Sion, who dwells in Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist here calls upon the people as well as the priests, upon those who stand in the courts of the Temple and those who minister at the altar, to praise Israel's God. It is easy and pleasant to sing the praises of one we love, and Israel loves Jehovah; for He has been good to her, He has chosen her for Himself, as His own possession. Moreover, Jehovah's power and majesty call for praise. He is above all gods, His will is supreme in Heaven and on earth, He rules the sea and the depths, He forms the clouds and produces the wind and rain.

Israel was not always faithful to her God; and in punishment for her sins she was often made to suffer severely at the rude hands of her foes. So God deals with His disobedient and wayward children. When

they persist in forsaking Him, to follow and worship other gods—the pleasures of the flesh, the passing delights and rewards of the material world, the esteem and praise of men like themselves—the one true God, for whom alone they were made, often permits them to pay an awful price for their folly.

But in the worst of her sufferings Israel always refused to despair. She knew she was but reaping the bitter harvest of her wilful and prolonged misdeeds, and she knew also the character of love and mercy of her true God as revealed in the mighty works He had performed for His people in the past. Those deeds she could never forget, she could never grow weary of recalling; they were a manifestation of His name, a memorial of His nature, which endures the same forever. Here was Israel's hope, as it is the hope of all sinners everywhere and at all times, that the mighty Creator and Ruler of the world is a God of love and mercy.

PSALM 135 (Heb. 136)

ACT OF THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S MANY BLESSINGS

INTRODUCTION

Like the preceding Psalm, this is a song of thanksgiving to Jehovah for the power and mercy He has displayed in behalf of His people, especially in delivering them from Egypt and settling them in the land of Canaan. It was composed for liturgical purposes, the first part of each verse being sung by a leading voice or choir, and the second part or refrain forming the response of the people. This antiphonal or litany-form of chanting, which was common among all Eastern peoples of antiquity, is found also in Psalms 117:1-4, 10-12; 105:1; 106:1; and in 2 Par. 7:3.

This Psalm was called the "Great Hallel," and, according to the Talmud, was sung on the seventh day of the Paschal feast.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

*A Call to Give Thanks to God (1-3)*

Laudate Dominum, quoniam bonus, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius. O praise the Lord, for He is good, for His kindness is for ever.



2. Laudate Deum deorum, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

3. Laudate Dominum dominorum, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

*Thank the Creator of All Things (4-9)*

4. Qui fecit mirabilia magna solus, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

5. Qui fecit caelos cum sapientia, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

6. Qui extendit terram super aquas, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius:

7. Qui fecit lumina magna, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius:

8. Solem, ut praesit diei, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius,

9. Lunam et stellas, ut praesint nocti, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

*Thank the Redeemer of Israel (10-22)*

10. Qui percussit Aegyptios in primogenitis eorum, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

11. Et eduxit Israel e medio eorum, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius,

12. Manu potenti et brachio extento, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

13. Qui divisit Mare Rubrum in partes, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

2, 3. "Deum deorum . . . Dominum dominorum," i.e., the supreme and only God and Lord.

O praise the God of gods, for His kindness is for ever.

O praise the Lord of lords, for His kindness is for ever.

*Praise Him* who alone did great wonders, for His kindness is for ever;

Who made the heavens in wisdom, for His kindness is for ever;

Who spread out the earth above the waters, for His kindness is for ever;

Who made the great lights, for His kindness is for ever:

The sun to rule by day, for His kindness is for ever;

The moon and the stars to rule by night, for His kindness is for ever.

*Praise Him* who smote the Egyptians in their first born, for His kindness is for ever;

And brought out Israel from among them, for His kindness is for ever;

With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for His kindness is for ever;

Who divided the Red Sea into parts, for His kindness is for ever;

14. Et traduxit Israel per medium eius, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

15. Et detrusit Pharaonem et exercitum eius in Mare Rubrum. quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

16. Qui duxit populum suum per desertum, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

17. Qui percussit reges magnos, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

18. Et occidit reges potentes, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

19. Sehon, regem Amorrhaeorum, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

20. Et Og, regem Basan, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

21. Et dedit terram eorum in possessionem, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius,

22. In possessionem Israel, servo suo, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

*Thank God Who Delivered Israel and Supports All Things (23-26)*

23. Qui in humilitate nostra recordatus est nostri, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius,

24. Et liberavit nos ab inimicis nostris, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

25. Qui dat escam omni carni, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

26. Laudate Deum caeli, quoniam in aeternum misericordia eius.

And led Israel through the midst thereof, for His kindness is for ever;

And cast down Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea, for His kindness is for ever;

Who led His people through the desert, for His kindness is for ever;

Who smote great rulers, for His kindness is for ever.

And slew mighty kings, for His kindness is for ever;

Sehon, king of the Amorites, for His kindness is for ever;

And Og, king of Bashan, for His kindness is for ever;

And gave their land as a possession, for His kindness is for ever;

As a possession to Israel His servant, for His kindness is for ever.

*Praise Him* who remembered us in our low estate, for His kindness is for ever;

And delivered us from our enemies, for His kindness is for ever;

Who gives food to all flesh, for His kindness is for ever.

O praise the God of heaven, for His kindness is for ever!

23, 24. Perhaps there is a question here of the liberation from Babylonian captivity.



## REFLECTIONS

This is another song of exuberant praise and thanksgiving. The Psalmist invites all his readers and hearers to praise and thank God, the Creator of the world, the liberator of His people from the bondage of Egypt, the giver of the promised land of Canaan, the merciful Father and protector of all the things He has made.

It is remarkable that divine lovingkindness is here assigned as the motive behind each of those extraordinary works. Thus creation and conservation are acts of divine love, and so all visible things become at once the result and witnesses of a lovingkindness which endures forever.

This conclusion of the Psalmist is not a mere pious wish, or expression of a passing holy joy at the thought of all Jehovah has done for the Chosen People. He is rather declaring a truth which springs from the very nature of the Supreme Being, who is defined as the Highest Good, and all of whose acts must therefore be prompted by goodness, by love. St. John was expressing this same thought and truth when he said: "God is love" (1 John 4:8); and what He is once He is forever. Nor is the manifestation of this characteristic of the divine nature restricted and confined to some of His creatures, but is extended to them all in due measure, according as they shadow forth and reflect their all-perfect cause and source.

If the goodness and love of God for us are sometimes made obscure and hard to understand by the many awful things which take place in the world, we must nevertheless cling steadfastly to the greater truth arising from the very nature of Divinity, and not be led astray by difficulties which come from the defects and limitations intrinsic and native to everything created. Since God has elected to make the kind of beings and world that we know, the explanation of these defective creatures can only be that so they fit in best with the larger divine plan and purpose, which are now altogether beyond our scrutiny and comprehension. But as we readily accept in our daily life many natural things which we do not understand, so, and much more so, should we be willing to accept in simple unquestioning trust the mysteries of God's plan and Providence concerning the world. We must continue to pray and hope now, while we walk by faith and not by sight, that all will yet be well, and that we shall see and understand when the clouds are lifted and the shadows flee away.

## PSALM 136 (Heb. 137)

## SORROWS AND DESIRES OF THE EXILES

## INTRODUCTION

This beautiful lyric was composed shortly after the return from the Babylonian captivity (536 B.C.), as the past tenses of verses 1-3 would seem to indicate; or during the exile, as can be argued from the tenses of verses 4-9. In a foreign land Israel's instruments of music and song were silent, while the exiles sat by the waters of Babylon and mingled their tears with the floods (vv. 1-3). How could they sing Jehovah's songs in a heathen land, or forget beloved Jerusalem and the Temple worship (vv. 4-6)? May their enemies and persecutors perish—the Edomites who rejoiced at Jerusalem's fall, and the Babylonians who plundered and ruined her (vv. 7-9)!

The Psalm is without title.

*The Cruel Babylonians Asked Their Captives to Sing for Them (1-3)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Ad flumina Babylonis, illic sedimus et flevimus, cum recordaremur Sion.   | By the streams of Babylon there we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion.   |
| 2. In salicibus terrae illius suspendimus citharas nostras.  | Upon the willows of that land we hung up our harps.   |
| 3. Nam illic, qui abduxerant nos, rogaverunt a nobis cantica, et qui affligebant nos, laetitiam: "Cantate nobis ex canticis Sion!" | For there, they that had led us away required songs of us, and they that afflicted us <i>demand</i> ed mirth, <i>saying</i> ; "Sing for us of the songs of Sion!" |

*The Reply of the Captives (4-6)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 4. Quomodo cantabimus canticum Domini in terra aliena?   | How shall we sing a song of the Lord in a strange land?  |
| 5. Si oblitus ero tui, Ierusalem, oblivioni detur dextera mea!   | If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten!   |
| 6. Adhaereat lingua mea faucibus meis, si non meminero tui, si non posuero Ierusalem super omnem laetitiam meam. | Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I remember thee not, if I put not Jerusalem above every joy of mine own. |

1. "Flumina" refers, not only to the Euphrates and the Tigris, but also to the various canals with which the country was intersected for irrigation purposes.



*May God Punish Israel's Foes (7-9)*

7. Recordare, Domine, contra filios Edom diem Ierusalem, qui dixerunt: "Evertite, evertite ipsa fundamenta in ea!"

8. Filia Babylonis vastatrix, beatus qui rependet tibi mala quae intulisti nobis!

9. Beatus qui apprehendet et alidit parvulos tuos ad petram!

Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom Jerusalem's day, who said: "Raze it, raze it, even the foundations in it!"

O daughter of Babylon, thou devastator, blessed be he that shall repay to thee the evils thou hast brought upon us!

Blessed he that shall take and dash thy little ones against the rock!

## REFLECTIONS

Finally home from the long and dreary captivity in Babylon this sweet singer is reflecting on all his people suffered there. Now at a distance he can form a better conception of the outrages endured in that strange land. He recalls in the first place how those rude and insolent captors were bold enough to ask the exiles to sing for their merriment some of Israel's sacred songs. The request was as inconsiderate as it was irreverent. How could people accustomed to the worship of the true God in His holy Temple sing in such a place and in such conditions as they were in then? They were too sad and lonely to do anything but mourn and weep. Music requires a suitable disposition on the part of those who make it, as well as an appropriate environment. We cannot sing and make merry when actually weighed down by sorrow and suffering. While it is true that some of the sweetest melodies ever expressed by notes and some of the most moving poetry ever written are deeply tinged with sadness, it is equally true that these were not produced in the midst of actual pain and sorrow, not until they could be viewed somewhat in retrospect.

There were also other reasons why the captives could not sing for their captors. To have done so would have been profanation. Israel's songs were sacred, for the worship of Jehovah and the help and inspiration of those who believed in Him; they were not for the amuse-

7-9. Jerusalem was to the exiles not only the capital of their fatherland, but the Holy City, God's special dwelling-place on earth. Hence irreverence to it was irreverence also to God.

8. "Filia Babylonis," that is, Babylon with her inhabitants.

9. The fate of Babylon was foretold by Isaiah 13:16-18; 14:21.—"Alidit." On such cruelty to people captured in war, see 4 Kings 8:12; Osee 10:14; Nahum 3:10.

ment of pagan revellers. Holy things are not to be exposed to desecration by the wicked.

The very recollection of those unhappy experiences enkindles in the Psalmist a renewed fervor and a passionate devotion towards Jerusalem, the Holy City. She lies before him in ruins, lonely and desolate. But he cannot forget her as she was in the days of her glory; nor will he, while his hand has power to move or his tongue to speak. His was a real, unselfish love for God and divine worship which time could not cool, nor change obliterate.

It is readily admitted that the closing verses of this Psalm are too harsh for Christian ears. They point to a lower moral level than that demanded by Christianity. And yet, we need to observe that just as hardness and coarseness under given conditions can easily pass into the worst barbarity and brutality, so can refinement degenerate into sentimentality and sickening softness. There is, after all, such a thing as retribution; and it is as much required by justice for crimes deliberately committed as reward is for virtues practised. And this, not only that injuries and damage done may be in some way and to some extent compensated for, but also that future similar sins and crimes may be restrained, if not prevented. At times it may be even desirable and necessary that the Almighty should destroy the very seed of the wicked, that a continuation of unholy growth and evil harvest may be ended. It is easy enough for those not concerned, who have not been the victims of outrageous wrongs, to talk about leniency and forgiveness. Not so for the actual sufferers.

## PSALM 137 (Heb. 138)

## AN ACT OF THANKSGIVING FOR HELP RECEIVED

## INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is here thanking God for the divine mercy and goodness that prompted a speedy answer to his prayer in some special necessity, and gave courage to his soul (vv. 1-3). In Messianic times, he says, when the heathen learn of all Jehovah has done for His people, exalting the humble and putting down the proud, they will join with Israel in singing His praises (vv. 4-6). And these past mercies are an earnest of future ones in time of need, for the Lord will never despise the work of His hands (vv. 7, 8).



1. Davidis.

Of David.

*The Psalmist Thanks God (1-3)*

Celebrabo te, Domine, ex toto corde meo, quia audisti verba oris mei;

2. In conspectu Angelorum psallam tibi, prosternam me ad templum sanctum tuum, et celebrabo nomen tuum propter bonitatem et fidem tuam, quia magnum fecisti super omnia nomen tuum et promissum tuum.

3. Quando te invocavi, exaudisti me, multiplicasti in anima mea robur.

I will praise Thee, O Lord, from my whole heart, for Thou hast heard the words of my mouth;

In the presence of the Angels I will sing to Thee; I will worship towards Thy holy temple, and praise Thy name because of Thy goodness and Thy faithfulness; for Thy name and Thy promise Thou hast made great above all things.

When I called to Thee, Thou didst answer me, and Thou didst increase strength in my soul.

*May All the Rulers of the Earth Praise God (4-6)*

4. Celebrabunt te, Domine, omnes reges terrae, cum audierint verba oris tui;

5. Et cantabunt vias Domini: "Vere, magna est gloria Domini."

6. Vere, excelsus est Dominus, et humilem respicit, superbum autem e longinquo contuetur.

All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord, when they shall have heard the words of Thy mouth;

And they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, saying: "Truly, great is the glory of the Lord."

Truly, the Lord is high; and yet He regards the lowly, while the proud He beholds from afar.

*The Lord Will Not Fail Israel (7, 8)*

7. Si ambulo in medio tribulationis, vivum me servas, contra iram inimicorum meorum extendis manum tuam, salvum me facit dextera tua.

8. Dominus pro me perficiet coepta. Domine, bonitas tua in aeternum manet; ne dereliqueris opus manuum tuarum.

If I walk in the midst of tribulation, Thou preservest my life, Thou stretchest forth Thy hand against the anger of mine enemies, and Thy right hand saves me.

The Lord will complete for me the things He has begun. Thy goodness, O Lord, endures for ever; forsake not the work of Thy hands.

REFLECTIONS

Whether this Psalm is personal or national, and whether the singular divine blessing for which the Psalmist extols and thanks Jehovah was the establishment of the monarchy or the restoration from exile, are disputed questions. Nor does it matter much which of these opinions is held. In any event, the singer overflows with gratitude and praise as he recalls the ample fulfillment of some extraordinary promise which God has made, and he feels it a duty on his part to make this blessing widely known so that all the world may recognize the power and bounty of Israel's God, proclaim His glory and sing of His ways to men. The Psalmist has a glowing vision of the future which he is sure will yet be fulfilled, for a God who regards the lowly and knows the lofty far away will in due time conquer all hearts.

There is something fundamentally good in all people, if only it can be brought out and developed. They do wrong largely because they do not understand. They are drawn to creatures and the goods of earth, because God and the treasures of Heaven do not appeal to them more strongly than those others. We all choose to do what most appeals to us at the time, here and now.

As for himself the Psalmist is confident that his life, his present and future, are secure in God. Troubles and enemies may encompass him, dark ways may lie ahead, but he will have no fear; for Jehovah will be with him and will be his protection and his stay. He knows that the divine lovingkindness endures forever, and God will complete His work in him. And yet he does not presume, but terminates his song with a prayer to God's faithfulness and honor that He abandon not the work of His hands.

## PSALM 138 (Heb. 139)

GOD IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE AND SEES ALL THINGS

## INTRODUCTION

Nowhere in the Psalter are certain aspects of the infinite nature of God more minutely analysed and clearly described than in this beautiful poem. Surely, such pure, elevated and wonderful conceptions of the Divinity as are expressed throughout the Psalter, and especially in this Psalm, are an unanswerable argument in favor of its divine revelation and inspiration.



The Psalmist here reflects in particular: (a) on the divine omniscience, which knows all his thoughts, words and actions, even before he can give expression to them (vv. 1-6); (b) on the divine omnipresence, which nothing can escape and from which nothing can be hid (vv. 7-12); (c) on the divine omnipotence, which has fashioned his being, body and soul, and ordered all the days of his life with a wisdom that is unsearchable and unfathomable (vv. 13-18). Sinners are the only discordant note in the music of creation. Why does God permit them to defile His work? At any rate, the Psalmist will avoid them, and hate their evil deeds (vv. 19-22). He prays that his own mind and heart may be kept pure, and that he may be led on to life eternal (vv. 23, 24).

There are several marked resemblances between this Psalm and the Book of Job. Compare, for example, verse 9 with Job 3:9, and 42:10; verses 13-16 with Job 10:9-11. The Aramaic coloring of the language has induced many scholars to give the Psalm a post-exilic date, although the presence of Aramaisms is not necessarily a proof of late composition.

1. Magistro chori. Davidis. For the choir-master. Of David.  
Psalmus. A psalm.

*God Knows All Things (1-6)*

2. Domine, scrutaris me et novisti, tu novisti me, cum sedeo et cum surgo.

3. Intellegis cogitationes meas longe in quo; cum ambulo et cum recumbo, tu perspicias, et ad omnes vias meas advertis.

4. Cum verbum nondum est super linguam meam; ecce, Domine, iam nosti totum.

5. A tergo et a fronte complecteris me, et ponis super me manum tuam.

6. Nimis mirabilis est mihi scientia haec, sublimis: non capio eam.

*God Is Everywhere (7-12)*

7. Quo abeam procul a spiritu tuo? et quo a facie tua fugiam?

O Lord, Thou searchest and knowest me; Thou knowest me when I sit down and when I rise.

Thou understandest my thoughts from afar; Thou seest me when I walk and when I lie down, and Thou observest all my ways.

Before a word is upon my tongue, behold, Lord, Thou already knowest it entirely.

Thou dost encompass me behind and before, and layest Thy hand upon me.

This knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty; I cannot grasp it.

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face?

8. Si ascendam in caelum, illic es; si apud inferos me sternam, ades.

9. Si sumam pennas aurorae, si habitem in termino maris:

10. Etiam illic manus tua ducet me, et tenebit me dextera tua.

11. Si dicam: "Tenebrae saltem operient me, et nox instar lucis circumdabit me:"

12. Ipsae tenebrae non erunt obscurae tibi, et nox sicut dies lucebit: caligo est tibi sicut lux.

If I should ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I should make my bed in the underworld, Thou art present.

If I were to take the wings of the dawn, and were to dwell at the end of the sea,

Even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand will hold me.

If I shall say: "At least the darkness will cover me, and the night as the light will surround me,"

Yet darkness will not be dark to Thee, and the night shall shine as the day; darkness to Thee is the same as light.

*God Is All-powerful (13-18)*

13. Tu enim formasti renes meos, texuisti me in utero matris meae.

14. Laudo te, quod tam mirifice factus sum, quod mirabilia sunt opera tua.

15. Et animam meam novisti perfecte, non latuit te substantia mea, quando in occulto formabar, quando texebar in profundis terrae.

16. Actus meos viderunt oculi tui, et in libro tuo scripti sunt omnes, dies sunt definiti, priusquam esset vel unus ex eis.

17. Mihi autem quam ardua sunt consilia tua, Deus, quam ingens summa eorum!

18. Si dinumerem ea, plura

For Thou didst form my reins; Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise Thee, that I am so wonderfully made, and because Thy works are wonderful.

And my soul Thou knowest perfectly; my substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in secret, when I was put together in the lower parts of the earth.

Thine eyes saw my acts, and all were written in Thy book; the days were determined before there was even one of them.

But for me how hard are Thy purposes, O God; how vast the sum of them!

If I would count them, they are

12. "Caligo est tibi sicut lux" are perhaps a gloss.

18. "Si pervenerim, etc." Pondering the depths of Divinity the Psalmist, if through weariness he should fall asleep at his task, would awake only to find himself still lost in God. This would seem to be the sense of the Vulgate.



sunt quam arena; si pervenerim ad finem adhuc sum tecum.

more than the sand; *and* if I were to come to the end, I am still with Thee.

*Would that Sinners Might Be Removed (19-24)*

19. Utinam occidas impium, Deus, et viri sanguinum recedant a me!

20. Nam rebellant contra te dolose, perfide se efferunt hostes tui.

21. Nonne, qui oderunt te, Domine, eos odio habeo, qui insurgunt in te, sunt mihi taedio?

22. Perfecto odio odi eos; inimici facti sunt mihi.

23. Scrutare me, Deus, et cognosce cor meum; proba me, et cognosce sensa mea,

24. Et vide, num via prava incedam, et deduc me via antiqua.

O God, that Thou wouldst slay the wicked man, and that men of blood would depart from me!

For they rebel against Thee deceitfully; Thine enemies treacherously exalt themselves.

Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and loathe those that rise up against Thee?

I hate them with perfect hatred; they are mine enemies.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts,

And see if I walk on an evil path, and lead me in the olden way.

REFLECTIONS

It is remarkable here, in the first place, that the Psalmist, discussing the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of God, considers these divine attributes, not as abstractions or as pertaining to creation in general, but as qualities bearing upon himself in a concrete, personal manner. The divine Being knows him through and through, is with him at all times and everywhere and has formed and fashioned him altogether. Of course it is understood that this individual and all-embracing relationship which God has towards him extends likewise to each and every person and thing in all creation; but it is only in the closing verses of the poem that the Psalmist makes reference to other men.

It is natural and to be expected that the intimate and penetrating relation between God and a human being, so vividly described in this Psalm, should produce opposite effects on good and bad people. Like this Psalmist, the holy and the good find nothing so comforting and consoling as the thoughts that their Father in Heaven knows all about

19-22. The connection between these verses and the preceding ones is difficult to see. The Psalmist wonders that the God whom he has been contemplating can permit sinners to exist. Of course sinners are also God's children, however wayward.

them—their souls and bodies; their past, present and future; their inner thoughts and desires, their outward actions and undertakings; their labors and struggles; their joys and sorrows; their hopes and ambitions; that He is with them in all places and at all times so closely and constantly that there is no possibility that He should ever desert them or leave them alone in any conditions or circumstances of life, in need or in peril, in sickness or in health, in youth or in age, in happiness or in sorrow; and that His limitless power is equalled by His everlasting and infinite goodness and love. What good person, or person earnestly and habitually striving to be good, would not be consoled, strengthened and inspired by thoughts like these? Who would not cherish the company of a friend such as God is to those who really want to love and serve Him?

On the other hand, the thought that God's knowledge embraces us completely, as to every least detail of our life and being, that nothing can escape or hide from His all-pervading gaze and presence, and that His power is without limit, cannot but fill with terror and dread the minds and hearts of the wicked, if they think or reflect at all on these stern truths. They may try to shut them out of their minds, or refuse to consider them, or harden themselves against them; but there they are, like dreadful, unrelenting ghosts, fixed and unremovable throughout all time and eternity. For it is as impossible that God should not know all things, be in all places and have all power, as it is that He should cease to be God.

Sinners must therefore reckon with truths and facts which the Infinite Being Himself cannot change or modify in any way. Their only hope is to face these grim realities in all candor and humility, and to try to bring their lives into harmony with them. They may not presume on the divine goodness, without doing their own full part, but they may be encouraged and have hope and confidence in the reflection that, as God made them, gave them their nature and brought them into the world, He will in the end remember mercy, for He knows their native frailty, their handicaps and hardships; He knows that they are dust.

PSALM 139 (Heb. 140)

AGAINST VIOLENT AND PERFIDIOUS ENEMIES

INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist here prays to be delivered from violent enemies who by slander and intrigue seek to ruin him. He entreats that God may not abandon him to the desires and plots of these unscrupulous men; nay,



rather let their own intrigues overwhelm them, and God rain upon them burning coals, hurling them down, never to rise again. The Psalmist knows that God is the champion of the weak and the poor, and therefore the just will praise His name and the pious shall dwell in His presence.

1. Magistro chori. Psalmus. Davidis.

For the choir-master. A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Prays to Be Delivered from His Enemies (2-8)*

2. Eripe me, Domine, ab homine malo, a viro violento custodi me:

Rescue me, O Lord, from the evil man; from the violent man preserve me;

3. Ab iis qui cogitant mala in corde, omni die excitant lites,

From those that devise evils in their heart; every day they stir up strife,

4. Acuunt linguas suas ut serpens: venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum.

They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; the poison of adders is under their lips.

5. Salva me, Domine, a manibus iniqui, a viro violento custodi me:

Save me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; from the violent man preserve me;

6. Qui cogitant evertere gressus meos, superbi abscondunt laqueum mihi, et funes extendunt ut rete, iuxta viam tendiculas collocant mihi.

Who purpose to turn aside my steps, the proud hide a trap for me, and stretch out cords for a net; by the wayside they place entanglements for me.

7. Dico Domino: Deus meus es tu; ausculta, Domine, vocem obsecrationis meae.

I say to the Lord: "Thou art my God;" hearken, O Lord, to the voice of my supplication.

8. Domine, Deus, potens auxilium meum! tegis caput meum die pugnae.

O Lord God, my strong help! Thou coverest my head on the day of battle.

*May the Plans of the Enemies Fail and May Their Malice Fall upon Themselves (9-11)*

9. Ne concesseris, Domine, desideria iniqui, noli implere consilia eius.

Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked man; fulfill not his plans.

10. Extollunt caput qui me circumdant: malitia labiorum eorum obruat eos.

They that compass me about lift up the head; may the malice of their lips overwhelm them!

11. Pluat super eos carbones ignitos, in foveam deiciat eos, ne resurgant.

May He rain upon them burning coals; may He cast them into the pit, that they rise not up again!

*Failure Awaits the Wicked, Triumph the Just (12-14)*

12. Vir linguae malae non durabit in terra; virum violentum repente capient mala.

The man of evil tongue shall not live long upon earth; evils shall suddenly overtake the violent man.

13. Novi Dominum ius reddere egeno, iustitiam pauperibus.

I know that the Lord renders his right to the needy, and justice to the poor.

14. Profecto iusti celebrabunt nomen tuum, recti habitabunt in conspectu tuo.

Surely the just shall praise Thy name, and the upright shall dwell in Thy presence.

REFLECTIONS

The condition of the Psalmist here and the thoughts of the Psalm are again familiar; they are duplicated in many other Psalms. The singer is encompassed by wicked enemies, he takes refuge in God, he prays that retribution may overtake his persecutors, he is confident of protection and safety in the divine shelter.

The Psalmist has recourse to God in his peril, first, because he feels that no one else can help him; and secondly, because his past experience assures him that God's help never fails. Jehovah is his God, his stronghold, the sure source of his salvation; and therefore he can appeal to Him with unwavering faith and be certain of protection and deliverance.

The vehemence of the poet's language against his foes, here as elsewhere, is characteristic of Oriental strong feeling and expression; but it has also another cause. The desire to serve his Lord and to pass his short life in sweet communion with Him was not only all that he lived for or cared to live for, but it was a consuming passion so intense and burning that any opposing or disturbing influence was enough to stir his soul to its very depths and excite him to a state of fury. Why could he not be left in peace to pursue an inoffensive, holy life? What reasonable objection could men have to his way of living? What harm was he doing to anyone, unless his very goodness was a standing reproach and challenge to wickedness around him?

These were doubtless some of the thoughts that flamed up in the Psalmist's mind and soul in the face of persecuting enemies. If we, in like circumstances, do not, or should not, share something of the



intensity of his feeling, it is because we lack also the intensity of his faith, fervor and joy in God and the divine service. Things poorly or coldly prized are forfeited without much struggle or resentment.

### PSALM 140 (Heb. 141)

#### PRAYERS OF A JUST MAN AGAINST THE PLOTS OF THE WICKED

##### INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is like the preceding one in tone and language, and very probably belongs to the same author; only here the Psalmist seems to fear that he may be seduced by the godless so as to imitate their evil ways. Therefore he pleads that his prayer may be pleasing in the sight of God, and that his speech and his heart may be guarded lest he begin to imitate the evil he abhors. He prefers the rebuke of the just to the flattery of sinners, for destruction awaits the latter and their judges.

The Psalmist is in sore need of help, and so looks to God with unfaltering trust, confident of deliverance from the snares and traps of evil-doers.

1. Psalmus. Davidis.

A psalm. Of David.

##### *The Psalmist Prays to Be Heard and to Be Kept from Evil (1-4)*

Domine, clamo ad te: cito succurre mihi, ausculta vocem meam, cum ad te clamo.

O Lord, I call to Thee, make haste to help me; hearken to my voice when I call to Thee.

2. Dirigatur ad te oratio mea sicut incensum, elatio manuum mearum ut sacrificium vespertinum.

Let my prayer be directed to Thee as incense, *and* the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.

3. Pone, Domine, custodiam ad os meum, excubias ad ostium labiorum meorum.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a guard at the door of my lips.

4. Ne inclinaveris cor meum ad rem malam, ad impie patranda facinora; neque cum viris iniqua

Incline not my heart to an evil thing, wickedly to commit crimes; neither let me ever eat with men

2. The reference is to the incense that was offered morning and evening on the golden altar of the Tabernacle and Temple (Exod. 30:7).

agentibus vescar unquam lautis cibis eorum. that work iniquity, of their dainty foods.

##### *Better the Rebuke of the Just than the Flattery of the Wicked (5-7)*

5. Percutiat me iustus: haec pietas est; increpet me: oleum est capitis, quod non recusabit caput meum, sed semper orabo sub malis eorum.

Let the just man smite me; this is kindness. Let him reprove me; it is oil for the head, which my head will not refuse. But I shall always pray under their afflictions.

6. Demissi sunt iuxta petram principes eorum, et audierunt quam lenia essent verba mea.

Their princes have been thrown against the rock, and they have heard how gentle were my words.

7. Ut cum terram quis sulcat et findit, sparsa sunt ossa eorum ad fauces inferni.

As when one furrows and breaks the earth, *so* are their bones scattered at the jaws of the underworld.

##### *The Psalmist Appeals to God (8-10)*

8. Nam ad te, Domine Deus, convertuntur oculi mei; ad te confugio: ne perdidideris animam meam.

For mine eyes are turned to Thee, O Lord God; to Thee I flee for refuge; destroy not my soul.

9. Custodi me a laqueo, quem posuerunt mihi, et a tendiculis agentium iniqua.

Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and from the entanglements of the workers of iniquity.

10. Cadant in retia sua impii simul, dum ego salvus evadam.

Let the wicked fall together into their own nets, while I pass on in safety.

##### REFLECTIONS

Verses 1-4 of this Psalm are closely linked with verses 8-10; but in the first group the singer is praying against temptation, the danger of becoming infected with the sins of the wicked rich around him, whereas

5. "Oleum, etc." This phrase means that the Psalmist regards the correction of a just man with delight, as if precious oil were poured in honor upon his head at a banquet.

6, 7. The rendering above gives the most probable meaning of these obscure verses. The texts here are in bad shape. The Hebrew of v. 6 appears to be: *Their judges (leaders) are thrown down on the rocks, and (men) hear my sayings because they are pleasant.* The Hebrew of v. 7 has: *As one cuts and cleaves the earth, so are our bones strewn at the mouth of Sheol.*



in the latter verses he pleads for his life which is in peril from the snares and traps which the ungodly have laid for him. The connection between these two sets of verses and the middle section of the Psalm, verses 5-7, is not very clear, largely on account of the obscurity of the verses in the middle part.

At any rate, the Psalmist is aware of the seductive influence of sin and sinners and of his own weakness and danger; and so he turns to God in devout prayer that his tongue and heart may be fortified against the temptation to speak wrong words or to indulge evil appetites. Far better, he thinks, the abode and fare of the righteous poor than the mansions and feasts of the unholy rich; far better the reproof of the godly than the praise and flattery of sinners. The pleasures and delights of sin and evil are momentary, but the sting and remorse which follow them are enduring.

As in many other Psalms, so here the Psalmist prays that the plots of his enemies may recoil on themselves. Retaliation for injuries and wrongs is not according to the virtue of Christian charity, which requires that we love our enemies and return good for evil; but it is an inescapable law of nature. Sin harms the sinner more surely and more severely in the long run than it does anyone else. Unjust traps set for others may or may not catch those others, but they will in the end—somehow, somewhere—catch those who set them.

#### PSALM 141 (Heb. 142)

#### THE PRAYER OF ONE ABANDONED BY ALL

##### INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist is in desperate need of help. Enemies have surrounded him, as in a prison, laying traps for him, and there is no one to help him, no one who cares for his life (vv. 2-5). But, in contrast to the hostility and neglect of evil men, there is the Lord, ever ready to protect and succor him; to Him, therefore, the Psalmist turns in his utter abandonment, pleading to be rescued, so that he and other just men may praise the Eternal for His mercy (vv. 6-8).

If the "prison" (v. 8) is to be taken literally, it may refer to the time when David was in the cave of Odollam (Adullam), or in that of Engaddi (1 Kings 22, 24), as the title suggests.

Verses 2-5 are clearly descriptive of our Lord's abandonment in His passion, and hence have a Messianic sense. With this Psalm compare Psalms 63, 119, 139.

1. Maskil. Davidis, cum esset in caverna. Precatio.

A maskil. Of David, when he was in the cave. A prayer.

#### *The Psalmist Is Alone among Enemies (2-5)*

2. Voce magna ad Dominum clamo, voce magna Dominum obsecro.

I cry to the Lord with a loud voice; with a loud voice I supplicate the Lord.

3. Effundo coram eo sollicitudinem meam, angustiam meam coram ipso pando.

I pour out my solicitude before Him; in His presence I declare my distress.

4. Cum anxiatur in me spiritus meus, tu novisti viam meam. In via qua incedo, absconderunt laqueum mihi.

When my spirit is anxious within me, Thou knowest my path. In the way wherein I walk, they have hidden a snare for me.

5. Respicio ad dextram et video, et non est, qui de me curet. Non est, quo fugiam, non est, qui prospiciat vitae meae.

I look to the right hand and I see, but there is no one that cares for me. There is no place to which I may flee, and there is none that gives heed to my life.

#### *The Psalmist Turns to God (6-8)*

6. Clamo ad te, Domine; dico: "Tu es refugium meum, portio mea in terra viventium."

I cry to Thee, O Lord; I say: "Thou art my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

7. Attende ad clamorem meum, quia miser factus sum valde. Eripe me a persequentibus me, quia me fortiores sunt.

Attend to my cry, for I am miserable indeed. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I.

8. De carcere educ me, ut gratias agam nomini tuo. Iusti circumdabunt me, cum bene feceris mihi.

Lead me out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name. The just will surround me, when Thou shalt have been good to me.

##### REFLECTIONS

Until the closing verse of this poem the writer speaks as if he were friendless, alone, abandoned by everybody; but at the end we see that

5. "Respicio . . . video" represent absolute infinitives in the Hebrew, which are rightly rendered here by finite verbs.—"Curet . . . prospiciat" mean to *recognize* and to *seek after* in a friendly and sympathetic manner.

8. "Carcere" may refer to the Cave of Adullam (1 Kings 22), where David hid for a time to escape the persecution of Saul.



this was not so, since there were good men waiting to rejoice with him in his deliverance. It is true these friends did not come to his aid in his greatest need, perhaps because they feared for their own safety, or did not understand his extremity, or were just indifferent, as most people always are towards others' troubles.

No one can quite completely enter into another's suffering, even though he has gone through a similar experience; and it seems to be characteristic of people generally to feel that they have enough to endure to bear their own burdens. Suffering of any kind is mostly a solitary affair. When all is well with us, we have friends and companions to share our prosperity and happiness; but when adversity comes, we are likely to find ourselves nearly, if not entirely, alone.

The Psalmist's loneliness in trouble and suffering drove him to God. He felt there was no one else he could turn to for help and sympathy. Others either could not or would not succor him. But in God he knew, instinctively and from experience, there was a helper who would never fail him—a helper at once all-powerful and all-good.

While there is abundant evidence to show that bad fortune of any kind often has good results in bringing people to their senses and making them spiritually better, there remains the grave question whether the contrary is not more generally true. Fr. Faber was a supremely optimistic spiritual writer, and yet the statement is attributed to him that "suffering makes few people better." The reason for this conclusion is that many people seem simply not to have enough faith and confidence in God to turn their crosses to their spiritual profit. Hardship and misfortune rather drive them away from God and spiritual things, or else make them indifferent to both. They therefore suffer to no other purpose, spiritual or temporal. Their lot is pitiable and truly miserable. Hence we should learn the importance of cultivating habits of faith and confidence in God at all times, and especially when well and prosperous, so as to be able to withstand the evil days.

### PSALM 142 (Heb. 143)

#### PRAYERS OF A PENITENT MAN IN DISTRESS

##### INTRODUCTION

In this, the seventh and last of the Penitential Psalms, the faithful servant of God cries out for divine aid against bitter foes who have reduced him to the verge of the grave. He knows he is being justly

chastised for his sins, but he is sorry for his transgressions and begs for mercy (vv. 1-4). He recalls the days of old, when Jehovah wrought wonders for His people; and in this cheering retrospect he is emboldened to hope for a new manifestation of the Eternal's goodness (vv. 5, 6). Help must be speedy, for his spirits are failing. May Jehovah guide him in the right way, teach him the divine will, direct his steps and make away with his persecutors (vv. 7-12)!

The Psalm breathes the spirit of David, and is reminiscent of many other Psalms whose Davidic authorship cannot be questioned.

1. Psalmus. Davidis.

A psalm. Of David.

*The Psalmist Appeals to God in His Sufferings, and Is Encouraged as He Recalls Other Days (1-6)*

Domine, audi orationem meam,  
percipe obsecrationem meam pro  
fidelitate tua, exaudi me pro tua  
iustitia.

O Lord, hear my prayer; receive  
my supplication in Thy faithful-  
ness; answer me according to Thy  
justice.

2. Ne vocaveris in iudicium  
servum tuum, quia nemo vivens  
iustus est coram te.

Call not into judgment Thy ser-  
vant, for no one living is just be-  
fore Thee.

3. Nam inimicus persequitur  
animam meam: prostravit in ter-  
ram vitam meam, collocavit me in  
tenebris sicut pridem defunctos.

For the enemy persecutes my  
soul; he has cast down my life to  
the ground, he has placed me in  
darkness like those that are long  
since dead.

4. Et deficit in me spiritus meus;  
intra me obrigit cor meum.

And so my spirit faints in me,  
and my heart within me stiffens.

5. Memini dierum antiquorum,  
meditor de omnibus operibus tuis,  
facta manuum tuarum perpendo.

I remember the days of old, I  
meditate on all Thou hast done,  
I muse upon the works of Thy  
hands.

6. Expando manus meas ad te;  
anima mea, ut terra arida, te sitit.

I spread forth my hands to Thee;  
my soul, like a parched land, thirsts  
for Thee.

*May God Send Help and Guidance, and Destroy the Psalmist's Foes (7-12)*

7. Velociter exaudi me, Domi-  
ne: nam deficit spiritus meus. Noli  
abscondere faciem tuam a me, ne

Answer me speedily, O Lord,  
for my spirit faints. Hide not Thy  
face from me, lest I become



similis fiam descendentibus in foveam.

8. Fac cito percipiam gratiam tuam, quia in te confido. Notum fac mihi, qua via incedam, quia ad te attollo animam meam.

9. Eripe me de inimicis meis, Domine: in te spero.

10. Doce me facere voluntatem tuam, quia tu es Deus meus. Spiritus tuus bonus est: ducat me in terra plana.

11. Propter nomen tuum, Domine, vivum me serva; pro clementia tua educ de angustiis animam meam.

12. Et pro gratia tua destrue inimicos meos, et perde omnes qui tribulant animam meam: nam ego sum servus tuus.

like those that go down into the pit.

Make me soon to enjoy Thy favor, for in Thee I trust. Make known to me the way wherein I should walk, for to Thee I lift up my soul.

Rescue me from mine enemies, O Lord; in Thee I hope.

Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. Thy spirit is good; may it lead me on smooth ground.

For Thy name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life; in Thy mercy lead my soul out of distress.

And in Thy goodness destroy mine enemies, and make an end of all that trouble my soul, for I am Thy servant.

#### REFLECTIONS

The first six verses of this Psalm are a plaintive prayer embracing a description of the writer's sufferings, the depressing effect they have on him, and his hope of help arising from a recollection of past mercies. In the last six verses the author pleads, first for practical direction as to the means by which he may be rescued from his foes, and then for inward enlightenment and help which teach him conformity between his will and God's, thus delivering his soul from all straits both from within and from without.

If it seems strange to us that the Psalmist so often complains of the suffering which enemies inflict on him, the answer is that such is the common lot, everywhere and in every age, of those who really try to lead a holy life here on earth. St. Paul expressed this truth when he wrote to Timothy: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). If some of us do not find it so, the reason is all too likely that we are not very holy, not trying to be very spiritual. The world that we know, into which we are born, is an evil one; and it is so because human nature is so bad—so inclined to the material and the temporal, to the goods of the present life and the pleasures of the

flesh, as opposed to the spiritual and the eternal and the treasures of Heaven. Life here below is a veritable warfare for all, but in particular for those who are striving after holiness.

But the fact that a life of virtue and high spirituality here is so hard, and the lot of those who endeavor to pursue it is so difficult, is an unanswerable argument for a future, better life to come in which good people will receive recompense for their struggles on earth, and will be able to obtain the complete satisfaction of all their better longings and aspirations. Were it otherwise, human kind would be the most deceived and cheated, the most miserable and wretched, of all creatures. It is this hope of something far better to come that makes so many troubled souls sigh for the end of earthly life. And yet many of those same persons do not seem to make any special effort to improve their spiritual condition and thus make sure the eternal peace and happiness for which they yearn. They fail to consider that there can be no joy or release in exchanging one state of misery for another, or in going from bad perhaps to worse.

#### PSALM 143 (Heb. 144)

#### PRAYERS OF A KING FOR VICTORY AND PROSPERITY

#### INTRODUCTION

This poem is partly a prayer for deliverance from foreign oppressors (vv. 1-11), and partly a prophecy of the blessings that will be Israel's in Messianic times (vv. 12-15). The first main section (vv. 1-8) is mostly a composite of older Davidic Psalms (especially of 17, 8, 38, 103), and can therefore be regarded as Davidic, at least indirectly. The rest of the Psalm was probably written later.

1. Davidis.

Of David.

#### *The King Proclaims God His Protector and Helper (1, 2)*

Benedictus Dominus, Petra mea,  
qui docet manus meas proelium,  
digitos meos bellum,

Blessed be the Lord, my Rock,  
who teaches my hands to fight, my  
fingers to make war,

2. Misericordia mea et arx mea,  
praesidium meum et liberator meus,  
clipeus meus et refugium meum,  
qui subdit populos mihi.

My mercy and my fortress, my  
stronghold and my deliverer, my  
shield and my refuge, who subdues  
peoples under me.



*Conscious of His Own Unworthiness and Infirmary the King Implores  
God's All-powerful Aid (3-8)*

3. Domine, quid est homo, quod curas de eo, filius hominis, quod de eo cogitas?

4. Homo similis est flatui aurae, dies eius umbrae, quae transit.

5. Domine, inclina caelos tuos et descende, tange montes et fumabunt;

6. Fulmina fulmen et disperge eos, emitte sagittas tuas et conturba eos;

7. Porrige manum tuam de alto, eripe me et libera me ex aquis multis, e manu alienigenarum,

8. Quorum os mendacium loquitur et dextera iurat falsum.

Lord, what is man, that Thou carest for him? Or the son of man that Thou takest thought of him?

Man is like a breath of air; his days as a shadow that passes away.

O Lord, bow Thy heavens and come down; touch the mountains and they shall smoke;

Flash forth lightnings and scatter them; send out Thine arrows and trouble them;

Stretch forth Thy hand from on high; rescue me and deliver me from many waters, from the hand of strangers,

Whose mouth speaks a lie, and whose right hand swears falsehood.

*The King Promises Praise and Thanksgiving for His Deliverance  
(9-11)*

9. Deus, canticum novum cantabo tibi, psalterio decachordo psallam tibi,

10. Qui das victoriam regibus, qui eripuisti David, servum tuum.

11. A gladio malo eripe me et libera me e manu alienigenarum, quorum os mendacium loquitur, et dextera iurat falsum.

O God, I will sing a new song to Thee, I will make music to Thee with a harp of ten strings,

Who givest victory to kings, who hast rescued David, Thy servant.

Rescue me from the evil sword, and deliver me from the hand of strangers, whose mouth speaks a lie, and whose right hand swears falsehood.

*May the People Enjoy Prosperity and Peace (12-15)*

12. Filii nostri similes sint plantis, crescentes in adolescentia sua; Let our sons be as plants, growing up in their youth; our daughters

12-15. These verses are best understood as prayers, imploring prosperity for the people of God.

12. The passage is descriptive of the peace and prosperity of the Messianic era.

filiae nostrae quasi columnae angulares, sculptae ut columnae templi.

13. Horrea nostra sint plena, copiosa omnibus fructibus;

Oves nostrae, milies fecundae, in myriadas augeantur in campis nostris; iumenta nostra sint onusta.

14. Ne sit ruptura moenium aut exsilium, neve planctus in plateis nostris.

15. Beatus populus cui sunt talia; beatus populus, cuius Deus est Dominus.

as corner pillars, sculptured like the columns of a temple.

Let our garner be full, overflowing with all manner of fruits;

Let our sheep, fruitful a thousandfold, be increased to myriads in our fields; let our beasts of burden be well laden.

Let there be no breach in our walls nor exile, no wailing in our streets.

Blessed is the people that has such things; blessed the people whose God is the Lord.

REFLECTIONS

The differences between the first eleven verses of this poem and the remaining four verses are so many and so marked that authors have thought that the two sections at one time must have constituted two separate Psalms in whole or in part. In the first part the Psalmist praises Jehovah who has taught him skill in war and fortified his natural weakness, and then prays for complete and ultimate victory over all his foes, promising new songs of praise for these added mercies. The last part gives a beautiful picture of the peace and prosperity which will follow upon conquest and which are possible for Israel only because Jehovah is her God.

Whatever may be said about the integrity of this Psalm or the connection between its two main divisions, it surely gives us, in brief, under material symbols a description of our present life and the rewards we hope will follow it for all who, by God's special help, shall have triumphed over its obstacles. Not that this was the Psalmist's intention or the direct meaning of his Psalm, but that it is an appropriate spiritual application which we can give to his words.

Human life at best is a warfare, in which no one who even approaches the years and state of maturity can hope to escape battle and a realization of the weight and importance of the grim struggle. This is true in the natural as well as in the supernatural order; and while in both the help of God is indispensable, it is obviously of greater moment in the latter.

13. "Iumenta . . . onusta," i.e., beasts of burden laden or freighted with fruits of the harvest.

14. "Exsilium," i.e., the people shall not be led into exile by conquering enemies.



Earthly life is short at longest, and the temporal results and consequences of it likewise soon pass. Our spiritual future, then, is the all-important question before us, and it is this which is more or less in jeopardy from the dawn of reason to death. Here it is that, above everything else, divine aid is needed, to teach us how successfully to fight foes from within and from without us—our own perverse nature and its unruly appetites, physical and mental handicaps, the lure and traps of the world around, Satan and his many devices and human agents—and to give strength and direction to our faltering efforts. Only with God's help and our own best efforts can we reasonably hope to enjoy, when the struggle is over, a spiritual peace and plenty corresponding to the material picture with which this poem ends.

It is wearisome to think that the present life must be such a constant battle; that wars, great and small, must be ever recurring; that during our few years here we cannot, in quiet and peace, enjoy the many good things within our reach; that love and desire, pleasures and satisfaction, ambition and effort, cannot be easily restrained in accordance with the requirements of law and order and consideration for one another in the human family. But such conditions in our present state, on any grand scale and for any considerable length of time, seem practically out of the question; they are not for here or now. To think or say otherwise is to close one's eyes to glaring facts, present and past. Earth will never be Heaven, nor anything like it, in spite of all our wishing and striving.

While therefore doing all we reasonably can for ourselves and others to make life easier and the world a better place to live in, we must never lose sight of the persistent truth that earthly existence is a warfare; and that so, with God's help, we must continue all our days to fight the good fight, try to keep the faith and await the crown which the just judge will render to all who in patience wait for Him and love His coming (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

#### PSALM 144 (Heb. 145)

### THE GREATNESS AND GOODNESS OF GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

This "Praise-Song" of David, as it is called in the title, celebrates the greatness and goodness of Israel's God as manifested in all creation, and in particular towards those that love and fear Him. The Psalmist, speaking for his nation, declares that the praises of God and of His

marvelous works shall go on forever. Everything manifests the divine beneficence and mercy, and hence may all the works of the Lord glorify Him! His is a universal, unending kingdom of justice and mercy, and therefore He will be near to those that love and fear Him, but the wicked He will destroy. Verse 21 is a conclusion, corresponding to verse 1: the chorus of praise to Jehovah begins with Israel and is echoed by all mankind.

The Psalm is alphabetical, each verse beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letters following in regular order. The *nun* stanza is wanting in the Massoretic text, but is found in the Greek, Syriac and Latin versions.

#### 1. Laudes. Davidis.

#### Praises. Of David.

#### *The Psalmist Will Praise God (1, 2)*

Praedicabo te, Deus meus, rex;  
et benedicam nomini tuo in saeculum saeculi,

I will extol Thee, my God, O king, and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever.

2. Omni die benedicam tibi, et laudabo nomen tuum in saeculum saeculi.

Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.

#### *God's Majesty, Power and Goodness (3-9)*

3. Magnus est Dominus et laudabilis valde, neque explorari potest magnitudo eius.

Great is the Lord and much to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable.

4. Generatio generationi praedicat opera tua, et annuntiant potentiam tuam.

Generation announces to generation Thy works, and they declare Thy power.

5. Gloriam magnificam maiestatis tuae loquuntur, et mirabilia tua pervulgant.

They speak of the magnificent glory of Thy majesty, and tell abroad Thy marvels.

6. Et potentiam terribilium operum tuorum dicunt, et magnitudinem tuam enarrant.

And they publish the might of Thy terrible deeds, and narrate Thy greatness.

7. Laudem magnae bonitatis tuae proclamant, et de iustitia tua exsultant.

They proclaim the praise of Thy great goodness, and exult because of Thy justice.

8. Clemens et misericors est Dominus, tardus ad iram et gratiae multae.

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and very kind.

9. Bonus est Dominus universis, et misericors erga omnia opera sua.

The Lord is good to all, and merciful towards all His works.



*The Glory of God's Kingdom (10-13b)*

10. Celebrent te, Domine, omnia opera tua, et sancti tui benedicant tibi.

11. Gloriam regni tui dicant, et potentiam tuam loquantur,

12. Ut notam faciant filiis hominum potentiam tuam, et gloriam magnifici regni tui.

13. Regnum tuum regnum omnium saeculorum, et dominatio tua manet per universas generationes.

Let all Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and let Thy saints bless Thee.

Let them speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and tell of Thy power,

That they may make known Thy might to the sons of men, and the glory of Thy magnificent kingdom.

Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations.

*God Cares and Provides for All Things (13c-17)*

Fidelis Dominus in omnibus verbis suis, et sanctus in omnibus operibus suis.

14. Dominus sustinet omnes qui cadunt, et erigit omnes depressos.

15. Oculi omnium in te sperant, et tu das illis escam tempore suo.

16. Tu aperis manum tuam, et satias cum benevolentia omne vivens.

17. Iustus est Dominus in omnibus viis suis, et sanctus in omnibus operibus suis.

The Lord is faithful in all His words, and holy in all He does.

The Lord upholds all that fall, and lifts up all that are bowed down.

The eyes of all hope in Thee, and Thou givest them food in due season.

Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest with benevolence every living thing.

The Lord is just in all His ways, and holy in all His works.

*God Is Kind to the Pious, and Should Be Praised by All (18-21)*

18. Prope est Dominus omnibus invocantibus eum, omnibus invocantibus eum sincere.

19. Voluntatem timentium se faciet, et clamorem eorum audiet, et salvabit eos.

20. Custodit Dominus omnes qui diligunt eum et omnes impios disperdet.

The Lord is near to all that call upon Him, to all that invoke Him sincerely.

He will fulfill the desire of those that fear Him, and He will hear their cry and save them.

The Lord keeps all that love Him, and all the wicked He will destroy.

21. Laudem Domini loquatur os meum, et omnis caro benedicat nomini sancto eius in saeculum saeculi. Let my mouth utter the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever.

## REFLECTIONS

So enraptured with God is this singer that, in the first six verses of his poem, he piles word upon word and phrase upon phrase to extol and magnify the divine greatness as manifested in the many visible works and wonders of creation. The Psalmist himself will never cease to praise that greatness, now or in the future, either in the present life or in a life yet to come. In his ecstasy, he speaks as if he had caught some clear glimpse of immortality. He will praise his Lord for ever and ever.

Then he turns in the following verses to the still more attractive divine qualities and deeds, which are the outpourings of divine goodness; and he foretells that Jehovah's faithful followers shall proclaim them to the whole world and to all succeeding generations. These qualities and acts are God's works and love and compassion, the glory and splendor of His kingdom, His kind Providence to all His creatures, His nearness to all who sincerely call upon Him, His determination to save and satisfy all who love Him.

While celebrating, however, the greatness and goodness of God, the universality and perpetuity of His rule and kingdom, and His constant beneficence to all creatures, the Psalmist is not unaware of discordant elements in the works of creation, for he speaks in verse 20 of the wicked who shall be destroyed. Sin is a disturbance of order, a blot on creation.

That there should be any lack of harmony in God's works is, at first sight and from a limited view, not easy to understand and sometimes profoundly disturbing to religious minds. Not that these persons are unwilling to accept and believe all that is required of them; but they do not like to take everything for granted without thought or explanation of any kind. They want what St. Peter called a reasonable faith. They cannot tolerate the errors of certain philosophers who would explain the evils of the world by saying that God is either not all-powerful, and so is unable to prevent them, or He is not all-good, and hence does not want to prevent them. It is obvious that such teaching contradicts the very notion of a Supreme Being. But these troubled souls are satisfied when they understand that defect and failure in some



degree are of the very nature of created things, and that there is only one all-perfect Being, which is God.

It would be impossible that God should reproduce Himself in the world, or create another all-perfect being like Himself, because such reproduction or creation involves limitation, and thus imperfection. The very fact that a thing is brought dependently into being, or has a beginning, makes it imperfect, as showing that it did not always exist, and so is limited and imperfect in duration to start with. If God does not, by special help or grace, supplement the naturally defective natures of His creatures, and so make them relatively more perfect, the reason is that such action would necessitate a change of plan and purpose in the work of creation as a whole. There is a vast variety and an immense gradation in the creatures that make up the universe, and no one being or part of it can be perfectly understood, theologically speaking, without a comprehension of the whole—a task to which only divine power and intelligence are equal.

It is only in Heaven and for the saved that God has prepared a relatively perfect state. For this let us strive, and let "all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever."

#### PSALM 145 (Heb. 146)

#### PRAISE OF GOD THE CREATOR, THE HELPER OF ALL, THE ETERNAL KING

##### INTRODUCTION

Israel is reminded in this Psalm of the power, goodness and everlasting rule of Jehovah, her God, the God of Jacob; and she is bidden to put her trust in Him, and not in earthly potentates whose lives are transient and whose schemes die with them. Jehovah is a faithful Lord and provides for all classes of people—for the hungry, for prisoners, the blind, the oppressed, for travellers, orphans and widows—for all. Unlike human rulers, Sion's God reigns forever.

1. Alleluia. Alleluia.

#### *In God Alone Can Israel Trust (1-4)*

2. Lauda, anima mea, Dominum, laudabo Dominum in vita mea; psallam Deo meo quamdiu ero. Praise the Lord, O my soul; I will praise the Lord in my life; I will sing to my God as long as I shall be.

3. Nolite confidere in principibus, in homine, per quem non est salus. Put not your trust in princes, in man, in whom there is no help.

4. Cum exierit spiritus eius, revertetur in terram suam; tunc peribunt omnia consilia eius. When his spirit shall have gone forth, he will return to his earth; then shall perish all his plans.

#### *The God of Israel Has Made and Provides for All Things; He Rules For Ever (5-10)*

5. Beatus, cuius adiutor est Deus Iacob, cuius spes in Domino, Deo suo, Blessed is he whose helper is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God,

6. Qui fecit caelum et terram, mare, et omnia quae in eis sunt, Qui servat fidem in aeternum, (7) reddit ius oppressis, panem dat esurientibus. Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, Who remains faithful for ever, who renders justice to the oppressed, and gives bread to the hungry.

Dominus solvit captivos, (8) Dominus aperit oculos caecorum. The Lord looses captives; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

Dominus erigit curvatos, Dominus diligit iustos. The Lord lifts up those that are bowed down, the Lord loves the just.

9. Dominus custodit peregrinos, pupillum et viduam sustentat, viam autem peccatorum perturbat. The Lord protects strangers; He upholds the orphan and the widow, *but* the way of sinners He confounds.

10. Regnabit Dominus in aeternum, Deus tuus, Sion, in generationem et generationem. Alleluia. The Lord will reign for ever; thy God, O Sion, from generation to generation. Alleluia.

##### REFLECTIONS

The glorious hymn-book of Israel, and of all succeeding ages, draws to a close with a group of Alleluia songs, mounting and swelling with themes of praise until they reach a climax in the final Psalm.

The central thought of this present poem is the blessedness of trust in God. That trust is grounded on Jehovah's revealed character and His works. The Psalmist himself has been blessed with it, and he would have all others share in his gift. As a first step towards it, therefore, he warns against trusting in men, however richly endowed or highly placed,



because at best they are weak and feeble, they live but a short time, and their works soon perish. Jehovah, on the contrary, is the mighty Maker of all things, faithful to all His promises, righteous in all His deeds, beneficent and kind to all His creatures. He looks with compassion on the poor, the needy and the afflicted; and His desire is to help all, if only they make a sincere effort to keep His laws and conform their lives to His precepts. He cannot relieve or assist them against their own will; He cannot act the part of a friend to them if they persistently choose to be His enemies; He can only destroy the inveterate wicked.

This is the tragedy of human life, that man in his weakness, beset by afflictions of many kinds and lured by manifold deceiving voices, may deliberately turn away from his true end or fail to make the effort necessary to attain it. To be sure, the struggle is hard. If it were not, if the choice were easy, who would not make it? But it is not easy. It requires, in addition to God's special help, that man do his best, in spite of all obstacles and opposing appeals, to know and to do what is necessary for his salvation and to persevere in these efforts to the end of his days.

No mortal of his own strength is equal to these requirements. Blessed, then, are they who have made God their friend and helper, who put their trust in Him; happy they whose hope is in Jehovah their God!

#### PSALM 146 (Heb. 147:1-11)

#### PRAISES OF GOD, ISRAEL'S POWERFUL AND WISE RESTORER

##### INTRODUCTION

This is a song of praise to Jehovah who has brought back Israel from exile and is rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. Praise is due the mighty God who heals the broken hearts of His people, whose power and wisdom rule the stars, who exalts the lowly but humbles the proud (vv. 1-6). Israel is yet weak from the effects of her exile, but let her sing the praises of Him whose beneficent Providence governs all creatures, and who delights, not in those that rely on physical strength, but in those that fear and trust Him (vv. 7-11).

In the Massoretic text the following Psalm is joined with this present one to form one poem. Psalm 147 in the Vulgate is, however, sufficiently distinct and complete to be regarded as a separate poem. Even the two divisions of this present Psalm may originally have formed single poems.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

#### *Praise God Who Restores Israel and Who Rules the World (1-6)*

Laudate Dominum, quia bonus est, psallite Deo nostro, quia suavis est: decet eum laudatio.

Praise the Lord, for He is good; sing to our God, for He is sweet; praise becomes Him.

2. Aedificat Ierusalem Dominus, dispersos Israel congregat;

The Lord builds up Jerusalem; the exiles of Israel He gathers together.

3. Ipse sanat fractos corde, et alligat vulnera eorum.

He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.

4. Definit numerum stellarum, singulas nomine vocat.

He tells the number of the stars, and calls them all by names.

5. Magnus Dominus noster et viribus potens, sapientiae eius non est mensura.

Great is our Lord and mighty in powers; of His wisdom there is no measure.

6. Sublevat humiles Dominus; impios deprimit usque ad terram.

The Lord lifts up the humble; the wicked He crushes even to the ground.

#### *Praise God Who Governs All Things in Favor of Those Who Trust in Him (7-11)*

7. Cantate Domino cum gratiarum actione, psallite cithara Deo nostro,

O sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make music to our God upon the harp,

8. Qui caelum operit nubibus, qui pluviam terrae parat; qui producit in montibus gramen, et herbam, ut serviat homini;

Who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth; who makes grass to grow upon the mountains, and plants for the service of man;

9. Qui dat iumentis escam eorum, pullis corvorum, qui clamant ad eum.

Who gives the beasts their food, and feeds the young ravens that call to Him.

10. Non robur equi delectat eum nec crura viri placent ei.

His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor His pleasure in the legs of a man.

11. Placent Domino, qui timeant eum, qui fidunt in bonitate eius.

The Lord takes pleasure in those that fear Him, in those that trust in His goodness.



## REFLECTIONS

While celebrating God's mercy to Israel in the restoration of her captives from exile in Babylon to their native land, the Psalmist first points out that He who is the builder of Jerusalem, who has gathered together again Israel's outcast children, healing their broken hearts and binding up their wounds, is the mighty Being who knows the number of the stars and calls them by their names, the Lord of infinite power and measureless wisdom. His greatness parallels His tenderness, His strength His mercy, the work of creation is continued in His Providence. Who could not praise a God so good and great?

Next the singer calls attention to Jehovah's marvelous doings in the world around us, how, at appointed times and seasons, He covers the sky with rain-clouds, refreshes the earth with water for its fruits and harvests and all living things, causes grass to grow on the mountains to feed the wild creatures that roam and live there, and answers the call of young ravens from their nests. These are manifestations of God's loving care and Providence for all His creatures, deserving the praise and gratitude of His children who can know and understand His universal goodness and the dependence of His creation on Him.

The Psalmist concludes that God's chief delight is in man; not, however, in man's physical strength, or wisdom, or skill. No, Jehovah takes pleasure in His human creatures above all others, because they alone of all His earth children can render Him a conscious service, can know and love and trust Him.

## PSALM 147 (Heb. 147: 12-20)

## INTRODUCTION

When Nehemias had completed the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem and restored the Temple, a solemn dedication service took place in honor of so great an event. It was probably at this time and for this occasion that the present Psalm was composed and first sung. Words more suitable or more magnificent could not have been uttered to express the gratitude of the people for their return from exile and the rebuilding of their city and Sanctuary.

*Praise God Who Restored Jerusalem and Gave It Peace, Prosperity and Revelation (12-20)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 12 <sup>(1)</sup> . Lauda, Ierusalem, Dominum, lauda Deum tuum, Sion,                               | Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Sion,   |
| 13 <sup>(2)</sup> . Quod firmavit seras portarum tuarum, benedixit filiis tuis in te.               | For that He has made fast the bars of thy gates, and has blessed thy sons within thee.        |
| 14 <sup>(3)</sup> . Composuit fines tuos in pace, medulla tritici satiat te.                        | He has arranged thy borders in peace, and satisfies thee with the finest of wheat.            |
| 15 <sup>(4)</sup> . Emittit eloquium suum in terram, velociter currit verbum eius.                  | He sends forth His command to earth, and His order swiftly follows.                           |
| 16 <sup>(5)</sup> . Dat nivem sicut lanam, pruina sicut cinerem spargit.                            | He gives snow like wool, and scatters hoar-frost like ashes.                                  |
| 17 <sup>(6)</sup> . Proicit glaciem suam ut frustula panis; coram frigore eius aquae rigescunt.     | He casts forth His ice like a morsel of bread; before His cold the waters freeze.             |
| 18 <sup>(7)</sup> . Emittit verbum suum et liquefacit eas; flare iubet ventum suum et fluunt aquae. | He sends out His order and melts them; He bids His wind to blow and the waters flow.          |
| 19 <sup>(8)</sup> . Annuntiavit verbum suum Iacob, statuta et praecepta sua Israel.                 | He has declared His word to Jacob, His statutes and precepts to Israel.                       |
| 20 <sup>(9)</sup> . Non fecit ita ulli nationi: praecepta sua non manifestavit eis. Alleluia.       | He has not done so to any other nation, nor has He made known His precepts to them. Alleluia. |

## REFLECTIONS

Israel has received her reward for patiently waiting on her Lord while she was chastised in exile for her sins. Not only are her children home again, but the walls of Jerusalem have been restored, the people have been blessed, peace broods over the land, she is satisfied with abundance.

The exile was like a cold, dreary, long winter, when snow and frost fill the air and hang on the trees, barring the brightness and warmth of

12<sup>(1)</sup>. In the Hebrew, this Psalm is a continuation of the preceding one, and hence is without title there; but the LXX, Vulgate and St. Jerome begin a new Psalm here.

13<sup>(2)</sup>. "In te." St. Jer.: *In medio tui*.

14<sup>(3)</sup>. "Medulla tritici." Literally, *the fat of wheat*, that is, the finest wheat or food. Cfr. Psalm 30:17.

15<sup>(4)</sup>-17<sup>(6)</sup>. In these verses we have a description of winter. God has only to speak and swiftly the snows descend, the hoar-frost hangs upon the trees like ashes, and hail comes down like fragments of ice.

18<sup>(7)</sup>. As winter with its severity has appeared at the command of Jehovah, so at His word does it melt and vanish away. Thus also has Israel's winter of sorrow, ushered in at Jehovah's bidding, yielded to the gladness of the springtime of her deliverance.



the sun, and covering and freezing all the earth. It came at God's bidding in punishment for sin. But lo, how swiftly all is changed when the Almighty gives His command of mercy! It is springtime, and the sun is shining! The bleak and killing winter ends as suddenly as it began. The warm winds blow, the waters flow, snow and ice melt and vanish away.

So does God act in nature, and so in like manner did He deal with His Chosen People. But He did more for them. He gave them a special revelation of laws and commandments by which they could know and serve Him more perfectly, and thus attain to greater nearness and likeness to Himself now and forever. This was Israel's high privilege, which she was to enjoy and share with others less favored. Special gifts, graces, privileges, impose corresponding obligations and duties, which their possessors are not free either to ignore or to neglect. Israel as a nation failed in her duty to share her special gifts with other peoples, and at length she lost them all herself. A stern warning this, to all of us, for we all have been favored by God in many ways.

## PSALM 148

## LET HEAVEN AND EARTH PRAISE THE LORD

## INTRODUCTION

This Psalm was written for liturgical use, and apparently, as we gather from the last verse, to commemorate some special occasion of rejoicing, such as the return of the exiles from Babylon, when the national existence of the Jewish people was again restored. Since man is the crown of creation, and Israel is Jehovah's servant for the redemption of all humanity, then all things in Heaven and on earth must rejoice when Israel is raised from humiliation to honor.

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

*Let the Heavens and All They Contain Praise the Lord*

Laudate Dominum de caelis, Praise the Lord from the heavens,  
laudate eum in excelsis. ens, praise Him in the heights.

2. Laudate eum, omnes Angeli eius, laudate eum, omnes exercitus eius. Praise Him, all His Angels; praise Him, all His hosts.

3. Laudate eum, sol et luna, Praise Him, O sun and moon,  
laudate eum, omnes stellae lu- praise Him, all shining stars.  
centes.

4. Laudate eum, caeli caelorum, Praise him, heavens of heavens,  
et aquae quae super caelos sunt: and you waters that are above the  
heavens.

5. Laudent nomen Domini, nam Let them praise the name of the  
ipse iussit et creata sunt, Lord, for He commanded and  
they were created,

6. Et statuit ea in aeternum, in And He has established them  
saeculum: praeceptum dedit, quod for ever and ever; He has given a  
non transibit. decree which shall not pass.

*Let the Earth and All It Contains Praise the Lord (7-12)*

7. Laudate Dominum de terra, Praise the Lord from the earth,  
cete et omnia profunda maris, you whales and all depths of the  
sea,

8. Ignis et grando, nix et ne- Fire and hail, snow and mist,  
bula, ventus procellae, qui facit stormy wind that does His word;  
verbum eius,

9. Montes et omnes colles, ar- Mountains and all hills, fruit-  
bores frugiferae et omnes cedri, ful trees and all cedars;

10. Ferae et omnia iumenta, Wild beasts and all cattle,  
reptilia et volucres pennatae, creeping things and winged birds;

11. Reges terrae et omnes po- Kings of the earth and all  
puli, principes et omnes iudices peoples, princes and all judges  
terrae, of the earth;

12. Iuvenes et etiam virgines, Young men and also virgins,  
senes, una cum pueris: old men together with boys;

13. Laudent nomen Domini, Let them praise the name of  
quia excelsum est nomen eius so- the Lord, for His name alone is  
lius; high;

14. Maiestas eius superat ter- His majesty is above earth and  
ram et caelum, et altum tribuit cor- heaven, and He has given a lofty  
nu populo suo. power to His people.

Laus est omnibus sanctis eius, Praise is for all His saints, for  
filiis Israel, populo qui propinquus the sons of Israel, a people near  
est ei. Alleluia. to Him. Alleluia.

4. "Caeli caelorum," i.e., the highest heaven.

6. "Non transibit," i.e., shall not be abrogated.

13, 14. These verses give the reasons for praising Jehovah; viz.: the manifestation of His glory in nature, and the liberation and exaltation of Israel.

14. "Altum . . . cornu," i.e., great power. See Pss. 17 (18):3; 74 (75):11, etc.



## REFLECTIONS

The deliverance of Israel from humiliation and captivity in Babylon was to this Psalmist and the returned exiles a blessing so signal and an event so stupendous that the singer here, in thanksgiving, summons the heavens and the earth and all they contain to praise and exalt Jehovah forever. He appeals to all heights and depths in those vast domains, and all that lies within their extremities, to join with him in an effort to express the rapture that fills his soul at the thought and realization of all that God has done for His Chosen People. He knew the awful sufferings which His people had endured during those fifty to seventy years in a foreign and hostile land; but now the Almighty has intervened, and Israel is again at home and free.

If the poet's language here seems more magnificent and his emotion more extraordinary than any temporal occurrence would seem to warrant, may it not be that he was under the spell of a prophetic vision of the larger, eternal emancipation of all mankind, of which the deliverance from Babylon was but a faint image and type? However that may be, may we not at least gather from his thrilling words and glimpse not inappropriately something of the state of soul of the redeemed in the great hereafter, when, after life's fitful fever and the exile of earth, they awaken to the everlasting happiness and enjoyment of the homeland of heaven? Then, as we are taught and believe, will the saved feel the need and irrepressible impulse of calling on the heights of heaven and the depths of earth, all living and non-living things, all that is and ever has been, to praise and extol and magnify the name of Jehovah our God for His enduring love and the redemption He has wrought for all His people. Then, in the words of the Apocalypse (7:10, 12), will they cry out for very joy, saying: "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. . . . Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honor, and power and strength to our God for ever and ever!"

Whether he knew and intended it or not, we can agree that the Psalmist's words here express, in anticipation, as other words could hardly better do, the eternal joy and jubilation of the saved.

## PSALM 149

## LET ISRAEL PRAISE THE LORD WITH MOUTH AND SWORD

## INTRODUCTION

This spirited poem celebrates the triumph of Israel over heathen foes. The people are gathered together for some great festival and are singing, dancing and rejoicing over the victory which the Lord has given them (vv. 1-5). Despite their triumphant joy, they are bidden not to rest in present success, but to look forward to the time when all nations, kings and nobles shall be compelled to obey and honor Israel's God (vv. 6-9).

Whether or not the temporal setting of this Psalm is to be found in the Machabean era or in the time of Nehemias, is a disputed point; but that its import is Messianic is obvious, and the final triumph towards which the Psalmist would direct the vision of his readers was a spiritual victory, not one to be achieved by material force and carnal weapons (cfr. 2 Cor. 10:4; Apoc. 5:9).

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

*Let the People Praise God Who Has Singularly Favored Them (1-5)*

Cantate Domino canticum novum; laus eius sonet in coetu sanctorum.

Sing to the Lord a new song; let His praise resound in the assembly of the saints.

2. Laetetur Israel de factore suo, filii Sion exsultent de rege suo.

Let Israel be glad for her Maker; let the sons of Sion exult because of their King.

3. Laudent nomen eius choro, tympano et cithara psallant ei,

Let them praise His name in the dance; let them sing to Him with timbrel and harp,

4. Quia Dominus diligit populum suum, et humiles victoria ornat.

For the Lord loves His people, and adorns the humble with victory.

5. Exsultent sancti de gloria, laetentur in cubilibus suis.

Let the saints exult because of their glory; let them rejoice upon their couches.

1. "In coetu sanctorum," i.e., in the assembly of faithful Israelites.

4. "Et humiles, etc.," that is, God gives Israel prosperity following her humiliation.

5. "De gloria . . . in cubilibus." These expressions signify respectively Israel's restoration to honor and her rest after victory.



*Let the People Also Prepare for Battle and Execute the Judgment of God (6-9)*

6. Praeconia Dei sint in gutture eorum, et gladii ancipites in manibus eorum:

7. Ut faciant vindictam in gentibus, castigationes in populis;

8. Ut alligent reges eorum compedibus, et nobiles eorum manicis ferreis;

9. Ut faciant de eis iudicium praestitutum: hoc gloriae est omnibus sanctis eius. Alleluia.

Let the praises of God be in their throat, and two-edged swords in their hands,

To execute vengeance upon the nations, *and* chastisements upon the peoples;

To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

To execute upon them the judgment decreed; this is the glory of all His saints. Alleluia.

REFLECTIONS

The Psalmist now first reminds his readers that it is the duty of the recipients of divine favors, above all others, to praise and thank God. It was Israel, the Chosen People, the children of Sion, the afflicted ones, whom Jehovah delivered from cruel bondage in Babylon and restored to their own land; and it is they consequently who are now called upon to sing a new song for these new mercies, to rejoice, be glad and exult with sacred dance and timbrel and lyre, and to shout aloud the praises of their God, even from their beds—those beds which in the past they had often bedewed with bitter tears. The night of sorrow and mourning is past, and the day of gladness and rejoicing is at hand. For a while God had frowned upon His people for their sins, but now they are restored to His favor. Pride and disobedience had preceded their chastisement, but humility and meekness in suffering paved the way for their deliverance.

In the second place the Psalmist admonishes that the special blessings bestowed on his people were not only for their personal enjoyment, but were to be used to extend God's rule and kingdom throughout the world. The favored ones must make a holy crusade for God's glory on earth and for the salvation of all souls. This is their high honor and distinct privilege. The foes of good should be resisted and vanquished, because they menace and imperil the temporal and spiritual welfare of the just and

9. "Iudicium praestitutum," i.e., the decree regarding the subjection of the Gentiles, which shall bring honor to Israel, God's Chosen People, long ago made by God and announced by the prophets.

righteous, they obstruct the diffusion of divine beneficence to all God's children, they harm themselves and are their own worst enemies.

PSALM 150

A SOLEMN CHORUS OF DIVINE PRAISE

INTRODUCTION

This magnificent hymn with which the Psalter closes, and in which every creature is summoned to extol the power, grandeur and infinite perfections of God, is regarded by some as simply a grand concluding doxology for the Book of Psalms. More probably, it is a distinct poem, a full-toned swelling symphony of praise, which fitly terminates the glorious Book of Divine Songs in which the joys and sorrows, the height and depth, the sunshine and shadow, of religious life and experience have followed one another like waves of the sea. This Psalm, therefore, as Maclaren says, seems to be "more than an artistic close of the Psalter; it is a prophecy of the last result of the devout life, and in its unclouded sunniness as well as in its universality, it proclaims the certain end of the weary years for the individual and the world. 'Everything that hath breath' shall yet praise Jehovah."

1. Alleluia.

Alleluia.

*Let God Be Praised by Every Means of Music and by All That Breathes the Breath of Life (1-5)*

Laudate Dominum in sanctuario eius, laudate eum in augusto firmamento eius.

Praise the Lord in His sanctuary, praise Him in His august firmament.

2. Laudate eum propter grandia opera eius, laudate eum propter summam maiestatem eius.

Praise Him for His mighty works, praise Him because of His supreme majesty.

3. Laudate eum clangore tubae, laudate eum psalterio et citara.

Praise Him with sound of trumpet, praise Him with harp and lyre.

4. Laudate eum tympano et choro, laudate eum chordis et organo.

Praise Him with timbrel and dance, praise Him with strings and pipe.

5. Laudate eum cymbalis sonoris, laudate eum cymbalis crepitantibus: omne quod spirat, laudet Dominum! Alleluia.

Praise Him with loud cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals; let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Alleluia.



## REFLECTIONS

We may see in the words of this Psalm the joyous reaction both to a retrospect and a prospect. The poem brings to a close the Psalter, the majestic hymn-book of the ages, and at the same time fittingly expresses the thoughts and feelings of a soul that has at last happily reached its journey's end, that has finally attained the completion of a holy life, a life led in God and for God. Such a soul, we can imagine, standing, as it were, on the shore of time and the brink of eternity, with the world of earth behind it, and looking out with fixed gaze on the eternal ocean and on the incoming carrier that will soon bear it away forever, would naturally, if possible, reflect on the past and briefly review what has gone before, what has brought it, under God, to this exultant moment. Then, stretching back through the years it would see and recall the many labors, sorrows, anxieties and fears; the disappointments, the shattered hopes, the foiled high ambitions; weariness and pain of body, depression and sadness of soul; the frequent dark days and fearful nights, ceaseless struggles and combats with enemies from within and from without; the constant prayers and cries to God for help, for pardon, for one's own and others' needs; the intermittent flashes of light from above, the many mysterious protections in danger, breathless escapes, sudden rescues when all seemed lost; the quieting moments of divine visitation, and the thousands of other incidents that have made up the mosaic of life and that now all swiftly pass as in a dream.

Very often in those years now gone the ways of God seemed impossible to explain or understand, and all life a hopeless riddle. But at the same time it was also often beyond question that unless a gracious Providence was superintending and a loving hand guiding, the soul had long since gone down in defeat and eternal ruin. Now the struggle is over, the war has been fought and won, the strange paths and ways by which the goal has been reached are all plain and justified, and there remain only reasons for praise, for music, for song, by every means possible in Heaven and on earth that the soul may express the ineffable joy and delight that flood it to overflowing.

Such would be a likely retrospect and its effects upon a spirit which had finished its earthly course in God's favor. But the words of this Psalm suggest a prospect, a theme for praise, vastly more glorious still. For the soul that is saved the eternal years are just beginning at what we call death. St. Paul speaks of them as "the ages to come," during which all of God's ways and "goodness towards us will be perfectly manifested and perfectly understood, the knowledge of Him ever growing deeper,

the vision of Him ever growing fuller, and His glory ever growing brighter. We cannot describe that life; but such an expression as 'the ages' implies a history of period after period, in which God will ever more and more exhibit the overflowing wealth of His grace by kindness to those in union with His Incarnate Son" (Hitchcock, on Eph. 2:7).

Such a state we can only dimly and imperfectly imagine now, for the glory that awaits the blessed in Heaven, in those other words of St. Paul, "surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19); here on earth we can form no adequate conception of what it will be. And even in that other life of Beatific Vision the redeemed soul, while perceiving and knowing in ever-increasing measure the riches which are in God and which will be unfolded to it, can never fully grasp its divine object through all the ages of eternity, simply because that object is infinite. The created knowledge and capacity can never equal the increate object. There the goal is ever being attained, but is never attained or attainable. Forever the soul that is saved will find in God more to know, more to love, more to adore; but even at the farthest stretch of the eternal years it would still be as far away from completely comprehending or exhausting the boundless ocean of God's infinite Being as it was upon its entrance into bliss.

Surely here is a prospect which provides a philosophy of life that has a clue to the otherwise hopeless riddle of our present existence, that rescues our earthly life from its littleness and miseries and links it to the tides of the Eternal, that promises an ultimate and adequate satisfaction for the endless reachings of the human mind and the ceaseless longings of the human heart.

It is the love of Christ and of God for us and our reciprocal love that will make all this possible for us. Truly this love, this glory to come, this heavenly prospect, "surpasseth all knowledge." "O my poor soul! what canst thou know of this, or of these beautiful necessities, of thy exceeding love, which shall only satisfy itself in endless alternations, now of silence and now of song?" (Faber, *Creator and Creature*, bk. II, ch. V).



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