

Gems From the Psalms 1

Gems from the Psalms

Psalms 1-75

F B Meyer

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PSALM 1

BLESSED IS THE MAN

This Psalm, like a sign-post, points the way to blessedness. The opening word may be read, "Oh, the blessedness!" In this exclamation is embodied the experience of a life, ratified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Psalter begins with the same message as the Sermon on the Mount. Blessedness is more than happiness. Beneath the lintel of this benediction we pass into the temple of praise.

BLESSEDNESS IS TO BE OBTAINED IN TWO WAYS.

(Psalm 1:1.)--NEGATIVELY.--Avoid the company of the irreligious. You must mix with them in daily business but do not choose their society. When free from necessary engagements seek God's people. (Acts 4:23).

(Psalm 1:2.)--POSITIVELY. We cannot live on negations. If we withdraw ourselves from evil men, we must enter the circle of prophets, kings, psalmists and historians, who wait to share within the circle of sacred Scripture.

It is not enough to read the Bible as a duty--we must come to it with delight. This is possible if you eschew light and foolish literature which cloy the appetite. Read the Book in happy fellowship with its Author; meditate until it is assimilated (Jas. 1:25). Better one verse digested than a whole chapter bolted.

(Psalm 1:3.)--THE REWARDS OF THE BLESSED MAN

He shall be under Divine culture, planted (Ps. 92:13); within reach of perennial supplies, planted by rivers (John 7:38-39); prepared against any demand or emergency--fruit in season; unfading beauty and freshness, a spiritual evergreen; and prosperity even in this world, because his life is ordered by discretion and obedience to Divine principles. Joseph realized this picture (Gen. 39:3-4).

(Psalm 1:4.)--THE CONTRAST TO THE BLESSED MAN

It might be rendered, Not so ungodly, not so. As to their career, all that has been said of the righteous is to be reversed. They go from bad to worse in their choice of company; beginning with the ungodly, and ending with the scornful; and from walking, they pass to standing and sitting, which give the idea of permanence and of settled enjoyment. As to their nature, they are as chaff, utterly worthless. As to their doom, they shall be forgotten on earth, leaving no trace, taking no root; and they shall be forever excluded from the other world (Matt. 13:30; Rev. 21:27).

(Psalm 1:5.)--THE COMFORTS OF THE BLESSED MAN.

God knows his way, though dark and difficult. Nothing is hidden from Him who bottles our tears (Psa. 56:8); and He will not let us be over pressed. Though the ungodly may appear to prosper at the expense of the righteous, ultimately the way of the ungodly shall perish (see Psa. 37). Wherefore, rest in the Lord. Your blessedness is better than the ill-gotten gains of the ungodly and will last longer.

PSALM 2

THOU ART MY SON!

This Psalm is dramatic and sublime. Attempts have been made to connect it with David or Solomon; but its scope is too vast and majestic to be limited to any earthly monarch. The Psalm must find its complete fulfillment in Him to whom its glowing passages are referred in Acts 4:25; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Rev. 2:27. A natural division is suggested by the structure of the Psalm into four stanzas of three verses each.

THE DETERMINED HATE OF THE PEOPLE (Psalm 2:1-3).

The word rage has the idea of vast crowds swarming with Oriental gesticulations and cries into a central meeting-place. Imagine is the same word translated meditate (Psalm 1:2); while the godly meditates on God's law, the ungodly meditates in vain. Pilate, Herod and the Jewish rulers are for once at peace among themselves in their common hostility to the Messiah (Luke 23:12-13). Let us not effect worldly alliances, for the drift of the great ones of the earth is against our Lord. Compare Psalm 2:3 with Hos. 11:4 and Matt. 11:30.

THE DIVINE TRANQUILITY (Psalm 2:4-6).

The scene shifts to heaven; there God is depicted as undismayed--a strong man laughs at the ineffectual efforts of tiny children to throw him down. Yet I have set, i.e., anointed.--"Messiah" and "Christ" alike mean anointed. Our Lord was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Isa. 11:2-3; 61:1; Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18; John 3:34). He is God's own King; MY King; as Solomon was David's (1 Kings 1:37-38, etc.).

MESSIAH'S MANIFESTO (Psalm 2:7-9).

He produces and recites one of the eternal decrees. Before time was, He was the only begotten of the Father (John 17:5); his sonship was declared at his Resurrection; then He was born first from among the dead and sealed (Acts 13:30-37; Rom. 1:4; Col. 1:18). The world is his heritage; but the gift is conditional on prayer. For this He pleads through the ages; and, if we are truly at one with Him, we too shall ask. The pastoral staff for the sheep; the "iron rod" for those who oppose.

OVERTURES AND COUNSELS OF PEACE (Psalm 2:12).

Kiss, the expression of homage (1 Sam. 10:1). The word "adore" is literally to the mouth. To "perish in the way" reminds of 1:6. Notice the change in R.V.: "his wrath will soon be kindled" (Jas. 5:9; Rev. 6:17). Oh the blessedness! closes this Psalm as it began the first.

PSALM 3

I WILL NOT BE AFRAID!

AN ENUMERATION OF TROUBLE (Psalm 3:1-2).

Though God knows all, it relieves the over-charged heart to make a full statement of anxieties and troubles. His foes were many. They quoted his sin as a reason for supposing that God had withdrawn his aid (2 Sam. 16:7-8). The word help is salvation; but salvation belongeth unto God (Psalm 3:8, 35:3).

AN EXPRESSION OF UNFALTERING TRUST (Psalm 3:3-4).

God our shield (Gen. 15:1) is for i.e., around us. Would that we found our glory in Him only (Jer. 9:23-24). It is a good thing to use the voice in prayer, as our Lord did. Words keep the heart awake (Heb. 5:7). David looked to God as dwelling between the cherubim of the ark, the symbol of propitiation. He approached Him as sinners must do through the Lamb of God.

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MERCY (Psalm 3:5-6)

It is the perfection of trust to be able to sleep under such circumstances without fear. But it is gloriously possible. So Jesus slept (Mark 4:38), and Peter (Acts 12:6). Let us be sure that we are where God would have us to be: then let us resign ourselves to his care. Though pursued by the results of our sins, we shall find that He will save us in them, if not from them.

AN URGENT ENTREATY (Psalm 3:7-8).

For the third time the idea of salvation is introduced. The writer's foes are looked upon as wild beasts, who, when their jawbone is broken and their teeth dashed out, are powerless to hurt. David speaks as if he felt that this work were already done and his foes' rage futile. He turns from them to his people, led wrong by wily conspirators, and pleads that God's best blessings may rest on them. So our Lord intercedes for us.

PSALM 4

HEAR ME WHEN I CALL!

A PRAYER (Psalm 4:1).

We must be sure that our cause is a righteous one before we can ask God to vindicate it; and we do well to go back to God's former deliverances. Build supplication on recollection.

AN EXPOSTULATION (Psalm 4:2-3).

Vanity refers to Psalm 2:1--"a vain thing"; leasing is Old English for lying. Absalom's rebellion is a type of all those plots against Christ and His saints which begin in falsehood, and end in confusion. The Hebrew word translated godly means one who loves. Dost thou love God first, and afterwards His saints? Then know that God hath set thee apart (i.e., separated) for Himself. Seek his praise alone. Be content to let the world go by. Thou canst not fail; his cause and thine are one (Lam. 3:58).

LOVING COUNSEL (Psalm 4:4-5).

The Apostle gives a very remarkable application of Psalm 4:4 in Eph. 4:26. If men communed with each other less, and with God more, allowing the heat of passion to cool in the silences of the night, they would discover the futility of fuming and fretting against the Lord's people and cause. To all of us the injunction, Be still, is most appropriate. It is only in standing water that silt settles, and in quiet nights that the dew distils. In the night, when the eye is closed to all the world, let it be opened to self-examination. Sacrifice here is the whole burnt offering, and corresponds to entire surrender, out of which trust naturally springs.

A WISE DEDUCTION AND RESOLVE (Psalm 4:6-8).

How true is this of the "many" everywhere who know not God!--But all is vain when God's face is hidden. How rich is the soul on which its light rests! (Num. 6:24-26). Absalom, and his conspirators, with all that David had left them, had not as much true bliss as the fugitive monarch enjoyed. In the hour of his sin he had asked to hear joy and gladness (Ps. 51:8); and this was the reply. The saint has no need to envy the prosperous worldling (John 4:13-14). May the Holy Spirit "put gladness in our hearts" to-day (Gal. 5:22). Psalm 4:8 means, "I shall go to sleep as soon as I lie down." God alone is enough for any soul. He suffices for heaven: why not for earth? In solitude, let us turn to Him (Ezek. 34:25).

PSALM 5

IN THE MORNING

THE ADDRESS AND MANNER OF PRAYER (Psalm 5:1-3).

Uttered words are inadequate to convey deep thought, groanings which cannot be uttered, but which the Spirit understands (Rom. 8:26-27). Distinguished from either of these is the urgent call for aid, described as the voice of a cry. As soon as we awake at early dawn, let us speak to God. Let Him be the first to hear our voice. And let us direct, i.e., set in order, our prayer. The same Hebrew word is used in Gen. 22:9; Lev. 1:7; 24:8. We are not to pray without method (Eccles. 5:1). And, having prayed, we must look out for the answer (Hab. 2:1). We miss many answers, because we get tired of waiting.

CONTRASTED CHARACTERS (Psalm 5:4-7).

There are here seven expressions for the ungodly. Evil may not even sojourn as a wayfaring man (2 John 10). Not in the spirit of boasting, but of humble gratitude, David turns to himself (1 Cor. 15:10). The Jew in prayer looked towards the temple (Dan. 6:10). The tabernacle was spoken of as Jehovah's temple (1 Sam. 1:9; 3:3).

THE PRAYER (Psalm 5:8-12).

We may appeal to God's righteousness to vindicate his righteous ones. Because He is what He is, we may count on Him (2 Chron. 16:9). Then Psalm 5:8 is thus parallel to the Psalm 5:4. This terrible description of the ungodly is concerned with the sins of the tongue. It is largely quoted in Rom. 3. Wicked men are like graves, which look fair without, but are full of corruption within. As by their words they sin against God and mislead the righteous, so by their words they shall be condemned and fall. David here, as God's mouthpiece, pronounces their inevitable doom.

Here again (Psalm 5:11) we meet the oft-repeated word, trust. And with trust goes joy, and with both goes love.

PSALM 6

THE LORD HATH HEARD!

The first of the Penitential Psalms; the other six being Psalm 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. Sheminith is evidently a musical term, signifying the octave. The earlier verses of this Psalm are a wail; but it ends in a song. It is like a day of rain which clears at evening. The Psalm is full of beautiful ejaculatory cries.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE PSALMIST'S SORROW (Psalm 6:1:7).

There was the pressure of Divine displeasure because of sin (Psalm 6:1-2), combined with soul-anguish (Psalm 6:3-4), perhaps accompanied with sickness, bringing nigh unto death (Psalm 6:4-5), while enemies add their hate (Psalm 6:6-7). In Psalm 6:5 David considers the grave as disabling us from that active service of praise which is the peculiar privilege of the living (Isa. 38:19). He clearly foresaw the Resurrection; but perhaps not so clearly the state of the departed, which is brought to light in the Gospel. How touching is the plea, so suitable for sufferers!--for I am weak. How expressive the broken sentence, How long? which was often on Calvin's lips! And that prayer, O Lord, heal me. may well be on our lips continually.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE PSALMIST'S DELIVERANCE (Psalm 6:8-10).

The prayer is no sooner uttered than answered. The consciousness of having been heard steals over the weary soul like a glint of light on to a bed in the hospital ward. David knows that the petition is granted, though it has not yet come to hand (1 John 5:15). Weeping has a voice for the ear of God. He can interpret sighs and tears (Psalm 6:8). In the Revised Version, the words of Psalm 6:10 read like an imprecation--they shall be ashamed and turn back. When God returns (Psalm 6:4), our enemies turn back (Psalm 6:10).

PSALM 7

IN THEE DO I PUT MY TRUST!

Shiggaion is thought by some to refer to the erratic and irregular metre. The expressions of this Psalm should be carefully compared with the narrative of events in 1 Sam. 24; 25; 26. Cush may be a covert allusion to Saul, who was a Benjamite. Or it may refer to some "black-visaged" member of his tribe, who was one of David's chief calumniators.

PRAYER (Psalm 7:1-2).

If David desired deliverance from his foes, how much more do we need deliverance from our arch-enemy! (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

PROTESTATION (3-5).

So far from being guilty of the offence charged on him, David, on two occasions, spared Saul's life (1 Sam. 24; 26). Mine honor is probably only another name for the soul (Gen. 49:6).

AN APPEAL (Psalm 7:6-9).

By a bold metaphor, he attributes the success of his foes to some temporary abdication on God's part, and entreats Him to reassume his throne, and give his decisions, as Eastern judges are wont to do, in the midst of the people standing around. When we do right and suffer for it, we have a strong argument with God; we stand still, keep silence and leave Him vindicate (1 Pet. 2:20-23). What a noble prayer is Psalm 7:9!

PREDICTION (Psalm 7:10-16).--Evil recoils like a boomerang on those who set it in motion.

PSALM 8

HOW EXCELLENT IS THY NAME!

Was Githith a tune or instrument brought from Gath? (1 Sam. 27:2). This exquisite ode, which can only reach its fulfilment in the person of the Son of Man--to whom it is referred in the New Testament (Heb. 2:6-9)--was evidently composed at night. It probably dates from the early shepherd days, when wild creatures crept around the fold, and night-birds screamed, reminding the sweet singer of the animal world.

THE INSCRIPTION (Psalm 8:1).

Jehovah our Lord Adonai (see Ps. 110:1). Our Lord Jesus is here.

THE ASCRIPTION (Psalm 8:1-2).

His name excellent on earth; his glory the crown on the brow of the sky. And so mighty that his strength communicated to babes is more than enough to vanquish and silence His foes (1 Cor. 1:25). See also Christ's own quotation (Matt. 21:16). Let us rejoice that we are weak and helpless. This is the very way of acquiring God's strength (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

THE COMPARISON (Psalm 8:3-4).

At first sight there is a great descent from the vastness of the works of God in the heavens to frail man (enough), the son of Adam

(ben-h' adam), whose very name implies that he is of the dust (Adam, earthy). How should so great a God visit him? We often confound size and greatness, and forget that the King loves his little babe more than all the splendor and extent of his ancestral palace. The age of the telescope was the age of the microscope. There are as many worlds of wonder which are too minute for our vision as there are which are too great for our understanding.

THE COMPENSATION (Psalm 8:5, 6, 7, 8).

Yet, man in his original creation was only a little lower than the angels. He was invested with the vicegerency of the lower orders of creation (Gen. 1:26).

Some traces of this still exist in the power of the human eye and voice over animals. But sin rolled this crown into the dust. We have to win authority with effort, and retain it with difficulty. We see not yet all things put under us. But this lost power has been re-acquired by Jesus, as man (Matt. 28:18). And in his kingdom it shall be restored to man (Isa. 11:6, 7, 8, 9). And from the redeemed creation shall arise the words with which this Psalm begins and ends (Rom. 8:19, 20, 21, 22).

PSALM 9

WITH MY WHOLE HEART!

Muth-labben probably refers to the tune to which these words were set. This is the first of the ACROSTIC or ALPHABETICAL psalms, of which there are nine (Psalm 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145). Psalm 119 is the most remarkable specimen of this acrostic style of composition. Prov. 31, and Lam. 1; 2; 3; 4 present the same acrostic character. In the Septuagint this Psalm refers to the death of the Divine Son, and recites his victory over death and the grave, and all our foes.

THERE IS A PREDOMINANT NOTE OF PRAISE (Psalm 9:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 14).

Let us not praise with a divided, but with a whole heart. And we must incite praise by recounting all God's works. Let memory heap fuel on the altar of praise. The Lord has indeed rebuked our arch-enemy (compare 6 and Zech. 3:1-2), and his strongholds are now wastes, come to a perpetual end (2 Cor. 10:4; Col. 2:15). What a contrast between our dead foes, and our ever-living King! (Psalm 9:7).

THERE IS AN ASSERTION OF TRUST (Psalm 9:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18).

"Refuge" is high tower (R.V.). The oppressed, the humble, the needy, and the poor have strong encouragement. Calamity drives them to God and makes them familiar with the secrets of his character. The more we know of God the more we can trust Him. Doubt is born of ignorance. Let God vindicate you: He will not forget (Psalm 9:12).

THERE IS A PETITION FOR FURTHER HELP (Psalm 9:13, 19, 20).

What a contrast between the gates of death (Psalm 9:13) and the gates of the holy city! (Psalm 9:14). What a striking example of Psalm 9:15 is given in the story of Haman! (Esther 7:10). He who lifts the righteous hurls down the wicked. It is a sin to forget God (Psalm 9:17; Isa. 51:13). There is a striking emphasis in the two closing verses; the Hebrew for men might be rendered weak, mortal man (enough).

PSALM 10

THOU HAST SEEN! THOU HAST HEARD!

This Psalm is full of sorrowful complaint, and befits God's people in all seasons of distress.

THE MALICE OF THE FOE IS POWERFULLY DESCRIBED (Psalm 10:1-11).

The treatment which the unjust oppressor deals out to his prey is set forth in many rich and striking images. Now it is the serpent with venom under his tongue (Psalm 10:7); now, the bandit secreted in ambush (Psalm 10:8); now, the lion in his den, and again the hunter snaring the unsuspecting prey (Psalm 10:9). And all the while God seems to stand afar off and hide his eyes from the tribulation caused to his own; so much so that the thoughts of the wicked, that there is no God, seem confirmed (Psalm 10:4-11).

THE PRAYER OF THE OPPRESSED (12-15).

God is asked to lift up his hands from rest in the folds of his robe. He is the helper of the helpless and hapless, who commit themselves to Him. Let us commit ourselves to Him who judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:23).

THE BOAST OF FAITH (Psalm 10:16, 17, 18).

What in Ps. 9:19 was a prayer is here taken as an accomplished fact. Forget not the humble (Psalm 10:12) is here recalled: Thou hast heard the desire of the humble (Psalm 10:17). The preparation of the heart in prayer is His work; and so of course He is able to hear and answer. When we abide in Jesus, and the Holy Ghost flows through our hearts as sap through the vine, we are taught how to pray; and whatsoever we ask we receive. True prayer begins with God, and returns to Him again.

PSALM 11

THE RIGHTEOUS LORD

When John Welsh and his fellow-captives were summoned from their prison on the Firth of Forth, to appear before the court, they sang this Psalm as they walked by night under guard to their trial. It is worth reading in the rugged Scotch version. The Psalm is a debate between fear and faith, and probably dates from the time when David was being persecuted by Saul.

THE COUNSELS OF EXPEDIENCY. (Psalm 11:1)

Timid friends, anxious for his safety, urged him, not simply to flee to the literal mountains, which he did, but to desert the cause of God, and to renounce his faith--which he never did. Birds escape the dangers of the plains by winging their flight to the caves or woods of the hills. Such counsels of expediency were frequently given to Nehemiah (Neh. 6). And the enemy has ever sought to dislodge the faithful servants of God by fear (Job 2:9-10; Luke 13:31). Luther's diaries abound in similar references. And there is much force in the reasons alleged. The bow is already being bent; the darkness is in favor of evil stratagems (Psalm 11:2, R.V.); and the foundations of social order are undermined. Righteousness cannot avail! why should it not be relinquished?

THE ANSWERS OF FAITH (Psalm 11:4-7).

The revolutions of earth cannot shake His throne. He permits the Evil One some license that the righteous may be tested (Job 1:8ff, Job 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; Luke 22, 31, 32). And when the limit is reached, their persecutors will be entangled in snares from which they shall not escape. Let the righteous remember that the eye of God not only beholds their patience, but exchanges glances of tenderness with his suffering ones (Ex 3:7).

PSALM 12

HELP, LORD!

The opening words suggest that this Psalm is an appeal for help in bad and evil days. There are days when sin seems rampant, sweeping all before it. The great and godly men one by one are taken away and the ungodly reign supreme. But when there is no help in man, let us turn to God with the cry which broke from Peter's lips when sinking in the waves. It is a very convenient cry, both from its brevity and its comprehensiveness. Help, Lord! (see Micah 7:2).

THE NEED OF HELP (Psalm 12:1, 2, 4).

A double heart is literally a heart and a heart; and such practice deceit on neighbors whom they should love. On the contrary, we are bidden to put away lying, and speak truth to our neighbors (Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9). Oh for perfect transparency of heart and life!

THE CERTAINTY OF HELP (Psalm 12:3-4).

The very prayer begotten in the heart carries the assurance of an answer. Besides, the world is so made that daring wickedness rarely goes unpunished. Let us never act as if we thought our lips were our own; for they too have been bought with the price of those dear parched lips which cried, I thirst.

THE ARISING OF HELP (Psalm 12:5).

God hears sighs. One sigh will make Him arise, as the sighs of Stephen made Jesus stand (Acts 7:56).

THE BLESSED PROMISE OF HELP (Psalm 12:6-7).

There is no mixture of error in the words of God; all dross has been removed: they may therefore be trusted to the uttermost. Bind the words of God to your heart, and fearlessly go forth into the world. You shall be kept and preserved for evermore (Isa. 54:17).

PSALM 13

HOW LONG, O LORD?

This Psalm evidently dates from the time of the Sauline persecutions. Four times the afflicted Psalmist cried, How long? The Psalm

begins in the deepest dejection, but it clears as it proceeds; and the soul, lark-like, rises above the lower current of east wind, till it revels in the heaven of God's love. Pray on, troubled believer: it is marvelous how certainly prayer proves to be a ladder from the deepest dungeon into the most radiant day.

DEPRESSION (Psalm 13:1-2).

Saul's persecutions probably lasted for eight or nine years; and no hope of termination appeared (1 Sam. 27:1). David was a man who spends five hundred days passing through a forest: the tangled over-growth hides the sun; and he begins to despair of ever emerging. Some say that this Psalm is the cry of the Church (Rev. 6:10).

SUPPLICATION (Psalm 13:3-4).

How wise to hand over all worries and anxieties to God. If we make them all instantly known to Him, we will live more blessed and peaceful lives (Phil. 4:6-7). He had bemoaned four evils: he now entreats three blessings (Psalm 13:3). Oh for the enlightened eyes! (Eph. 1:18). The holy soul is as eager for God's honor, as for its own vindication (Psalm 13:4).

ASSURANCE (Psalm 13:5-6)

It is delightful when we can sing, because certain of coming deliverance. Faith praises for the victory, before the fight has even reached its worst. After lying for some time in the Bishop of London's coalhouse, Mr. John Philpot was rebuked for singing hymns in prison, and he answered: "I have so much joy that I cannot lament; but day and night I never was so merry before."

PSALM 14

THE FOOL HATH SAID "NO GOD!"

The creed, character and doom of the Atheist are here depicted; and the Psalm is so important as to be repeated (Psalm 53), with slight alterations, which show this rendering more suitable for public use. The Hebrew word translated fool (naval) denotes one of withered intellect.

THE ROOT OF ATHEISM. (Psalm 14:1)

It begins not in the head, but in the heart (Rom. 1:21). Men do not like God. They try to ignore Him and end by blatantly denying Him. The surest way of dealing with such is to treat them as rebels and sinners.

THE EFFECT OF ATHEISM ON THE CHARACTER (Psalm 14:1-6).

Corruption as of a grave; abominable works; darkened understanding; filthiness of heart and life; persecution and shaming of the godly; but finally "great fear." What a terrible catalogue of crimes! These verses are largely quoted by the Apostle (Ro 3:10, 11, 12) as true of all men; because the seeds of this awful crop are by nature latent in us all, awaiting favorable conditions of germination. God comes as a seeker ("the Father seeketh": John 4:23), eagerly looking for those who abjure the - ways of sin and call upon Him. These are picked out by Him as his choice jewels for his own. The word because in Psalm 14:6 would be better rendered but. The enemy may come up against the camp of the righteous, but God is in the midst of them; they cannot be moved (Ps. 46:1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

THE BEST ANSWER TO ATHEISM (Psalm 14:7).

The Church of God is too much in captivity to the world and the devil. Let us daily ask that our salvation may speedily come, the advent of which shall bring discomfiture to our foes, and long, glad rejoicings to us (Heb. 9:28; 2Th 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

PSALM 15

WALKING WITH GOD

This Psalm was probably composed with Ps. 24--which it closely resembles--to celebrate the bringing of the Ark to Mount Zion. The first words are almost a repetition of the awe-struck question of the stricken men of Bethshemesh (1 Sa 6:20). And the rest of the Psalm gives a description of those who may dwell with God. If we would have fellowship with God, and dwell in his house all the days of our earthly life, let us see that this character is ours, by the grace of the Holy Spirit!

THE CHALLENGE OF THE SOLOIST (Psalm 15:1).

THE ANSWER OF THE CHOIR (Psalm 15:2, 3, 4, 5).

The answer is given, first, positively (Psalm 15:2), and then, negatively (Psalm 15:3); so also, in the two following verses. We need to watch our walk, work and talk, if we would have fellowship with God. We must abhor slander, evil and reproach. When stories

reach us, let them stop with us. Let us act as nonconductors. We must also mind what company we keep; withdrawing from the vile, but drawing close to and honoring all who fear God, as children of the same Father, and therefore brethren and sisters. Usury, which is a very different thing to the taking of interest; and bribes--are equally inconsistent with the vision of God. If we are heedful of all these matters, we shall not only be able to dwell in the royal palace, as priest and kings, but we shall remain steadfast and unmoveable amid the changes and convulsions around. Here is the secret of permanence and rest (Psalm 15:5).

PSALM 16

MY HEART IS GLAD

Michtam is derived by some from a word meaning golden. And, indeed, that epithet may be truly applied, not only to this Psalm, but to Psalm 56, 57, 58, 59, 60. Others explain it as a secret; i.e., a song which leads the holy soul into those deep things of God which are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10, 11, 12, 13, 14). This, then, is the song of the golden secret.

The key to the Psalm is given by the Apostle Peter, when, quoting from it, he says: "David speaketh concerning Him" (Acts 2:25). And in the following verses he goes on to show that the Psalm could not be true in all its wealth of meaning of David, but of David's Lord (Psalm 16:31). The Apostle Paul makes a very remarkable reference to this Psalm, expressly ascribing it to God's authorship through the Psalmist, and affirming that it spoke of Him (Acts 13:35-38). But, of course, in a lower sense, each one of us who are one with Jesus may appropriate these golden words.

Psalm 16:1.

The believer turns from all creature confidence to his God, as his only hope and all-sufficient help. Trust in Him cannot be misplaced.

Psalm 16:2

The rendering of R.V. is very beautiful "I have no good beyond Thee." Satisfied with God, wanting nothing in wealth or comfort outside Him.

Psalm 16:3.

The soul that loves God loves the people of God.

Psalm 16:4-6.

Contrasted lots.

The R.V. brings out the sense. Those who exchange the Lord for another god shall have "sorrows multiplied"; those who live in God's favor shall have "a goodly heritage." Fleeing idolatry in every form, the Lord is our portion; He will maintain our lot, assert our cause. The measuring lines are outstretched so as to divide off for us a liberal patrimony; they fall in pleasant places, and our allotment is one facing the sun and including abundance of water. Oh to be as Levi, whose only portion was God Himself! (Num. 18:20; Lam. 3:24).

Psalm 16:7.

Reins mean inmost thoughts (Ps. 7:9). God often speaks in the quiet heart through the language of thoughts.

Psalm 16:8.

The one object of life is to do his will and please Him; and He is ever at the right hand to help--nearer than our accusers (compare Ps. 109:6, 31).

Psalm 16:9.

My glory interpreted by Peter of "the tongue" (Acts 2:26). Speech is man's glory: therewith he blesses God and teaches his brother.

Psalm 16:10-11.

Thus The Lord Jesus might have softly sung to Himself as He descended into the lowest depths of his humiliation. Hell here is sheol; not the place of torment, but of disembodied spirits. Thine Holy One, i.e., one whom Thou favorest. The path of life is the upward path to life. God is at our right hand and our lot is pleasant here. Ere long we shall be at his right hand amid everlasting pleasures.

PSALM 17

I SHALL BE SATISFIED!

This prayer dates from the Sauline persecutions. In the earlier verses David protests his innocence, and then proceeds to plead for deliverance from his foes, ending with glad anticipations of his vision of God's face. It may have been composed for use at eventide. Two verses point in that direction (Psalm 17:3-15).

PROTESTATIONS OF INTEGRITY (Psalm 17:1-5).

What a comfort to appeal from the accusations of men to the judgment-bar of God! Even if behavior has been unwise God judges the motive and heart. The Hebrew word "tried" is "melted" (tzaraph); as gold is tried in the furnace and found to have no dross. But we can have no hope of preserving our integrity and keeping from the paths of the transgressor unless we avail ourselves of God's Word to test and direct our goings. Use the Royal Guide-book if you would keep on the King's highway.

PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE (Psalm 17:6-14).

How safe we are! As the apple of the eye: the pupil of the eye is defended by eyelash, lid, brow, bony socket, the swiftly-uplifted hand (comp. Zech. 2:8). Thy wings: the eaglet is gathered under the wing of the parent bird (Deut. 32:11; Exod. 19:4). The R.V. gives a better sense of Psalm 17:13-14: "by thy sword," "by thy hand." What a striking contrast there is between Psalm 17:14 and Ps. 16:5, 11.

GLAD ANTICIPATION (Psalm 17:15)

They are filled with this world--I with Thee: they look for the things of this life--I with the eternal and unseen: they satisfied with children--I with thy likeness (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21). We shall never be perfectly satisfied with anything less than the beatific vision. Most of that rapturous vision is veiled from sight; but when it shall be unveiled, it will be approved.

PSALM 18

MY ROCK AND MY FORTRESS

There is another form of this Psalm on record--that in 2 Sam. 22. It recapitulates the deliverances of the past, and sets them to music. Psalm 18:2, 49 are quoted in New Testament as the words of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 2:13; Ro 15:9).

A GOOD RESOLVE (Psalm 18:1-3).

How beautiful is this array of metaphors; as if no single one were forcible enough to set forth the many-sided glory of God. Faith puts its hand, my, on all that God is and claims it for its own. Can we not also say: "I LOVE Thee"? Not indeed as we would, yet we can take John 21:17: "Thou knowest." David's word is a very intense one.

THE STORY OF THE PAST (Psalm 18:4-19).

It is good to recall God's gracious dealings. David does it in poetical language, borrowed from the scenes of the Red Sea and Sinai. And yet there was so much of God's gracious help in his life, that he was warranted in comparing it with the deliverance from Egypt. We, too, have our Red Seas. And God will do for us as much as for David. In our distress let us also cry. "Far up within the bejewelled walls, and through the gates of pearl, the cry of the sufferer will be heard." My cry came before Him. The voice is thin and solitary, but the answer shakes creation.

THE CLAIM OF THE RIGHTEOUS (Psalm 18:20-27).

The righteousness of which David boasted was not his own, for he was willing to admit that he was not free from impurity. Rather it indicates purity of motive and integrity of heart as contrasted with hypocrisy and wickedness. Compare Psalm 18:26 with Lev. 26:21-24. Our character gives its shape to our thoughts of God.

JOYFUL ANTICIPATION (Psalm 18:28-45).

God's way is perfect and He maketh our way perfect. Walls and troops cannot oppose us, when God's way lies through them, and we are on the line of his purpose. Swift and sure-footed in slippery places (Psalm 18:33). Strong in battle (Psalm 18:34). Oh, the gentleness of God! (Psalm 18:35). It has done more for us than severity. Instead of the word "gentleness" the Prayer-book version translates, "Thy loving correction."

THE CLOSING HALLELUJAH (Psalm 18:46-50).

We must stint our words when we thank our fellows, lest we be extravagant. But mortal lips need never refrain themselves for fear

of saying too much to God.

PSALM 19

THE WITNESS OF THE HEAVENS

The Psalm of the Two Books: the Book of nature, and the written Word. If Psalm 8 were written at night, this must have been penned by day. In the first verse God is called EL, the Strong One; in Psalm 19:7, 8, 9, 14, the Hebrew name JEHOVAH is translated LORD, as if his glory as Creator were the stepping-stone to loftier conceptions of Him in redemption.

NATURE.

There is the blue tapestry of the azure and the expanse of the firmament woven by God. What a picture of the sacred silence of the dawn! "No speech, nor language; there voice cannot be heard" (R.V.). There is also the universality of their witness-bearing. "Line" is the compass or territory through which they speak. Some translate it "chord." There is no tongue in which the works of God do not speak. Does not the picture of the dawn, in which the sun comes forth radiant as a bridegroom, strong as an athlete, make us think of the resurrection? And is not Jesus our Sun? (Mal. 4:2).

REVELATION.

Six synonyms--the law; the testimony; the statutes; the commandment; the fear; the judgments--are used of the Word of God. Twelve qualities are ascribed to it. How truly might our blessed Lord have appropriated Psalm 19:10! The man who lives a simple life is he who appreciates the Bible.

CONFESSION AND PRAYER (Psalm 19:12, 13, 14).

"Errors"; the same word is used Lev. 4:2-13. "Errors" will, if not checked, lead on to presumptuous and deliberate sins. The "dominion" which the Psalmist feared is expressly referred to in Rom. 6:14. What a claim we have on God when we can say, "Thy servant!" For the seventh time David repeats the covenant name "Jehovah," with two last, loving epithets, "Rock" and "Redeemer" (R.V.).

PSALM 20

THE LORD ANSWER THEE!

This Psalm may have been written on such an occasion as that of 2 Sam. 10. It may be used especially when the armies of our King are going forth to war.

THE PRAYER OF THE SOLDIERS (Psalm 20:1-4).

Ready drawn up for the fight, the soldiers pray for their king, who was wont on the eve of battle to bring sacrifices and offerings for success. (Psalm 20:1) The Lord hear thee! literally, The Lord shall answer thee! The "name" of God is his character. The God of Jacob will not reject or forsake any worms as weak as the patriarch was once.

THE RESOLVE (Psalm 20:5).

As the banners wave in the breeze it is expressly said that God is the object of trust. The Lord is our banner (Exod. 17:15). We succeed so far as we set forward in his name and for his glory.

THE VOICE OF THE KING (Psalm 20:6).

The devotion of the soldiers seems to their leader an omen for good. God's holiness is a guarantee of his faithfulness. The Hebrew for strength (gevooroth, "powers") is plural, implying the infinitude of God's resources.

THE FINAL CHORUS OF THE HOST (Psalm 20:7-9).

As they look across the field to the embattled array, they contrast the chariots and cavalry of the foe with their slender equipment. But, lo! as they gaze, their enemies are scattered. And with the brief ejaculation, "Save!" they hurl themselves headlong in pursuit.

PSALM 21

STRENGTH AND SALVATION

This is evidently a companion Psalm to the former. The blessings there asked are here gladly acknowledged to have been granted

and bright anticipations are entertained for the future. How much of it is true of our King as He rides forth on his white horse (Rev. 19:11-16).

Psalm 21:2.

His heart's desire.--The heart's desire finds its expression by the lips. There is no contrast implied between unspoken desire and oral prayer, both ascend together.

Psalm 21:3.

Thou preventest him (goest before him).--God's help anticipates our needs. It precedes us.

Psalm 21:4.

He asked life of Thee.--Our true life can be measured only by eternal ages.

Psalm 21:5.

Honour and majesty--Similar terms are used of our Lord in Heb. 2:9--"crowned with glory and honour."

Psalm 21:6.

Most blessed for ever.--Blessedly true of our beloved dead (Rev. 20:6).

Psalm 21:7.

Trusteth--shall not be moved.--Trust is the secret of permanence.

Psalm 21:8-12.

All thine enemies.--Our foes and the foes of Jesus must perish. Not one of them shall escape. In the garden of Olivet, Christ's gentle I am He, overthrew the soldiers (John 18:6). How will it be when the wrath of the Lamb flames forth? Who shall be able to stand? (Rev. 6:16).

Psalm 21:13.

Be Thou exalted, O Lord!--Every loyal heart must join in that devout wish. But we may ask whether we have exalted Him to the place of power in the inner kingdom. God has exalted Him to be Prince and Saviour. We shall not have peace until we have done the same (Acts 5:31).

PSALM 22

THE PSALM OF THE CROSS

The Hebrew inscription to this exquisite ode, which demands as many pages as we can give it lines, is "the hind of the morning." The "hind" stands for one persecuted to death and is also an emblem of loveliness (Sol. Song 2:7-9). The cruel persecutors are designated as "bulls, lions, and dogs." Perhaps the addition "of the morning" (marg.) refers to the dawn of brighter and better days.

There is a remarkable exchange in the latter part of the Psalm (Psalm 22:22-31) of triumph for complaint. Of course, our blessed Lord is in every syllable. Indeed, it reads more as a history than a prophecy. It seems as if the Divine Sufferer recited it to Himself during the agonies of his crucifixion, for it begins with "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" and it ends according to some, in the original, with "It is finished! It is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours: the record of his dying words; the memorial of his expiring joys." If we have here the sufferings of Christ, we shall certainly have also the glory that should follow.

Psalm 22:1-8.

COMPLAINTS THAT HE IS FORSAKEN AND UNHEARD, ALTHOUGH HE HAD TRUSTED FOR DELIVERANCE.

Psalm 22:9-21.

EXPOSTULATIONS ON THE GROUND OF PAST FAVOR AND OF THE EXTREMITY OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

Psalm 22:22-31.

EJACULATIONS OF PRAISE, AS THE CLOUD BEGINS TO ROLL AWAY.

Ah, Psalm that was balm to the pierced heart of Jesus, how precious art thou to those who drink his cup!

Psalm 22:1.

My God, my God! Uttered by our Lord after the darkness had lasted for three long hours. His God still, though hidden. God was as near and tender as ever; but the human consciousness of the Sin-bearer, made a curse for us, had lost the sensible enjoyment of his presence.

Psalm 22:2.

Thou hearest not. This is rendered in R.V. answerest not God's silence is no reason for our silence; but on the contrary, an incentive to more importunity (Matt. 15:22-23).

Psalm 22:3.

Thou art Holy. Though prayer is not immediately answered there is no imputation on the character of God. The praises of the saints are the throne of the Eternal.

Psalm 22:4-5.

They trusted. The thrice repetition is very significant. Is this the prominent feature in our character that our children will recall, and on which they will base their pleas?

Psalm 22:7-10.

They laugh me to scorn.

His very enemies had remarked how he rolled himself upon God (8, marg.) and used it as a jeer, but the Sufferer turns it into a prayer. From his birth he had been God's nursling, and could he be now deserted?

Psalm 22:11.

Be not far from me. Trouble sometimes seems nearer than God. But this is only to the eye of sense. Faith descries the Deliverer coming across the waves, and saying, It is I.

Psalm 22:14.

All my bones are out of joint. What a vivid picture of the anguish of the cross! The gaping crowds; the strength and virulence of their abuse; the bones wrenched from one another; the broken heart; the fevered lips; the pierced hands and feet; the parted garments; the thrusting of Jehovah's sword against his fellow (Psalm 22:20; Zech. 13:7).

Psalm 22:20.

My Darling. We learn from the parallelism that this represents his soul. The Hebrew is my only one.

Psalm 22:21.

Thou hast heard me. In the limits of one verse, prayer begins to change to praise. He who had said, "Thou hearest not" (Psalm 20:2), confesses that all the while God had been hearing and helping him. The dog, the lion, the wild oxen (R.V.), are emblems of the hatred of man, from which God had rescued his servant.

Psalm 22:22.

I will declare thy name. Jn 17:26; Heb. 2:12.

Psalm 22:24.

He hath not despised. Man may despise (Psalm 22:6), but God cannot. Man may abhor a worm (Psalm 22:6), but God uses such to thresh mountains. And though his face may seem hidden (Psalm 22:1-2) it is not really so.

Psalm 22:25-26. My praise shall be of Thee.

Of Thee, i.e., originating from Thee, shall be my praise. Praise shall be the ultimate perquisite of all who seek God. And all who feed on the words of Jesus must have everlasting life (John 6:51).

Psalm 22:27-31.

All the ends of the world. There is surely here a forecast of the effects of the death of the cross, first on the Jews (Psalm 22:23), but

also in these verses on the Gentiles. The ends of the earth converted; the usurper dethroned (Psalm 22:28); the resurrection accomplished (Psalm 22:29); and the seeing of a spiritual seed to satisfy the travail of the Redeemer's soul.

PSALM 23

THE SHEPHERD PSALM

A restfulness breathes through this Psalm. It is the favorite of the children; but the oldest and holiest must confess that it touches an experience which lies still in front of them. There is no strife, no fear, no denunciation of the wicked, no effort at self-vindication: the waters, which fretted and chafed in their earlier course, flow in placid repose through the rich pasture lands and beneath the arms of the spreading trees. If for a moment there is the suggestion of the dark valley of death shadow, it is instantly dismissed by the thought that He will be there, whose face makes light in the darkest night.

Jehovah is represented successively as the true Shepherd and Guide and Host of his people. We are taught to think much less of ourselves in our relations with Him and more of Him as being responsible for us. After all it is not so much a question of what we are to Jesus, as of what He is to us. The flock does not keep the Shepherd, but the Shepherd the flock. Look away from self and trust Him to keep and lead and feed. All that we should care for, is not knowingly to resist any of his gracious promptings and teachings.

The Psalm was probably written when the sun of David's life was westering. The experience of age is grafted on the memories of youth.

Psalm 23:1.

The Lord is my Shepherd.--The thought of God as the Shepherd of his saints is familiar to Scripture students from Gen. 48:15 to Rev. 7:17, especially John 10. Let God see to your wants. There is nothing you really need for which you may not count on Him.

Psalm 23:2.

He leadeth me.--"Pastures of tender grass and waters of rest!"

Psalm 23:3.

He restoreth my soul.--When the soul has spent itself unduly, He recruits it. When diseased, He heals it. When penitent, He puts it back whence it fell. It is only as we look back on life that we see how absolutely right were paths that seemed most wrong. But his name and character are implicated in doing the best for us.

Psalm 23:4.

The valley of the shadow.--This is not death only, but any dark ravine through which we have to pass. God seems nearest then. It is no longer He, but Thou. Club to defend; crook to chasten and guide.

Psalm 23:5.

Thou preparest.--Every day is that table spread with food for body and spirit, but we need the purged eye to see and the believing hand to appropriate. We must be prepared to break through a ring of enemies to feed and to get the daily anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27).

Psalm 23:6.

PSALM 24

THE KING OF GLORY

Psalm 22 tells of the Cross; Psalm 23 of the Crook; Psalm 24 of the Crown. This great choral hymn was evidently composed to celebrate the removal of the Ark from the house of Obed-edom to Mount Zion (2 Sam. 6). There must have been a great procession by which it was conducted, with music and song, to its resting-place (1 Chron. 15:2-27).

This Psalm was composed for a choir. The first two verses might have been sung by the entire festal crowd; the third by a single voice; the fourth and fifth by the choir; and the sixth by all. What a sublime challenge on the part of the approaching host is contained in Psalm 24:7, answered by a company already within the gates (Psalm 24:8); to which again the vast shout of the multitudes gives reply. Surely this ode was rightly employed when used by Handel to represent the return of the ascending Saviour to his home. It never reached its perfect accomplishment till the Victor over hell and the grave arose on high.

Psalm 24:1-2.

The earth is the Lord's.--These words were chosen by Albert the Good to be placed as a motto over the Royal Exchange. The earth and men are God's by right of creation and redemption. The devil is a usurper and shall be thrust out.

Psalm 24:3-4.

The Hill of the Lord.--The Almighty is also the All-Holy. We are his, but we cannot approach Him unless we observe certain conditions, which He will secure in us by the power of the Holy Spirit, if we are only willing that He should.

Psalm 24:5.

From Jehovah-from Elohim.--What a blessing is this! (Gen. 15:6; 49:25).

Psalm 24:6.

Them that seek thy face.--We must evidently insert the name of God before Jacob, as the margin suggests.

Psalm 24:7.

Lift up your heads!--The doors are everlasting, grey with hoar antiquity and destined to stand for ever. The connection between Psalms 15 and 24 has already been pointed out. This Psalm is accomplished in us when Jesus enters our hearts as our King to reign. It will have its full realization when the earth and its populations welcome Him as its Lord.

The house of the Lord.--God's house' is his Presence Himself. There let us live. His twin-angels shall follow us. We must not look behind, dreading the pursuit of the evil past. The rear is well protected. Watch-dogs behind; the Shepherd before.

PSALM 25

THE SECRET OF THE LORD

An acrostic or alphabetical Psalm. The verses begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; probably to aid the memory: so also Psalms 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145. It contains many similar expressions, which might be connected by slight Bible markings. Such are wait (Psalm 3, 5, 21); ashamed (Psalm 2, 3, 20); teach (Psalm 4, 5, 8, 9, 12).

Psalm 25:1.

Unto Thee, O Lord! Lift up your soul, that its darkness may be penetrated by his light, its maladies healed by his saving health.

Psalm 25:4-5.

Lead me! and teach me! If you utter this prayer in all sincerity, wait for the answer. Be sure that it will come. If you are not yet told what to do, wait till you know certainly. "Wait all the day."

Psalm 25:8-9.

Therefore will He teach. God's holiness is no barrier, but an encouragement to repentant sinners (compare Matt. 9:13 and Luke 15:1). Not the meek only, but sinners may claim his teaching. Do not be careful as to your lessons, but as to acquiring them. God will set them; we must get them by heart.

Psalm 25:11.

For thy Name's sake! How much the Old Testament writers count on God's Name! It is his character, his truth, Himself (Josh. 7:9; Isa. 63:14, 16; Ezek. 36:22-23).

Psalm 25:13.

His soul shall dwell. In the darkest, saddest hour we may find a home in the goodness of God.

Psalm 25:14.

The secret of the Lord. What secrets God has to tell his own! (Gen. 18:17; John 13:31; 15:15; 1 Cor. 2:9-10).

Psalm 25:15. Mine eyes are toward the Lord. Do not look down at your feet, but up to his face.

Psalm 25:20.

Oh, keep my soul! When we are unable to keep ourselves for God, let us trust Him to keep us for Himself. He is able to do this. It is

best to transfer the entire responsibility to Him (2 Tim. 1:12). We cannot be "ashamed" (Isa. 45:17; 49:23; 50:7).

PSALM 26

JUDGE ME, O LORD

In some respects this Psalm is similar to the previous one. Instead of entreaties for forgiveness, there are protestations of innocence. It may have been composed during Absalom's rebellion. It is a strenuous protest against the dissembling and hypocrisy on which that revolt had been built. In these avowals of conscious rectitude, we must remember that David did not mean to express absolute sinlessness, but his innocence of those specific charges with which he had been assailed.

Psalm 26:1.

I shall not slide. If therefore be omitted, we get the sense that he had not slidden from his attitude of faith. Let us trust God to keep us trusting.

Psalm 26:2.

Examine, and prove. These words are all borrowed from the smelting furnace and point to the purity which fire gives.

Psalm 26:3.

I have walked in thy truth (Zech. 10:12).

Psalm 26:4-5.

I have not sat. Human society without God is an empty bubble and cannot satisfy (Psa. 1:1).

Psalm 26:6-7.

In innocency. We must use the laver, if we would minister at the altar. It is more important to be clean than to be clever. We must wash before we publish and tell.

Psalm 26:8.

I have loved thy house. Hatred of evil men (Psalm 26:5) is one side of the coin; love to God's house the other. Seek either and the other will be yours.

Psalm 26:11.

Mine integrity. Can we also assert our integrity--that is, our whole-heartedness? (Job 2:3, 9; 27:5). Is our eye single? our heart open toward God? Are our motives pure? If so, though we still need "grace to help," we are on an even table-land, in which there is no pitfall and from which the glad song of praise shall ascend as sweet incense to God.

PSALM 27

SEEK YE MY FACE!

This Psalm probably dates from the time when the exiled king, surrounded by unscrupulous foes, looked from the regions beyond the Jordan to the beloved city, where the Ark of God abode. It would seem as if his one thought was--not to resume his throne, but to revisit the sanctuary of God. "One thing have I desired." The "one thing" people are irresistible (Phil. 3:13).

1. ASSURANCE (Psalm 27:1-6).

How many-sided is God! He is "light," "salvation," and "strength." The trusting soul lives behind a triple door. We may shrink from uttering the desire to dwell evermore in Jehovah's house. Yet there is a sense in which even busy people can do this by the grace of the Holy Spirit. God's presence is God's house. Abide in Him! You are "in Him" unless you consciously go out. How beautiful is God's world! How much more beautiful Himself! If you behold that beauty, it will be transferred to your own face, though you wist it not (Psa. 90:17; 110:3). Temple (Psalm 27:4) is here applied to the tent which David erected on Mount Zion (2 Sam. 6:17). The believer who hides in God is as safe as the young Joash (2 Chron. 22:12).

2. SUPPLICATION (Psalm 27:7-14).

The triumphant trust of the Psalm suddenly changes to a tone of sadness as if a cloud had for a moment passed over the soul. Did the writer for a moment look from his Saviour to the wind and waves? How true to life are these changing strains! What a comfort to

know that our experiences do not alter our standing! Sometimes God seems to hide his face, only to lead the soul to a pitch of trust which otherwise it had never dared to adopt (Mark 7:28). Here is the heart-echo. God's words come back to Him as a prayer. The dearest may forsake, but the Lord gathers (Isa. 40:11).

Psalm 27:11.

Teach me! ,lead me!--Again we have the even path of Psa. 26:12.

Psalm 27:12.

Mine enemies.--We may apply this to the wicked spirits of the heavenly places who assail us, if we have no earthly foes who hate us for the truth's sake. It is an unlikely thing, however, that we should escape hatred, if we are living very near to Christ (John 15:19-20).

Psalm 27:13.

Unless I had believed to see.--Look up! and look on!

Psalm 27:14.

Wait on the Lord!--It is so much easier to act, or lie down and die, or run to friends, than to wait. But waiting is the true posture. He that waits for God shall not be long without the God for whom he waits.

How delightful are the me and my of this exquisite Psalm!--the pronouns of personal appropriation.

PSALM 28

UNTO THEE WILL I CRY!

This Psalm also probably belongs to the time of Absalom's rebellion. Psalm 28:2-3 closely resemble Psa. 26:8-9.

Psalm 28:1-2.

If Thou be silent.--What a thought is suggested in the silence of God! Sometimes He is silent because He loves (Zeph. 3:17, marg.). Sometimes to test our faith and stir up our zeal (Matt. 15:23). Sometimes because He has already spoken, and we have not heeded his words (Matt. 26:62). But if a period of silence befall us, let us not have recourse to any unhallowed source of help (1 Sam. 28:6-7). Let us rather pray and wait, lifting up our hands for help towards God's oracle.

Psalm 28:3-5.

The workers of iniquity.--The world is so made that wickedness is doomed to failure. The righteous man is glad when God's righteous government of the world is thus approved. We must look at the punishment of wrong-doing not only from man's standpoint, but from God's

Psalm 28:6-7.

He hath heard!--The answer has already begun to steal into the psalmist's soul. Some stray flowers of hope piercing the sod tell of coming spring. The quick ear can tell the approach of the Highlanders, though foes engirdle the beleaguered city. "I am helped."

Psalm 28:8-9.

The Lord is my strength.--Note the contrast between my strength (Psalm 28:7) and their strength (Psalm 28:8). Trust is contagious as , well as panic. All who have experienced God's help long that others may know the blessed help and salvation of God! Feed them (Psa. 81:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). Bear them (R.V.; Isa. 63:9; 40:11).

It is thus that prayer clears itself in its utterance and changes its note to praise, and as a rising lark breaks into songs as it soars.

PSALM 29

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

A perfect specimen of Hebrew poetry, giving a magnificent description of a thunderstorm, marching from north to south of Palestine.

PRELUDE (Psalm 29:1-2).--Addressed to the firstborn sons of light (marg.), who stand above the tumult of earth and sky. Heaven is viewed as a temple, the priests of which are angels, clad in holy vestments (2 Chron. 20:21; Psa. 110:3).

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE STORM (Psalm 29:3-9).--We hear first the low, distant muttering of the thunder. The "many waters" may refer to the Mediterranean from which the storm arose (Psalm 29:3). Coming nearer the tempest breaks on Lebanon and Sirion, the Sidonian name for Hermon. The cedars sway to and fro before the wild fury of the storm. Each thunder peal is accompanied by zig-zag forked lightning (Psalm 29:4-7). The storm passes southwards to the desert Kadesh and to the rock-hewn cities of Petra. In the Temple the gathered worshippers respond to the challenge of nature, and say, "Glory! Every whit of it uttereth glory" (marg.). Oh that every whit of the inner temple of our hearts, and of the spiritual temple of the Church--each nail, and thread, and splint--might utter that same cry, "Glory to God in the Highest!" The voice of the Lord is mentioned SEVEN times, reminding us of the seven thunders of Rev. 10:3.

THE CONCLUSION (Psalm 29:10-11).--God's supremacy is the subject of these closing words. He sits upon the clouds as on a throne or chariot. He is King of Nature and of Grace. He is in the strength of the storm and in the halcyon peace that breaks out like a smile, when the storm has passed. The Psalm begins with Gloria in excelsis! and ends with Pax in terris! "Glory to God" implies "peace on earth."

PSALM 30

THOU HAST LIFTED ME UP!

It becomes the child of God to dedicate the house in which he lives, so that each room is part of His temple, dedicated to His service and used for His glory. David wrote this psalm and song on the occasion referred to in 2 Sam. 5:11. It records the emotions which befitted the transition from the cave of Adullam to the splendor and comfort of a house of cedar.

Psalm 30:1.

I will extol Thee!--Lift Him up in song, who has lifted thee up in mercy.

Psalm 30:2-3.

Thou! Thou! Thou!--It may be that David celebrates here his recovery from some deadly sickness. At such times we must not put the physician in the place of God (2Chr 16:12).

Psalm 30:4-5.

Sing! and give thanks!--No one though he were a sweet singer like David, could tell forth all God's praise. Weeping is here personified as a lodger who tarries for the brief Eastern night, and then, veiled, glides out of the house before daybreak. With the first ray of light joy comes to stay.

Psalm 30:6-9.

I cried to Thee!--When our circumstances are prosperous, we begin to rest in them rather than in God. We forget Him. Then He hides his face. The Chaldee says, "His shekinah." And the soul, panic-stricken, turns from the creature to the Creator.

Psalm 30:10.

"Lord, be Thou my helper," is a prayer which fits our life, every day. How swiftly the prayer was heard!

Psalm 30:11-12.

In these utterances the past tense is used of Him who turneth the shadow of death into morning. Christ might have used these words of rapture on the Resurrection day. Each penitent may use them. And we shall use them when we have put off the body of our humiliation and stand before God in his sanctuary (1 Cor. 15:54, 55).

PSALM 31

IN THE SECRET OF THY PRESENCE

In Psalm 31:9-18 we have a picture of unusual grief, probably written during the rebellion of Absalom. It alternates from depths of despondency to heights of sublime trust. It fits well the experiences of any who walk in the darkness and have no light (Isa. 50:10).

Psalm 31:1.

In Thee do I trust.--God's answer to his people's trust is guaranteed by his righteousness (Joel 2:26).

Psalm 31:2.

A house of defence.--Hidden with Christ in God, the believer, apparently defenceless, lives, walks and has his being within an impregnable defence. You go into the day enclosed in God just as God's life is enclosed in you.

Psalm 31:3-4.

Pull me out of the net!--When we are wholly given up to God, our cause is his, and the honor of his name is at stake (Josh. 7:9). God's pulls are sometimes rather sharp.

Psalm 31:5.

Into Thine hand!--The last words of Stephen, Polycarp, Bernard, Huss, Luther, Melancthon, and of many more, and above all of our Lord (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59). The Psalter was our Saviour's prayer-book. This is a suitable petition for every morning before the day's war and work. What a claim we have on God! He must keep what we commit, because we are his by redemption and because his truth cannot fail (2Ti 1:12).

Psalm 31:7.

I will be glad and rejoice!--Faith will find material for her songs in the darkest days. God can recognize us though, our beauty has vanished and our friends hardly know us (Job 2:12).

Psalm 31:9.

Mine eye is consumed with grief.--This and the following verses tell a sad tale. There is a special disease of the eyes brought on by excessive weeping. We all know how the digestion and the health are affected by mental emotion. Yet the believer realizes that each moment of suffering is allotted by the dear hand of God. The Refiner sits beside the crucible, his watch in hand, his other hand on the patient's pulse. "My times are in thy hand."

Psalm 31:10.

My strength faileth.--Sin may be committed in the heat of passion. It lays up for itself bitter memories and involves sorrowful consequences which eat into the soul.

Psalm 31:11.

A fear to mine acquaintance.--The inmates of the same house avoided him. Those who met him in the streets fled from him.

Psalm 31:14-18.

Thou art my God.--What a change there is in the spirit of our life when we look from men and things to God! Do not look at God through circumstances; but at circumstances through the environing presence of God, as though a golden haze. The times of our Lord's life were in his Father's hands as ours are in his (Psalm 31:15; John 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). Who will dread the averted faces of friends or foes, if only God's face shines? We cannot see it shine unless, as his servants, we are where He would have us be and doing his will (Psalm 31:16). "Grievous" things are hard ones (Psalm 31:18).

Psalm 31:19.

How great is Thy goodness!--As God hath laid up ore in the earth, so that man must dig for it--so hath God laid up unsearchable riches of goodness in Christ and all spiritual blessings (Ro 11:33). But we must first know what they are, and then take them (Prov. 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Psalm 31:20.

In the secret of Thy presence.--What a compensation for slandered saints! Perhaps we never know that hiding until we have tasted the proud hatred and contempt of man. Do you know the royal withdrawing room? God's pavilion is sound-tight; the strife of tongues cannot invade.

Psalm 31:21.

His marvellous kindness.--Was this Mahanaim? (2Sa 17:27).

Psalm 31:22.

In my haste, it is a mistake to speak in haste.

Psalm 31:23-24.

Oh, love the Lord!--Oh for love, that we may cast it at His feet, who is so infinitely lovable! And out of love shall spring hope, strength, and courage.

PSALM 32

THOU FORGAVEST

David evidently wrote this Psalm (Rom. 4:6-8). It gives more minutely the story of his experience after his great sin (comp. Psa. 51). Maschil means to give instruction. This Psalm was one of Luther's favorites.

Psalm 32:1-2.

Blessed is the man!--We never realize the blessedness of forgiveness so sweetly as when we have known the burden of unforgiven sin. The word is plural, "Oh, the blessednesses!" Transgression is passing over a boundary. Sin is the missing of a mark. Iniquity is what is turned out of its proper course and perverted. The first must be forgiven, i.e., borne away (John 1:29). The second must be covered, i.e., hidden from sight (Rev. 3:18). The third must not be imputed (2 Cor. 5:19). All these things are true of each believer in Jesus. And in such, forgiveness begets guilelessness.

Psalm 32:3-5.

1 acknowledged my sin.--For some time after his sin, the tempter so gagged David that he strove to hide it. Ah, how bitter was his anguish then! He was silent in confession, but not in grief. Under the remorse of conscience he suffered as if the combined agonies of ague and fever had smitten his physical strength, and laid him low. At last he could stand it no longer. He confessed and experienced the joy of God's forgiveness (1Jn 1:9). There is no cure for the soul like the heartfelt confession of sin.

Psalm 32:6-7.

For this shall every one pray.--Godly people should take courage at the Lord's deliverances to their fellows. Godliness is Godlikeness. Do you resemble your Father? (Eph. 5:1). There are times when He seems especially near--nearer than the floods of great waters. Oh to be God-enclosed, God-encompassed! Then deliverances shall encircle us with songs.

Psalm 32:8.

I will instruct thee!--Three precious promises--for instruction, teaching and guidance. "Though the vision tarry,, wait for it" (Hab. 2:3). If the cloud still broods over the Holy Place, do not strike your tents (Num. 9:15-23). Throw on God the responsibility of making his way plain. It is not that God will indicate our duty by the slight movement of the eye, but that He will watch us so as to stop us taking a wrong turn or making a false step.

Psalm 32:9.

The bit and bridle.--The R.V. gives a more accurate rendering of the original. With the bit and bridle the animal needs to be governed and restrained. We should be actuated by love.

Psalm 32:10-11.

Be glad in the Lord!--Compassed with songs and with mercy. When one asked Haydn why his church music was so cheerful, he said, "I cannot make it otherwise: 1 write as 1 feel. When 1 think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen." (Phil. 4:4).

PSALM 33

REJOICE IN THE LORD!

This Psalm incites to PRAISE. Let us note the subjects enumerated for this holy exercise. Surely it shall not be long ere our soul shall kindle.

Psalm 33:1.

Praise is comely.--We cannot rejoice in ourselves, but we may in the Lord. Such an exercise is eminently befitting to those who owe to Him all they are and all they hope for.

Psalm 33:2.

With harp; with psaltery.--Sweet-toned instruments and the voice of song will often stir the lethargic soul.

Psalm 33:3.

Sing a new song!--New hearts may use the old words, but with fresh emotion.

Psalm 33:4.

The word of the Lord, and his works.--Think of his words of promise, of teaching, and his marvellous works in creation. Recall his works. Surely in some of these there is food for song. Muse and the fire must burn (Psa. 39:3).

Psalm 33:5.

The earth is full.--His goodness is always passing before us (Exod. 33:19). The evil of the world is due to the devil's intrusion upon God's work (Matt. 13:28).

Psalm 33:6-9.

He spake, and it was done.--In a few words of marvellous power the great work of creation is here recapitulated (Gen. 1).

Psalm 33:10-15.

The counsel of the Lord.--God's providential government. We may know the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:18; Titus 2:14), and drink in the blessedness of Psalm 33:12. Psalm 33:15 does not mean that all hearts are alike, but that all are equally fashioned by his hand (see R.V.).

Psalm 33:16-19.

No king saved by a host.--We may not possess a host, or much strength, or horses: we may be humble and despised. We need not regret the absence of all these earthly things. They do not really avail in the day of battle. God's unslumbering eye sees our need. If we dare to trust in Him, He will deliver us from death and famine.

Psalm 33:20-22.

Our soul waiteth.--Let us patiently tarry our Lord's leisure and occupy ourselves as we do so with glad songs of praise for what He is going to do. Trust is certain to bear fruit in joy. The grave must lead to the songs of the resurrection morning.

PSALM 34

THIS POOR MAN CRIED

The event which this Psalm celebrates is recorded in 1 Sam. 21. The association with Achish was not a very creditable incident. David realizes the goodness of God, in spite of his own failures and mistakes. The Psalm clearly falls into two divisions, the first ending at Psalm 34:10. In the original the verses begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Psalm 34:1.

At all times continually.--It is a sign of great grace to bless, in dark times as well as in bright.

Psalm 34:3.

Let us exalt His name!--We learn from 1Sa. 22:9, 10, 11, who they were to whom David spoke. "Birds," says Trapp, "when they come to a full heap of corn, will chirp and call in their fellows." Charity is no churl.

Psalm 34:4-6.

This poor man cried.--While feigning madness, his soul was going up in prayer. We can never turn our faces to God to be disappointed.

Psalm 34:7.

The Angel of the Lord.--Compare Acts 12:6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Psalm 34:8.

Oh, taste and see.--Some experiences must be realized before they can be understood. Even then they cannot be expressed: the rapture is unspeakable. But however rich the provision of God's goodness, it will avail nothing until we open eye and mouth.

Psalm 34:10.

They that seek shall not want.--"We will leave thee nothing," said plundering soldiers to a widow, "to put in thee or on thee." "I care not," said she: "I shall not want as long as God is in the heavens." Columba spent his last afternoon in transcribing this Psalm, saying when he reached this verse, "I will stop here. The following verse will better suit my successor."

Psalm 34:11-14.

Hearken unto me!--The purport of this exhortation is well summed up by Peter in his First Epistle (1 Peter 3:10). We need not fret to defend ourselves or answer false accusations. Let us refrain our lips and go on doing what is right and good. So shall we find our needs supplied, our enemies silenced and our soul redeemed.

Psalm 34:15.

The righteous.--Those who stand before God accepted in the Righteous one and in whose hearts his Spirit is working righteousness.

Psalm 34:17.

Delivereth them. Not kept from it, but delivered out of it (2Cor 1:10).

Psalm 34:18.

The Lord is nigh.--You may not realize it, oh brokenhearted sufferer, but the great Gardener passes by those who are standing erect, to stoop over thee, beaten down by the storm and trailing on the ground. He comes where He is most needed.

Psalm 34:20.

He keepeth all his bones.--The literal fulfilment of these words must be sought in John 19:36. But there is a sense in which the integrity of our bodily health is due to the perpetual exercise of God's care.

Psalm 34:22.

The Lord redeemeth.--All through these latter verses it is good to note the present tenses of our God's deliverances.

PSALM 35

WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE?

This psalm dates from the Sauline persecution or from the disturbed state of the kingdom in David's later days. Each of the three divisions into which the Psalm naturally falls ends with praise (Psalm 35:9, 18, 28).

Continually in this Psalm we meet with imprecations on the wicked. The spirit of the New Testament teaches us a higher law, the law of love and forgiveness (Luke 9:55-56). But perhaps it is better to read these verses as predictions: thus, "Let them be confounded," would read. "They will be confounded." Much of it could be only true in its deepest sense, when uttered by the Messiah: rejected by Pharisee and Scribe; unconscious of any personal hatred; and only prompted by an absorbing passion for the vindication of the righteousness of God.

Psalm 35:3.

I am thy salvation.--What a thrill passes through the soul when God whispers this assurance "I am thy salvation!" God Himself is even more to us than what He has done. He is in us, around us, for us. He is our salvation.

Psalm 35:5.

The Angel of the Lord.--This is He who appeared to Abraham and accompanied the wilderness-march. How awful that He should be wrath and pursue!

Psalm 35:7.

Their net in a pit.--"The pit-net was covered over by the hunter with a net and with twigs, to ensure the fall and capture of a wild beast."

Psalm 35:9-10

My soul shall be joyful.--We pray and are not always careful to return thanks. "Who is like unto Thee?" is a snatch from the song at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:11).

Psalm 35:11.

They laid to my charge.--"They ask me of things that I know not" (R.V.). The idea being that his enemies sought to elicit by questions some ground for accusation (Mark 14:55; Luke 11:53; John 18:19).

Psalm 35:12-14.

But as for me.--How true this was of the Lord Jesus; weeping, praying, dying for his foes (Luke 19:41-44). When our prayers and tears cannot avail for others, they return to bless ourselves (Matt. 10:13). "Darling" is soul (Psalm 35:17).

Psalm 35:20.

The Quiet in the Land.--This was the title adopted by holy men in Germany through long and dark days and is beautifully significant of those whose life is hidden with Christ in God.

Psalm 35:22.

This Thou hast seen.--What a striking contrast between God's seeing and the seeing of the previous verse, directed towards the fall and destruction of the persecuted one!

Psalm 35:24.

Judge me, O Lord!--It is a comfort to appeal from the judgments of men to the bar of God and to claim his interposition and vindication--which must come, though years pass on without an answer.

Psalm 35:28.

My tongue shall speak of Thy praise!--What might not life be, if this were our resolution! Such is the spirit of heaven. Of its inhabitants it is said, "they rest not day and night" (Rev. 4:8).

PSALM 36

THY LOVING-KINDNESS

By the inscription we are specially led to think of SERVICE in connection with this Psalm. The Lord's service is indeed blessed. It constitutes perfect freedom. Christ's household servants all become nobles.

CONTRASTED SERVICE (Psalm 36:1-4).

When there is "no fear of God before the eyes," a man is free to "flatter himself in his own eyes." It is a terrible thing when a man becomes headstrong in wickedness and abhors not evil.

THE MASTER'S CHARACTER (Psalm 36:5-8).

All natural symbols fail to set forth the glories of Nature's Lord. We cannot scale his heights or plumb his depths or see his last star. His loving-kindness is precious (1 Pet. 2:7). If you want men to leave other refuges, so as to shelter under the wings of God, begin to talk of His love: that will draw them (Psalm 36:8). Those who thirst for creature-delights have yet to learn something of the meaning of this abundant satisfaction (John 10:10). God gives sorrow by cupfuls and pleasures by riverfuls. The Hebrew word for Pleasures is "Eden."

Psalm 36:9. In Thy light shall we see light.--The deepest teachings of the Apostle John lie folded in this marvellous verse as the forest in the acorn (John 1:1-16; 1Jn 1:1-7).

THE SERVANT'S PRAYER (Psalm 36:10-12).

Set thy loving-kindness abroad, so that we may drink and drink again. Start the flow, that it may be like some fountain of oil, which the more it is drawn upon, the more it yields. The man who knows God is "upright in heart" and vice versa. But the servants of sin incur irrevocable ruin, while the servants of God stand in their integrity, unmoved (Isa. 54:17).

PSALM 37

FRET NOT THYSELF!

Written by David in his old age (Psalm 37:25), this Psalm contains his mature experience. Like Psalms 25, 34, 119, and some others, it is, in its arrangement, an acrostic. It deals with the great problem of the prosperity of the wicked contrasted with the afflictions of the righteous. It shows that these afflictions are only temporary, and that, if we can trust and wait, we shall see that God will mete out their deserts to all. This Psalm is a protest against querulous complaint and has in all ages been peculiarly dear to the troubled believer. It is exquisitely paraphrased by Gerhardt's noble hymn, "Commit thou all thy griefs." Psalm 36:5 was frequently quoted by Dr. Livingstone.

Psalm 37:1.

Fret not.--This key-note is thrice repeated (Psalm 37:1, 7, 8). It might be translated "Do not worry."

Psalm 37:5.

Roll thy way upon the Lord (marg.)" see also for same Hebrew word Psa. 22:8, "trusted"; Prov. 16:3, "commit."--True religion is summed up in two words, SUBMIT and COMMIT.

Psalm 37:7.

Rest in the Lord! (marg., Be Silent!)--The Rhone rids itself of silt as it passes through the still waters of Geneva's lake. It is so much easier to act than to be still.

Psalm 37:9.

Earth may be read the land: see also Psalm 37:11, 22, 29, 34, and Matt. 5:5.--This surely means the supply of all temporal needs as well as of spiritual blessing.

Psalm 37:12.

The wicked plotteth.--Let us not fear the threatenings of our foes. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Psalm 37:18.

The Lord knoweth.--It is enough that God knows what lies hid in each day and guarantees a sufficiency of strength (Deut. 33:25).

Psalm 37:19.

Not ashamed in the evil time.--So God cared for Jeremiah in the time of siege (Jer. 37:21).

Psalm 37:23.

The steps are ordered.--Jehovah guides the steps and orders the goings. There is safety here (see Psalm 37:31; Job 34:21; Psa. 17:5; 40:2; Prov. 16:9).

Psalm 37:24.

The Lord upholdeth, --The Douay version reads "The Lord putteth his hand under him."

Psalm 37:25.

I have been young, and now am old.--Though this may have been David's experience it does not follow that it is universally true. But on the whole it is true. Not the blessedness of the seed of a good man (Psalm 37:26).

Psalm 37:30-31.

The law of his God in his heart.--This is the portrait of the godly as to their life, and heart, and steps, Here, as in Psa. 1 and Psa. 119, the "law of the Lord" is the source of strength and safety. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart" (Psa. 119:11).

Psalm 37:34.

He shall exalt thee.--The fulfilment of these promises depends on our fulfilment of the conditions of faith and waiting. Because they trust in Him (Psalm 37:40).

Psalm 37:37.

The end of that man is peace.--Bishop Coverdale's translation in the Prayer Book version is worthy of note: "Keep innocency, and

take heed unto the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last." But the Revised Version favors the ordinary reading. The day may break stormily, but the storms expend themselves ere nightfall and the sunset is golden.

PSALM 38

FORSAKE ME NOT!

One of the seven penitential Psalms. It seeks to bring to God's remembrance his apparently forgotten suppliant (see Septuagint heading). We all should have times of remembrance, when we summon back the past.

Psalms 38:1.

THE BURDEN OF THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER.

Psalms 38:2-8.

HIS FIRST PLEA, derived from his physical and mental sufferings.--Sin's convictions are as arrows. When God's holy law is driven home by the Spirit, we are like hunted deer. Many images are introduced: the hunted quarry (Psalm 38:2), disease (Psalm 38:3), the waters rolling over a drowning man (Psalm 37:4), a burden which crushes the bearer to the ground (Psalm 38:4), ah, how blessed that they were not too heavy for the Sin-bearer! (Isa. 53:4, 5; 1 Pet. 2:24). I am troubled might be rendered I writhe (Psalm 38:6). Mourning will soon be exchanged for singing (Psa. 40:3).

Psalms 38:9-12.

HIS SECOND PLEA, derived from his ill-treatment by men.--God reads the unspoken sorrows of our hearts (Psalm 38:9). Mark the beating, palpitating heart, the failure of strength, the lack-lustre eye (Psalm 38:10). When enemies are nearest, friends are furthest: so it was with our blessed Lord (Matt. 26:56). Malice in deed and malice in thought (Psalm 38:12).

Psalms 38:13-20.

HIS THIRD PLEA, derived from his absolute dependence on God.--It is well to be deaf to calumny and dumb in self-vindication (1 Sam. 10:27). Let God undertake your cause (Psalm 38:15). How truly might the Messiah have appropriated many of these words! (John 15:25; Matt. 26:62).

Psalms 38:21-22.

HIS CLOSING PETITIONS. Thus, faith becomes expectant and triumphant, claiming God as its salvation.

PSALM 39

I WAS DUMB!

Written by David and handed to Jeduthun, who is specially mentioned as entrusted with the Psalmody (1 Chron. 16:41-42). Psalm 39 is a calm meditation on the respective lots of righteous and wicked men. This Psalm is full of impetuous and impatient complaint, which finally works itself out and subsides into a more submissive and plaintive tone.

IMPATIENT MURMURINGS (Psalm 39:1-6).

FAITH AND PRAYER (Psalm 39:7-13).

Psalms 39:1.

I will take heed.--A tale of the fifth century tells of a plain man, who, having learned this verse, took leave of his teacher, saying he would return for more when he had mastered it. He did not return for forty-nine years, as he found it took him all that time to acquire its lessons. We need to ask God to tame what man never can (James 3:2-8).

Psalms 39:3.

While I was musing.--The pent-up fire broke forth as from a volcano. Perhaps it had been better, if it had been altogether restrained (Job 1:22; 2:10; 3:1). And yet, if the lips must tell the unsupportable agony of the heart, it is better to tell it all out into the ear of God.

Psalms 39:5.

My days as a hand-breadth.--Not only does he, with all his days, shrink into nothingness in contrast with God, but every man, when standing most firmly, is only "a breath" (R.V., marg.). The outward life and activity of men is fleeting and unsubstantial as the shadow

of a cloud on the mountain slope.

Psalm 39:7.

My hope is in Thee!--David ceases from peering into dizzy depths, which well-nigh make him reel--and looks upward. This is the turning point of the Psalm. The former thoughts are repeated, but the dark clouds are shot through with light.

Psalm 39:9.

I was dumb.--Dumbness not now from wrath, as in Psalm 39:2, but from trust. Thou didst it.

Psalm 39:11.

When Thou dost correct.--The transience of human life is now seen to be due to the sin which needs correction, much more than to any defect in God's creative love.

Psalm 39:12.

A stranger with Thee (Lev. 25:23).--We have a constant companion. God is our fellow-pilgrim. "Life need not be lonely, if He be with us; nor its shortness sad."

PSALM 40

LO, I COME!

Though the primary reference be to the individual believer, there is One only in whom these words can find their entire fulfilment. This is put beyond all doubt by Heb. 10:5-9.

THANKSGIVING (Psalm 40:1-3);

DECLARATION (Psalm 40:4-5);

CONSECRATION (Psalm 40:6-10);

ENTREATY (Psalm 40:11-17), unite to fill this precious Psalm with helpful thoughts and words.

Psalm 40:1.

Waiting, I waited (marg.).

Psalm 40:2.

A pit of roaring, a deep cavity through which roaring waters rush (Isa. 17:12). Miry clay (Psa. 69:2).

Psalm 40:3.

A new song.--May not these have been the words of Christ as He ascended out of the grave,, leading the new song which only the redeemed can learn? (Rev. 14:3).

Psalm 40:5.

Many are Thy wonderful works.--What wonderful works in Redemption, Adoption, Pardon, Sanctification and Providence! God's living thoughts of us pass our power of counting (Psa. 139:17). Here is a maze, in which, bewildered, we may soon lose ourselves.

Psalm 40:6.

Sacrifice, Thou didst not desire.--The bloody and unbloody offerings respectively. Where these expressed a loving, obedient heart, they were gladly accepted: otherwise they were valueless (Psa. 50:5; 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6).

Mine ears hast Thou digged (marg.) (Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17).--Thus did Jesus freely give Himself up to obedience and bloodshedding for us. So should we give ourselves irrevocably to Him.

Psalm 40:7-8.

Lo, I come!--It is blessed when God's law is not only in the head but in the heart. When it is there it will not be concealed (Psalm 40:10).

Psalm 40:9.

In the great congregation.--We are reminded of John 17:26.

Psalm 40:10.

I have not hid.--What themes are here, not only for the Lord, but for his ministers!

Psalm 40:12.

Innumerable evils.--If applied to our Lord, these must be the sins of the whole world (Isa. 53:4-6).

Psalm 40:15.

Their shame.--For a reward of the shame with which they tried to load the sufferer.

Psalm 40:16.

The Lord be magnified!--What a contrast in the objects of those who seek! (Psalm 40:14-16).

Psalm 40:17.

I am poor and needy.--The thoughts of God towards the soul (Psalm 40:5) are sweet themes of encouragement (1 Peter 5:7). Poverty and need are not barriers to, but arguments for, the thoughts of God.

PSALM 41

MINE OWN FAMILIAR FRIEND!

It is supposed by some that this Psalm was composed during the four years in which Absalom's conspiracy was being hatched. Perhaps the pain and sorrow of David's heart brought on some serious illness, which his enemies used for their own purposes, and exulted over with unseemly glee. His sensitive nature is keenly hurt and pours out its complaint. And we cannot but feel the applicability of the Psalm to Him who was betrayed by his friend. Psalm 41:9 is fulfilled in John 13:18.

Psalm 41:1-3.

A GENERAL PRINCIPLE.

When the writer's enemies were in sorrow, he was very tender in his dealings with them (Psa. 35:13-14). Now he asks tenderness from God.

To make the bed is to turn it.--As a gentle nurse comforts, so does God interpose alleviations for our pains.

Psalm 41:4

WHAT A WHOLESOME PRAYER!

"Heal us, Emmanuel! we are here, Waiting to feel thy touch; Deep-wounded souls to Thee repair, And, Saviour, we are such."--Cowper.

Psalm 41:5-9

DAVID'S TREATMENT BY HIS FOES.

His disease drew no pity, but only impatience that he lingered so long. Their comforting words were full of deceit. They rejoiced in his approaching end. "The man of my friendship," like a vicious mule, has kicked at the sick lion.

Psalm 41:10-12

The earlier verses savor more of the Old Testament spirit than of the New. But the conception of Psalm 41:12 is very beautiful, as a courtier who stands in the chamber of the king (2 Chron. 9:7; 1 Kings 17:1; Luke 1:19).

Psalm 41:13.

This Doxology closes the first book of the Psalter. Each of the five books ends in a somewhat similar manner.

PSALM 42

AS THE HART PANTETH!

This Psalm embalms the holy musings and yearnings of the exiled king during the rebellion of Absalom. The thoughts are evidently David's, even though their expression and setting may be by the sons of Korah (2 Chron. 20:19). This Psalm was a great favorite with the early Christians hunted to the catacombs, where the hart is a common emblem on the walls.

Psalm 42:1.

As the hart panteth.--The hind in the drought and the hunted stag, long for cool streams. This thirst for God proves the very being of God, for all natural appetites must have their perfect satisfaction.

Psalm 42:2.

For the living God!--Not a dead idol, but the living God of my life. Lit. "Appear before the face of God" (Psa. 41:12).

Psalm 42:3.

Where is thy God?--Shimei's words clung to his memory (2 Sam. 16:8).

Psalm 42:4.

When I remember.--The thought of the sufferer is to give a loose rein to these bitter memories and to allow his sad thoughts to work out their will. So he recalls the festal processions that he had led in happy bygone days.

Psalm 42:5.

Why art thou cast down?--Thus does the spirit rebuke the flesh and battles with its despondency in the name of the most High. "David chideth David out of the dumps," says Trapp.

Psalm 42:6.

My soul is cast down.--These words reappear (Jonah 2:7; , Matt. 26:38). You may be excluded from God's temple, but you can always remember God. The Hermons belonged to the trans-Jordanic tribes. And how insignificant was Mizar compared with Zion!

Psalm 42:8.

His loving-kindness.--Tears day and night (Psalm 42:3); and yet loving-kindness and song day and night (Job 35:10)

PSALM 43

GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY!

This, with the preceding Psalm, forms a pair.

Psalm 43:1.

Judge me, O God!--When others fail to understand our motives, we may appeal to the righteous bar of God. He is our great Advocate, who will plead for us (Lain. 3:58).

Psalm 43:2.

Thou, the God of my strength!--"The God of my life" (Psa. 42:8) is here "the God of my strength." How fertile is the soul in its epithets for God! And how conclusive the answer to the taunt of the foe, "Where is thy God?" God is with me in me here.

Psalm 43:3.

Let them lead me.--Light and Truth in the van. Goodness and Mercy bringing ,up the rear. Watch them as these twin angels emerge from God's home to conduct the suppliant thither.

Psalm 43:4.

God my exceeding joy.--The altar of outward symbolism and rite" was very little to David. It was for God that his soul yearned. How he dwells on that precious name, God! my God!

Psalms 43:5.

Why disquieted?--It is a mistake to allow aught to break the inner Sabbath. Troubles may burst on the bulwarks of the ship but they should not enter its inner sanctuary.

In these Psalms, notice how God is described as the strength of our life, the gladness of our joy, the health of our countenance. And mark how faith chases the tear from the eye, the furrow from the brow, the fear from the soul.

PSALM 44

THOU ART MY KING, O GOD!

This Psalm is so like Psa. 60, that it was probably occasioned by the same circumstances. While David was fighting with the Syrians, the Edomites made an incursion. Amid the anguish this Psalm may have been composed by the sons of Korah. David's return was God's answer to their cry (2 Sam. 8:13, 14). Some, however, consider the Psalm to have reference to the events narrated in 2 Chron. 20.

It fits any period of the Church's history when her former prosperous condition contrasts sadly with her depressed and suffering state. Rom. 8:36 points the application of Psalm 44:22.

Thou hast helped us (Psalm 44:1-3). Thou must help us (Psalm 44:4-8). Thou art not helping us (Psalm 44:9-16). We are not conscious of having done aught to forfeit Thy help (Psalm 44:17-22). We invoke Thy help (Psalm 44:23-26).

Psalms 44:3.

Thy right hand (Deut. 8:7-18).--All that we are and have and hope for, is the gift of God's undeserved mercy. We need not boast, but we need not fear to lose.

Psalms 44:4.

Thou art my King!--We cannot expect deliverances till we have made Christ our King.

Psalms 44:8-10.

In God we boast all the day.--Sometimes God takes away all sensible enjoyment and encouragement, to see whether we still cling to Him for Himself. Happy are we if we can adopt Psalm 44:18.

Psalms 44:20-21.

If we have forgotten (Josh. 22:22).

Psalms 44:22.

For Thy sake are we killed.--The path to victory lies through death and the grave.

Psalms 44:23.

O Lord, arise!--Though the Lord seem to sleep, it is in the stern of the boat. Do not be afraid. If He is with you, no storm can prevail to your destruction (Mark 4:40).

PSALM 45

THINGS TOUCHING THE KING

The inscription of this exquisite Psalm, To the chief musician, indicates that it was intended to be employed in God's service. Therefore, though it was probably suggested by Solomon's marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh, we must pass beyond the mere outward interpretation to consider these glowing words in their relation to Christ and his Church. The Psalm is distinctly applied to Him (Heb. 1:8). The union between Him and his people is often described in such imagery (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23). Let us pray for the time when the universe shall ring with this marriage-ode: when the hour of the marriage of the Lamb shall have come and heathen nations partake the joy (Rev. 19:7). Shoshannim means "lilies," and tells of the purity of heart that is appropriate to this song of love.

Psalms 45:1.

My heart overfloweth (R.V.)--Oh for a heart kept bubbling over with love for Jesus! We should make things about our King--be weaving chaplets--be composing hymns. When the heart is full, there will be no difficulty about the tongue (Acts 2:4).

Here is "good matter" indeed. Christ's beauty (Psalm 45:2); his victorious might (Psalm 45:4); his Divine nature and everlasting reign (Psalm 45:6); his joy (Psalm 45:7); his sweetness (Psalm 45:8); his bride (Psalm 45:13); the splendor of the royal procession (Psalm 45:15); the number and royalty of his posterity (Psalm 45:16).

Psalm 45:2.

Fairer than the children of men.--Happy are they who live in His presence (1 Kings 10:8; Luke 4:22).

Psalm 45:3-4.

In Thy majesty.--These imperatives are predictions of what the King will do. Though His plans are made, prayer is required to put them in operation. Because of truth means in the cause of truth. Our King fights for us and conquers Death, Satan and the Grave. We march to victory over a fallen foe.

Psalm 45:7.

The oil of gladness.--Here is the secret of perennial joy. So far as we enter into Christ's spirit, we shall share in his joy, a joy such as our fellows cannot know.

Psalm 45:8.

All Thy garments.--The word smell might be omitted. The royal robes are as sweet as if they were made of myrrh.

Psalm 45:10-11.

Hearken and consider!--Those are likeliest to know the preciousness of Christ's love who, in an abandonment of surrender, cut the cords which would bind them to old and worldly connections and hold them back from Him. Be only for Christ: so shalt thou taste his secret love.

Psalm 45:13.

All glorious within.--Within is in contrast to out of the palaces (Psalm 45:8), and refers to the interior of the royal residence. Is there not also a reference to the hidden beauties of Christian character?

Psalm 45:17.

Thy name!--Let us pass on that precious "Name," that the people may break forth into praise in all ages and all climes.

PSALM 46

BE STILL

The historical occasion of this Psalm cannot be certainly determined. But it is very probable that it was composed when Jerusalem was beleaguered by Sennacherib's hosts (Isa. 37). It fits every era in which the Church is in danger from her foes. It foretells the final destruction of Antichrist. It was Luther's favorite and is rendered into verse in his memorable hymn, Ein feste Burg. During the sitting of the Diet of Augsburg, he sang it every day to his lute, at the window, looking up to heaven.

The security of God's people amid storms is elaborated in three divisions, each concluding with Selah.

Psalm 46:1-3.

God our Refuge.--These words may have inspired Hezekiah's address to the captains (2 Chron. 32:7). We never know how near God can be till we are in trouble. Mountains stand for the most stable things on which we have been wont to fix our confidence.

Psalm 46:4-7.

There is a river.--In opposition to the raging of the sea is the even flow of the pellucid river. Alone among great cities Jerusalem lacked a river. But God Himself was all to her that a river was to ordinary cities (Isa. 33:21). The "river" throughout Scripture, from Eden to the New Jerusalem, is a symbol of the presence of God. The margin (Psalm 46:5) gives a beautiful alternative reading: "When the morning appeareth." Distress, in the case of God's people, is limited to a night's stay. But probably there is an allusion to Isa. 37:36. God is never before his time and never a moment too late (Matt. 14:25). If Jehovah is willing to be known as Jacob's God, I too may claim Him.

Psalms 46:8-11.

He maketh wars to cease.--War in the Church and the world is doomed, and shall become an extinct art before the Gospel of the love of God. We must cultivate the habit of stillness in our lives, if we would detect and know God.

PSALM 47

KING OVER ALL THE EARTH

This Psalm probably dates from 2 Chron. 20. Without a battle, Israel obtained a victory. They stood still and saw the salvation of God, given in answer to King Jehoshaphat's prayer. The Korhites, whose name is inscribed above it, are expressly mentioned as having been present (Psalm 47:19). Before the people left the field, they held a thanksgiving service in the valley of blessing (Psalm 47:26). From that valley God is depicted as having made his ascent to heaven, having wrought deliverance for his people (Psalm 47:5). This Psalm was probably sung in that "valley of blessing." It is a double call to praise, addressed first to the heathen (Psalm 47:1-4), and next to Israel. The name Elohim occurs seven times.

Psalms 47:1-4.

Oh, clap your hands!--In these days of world-wide evangelization, the Gentile peoples are beginning to respond to this invitation.

Psalms 47:3.

He shall subdue!--If He can subdue nations, surely He can give us the victory over our sins.

Psalms 47:4.

He shall choose!--Let God choose for you. He will do the best for his beloved.

Psalms 47:5.

Gone up with a shout!--An anticipation of the Ascension (Psa. 68:18).

Psalms 47:6.

Sing praises to God!--Let no heart be cold, no tongue be dumb. Holy songs stir the spirit.

Psalms 47:7.

God is the King!--God claims the kingdoms of this world, which is in revolt, but the end is sure (Rev. 11:15).

Psalms 47:8.

The throne of His holiness.--Holiness is the basis of God's rule.

Psalms 47:9.

The shields of the earth are the princes, as protectors of the people (Hos. 4:18, marg.). Compare Rev. 21:24.

PSALM 48

ZION THE JOY OF THE WHOLE EARTH

This Psalm was probably composed on the same occasion as the foregoing. But that was sung in the valley of Berachah and this on the return to Jerusalem and the temple (Psalm 48:9). Tekoa (2 Chron. 20:20) was only three hours' march from the city and commanded an extensive view, so that verses Psalm 48:4-5 were literally true. Let the reader turn to 2 Chron. 20:27, which tells the occasion of this burst of jubilation. There is also a special connection between Psalm 48:7 and the circumstances described in 1 Kings 22:48; 2 Chron. 20:37.

The divisions are easy: the dignity and beauty of Jerusalem, as the city of God (Psalm 48:1-3); the special instance of Divine deliverance is gratefully recorded (Psalm 48:4-8); glad thanksgivings (Psalm 48:9-11); and exhortations to commemorate God's goodness to coming generations (Psalm 48:12-14).

Psalms 48:1-2.

The city of our God.--Zion was the heart and center of the holy city which clustered around its northern slopes. The Church is the

city of God now, in which He dwells, and is known for a refuge.

Psalm 48:3.

God, a refuge.--The grandest palace without God is no refuge for the weary, hunted soul. But a hovel becomes a palace if God is known and loved there.

Psalm 48:5.

They hasted away.--Notice the magnificent brevity of this verse. As if one glimpse of that city struck them with panic.

Psalm 48:7.

Thou breakest the ships.--The destruction of the foe was as sudden and total as the sinking of a vessel struck by a hurricane.

Psalm 48:8.

As we have heard.--Whatever God has done in former days, He is able and willing, if needs be, to do again. Psalm 48:9. We have thought.--Let us cultivate the habit of holy musing on this sweet and boundless theme.

Psalm 48:13.

Mark ye well!--Consider God's wonderful dealings with his people. Their choice, redemption, adoption, sanctification, eternal inheritance--each is a subject for marking well and pondering.

Psalm 48:14.

Our God forever.--Let us replace the our by my and bind this text as a jewel on our heart.

PSALM 49

THEY THAT TRUST IN WEALTH

The subject of this Psalm is the prosperity of the wicked, as contemplated by the righteous. This was a frequent cause of wonder to these Hebrew thinkers (compare Psa. 37). And the singer presents to us the only consolation within the reach of those times--that the glory and success of the ungodly were but temporary and would pass away as a shadow. While the righteous might count upon long vistas of unbroken blessedness in the presence of God.

We may divide thus: The introduction (Psalm 49:1-4); the argument (Psalm 49:5-15); the conclusion (Psalm 49:16-20).

Psalm 49:4.

I will open my dark saying.--The Psalmist has no hesitation in asking for universal audience, because he not only speaks what he has heard with the ear--he brings forth in song what he has learned from God. There is melody in God's darkest sayings.

Psalm 49:5. Wherefore should I fear?--The second clause might be better rendered, "When the iniquity of my treaders-down compasses me about."

Psalm 49:6-9.

They that trust in wealth.--Men are very foolish to take airs on themselves, because they are rich. After all, money cannot do much for its owners. It will not enable a man to redeem either his brother or himself from untimely or sudden death. "A million of money for a moment of time!" cried Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed. (See 1 Tim. 6:17).

Psalm 49:10-12.

Leave their wealth to others.--And yet, though wealthy and wicked men are surrounded by death, they try as much as possible to ignore it and endeavor to obtain immortality for themselves in this world by the perpetuation of their names on their estates.

Psalm 49:14.

They are laid in the grave.--The idea here is of a flock of sheep, with death as shepherd, conducting them to the fold of the grave and sheol. What a contrast to Psa. 23:1! The morning of resurrection glory is not far away, with its songs of triumph. Lift up your heads, your redemption draweth nigh.

Psalm 49:18-20.

While he lived.--Our Lord's parables are the best commentary on these words (Luke 12:19; 16:25).

PSALM 50

I AM GOD, THY GOD

Asaph is named as the author of this Psalm. Perhaps he who is mentioned in 1Chr 15:17, 18, 19, and in 2Chr 29:30. The Psalm contains a severe rebuke of the hypocrite who contents himself with giving a mere outward obedience to the ritual of God's house, but withholds the love and homage of his heart.

In the earlier part God is represented as coming again, as once at Sinai, to vindicate and explain the spiritual requirements of his holy law (Psalm 50:1-6). Then the errors in observing the first table are discovered (Psalm 50:8-15), after which the Psalmist indicates the violations of the second table (Psalm 50:16-21). Finally there is an impressive conclusion (Psalm 50:22, 23). The Psalm is interesting, because it shows how the devout Israelites viewed the Levitical ritual as being only the vehicle and expression of the yearnings and worship of the spiritual life, but not of any value apart from a recognition of God's claims on the devotion of his people.

Psalm 50:1.

Elohim Jehovah called the earth.--God still calls the earth through the Gospel of Jesus.

Psalm 50:5.

Gather my saints together!--There are times when the saints have to stand before God and receive into the depths of their heart his searching scrutiny (Mal. 3:1-3).

Psalm 50:9-13.

Every beast of the forest is Mine!--God holds the keys to the commissariat of the universe. Dost thou doubt that He can supply thy table?

Psalm 50:15.

Call upon Me! I will deliver.--There is no uncertainty here. God knows our troubles, but He demands that we should call. Days of trouble are often sent to make us call.

Psalm 50:21.

1 kept silence.--The silence of God in sight of the evil around is due to His longsuffering. It will not continue forever (Psalm 50:3).

Psalm 50:23.

I will show the salvation of God.--What a spectacle for the holy soul! Our way may seem dark, but if we dare go on doing right, we shall certainly experience the Divine deliverance. Stand still and see the salvation of God.

PSALM 51

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART

There is no doubt as to the occasion or the authorship of this Psalm. It abounds with references to 2 Sam. 11, 12. It is remarkable that such a confession should have been handed to the chief musician. But surely the publicity given to it has been a means of grace to all earnest worshippers in every age. The repentance was as public as the guilt. Many a sin-stained penitent has trodden these well-worn steps, which bear the marks of pilgrims of all nations and lands.

What a story it is! "This saint of nearly fifty years of age--bound to God by ties which he rapturously felt and acknowledged, whose words have been the very breath of devotion for every devout heart--forgets his longings after righteousness; flings away the joys of Divine communion; darkens his soul; ends his prosperity; brings down upon his head for all his remaining years a cataract of calamities; and makes his name and his religion a target for the barbed sarcasms of each succeeding generation of scoffers. As man, as king, as soldier--he is found wanting. Why should we dwell on the wretched story, except that it teaches, as no other page in the history of God's Church does, that the alchemy of Divine love can extract sweet perfumes of penitence and praise out of the filth of sin?" (Dr. Maclaren)

Psalm 51:1.

Thy loving-kindness Thy tender mercies.--Our only pleas for forgiveness are in God's loving kindness, and in the multitude of his tender mercies. It is only as we believe in these that we dare look at our sins. Nor can we ever forget that though the blood of Jesus did not purchase the love and mercy of God, it is only through his sacrifice that God's love is able to have free scope in pursuing its tender office of redemption.

Psalm 51:2.

Cleanse me from my sin!--The plural transgressions" (Psalm 50:1) is here replaced by the singular sin, because all the successive crimes which had accumulated about his soul were branches from a common trunk. Mark these successive terms: transgression, the violation of law; iniquity, crookedness from the straight line of rectitude; sin, missing the mark.

Psalm 51:3

1 acknowledge.--However much God loves the penitent and desires to forgive him, He dares not pardon until distinct confession has been made. Till then sin is like the fabled spirit of a murdered and unburied corpse---it is ever before the eyes of the soul.

Psalm 51:4.

Against Thee have 1 sinned.--Every sin against man is still more a sin against God.

Psalm 51:5.

1 was shapen in iniquity.--This was not said to extenuate, but to show how inveterate was the evil, needing infinite help and love.

Psalm 51:7.

Purge me, wash me!--How many are the expressions employed! Blot out, as from a record. Wash, as foul stains which must be rubbed and beaten out. Cleanse, as a leper: for whom the sprig of hyssop was always used (Lev. 14:4-9).

Psalm 51:8.

Make me to hear joy!--How gloriously bold to ask for restoration to joy (Psalm 50:12). Let us claim the music and dancing, as well as the best robe.

Psalm 51:10-12.

A constant spirit (marg.).--This is what we need to guard against future outbreaks--a constant spirit (marg.); God's Holy Spirit; and a willing spirit (R.V., marg.).

Psalm 51:13.

I will teach transgressors.--There is no such preacher as he who has been newly-forgiven. The forgiven Peter was the appointed preacher at Pentecost.

Psalm 51:15.

Open Thou my lips!--When God opens the lips, the devil and fear cannot shut them.

Psalm 51:16-17.

Thou desirest not sacrifice.--Ceremonialism cannot free us from taint (Heb. 9:9-16). God's fire descends on broken hearts.

Psalm 51:18-19.

Do good unto Zion!--When we are right with God, our sympathies and prayers overflow the narrow confines of selfish interest and pour themselves out for the entire Church.

PSALM 52

THE DOOM OF THE EVIL DOER

The superscription fixes the occasion on which this Psalm was composed (1 Sam. 22). It was at first suggested by Doeg's treachery. It also had reference to Saul himself, to whom alone many of the allusions of the Psalm are applicable. Later this Psalm of David's wanderings was given to the chief musician for public use, because of its eternal truth.

Psalm 52:1-4.

THE TRAITOR'S SIN.

How safe are those who are entrenched in the favor of God! All else may pass, but that remains indestructibly the same. What terrible power there is in the tongue! (Jas. 3:4-11). A sharp razor, working deceitfully, can injure the hand that holds it.

Psalm 52:5-7.

THE TRAITOR'S FATE.

"Shall take thee away, and pluck thee," etc.; literally, "shall seize thee, and hurl thee away homeless (tentless, comp. Jer. 10:20). The outstanding idea is rejection of the impenitent by the Holy One. This is the inevitable doom of sin. Wickedness meets its reward even here.

Psalm 52:8.

CONTRAST TO THE TRAITOR'S END

It is thought by some that Nob, where the tragedy took place, was situated on the Mount of Olives. If so, this allusion would be very appropriate. "As the olives grew all around the humble forest sanctuary and were in some sort hallowed by the shrine which they encompassed, so the soul grows and is safe in loving fellowship with God." What a contrast between trusting in the abundance of riches and in the mercy of God! The former take to themselves wings; the latter is forever (Psalm 52:1). Oh to have roots stuck deep down into God.

Psalm 52:9.

The Psalmist's soul sings itself clear, and he determines to entrust his cause to God, and patiently await his vindication.

PSALM 53

WITHOUT GOD

A revision of Psalm 14. Twice is ATHEISM denounced in the Psalter. Line must be on line, precept on precept. Mahalath is "sickness." Does not this Psalm lay bare the hereditary tendency of the heart of man to forsake God? In Psalm 14, Elohim is thrice used, Jehovah four times; here, Elohim is used throughout. There are some other differences:--

Psalm 14

(1) Abominable works.

(3) Gone aside.

(5). God is in the generation of the righteous.

Psalm 52

(1) Abominable iniquity.

(3) Gone back.

(5)God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee.

It is as if every effort were made to find more forcible expressions to describe the sin and the doom of those who deny God.

Psalm 53:1.

THE SEAT OF ATHEISM.

It is not in the head, but in the heart. And men keep on boasting of it, in the hope of making themselves believe it and in order to keep their courage up.

Psalm 53:2.

THE ATTITUDE OF ATHEISM.

Its eyes are downward. If they were lifted for a moment, they would see God looking down.

Psalm 53:3.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

Let each beware (Heb. 3:13).

Psalm 53:2-3.

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF ATHEISM.

On the understanding and affection, so that corruption is bred through the entire nature (Rom. 3:10-17).

Psalm 53:4.

THE CRUELTY OF ATHEISM.

Who eat up my people. He who has no care for God is not likely to have much care for man. The prayerless man is an atheist in heart: "he calls not upon the Lord."

Psalm 53:5.

THE CAUSELESS FEARS OF ATHEISM.

How often have the enemies of God been seized with inexplicable panic! (Prov. 28:1; 2 Kings 7:6-7.).

Psalm 53:6.

THE DIVINE ANSWER TO THE ATHEIST.

Even now the existence of God's ancient people is a marvellous reply to the taunts of his foes. How dumb and silenced they will be when they see Israel restored as a nation, and when the saints shall possess the earth! Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! This is a prayer which fits every instance of depressed spiritual life.

PSALM 54

GOD IS MY HELPER

We were led by the superscription to 1 Sam. 23:19. The Psalm is short, as if compressed by the intensity of David's need. Psalm 54:1-3 contain a prayer for deliverance; Psalm 54:4-7 contain expression of confidence and praise. In the first he invokes the name of God; in the second he extols it. His trust throughout is in El, the Strong.

The Ziphites are described as strangers (Psalm 54:3), though men of Judah like himself, because they were possessed of a spirit so contrary and alien to his own. It is beautiful to see how David refuses to say all the hard things which he might have said about Saul, and deals with those who enticed him into evil courses, as though he would cloke the sins of the Lord's anointed King.

Psalm 54:1

Save me, O God!--A lonely, persecuted man, who has no other help, appeals from man to God, conscious of the rectitude of his cause.

Psalm 54:3.

They have not set God before them.--Not to have God before our eyes is to have them full of self-estimate, or men's measurements, uncorrected by thoughts of the claims of God's Holiness, Power and Purity.

Psalm 54:4.

Behold, God is my Helper!--What faith is here! Hardly had the prayer ascended than the soul is aware of the gracious answer. Note this present tense: "God is mine helper." The eye sees nothing. Faith knows that the mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire. Saul sought David every day, but God delivered him not into Saul's hand. "The Lord is on my side" (Psa. 118:6; Rom. 8:31).

Psalm 54:6.

With willinghood will I sacrifice; or, "with free-will gift" (Exod. 25:2; 35:29). When God has saved us, let us yield ourselves to Him, as the woman in the Gospel yielded her alabaster box.

Psalm 54:7.

He hath delivered me!--When we pray in faith, we have the petition which we asked (1 John 5:15). And when our enemies are punished we have no feeling of vindictive satisfaction, but are thankful that God has vindicated his name and his truth.

PSALM 55

OH FOR WINGS LIKE A DOVE!

The groundwork of this Psalm was suggested by Absalom's rebellion and Ahithophel's treachery (2 Sam. 15:12). But the Spirit leads out the Psalmist beyond the immediate occasion to depict the sufferings of our Lord at the hand of Judas. And the whole Church has fellowship with those sufferings, in the days of treacherous foes and false friends.

It may be divided thus: Psalm 55:1-2, The cry of the soul; Psalm 55:3-8, A description of desperate need; Psalm 55:9-11, The sin of the city; Psalm 55:12-15, 19-21, A particularization of the plottings and deceit of a former friend; Psalm 55:16-18, Expressions of trust in God; Psalm 55:22-23, Exhortations to others, founded on personal experience.

Psalm 55:4-5.

My heart is sore pained.--How aptly do these words describe those deeply convicted of sin!

Psalm 55:6.

Oh that I had wings like a dove!--The dove is swift in its flight and it hides before a storm. What a picture of timid innocence! How often do we suppose that we should find rest in changed circumstances! But the restless heart would be restless everywhere. The words of Jesus are the true answer to this cry for rest (Matt. 11:28, and Heb. 4:3).

Psalm 55:12-14.

Thou ... mine acquaintance!--Our Lord, who bore his other sorrows in silence, exclaimed against the treachery of Judas, as if this were the drop which made His cup overflow.

Psalm 55:15.

Quick, i.e., alive, like Korah (Num. 16). Very different was the spirit of the old dispensation to that of Christ (Matt. 5:43-45; 26:52; Luke 23:34).

Psalm 55:17.

Evening, morning, and noon.--Referring to the habit of the pious Jew (Dan. 6:10-13). If we need to eat for physical strength thrice each day, do we not need to pray as often? But though we have our fixed times, no time is unreasonable. God's courts of appeal never rise or close their doors.

Psalm 55:22.

Thy burden, as the margin (R.V.) suggests, is that which God has given thee to carry. "He cast it on thee: now cast it back on Him." We cannot do God's work in the world, so long as we stoop under burdens which impede our energies. Therefore hand over all. Let no burden be brought into the inner city to disturb its Sabbath-keeping (Neh. 13:19).

PSALM 56

PUT MY TEARS IN THY BOTTLE!

This Psalm was composed under the same circumstances as Psa. 34. Pursued by Saul, almost in despair, David crossed the frontier and took refuge in the city of Goliath. He was soon recognized and restored to the subterfuge of feigning himself mad (1 Sam. 21). All the time he was acting thus, his soul seems to have been directing its eyes towards God. His faith was not strong enough to keep him from an unworthy disguise, but still faith was there. What a strange medley are we all at the best!--feigning madness in terror and compiling psalms in heroic trust.

The Psalm falls into three strophes: Psalm 56:1-4; 4-11; and Psalm 56:12-13. The earlier part of each of the two former describes the writer's danger; and the latter part in each case closes with a similar refrain (Psalm 56:4; 10,11).

The title is very touching, as the margin (R.V.) puts it. Perhaps there is a reference to Psa. 55:6.

Psalm 56:3.

I will trust.--We are reminded of 1 Sam. 21:12. It is better to say with Isaiah, "I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2). See also 4 and 11.

Psalm 56:4.

I will not fear.--Here for a moment the writer seems to have climbed out of the shadowed valley of fear to a mountain summit, sunlit. But in them the next verse he is hurled back again.

Oh to live, outside one's own experiences, in the unchanging Person and work of Christ! All praise and trust must be in Him.

Psalm 56:8.

Put my tears into Thy bottle!--No tear of the child of God falls unnoticed and forgotten. Remember how the sinner's tears were precious to the Master whose feet they laved (Luke 7:38, 44). As rainbows are made of drops of water, so does God keep our tears to transmute into songs. You will meet your tears again in rainbows (Isa. 61:7; Rev. 7:17; 21:4).

Psalm 56:12.

Thy vows are upon me, O God!--Vows had an important place in the Old Testament economy (Deut. 23:21-23; Ecc. 5:4-5). The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:33-35) seems to exclude them from the ethics of the new dispensation. Though vows are twice mentioned in the (Acts 18:18; 21:23), both cases are probably in connection with Nazarite consecration.

Psalm 56:13

My feet from falling!--Here is a plea for those who have been saved from the penalty of sin, that their feet may be kept from falling. Oh to walk before God so as to please Him! (Gen. 17:1-8; Psa. 36:9).

PSALM 57

THE SOUL AMONG LIONS

This is one of the choicest of the Psalms. It is dated from the cave of Adullam or the hold at Engedi. The resemblances to Psa. 7 probably point to the latter. The Psalm falls into two parts, each of which closes with a similar refrain.

Psalm 57:1.

In the shadow of Thy wings.--As the hills were David's refuge from Saul, so was God the cave of refuge for his soul. Is there also a reminiscence of words spoken to his ancestress the Moabite maiden? (Ruth 2:12). God's care is like an eagle's wing for strength and like a hen's for gentleness (Matt. 23:37).

Psalm 57:2.

God that performeth all things for me.--Why should we not let God do "all things" for us and through us? (Heb. 13:20-21).

Psalm 57:3.

He shall send from heaven.--With this confidence, we need not fear "him that would swallow us up."

Psalm 57:4.

My soul is among lions.--Delitzsch here says that, as the fugitive among those rocky fastnesses prepares himself for his night's rest, he hears the growl of the beasts of prey from which his refuge protects him. So did God save David from his foes.

Psalm 57:5

Be Thou exalted, O God!--Let us sometimes rise above our personal griefs in passionate desire for God's glory.

Psalm 57:7.

O God, my heart is fixed!--The steadfast and prepared heart is always in a condition of holy song. May God keep us fixed!

Psalm 57:8-9.

I will awake right early! (R.V., marg.)--If the earlier verses marked the writer's thoughts at eventide, here is his morning's resolution. Glory stands for soul (See also Psa. 16:9). He who lies down to sleep among lions shall yet arise to praise.

Psalms 57:10.

Be Thou exalted, O God!--Mercy and Truth had come as he expected (Psa. 36:5; 108:4). As he closes, he magnifies Him who stooping from heaven had lifted him to heaven.

PSALM 58

LIKE THE DEAF ADDER

This Psalm is against wicked rulers. It has been suggested that it was written on account of, Abner and the rest of Saul's princes, who judged David as a rebel and outlaw, and urged Saul to pursue him. It is the fourth of the Golden Psalms. For superscription, see also Psa. 57.

The divisions are very simple: a description of the evils of the unrighteous judges (Psalm 58:1-5); prayer for their overthrow (Psalm 58:6-8); the ultimate triumph of righteousness (Psalm 58:9-11).

Psalms 58:2.

Ye weigh out violence (R.V.)--Weighing is always symbolical of JUSTICE, but these unrighteous judges weighed out violence rather than justice.

Psalms 58:3.

They go astray as soon as born.--It is said that the young serpent will sting as swiftly and as poisonously as an older one. And certain it is that the virulence of our nature will show itself in young children. Of course we all share the fallen nature of Adam, though, in the case of the believer, grace neutralizes its effect.

Psalms 58:4-5.

Like the poison of a serpent.--The second clause may be rendered, Like a deaf adder, he stoppeth the ear. "The hearing of all the serpent tribes is very imperfect, as all are destitute of a tympanic cavity." The charmer has to reach the snake by very shrill notes of voice or flute. In the case of David's persecutors, it was not so much their inability as their unwillingness to hear. Saul's conscience was not dead, for he was on more than one occasion touched by David's appeals (1 Sam. 19:6; 24:17-21; 26:21, 25). But he resisted the prompting of his better self.

Psalms 58:6.

Break their teeth!--This imagery is borrowed from the lion, which tears his prey with his great eye-teeth.

Psalms 58:7.

Let his arrows be as if they were cut--headless, pointless, blunt and harmless (Psa. 37:15).

Psalms 58:9.

Before the contents of the pots can feel the heat of the thorns burning beneath, God will take away both those which have not been reached by the fire and those which are burning. The rapidity and rush of the tempest, which sweeps away all preparation for the meal, is very vivid.

Psalms 58:10-11.

Sooner or later the "integrity of the righteous will be vindicated. It will be manifest that the eye of the all-seeing Judge has discerned between the false and the true. There is a great distinction between the desire for the gratification of personal vengeance and zeal for the vindication of God's character. Ah, what a commentary is supplied by Rev. 19:1-4!

PSALM 59

DELIVER ME, O GOD!

The fifth of the Golden Psalms. Compare the title with those of Psalms 16, 56, and 58. Delitzsch says, "We believe that it is most advisable to adhere to the title." The contents of this Psalm correspond to the title and carry us naturally to 1 Sam. 19:11.

It consists of four parts, of which the first and third are very similar. The second and fourth parts also resemble each other. Compare Psalm 59:1:5 with Psalm 59:11-13: also 6-10 with Psalm 59:14-17.

Psalm 59:1-2.

Deliver! defend! deliver! save!--Four times the persecuted man cries for help. He speaks of his enemies as workers of iniquity, men of blood, plot weavers, and insolent in their might. How often must similar cries have been wrung from the Waldenses, the Huguenots and the Covenanters!

Psalm 59:3.

Transgression rather refers to the treason with which David was charged against the king, sin as towards God. We should habitually exercise ourselves to have consciences void of offence towards God and men (Acts 24:16).

Psalm 59:4.

They run and prepare themselves.--They made haste to manifest their enmity. Yet their hatred was "without a cause" (Psa. 7:4; 35:7, 19; 109:3; 119:78, 161).

Psalm 59:5.

Lord God of hosts, God of Israel.--Dwell on these names for God: Jehovah, the unchanging; Elchim Sabaoth, the God of hosts, indicating the resources at his command; Elohe Israel, the God of Israel, in his covenant relations. Each is a new plea, which God cannot resist (see also Jer. 35:17; 38:17).

Psalm 59:6-7.

Like a dog.--The Eastern dog is a wretched animal, prowling through the streets to feed on offal and filling the night air with howlings when its search for food has been in vain. Thus for several successive nights David's foes may have gathered round his house, whispering, or pouring forth their hatred in muttered tones. Silence has settled on the houses all around, the inmates are wrapt in slumber: Who doth hear?

Psalm 59:8.

Thou, O Lord, shalt laugh.--What a bold image! God looks down through the dark and laughs at them in scorn (Psa. 2:4).

Psalm 59:9.

O my Strength, I will wait upon Thee is the beautiful reading of the Revised Version.

Psalm 59:10.

The God of my mercy.--It might be read, "My God shall go before me with His mercy." Here is God's prevenient grace. He goes before the sheep which He puts forth. He marches in front to make the crooked straight and the rough smooth (John 10:4).

Psalm 59:11-13.

God ruleth unto the ends of the earth.--These imprecations arise from fear lest his people should be hardened in sin.

Psalm 59:16-17.

I will sing in the morning.--There is also here an amplification of David's former resolve (Psalm 59:9). The morning is ever breaking on the godly, succeeding the night of anxiety and peril. Let it summon us to loud songs of praise!

PSALM 60

SAVE WITH THY RIGHT HAND!

This is a national Psalm to be taught to the people (Deut. 31:19). Psalm 60:5-12 reappear in Psa. 108. As Psa. 13 was sung by the sons of Korah when the Edomites were taking advantage of David's absence to invade the land, so this Psalm was composed after victory had been assured. Shushan-eduth means "the lily of testimony" and may refer to the name of the tune to which this Psalm was set. Aram stands for the Syrians. The Syrians which dwelt between the two floods, Euphrates and Tigris, had become confederate with the Syrians of Zobah (2 Sam. 10:6, 8, 16, 19). For the whole story, see 2 Sam. 8.

The nation's anguish (Psalm 60:1-4); the nation's confidence in God's word (Psalm 60:5-8); the nation's prayer (Psalm 60:9-12).

Psalm 60:1.

Thou hast been displeased.--These earlier verses have a plaintive tone, due to the great losses inflicted on the land by the Syrian invasion. Sometimes disasters fall so thick on the Church that it seems as if it were God-forsaken.

Psalm 60:4.

Thou hast given a banner.--There is the more reason for claiming God's help, because his people carry the banner of his truth. If it is trailed on the ground, great dishonor is due to his holy name.

Psalm 60:5.

Thy beloved.--We are "beloved" indeed, if we are in the Beloved (Deut. 33:12; Eph. 1:6).

Psalm 60:6.

I will divide and mete out.--This is an allusion to God's promise that His people should possess Canaan (Gen. 12:7, etc.). And therefore the nation rejoices in its certain victory over its foes. When we have any promise of God, we may confidently depend upon it.

Shechem and Succoth are described as contiguous in Gen. 33:17-18. As it was promised in Jacob's days, so should it be (Gen. 28:13-15; 35:11, 12). The enemy should not succeed in wresting an inch from Israel.

Psalm 60:7.

Gilead is Mine!--Gilead, though lying across the Jordan, should not be dismembered. Manasseh and Ephraim, the martial tribes, and Judah, the seat of government, were welded into a strong united kingdom and should remain so.

Psalm 60:8.

Moab, Edom, Philistia.--The three hereditary foes of Israel had been reduced to subjection. Moab, a washing tub (2 Sam. 8:2); Edom, a slave taking care of sandals (Matt. 3:11), or the idea may be of the transference of authority (Ruth 4:7); Philistia, compelled to welcome with shouts of triumph (Psa. 108:9).

Psalm 60:9.

Who will lead me?--The victor pants for new victories. The strong city is probably Petra, the famous capital of Edom, hewn in rock.

Psalm 60:11-12.

Give us help!--The cry for help and the assurance of deliverance go hand in hand. Here is a motto for us in all times of opposition and difficulty.

PSALM 61

THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I

Neginah implies that the Psalm was intended for singing to instruments. It was evidently composed while the tabernacle was standing (Psalm 61:4), and after David had received the promise of the everlasting kingdom (Psalm 61:6-7). Yet he was manifestly passing through a time of great distress. Delitzsch is, therefore, probably right in fixing its date at the time of Absalom's rebellion and in heading it, "Prayer and Thanksgiving of an expelled king on his way back to his throne." It is a precious gem.

Psalm 61:1.

My prayer.--How earnest it is!--my cry!

Psalm 61:2.

The end of the earth is any place of extreme sorrow or depression. It is equivalent to the uttermost of which Heb. 7:25 speaks. We are never really far off from God. But, owing to depression and physical weakness and the oppression of our foes, we may feel ourselves to be so.

My Rock!--What rock is this, save the Rock of Ages, cleft for us? And yet we cannot climb up into its clefts. We need the hand of Divine grace to lift us thither and keep us there. "I will put thee" (Exod. 33:22).

Psalm 61:3.

A shelter! a strong tower!--What God has been, He will be.

Psalm 61:4.

In Thy tabernacle forever.--If permitted to return, David purposed to abide forever in the sacred shrine. But everywhere God pitches a pavilion for us. These are the outspread wings of the shechinah (Psa. 36:7). Ah, what a heritage is here! (Eph. 1:3).

Psalm 61:6-7.

His years as many generations.--Words which can only be fulfilled in their entire wealth of meaning in the King of kings.

Psalm 61:8.

I will sing praise (Psa. 5:3; Phil. 4:6).

PSALM 62

MY SOUL WAITETH UPON GOD!

This is the "only" Psalm (see Psalm 62:2, 4, 5, 6). It consists of three strophes, each of which begins with that word only or surely, ach in the Hebrew (Psalm 62:1-4; 5-8; 9-12). The first two divisions (Psalm 62:1-4; 5-8) close with "Selah." This Psalm was probably composed during the time of Absalom's rebellion. It resembles Psa. 39 in being dedicated to Jeduthun (1 Chron. 25:1-3). That Psalm also gives the Hebrew word ach four times, translated surely and verily.

Psalm 62:1.

Only my soul waiteth, or "is silent unto."--There are times when words fail us, and when the soul mutely waits for God's salvation. Silence is often golden eloquence and God can understand it. Moreover waiting on God stills the soul.

Psalm 62:2-6.

1 shall not be moved.--The movement is only on the surface of the life, while the great deeps of the soul are at rest (Acts 20:24).

Psalm 62:3.

How long?--It is probably David who was the bowing wall and tottering fence (see R.V.). One thrust and his enemies think he will be at their feet.

Psalm 62:5.

My expectation.--It is well for us if we have learned to look away from all creature-help to God alone.

Psalm 62:6.

My rock! my salvation!--What a loving accumulation of endearing titles for God! The man of fifty catches up the imagery of earlier years and ransacks memory to supply fit names for this Almighty Friend. And all that God is, is mine.

Psalm 62:8.

At all times, means on dark as well as bright days. When the heart is charged with sorrow or sin, what a relief it is to open the sluice gates and pour all out toward God!

Psalm 62:9.

Lighter than vanity (see R.V.): They go up as the lighter scale, lighter than vanity, i.e., a breath. How often have we looked for help from men and money in vain!--but God has never failed us.

Psalm 62:10.

Oppression, robbery. The men of high degree oppress. The men of low degree are fraudulent, but the evil deeds of both are seen and known of Jehovah. The increase of riches has its dangers. It generally means the increase of temptations.

Psalm 62:11-12.

Power and Mercy are the two pillars on which the Temple of His justice rests.

Psalm 62:12.

God is neither unseeing nor unmindful (Psa. 10:14; Heb. 6:10).

PSALM 63

MY SOUL THIRSTETH!

This is said to have been from the third century the morning song of the Church. The superscription tells us that it was written in the wilderness of Judah. But the word "king" (Psalm 63:11) forbids our supposing that the Psalm was penned during the Sauline persecution. It was probably written amid the events recorded in 2 Sam. 15:23-28; 16:2; 17:16. This "wilderness" stretched southwards from Jericho on the western shore of the Dead Sea. In the Psalm there are noticeable references to the life of the soul. My soul thirsteth; my soul longeth; my soul shall be satisfied; my soul followeth hard after Thee (Psalm 63:1, 5, 8).

Psalm 63:1.

Early will I seek Thee!--This should be the cry of each of us in the dawn of life and of each day: "In a dry and weary land" (R.V.). How weary and sad is life without God! Though we have all, if He be not there, our soul is athirst and weary (John 4:13-14).

Psalm 63:2.

To see as I have seen Thee!--As the Psalmist trod sadly over the burning sand and crossed the dry torrent-beds, it seemed a picture of his state of soul. He contrasted the present with the happy past, when he had had similar desires, which were then slaked by the vision of the Divine power and glory.

Psalm 63:3.

Thy loving-kindness is better than life.--Already a sense of the love of God breaks on his soul, as a tropical rain on the parched earth. He becomes assured of speedy satisfaction.

Psalm 63:5.

As with marrow and fatness.--God not only gives us necessaries but dainties.

Psalm 63:6.

In the night-watches.--Many of David's most rapturous experiences of God seem to have been at night. In all these Psalms there is imagery borrowed from the night-watch in the camp.

Psalm 63:8.

Thy right hand upholdeth.--The hand of God ever supports the soul in its pursuit of Him (Phil. 3:12).

Psalm 63:9.

Those that seek my soul.--Perhaps there is an allusion here to Num. 16:31-32.

Psalm 63:10.

A portion for foxes.--Absalom's army was badly routed. Many of the slain must have fed the jackals which roamed the forest (2 Sam. 18:6, 7, 8).

Psalm 63:11.

Shall rejoice in God.--"By Him," refers of course, not to the king, but to God.

PSALM 64

THE COUNSEL OF THE WICKED

This Psalm probably dates from the Sauline persecutions. The slanders of the tongue, specially mentioned, are very characteristic of that period. There are two strophes: prayer for preservation (Psalm 64:1-6) and assurance of Divine vindication (Psalm 64:7-10).

Psalm 64:1-5.

Hide me from the wicked!--What a marvellous picture is given here of the whole range of calumny! Insult, sarcasm, slander,

innuendos, tale-bearing and suspicion are rife enough in our society and even in Christian society. How fond are we all of hearing and spreading reports of which we have not taken the trouble to ascertain the truth! Sometimes it is a look or a gesture or a shrug of the shoulders, but it may be enough to ruin a man's reputation.

Psalm 64:6.

They search out iniquities.--If this search is always on foot, how careful and circumspect should we be! (1 Cor. 10:32).

Psalm 64:7-9.

All men shall fear.--God relieves us of the necessity of fighting for ourselves. While the wicked are bending their bows against us (Psalm 64:3), God's arrow is flying from an unsuspected quarter against them. Curses come home to roost (Psalm 64:8).

Psalm 64:10.

The righteous: the upright.--The Psalm began with the singular ("my voice": "hide me!") and ends with the plural. Our experiences enrich the whole Church. And those who trust shall have abundant cause for rejoicing and praise.

PSALM 65

THE RIVER OF GOD

This joyous hymn was probably composed for use in the sanctuary on the occasion of one of the great annual festivals. It expressly dwells on the Divine bounty in the fertility of the earth (Lev. 23:9-14). There is a marvelous blending of nature and grace in its entire texture, which makes it one of the most beautiful of all sacred lyrics.

There are three divisions. We are transported successively to the Courts of the Lord's house (Psalm 65:1-4); to the shore of the sea, where rockbound coasts resist the fury of the waves (Psalm 65:5-8); and to the pasture-lands and cornfields of Canaan (Psalm 65:9-13).

Psalm 65:1.

For Thee is the silence of praise is the literal reading. Such praise as is too great and deep for tumultuous expressions, and so arrests the fever of the soul. It has been said, "The most intense feeling is the most calm, being condensed by repression."

Psalm 65:2.

Unto Thee shall all flesh come!--By the word flesh the Psalmist would call attention to our weakness and need as men (Gen. 9:11, 15; 136:25; Isa. 40:5), each deficiency on our part pointing us to God. The more needy we are, the greater cause is there for going to God. And He answers prayer. There is no definition of the kind of prayer which He answers, because the outward expression matters nothing, if the heart speak. And wherever the heart speaks, God hears.

Psalm 65:3.

Words of iniquities (marg.).--This prevailing may be because they act more masterfully or because they excite deeper contrition. The Hebrew word *capher* translated cover implies, "To cover with the atonement." And the pronoun, Thou, is emphatic, intimating that God, and God alone, could do this. 4. Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth.--God hath chosen Christ and all who are one with Him (Eph. 1:4). We need to be caused, ere we can approach or dwell (John 6:44; Gal. 4:9). But in each case God is prepared to do this by the Holy Spirit. Dwell in Thy courts. What a sacred position would this be! Why should we not seek it! "And go no more out!" (Rev. 3:12). Satisfied. Such a condition is involved in the realization of the presence of God and when we are abiding in Him. Thy holy temple. The word "temple" was applied to the Lord's house even before Solomon's temple was erected (1 Sam. 1:9; 2 Sam. 22:7).

Psalm 65:5.

By terrible things in righteousness.--The terror is towards God's foes; the answer towards his friends (2 Sam. 7:23). Ultimately all mankind shall come to acknowledge Him (Isa. 66:16, 18). Afar off upon the sea will mean not only those afloat, but those living on the seashore in distant lands.

Psalm 65:8.

The morning and evening may mean dwellers in East and West or the mercies which characterize dawn and eve and which lead us to new songs and joys.

Psalm 65:9.

Thou visitest the earth.--Every spring is like a Divine visit. The holy soul looks through second causes to the present tenses of the I am.

Psalm 65:10.

Thou waterest the ridges.--The ridges of the plowed fields are lowered through the plenteous rains and fertilized to fatness.

Psalm 65:12-13.

The hills rejoice; the pastures are clothed; the valleys are covered.--Let us seek an equal fertility in the life of the soul through the river of God, which is the Holy Spirit (Rev. 22:1).

PSALM 66

VERILY GOD HATH HEARD!

Some of the old expositors speak of this Psalm as the Lord's Prayer of the Old Testament. It consists of five divisions (Psalm 66:1-4, 5-7, 8-12, 13-15, 16-20), of which the second and the fifth begin in a similar manner--Come ye!

Psalm 66:1.

All ye lands!--Notice the missionary spirit which breaks through the narrow limits of Judaism. Thus are men larger than their creeds. See also Ps 66:4.

Psalm 66:2.

Make His praise glorious!--We should make our praise as worthy of its object as possible. Praise Him with a glorious hymn!

Psalm 66:3.

How terrible are Thy works!--God's manifested power will only make his enemies yield a feigned obedience. See marg., R.V. Grace alone can change their hearts.

Psalm 66:5.

Come and see!--Thus Jesus spake and Philip (John 1:39-46).

Psalm 66:6.

Through the Flood!--The Red Sea and the Jordan. Is not this always true of the Church, that God's people are passing through obstacles which must daunt them, were it not for their Divine companion (Isa. 43:2). Our God turns the place of trial into one of joy. "Isa. 11:11-15 leads us to anticipate a repetition of the miracle of the divided waters."

Psalm 66:7.

His eyes behold the nations.--The metaphor here is of God looking forth on men from his heavenly watch-tower with eyes that carry with them the light by which they see.

Psalm 66:10.

Thou hast tried us!--"It is not known what corn will yield, till it come to the flail; nor what grapes, till they come to the press. Grace is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose-leaves. The fire of affliction fetcheth it out." Satan tempts us to our fall and ruin; God tries us to show what grace He has implanted, and to strengthen by exercise.

Psalm 66:11-12.

Thou broughtest us into! Thou broughtest us out!--The Psalmist sees God's will not only in his appointments, but also in his permissions. He is said to do what He permits to be done. The imagery is of beasts, first netted; then heavily laden (the loins being the seat of strength); then driven by men who almost sit over their heads, dominating them as they choose.

Psalm 66:12.

Through fire and through water.--Fire and water were used in purifying the spoils of war (Num. 31:23). We need something more than water (Matt. 3:2). He who brings us into the trial will certainly bring us out. The wealthy place is a well-watered place (see

marg.). The word is translated in Psa. 23:5, "runneth over."

Psalm 66:14.

Opened lips (marg.) are probably mentioned to show that the vows were made under strong internal pressure which forced the lips open.

Psalm 66:16.

Come and hear!--These words befitted the woman of Samaria and the Gadarene demoniac (John 4:29; Mark 5:19-20). They suggest the duty of all those who have received special help and blessing.

Psalm 66:17.

I cried unto Him.--Scarcely had I cried, than I had reason to praise.

Psalm 66:18.

If I had regarded (R.V., marg.).--Be sure that you are on God's errand and not on some sinful or selfish quest.

Psalm 66:20.

God hath not turned away His mercy.--We have no plea in prayer like God's mercy.

PSALM 67

LET THE PEOPLE PRAISE THEE!

This Psalm was probably composed, like Psa. 65, to be used at one of the great annual festivals, probably the Feast of Tabernacles. The singer goes beyond the occasion which called forth his song and seems to include in the range of his thought those spiritual blessings which accrue to all the world through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 67:1-2.

Cause His face to shine!--There is an allusion here to the threefold blessing of Num. 6:24-26. When Abraham and his seed are blessed; the world is blessed through them. Similarly We may plead that God Would bless his Church and people as the condition of blessing of the world. Oh for the shining of that dear face, undimmed by any cloud born of our sin and neglect!

Psalm 67:3.

Let the people praise Thee! We want crowns for the brow of Christ. Each loyal heart yearns for the exaltation of its King.

Psalm 67:4.

Thou shalt judge and govern.--To govern is to lead or tend (see marg.). Christ shall yet be the Shepherd of mankind.

Psalm 67:6.

The earth hath yielded her increase (R.V.) as if already the Millennial age had broken on the rapt gaze of the poet-prophet and all the harmonies of nature were restored. Praise ever accompanies the fertility of the Church. Our own God. What rapture there is here! Faith lays its hand on God and appropriates Him for itself. There is a wide difference between speaking of things and people as fair and useful and saying to them, "These are my own." He is our own, because He has made himself so and has taken us to be his forever. "His every act pure blessing is."

PSALM 68

LET GOD ARISE!

This Psalm is one of the grandest odes in existence. It was probably composed when the Ark was brought up in triumph by the united people (Psalm 68:27) from the house of Obed-edom to the newly-acquired Mount Zion (2 Sam. 6). It is evidently a processional hymn to be sung by multitudes of white-robed priests and Levites. We may almost mark the successive divisions of the melody as corresponding to the several stages of the march.

Whilst the Ark is being lifted to the shoulders of the Levites, a measured strain is chanted (Psalm 68:1-6). As the procession then moves forward, the march through the wilderness is recited (Psalm 68:7-14). Presently Mount Zion comes in sight and all

neighboring hills are depicted as looking askance and enviously at its selection in preference to themselves (Psalm 68:15-16). The procession now begins to climb 'the sacred slopes of Zion amid more triumphant strains (Psalm 68:17-18). The procession is next described (Psalm 68:19-27). From the assembled hosts, now gathered on the sacred site, the strains of triumph peal forth (Psalm 68:28-35).

Psalm 68:1.

Let God arise!--These opening words were the formula used by Moses (Num. 10:35). How strange their history! "Through the battle smoke of how many a field have they rung! On the plain of the Palatinate, from the lips of Cromwell's Ironsides and from the poor peasants that went to death on many a bleak moor to their rude chant:--

Let God arise, and scattered
Let all his en'mies be;
And let all those that do Him hate
Before His presence flee

Psalm 68:4.

Cast up a highway for Him that rideth through the deserts (R.V.).--As the Ark of God once led his people through the wilderness, so now does the Word of God ever lead us through dark and difficult places.

Psalm 68:5-6.

Setteth the solitary in families.--God has a special care for lonely people. In his providence He often introduces such into the warmth and fellowship of family life (comp. John 19:26-27). He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity (R.V.).

Psalm 68:9.

A plentiful rain.--"A rain of liberalities," probably referring to the abundant gifts of every kind bestowed on the people.

Psalm 68:11.

The women that publish the tidings are a great host (R.V.); an allusion to the Oriental custom of damsels celebrating a victory in song and dance. How marvellously this is being fulfilled now by the exodus of noble girls from their happy homes to publish to the heathen the Gospel of Jesus!

Psalm 68:13.

Covered with silver.--The Authorized Version gives good sense, contrasting the blackening contact of a smoky caldron with the lustrous colors flashed from the dove's wing.

Psalm 68:14.

White as snow.--"Salmon" means shady, dark. It was a high mountain near the Jordan. The kings were scattered as snowflakes are driven before the wind and melt before the sun.

Psalm 68:15.

The hill of Bashan.--Bashan is the high snow-summit of Hermon. It is employed as a symbol of worldly greatness. But the lesser Zion is as great--and greater since God is there. God does not choose the great and strong of this world (1 Cor. 1:26).

Psalm 68:18.

Gifts for men.--"Thou hast obtained spoil which Thou mayest distribute as gifts among men." Thus the Holy Spirit gives the exact sense, though not the words, in Eph. 4:8.

Psalm 68:19.

Who daily beareth our burden (R.V.).--Either rendering (A.V. or R.V.) is delightfully suggestive.

Psalm 68:22.

I will bring again my people.--Though the danger be as great as that caused by Og in Bashan or by the passage of the Red Sea, yet will God deliver his people.

Psalm 68:27.

Benjamin, with the princes of Judah.---The union of the tribes at the extreme North and South is emblematic of the union of the Church of the ascended Lord (Eph. 4.).

Psalms 68:30.

Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds (R.V.), referring to Egypt as representing heathendom.

Psalms 68:31.

Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands.--A glimpse of days not far away.

PSALM 69

IN DEEP WATERS

This is the second Psalm with this title, "Upon the lilies" (see Psa. 45.). It touches the profoundest depths of sorrow, which were only fully known and trodden by our blessed Lord. Of course, there was a primary reference to the sorrows of the Psalmist. Only in Jesus is there a full realization of much that is here expressed. Clearly, however, the maledictions with which wrong-doing is threatened had no place in Him, who from his cross asked his Father to forgive. This, like Psa. 22, is constantly applied to Christ in the New Testament. Compare 4, with John 15:25; 9, with John 2:17, and Rom. 15:3; 21, with Matt. 27:34-48; 25, with Acts 1:20.

Psalms 69:4.

Without a cause.--The last clause is a proverbial way of saying, "I am held guilty of wrongs which I have never done," as when Shimei charged David with Saul's sins (2 Sam. 16:8).

Psalms 69:8.

A stranger unto my brethren.--True of David (1 Sam. 17:28), and of our Lord John 1:11; 7:5).

Psalms 69:9.

Reproaches are fallen upon me.--All these foregoing verses may serve to show us how deep and agonizing was the travail of the Redeemer's soul when He came to his own, but they received Him not and accounted Him a winebibber and sinner. 13-21. There was none to pity.--Read these verses once or twice, and think into them some of the meaning with which Jesus uttered them. It is probable that He literally died of a broken heart--this was evidenced in the blood and water of John 19:34.

Psalms 69:22-28.

Let them be blotted out.--That such will be the fate of the wicked is undeniable. Though the saint foresee it, he will not desire it for selfish reasons.

Psalms 69:35.

Thy holy places.--We began with "deep mire where there was no standing." We end in the abiding city of God.

PSALM 70

I AM POOR AND NEEDY

This Psalm reminds us of Psa. 40. Indeed, it is a repetition of its closing verses. It was composed as a Psalm to put God in remembrance of his suffering ones. "When God seems to forget us, we must not forget to put Him in remembrance" (Isa. 43:26; 62; 62:6-7, marg.).

Psalms 70:1.

Make haste to deliver!--God often delays to come to our help and tarries till the fourth watch of the morning or the night before the execution. But He is never too late. Yet we often chafe at the delay.

Psalms 70:2-3.

Put to confusion.--Wicked spirits as well as men seek after our soul. But God shall turn them backward and disappoint their designs.

Psalms 70:4.

Let God be magnified.--How much better to say: "Let God be magnified," than, "Aha, Aha." The godly man boasts in God and is only eager that his name should be exalted (Phil. 1:20). Let it be our one aim to do and suffer all with this one purpose to make all men think better of the great God.

Psalm 70:5.

Poor and needy.--Happy are they who have learned to glory in their infirmities and to use them as arguments with God. There is a beautiful answer to this plea in that description of the Messiah which is given in a following (Psalm 82:4): Helper in good works; Deliverer from all the power of the adversary.

The prayer closes with one further plea for urgency.

PSALM 71

FOR DECLINING YEARS

The writer and the occasion of this Psalm are unknown. It is obviously an old man's psalm (Psalm 71:9, 17, 18). The divisions fall naturally into prayer (Psalm 71:1-13), and the expression of confident hope (Psalm 71:14-24). The three first verses are a reproduction with slight variations of Psa. 31:1-3. One key-note is Great and Greatly (Psalm 71:19, 20, 21, 23). Another is All the day (Psalm 71:8, 15, 24).

Psalm 71:2.

Incline Thine ear unto me.--If you are too weak to cry aloud, God will stoop to you.

Psalm 71:3.

My strong habitation.--There is a door at St. Peter's opened once in a century, but God's door is always open.

Psalm 71:5.

Thou art my hope.--Not only is our hope in God, but God is our hope. Not created things; the Creator alone can satisfy us. "Christ is in us, the Hope of Glory."

Psalm 71:6.

My praise shall be continually of Thee.--Let us praise God for his daily miracles.

Psalm 71:9.

Cast me not off in the time of old age.--Compare Josh. 14:10-14. Our weakness is a prevalent and irresistible plea.

Psalm 71:14.

I will hope continually.--The strain changes from prayer to hope.

Psalm 71:15.

My mouth shall praise.--How soon has the answer come to his petition! (Psalm 71:8).

Psalm 71:16.

In the strength of the Lord God.--The Septuagint translates "I will enter into the powers (mightinesses) of the Lord," as into a sure citadel. There is force and beauty in our version.

Psalm 71:17.

Thou hast taught me.--Let God teach you just one lesson at a time. Declare what you are taught.

Psalm 71:21.

Turn again and comfort me (R.V.).

Psalm 71:22.

Thou Holy One of Israel.--This name for God occurs only in two other (Psalms 78:41, and Psalm 89:18). My God, set us talking on this theme forever.

PSALM 72

THE COMING KING

Critics insist that for in the inscription should be of. Therefore this glorious Messianic Psalm was composed by Solomon. A conclusion which is not contradicted by Psalm 72:20, which was evidently appended (with the Doxology) by those who divided the Psalter into books, the second of which closes with this glowing description of the Lord's Anointed and his reign. Behold the kingdom of heaven which is already set up and shall come yet more and more!

Psalm 72:1.

Give the King thy judgments.--This reminds us of 1 Kings 3:9-28. In all judging and advising we need to catch sight of that which is in God's mind and to reproduce it. This is what the Holy Spirit did for our Lord and will do for us (Isa. 11:2-4). How instantly this petition was answered! (see the next verse).

Psalm 72:3. Peace to the people.--Peace as the result of righteousness (Isa. 32:17; Heb. 7:2). It was and still is common in the East to announce great events from the tops of the mountains (Isa. 40:9).

Psalm 72:4-5.

He shall judge the poor.--Compassion for the poor makes the throne endure. But how infinitely true this is of our Lord, to whom so many of these expressions must apply! (Rev. 5:9).

Psalm 72:6.

Like rain upon the mown grass.--The mown grass is that which is shorn. On the shorn blades, suffering still from the scythe, that gentle rain descends which heals and revives, emblem of the blessed work of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 72:7.

Till the moon be no more (R.V.).

Psalm 72:8.

The river--the Euphrates (Exod. 23:31; Deut. 11:24).

Psalm 72:10.

The kings of Seba shall offer gifts.--Tarshish, on the far West, by the Straits of Gibraltar; Sheba and Seba, nations in South Arabia famed for their wealth. "The most uncivilized--the most distant--the most opulent--shall pay homage to Christ."

Psalm 72:11.

All kings shall serve Him.--Kings of wealth and thought, music and art have already acknowledged Him, and shall (Rev. 19:16).

Psalm 72:12.

The needy when he crieth.--Our needs are arguments and reasons with Christ.

Psalm 72:15.

Prayer for Him continually.--"Men shall pray for Him continually: they shall bless Him all the day long" (R.V.). "We pray for Christ," says Augustine, "when we pray for the Church of Christ, because it is his body." We pray for Him when we say, "Thy kingdom come!" Though Christ is King of the poor, He shall have abundance of gold.

Psalm 72:16.

An handful of corn in the earth.--Though there be but a handful, yet such shall be the marvellous increase that the slopes of the mountains shall wave with corn as Lebanon with cedars. As there is abundant produce in the country, there shall be vast populations in the city, numerous as blades of grass.

Psalm 72:17.

His name shall have issue (R.V., marg.).--It shall reproduce itself. The Gospel of the name of Jesus begets children in every nation enlightened by the sun. Well for us if we claim those blessings which are in Him for us (Eph. 1:3).

Psalms 72:18-20.

Blessed be the Lord God!--This doxology reminds us of Psalms 41:13, where the first book is closed. It is a sublime aspiration in which we who see the beginnings of this beneficent reign may well unite.

PSALM 73

SET IN SLIPPERY PLACES

This and the ten following psalms are ascribed to the family of Asaph, the eminent singer (1 Chron. 16:7; 2 Chron. 29:30). The author describes his conflict with a strong temptation to envy the wicked. The 37th Psalm and the 73rd, discuss this problem, which was the great stumbling-block of the saints of old.

We may divide the Psalm thus: How he came into the temptation (Psalm 73:1-14); how he got out of it (Psalm 73:15-20); how he profited by it (Psalm 73:21-28).

Psalm 73:1.

Truly God is good!--This is the great principle on which he stands, as on a slab of granite. "Only good is God" (R.V., marg.). Whatever appearances there may be to the contrary, there is no doubt as to His perfect beneficence. The Israel is not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (John 1:47; 1 Cor. 10:18). If you are washed in the blood of Christ, believe that every wind which blows on your life comes from the quarter of God's love.

Psalm 73:2.

My feet were almost gone.--Almost but not altogether.

Psalm 73:4.

No bands in their death.--This might be rendered, "no pangs up to their death" (R.V., marg.). Or it may mean that their death is easier than that of the godly. Their life flows on in a softly flowing current. "Men may die like lambs; and yet have their place hereafter with the goats."

Psalm 73:6-9.

They are corrupt.--What a picture! Their haughty bearing; their eyes and their speech; the imaginations of their evil heart overflowing (7, R.V.). They blaspheme God in heaven and wander through the earth in search of garbage.

Psalm 73:10-11.

How doth God know?--Some think that these verses indicate that the perplexity of the saints, coupled with the baleful influence of the wicked make the Lord's people apostatize. Others that here we are told of the anguish caused them by the tyranny of the proud oppressor.

Psalm 73:13-14.

Chastened every morning.--These verses might be paraphrased thus: "Surely godliness does not profit. I have lived up to all I knew to be right, keeping my conscience void of offence; and yet plagues and chastisement have been my daily lot. Is there a God, or is He other than good, that He so deals with his most faithful servants? Plagued" (contrast Psalm 73:5).

Psalm 73:15-16.

Too painful for me.--It seems treacherous to breathe such thoughts about God. Yet it is an infinite pain to doubt God's perfect integrity. Ah, the agony of a suspicion that God should not be perfectly wise and good!

Psalm 73:17-19.

Until I went into the sanctuary.--Let us view things from God's standpoint and take in the whole course of his providence, weighing the future retribution of the wicked against their present estate (James 5:11).

Psalm 73:20.

As a dream.--"The awaking of God is a metaphor for his ending a period of probation or indulgence by an act of judgment." Here it would seem that death, which separates a man from his prosperity, is specially referred to.

Psalm 73:21-22.

So foolish was I.--When a man is nearest God, he is most full of self-loathing. God forgives him, but he cannot forgive himself.

Psalm 73:23-28.

God is my portion forever.--In spite of all the follies and sins of the past and present we may have God's constant presence. In Him we can have all and more than all that the Godless find in their wealth. God in heaven; God in the pathway of daily life; God in the heart--this is blessedness

PSALM 74

WHY HAST THOU CAST US OFF?

This Psalm was composed when the Chaldeans destroyed the temple and city (compare Psalm 74:8 with Jer. 52:13-17). The Psalmist describes his people's miseries (Psalm 74:1-11), recounts the reasons why they should still trust in God (Psalm 74:12-17), and concludes with urgent petitions for help (Psalm 74:18-23).

Psalm 74:3.

Lift up thy feet, i.e., come not slowly but quickly to restore ruins which otherwise must be perpetual.

Psalm 74:4.

Thine enemies roar.--The shout of the foe breaks in on the holy calm of congregations gathered for solemn worship. Heathen standards wave over the buildings consecrated to God.

Psalm 74:5.

They seemed as men that lifted up axes upon a thicket of trees (R.V.).

Psalm 74:8.

They have burned the synagogues.--As early as Samuel's time there were meetings on fixed days for worship (1 Sam. 9:12; 10:5). And these were probably maintained by the prophets (2 Kings 4:23), and anticipated the synagogues of later times.

Psalm 74:13-14.

Dragons in the waters-Leviathan.--These monsters stand here for the Egyptian hosts.

Psalm 74:15.

The fountain and the flood.--The Chaldaic adds to the Jordan, the Arnon and the Jabbok (Num. 21:13-15).

Psalm 74:16-17.

The day is thine, the night also.--Our God is the God of nature. What can He not do? The night may be overshadowing your life, but it is as much his as the day. There are treasures in darkness (Isa. 45:3).

Psalm 74:18.

Arise, O God!--It is blessed to feel that God's glory and our deliverance are identical (Psalm 74:22).

Psalm 74:19.

Thy turtle dove.--What a striking similitude for the Church in its simplicity, weakness and defenselessness!

Psalm 74:20.

Have respect unto the covenant.--There is no stronger plea with God than this, for the "covenant" is ordered in all things and sure (2 Sam. 23:5).

This Psalm may be recited by the saints in all times of the Church's depression.

PSALM 75

HE PUTTETH DOWN AND LIFTETH UP

It is fitting that the wail of the previous Psalm should break forth into glad thanksgivings. This title resembles that of Psa. 57, Destroy not. Probably this triumphal ode was prepared to celebrate a deliverance of which faith was sure. Reference is probably made to Sennacherib's invasion in the time of Hezekiah (Psa. 46; 76). The north is therefore omitted as one of the quarters from which help would come (Psalm 75:6). It was thence that the invader came.

Psalm 75:1.

Thy name is near.--The believing soul gives thanks before the blessing of deliverance has come to hand. Its ear is quick to detect the pibroch of the relieving force though the cannonade of the foe is fiercer than ever.

Psalm 75:2.

will judge uprightly.--This is the reply of Jehovah, while his people are yet speaking (Isa. 65:24). "When I shall find the set time" (R.V.) i.e., when the set time has come.

Psalm 75:3.

I bear up the pillars of the earth.--What a comfort it is to feel that amid the chaos and anarchy which sweep the surface, God is holding fast the foundations on which we may build.

Psalm 75:4-5.

Lift not up the horn.--The Psalmist here becomes the speaker. The horn is the strength of certain beasts and is the symbol of power (Deut, 33:17; 1 Sam. 2:1-10), often the power of the ungodly (Dan. 7:7). The word occurs four times.

Psalm 75:6.

Neither from east, west, nor south.--Promotion stands for deliverance---the 'lifting up of God's help

.

Psalm 75:7-8.

A cup the dregs thereof shall the wicked drink.--God's judgments stupefy by their suddenness (Rev. 16:18, 19, 20, 21).

Psalm 75:10.

The righteous shall be exalted.--The prophets are sometimes said to do things in which God is evidently the Agent (Jer. 1:10). This is the Psalm of the second Advent.

Go to Gems from the Psalms 76-150