

# Gems From the Psalms 2

## Gems from the Psalms

### Psalms 76-150

F B Meyer

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## PSALM 76

### THOU ART TO BE FEARED

If the former Psalm anticipated Sennacherib's overthrow, this was written after it (Psalm 76:3, and Isa. 37).

Psalm 76:2.

In Salem is his tabernacle.--Salem was the ancient name of Jerusalem and signifies Peace. God can only dwell where there is peace (Acts 2:1).

Psalm 76:3.

The shield, the sword and the battle.--God snaps the proudest instruments of war.

Psalm 76:4.

More glorious than mountains.--The world-kingdoms are compared to mountains covered with spoils. The city of God is fairer than the best.

Psalm 76:5-6.

Cast into a deep sleep.--God did but speak a word and the warriors of the king of Assyria slept their last sleep. The poet depicts the scene:

The eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill, And their hearts but once heaved, and forever were still.

Psalm 76:9.

God arose to judgment.--God sometimes seems to sit and allow matters to take their course. He is waiting for the set moment to interpose. When He arise as He will on the behalf of his people, the earth is still as nature before a thunderstorm.

Psalm 76:10.

The wrath of man shall praise Thee.--What is meant in malice is changed to blessing. And there is a limit beyond which the rage of the enemies of the righteous cannot pass (Job 1:12); 1 Cor. 10:13).

Psalm 76:11.

Vow and pay (2 Chron. 32:22-23).--See Note on Psa. 56:12.

Psalm 76:12.

He shall cut off princes.--"Cut off" as a vinedresser would cut off shoots. The spirit, i.e., the life of princes (Rev. 6:15; 14:18, 19). How terrible must be the wrath of the Lamb!

## PSALM 77

### THE WATERS SAW THEE

This Psalm is still ascribed to Asaph, but it is after the manner of Jeduthun (inscription, R.V.). There are resemblances to it in Hab. 3:8-15, so it was probably composed before the end of Josiah's reign in which Habakkuk lived. The carrying away of the ten tribes and the imminent captivity of Judah may have furnished the occasion of this sad lament.

We may divide at the Selahs.

Psalm 77:1-3.

1 cried with my voice EXPRESSES THE PSALMIST'S ANGUISH.--How often do we need the day of trouble to make us seek the Lord! The passage, "my sore," etc., is better rendered, "my hand was stretched out" (R.V.). This refusing to be comforted recalls Gen. 37:35 and Jer. 31:15. What excessive grief is here!

Psalm 77:4-9.

I am so troubled that I cannot speak.--A CONTRAST BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT.--In this scarcity of comfort, Trapp says that the Psalmist was glad to live upon his old stores as bees in winter. Particularly he remembered his song in the night (Job 35:10), which is equivalent to that "glory in tribulation" of which the New Testament is full (Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 7:4). It is wholesome to compare the present with the past, so that we may repent if we are conscious of any backsliding; and that we may be led again to the feet of Christ.

After long days of gloom and anguish have darkened the soul, it begins to fear lest it may never emerge from the darksome forest into the open. Melancholy and depression are apt at putting questions, but faith has an answer ready. "Will the Lord cast off?" No! (Rom. 11:1).

"Will He be favorable no more?" His compassions fail not! (Lam. 3:22).

"Is his mercy clean gone forever?" No! (Psa. 103:17). "Does his promise fail?" No! (Heb. 6:18).

"Has God forgotten to be gracious?" No! (Exod. 34:6). "Has He in anger shut up his mercies?" No! (Psa. 103:17). 10-15. I will remember.--FAITH RESTORED BY MEMORY.--The years of God's past love are not likely to be all in vain. Has He loved from eternity and will He forsake or forget in time? God's way is in the sanctuary, i.e., it is holy (Psalm 77:13). But it is also in the sea, i.e., it is full of mystery (Psalm 77:19). "Some providences, like Hebrew words, must be read backwards."

Psalm 77:16-19.

A POETICAL ACCOUNT OF THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.--The thunderstorm here described is almost implied in Exod. 14:24. God does as He will. No difficulties are obstacles to Him. What He has done, He can do. He still speaks to the waves (Mark 4:39).

Psalm 77:20.

By the hand of Moses and Aaron.--"Great was the power of these two men, but neither was the shepherd of the sheep. Each was a servant of the Great and Good Shepherd who made use of their hands."

## PSALM 78

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL

This Psalm specially refers to the children of Ephraim as representing the northern kingdom of Israel (Psalm 78:9, 67). It is intended to show the cause of their rejection and to warn them against further judgments. It may date from 2 Chron. 13. Is not Asaph a type of our Lord pleading with his Church?

Divide thus: A call for attention (Psalm 78:1-8): the story of Israel's many rebellions and providential deliverances in the wilderness (Psalm 78:9-39); the narrative is continued to their settlement in the land of Canaan (Psalm 78:40-55); the reason for and the fact of the transference of leadership from Ephraim to Judah (Psalm 78:56-72).

Psalm 78:9.

Ephraim turned back.--During the time of Ephraim's headship, the nation failed at the gates of Canaan to go forward to take the land. Hence the transference of leadership.

Psalm 78:12.

In the land of Egypt.--Zoan or Tanis was a very ancient city on the Nile, the capital of a district (Psalm 78:43).

Psalm 78:20.

Can He give bread also?--God has filled heaven and earth with proofs of his love, and yet we distrust Him.

Psalm 78:21-22

Because they believed not.--Nothing so grieves and angers God as unbelief.

Psalm 78:32-42.

How oft did they provoke Him! An epitome of the forty years' wanderings.

Psalm 78:43-51.

He wrought his signs in Egypt.--Several additional descriptive touches are given to the account of the plagues.

Psalm 78:49.

Evil angels.--Not evil spirits, but agents of suffering.

Psalm 78:50.

He made a path for his anger (R.V.). He did not restrain it.

Psalm 78:59-61.

He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh (see 1 Sam. 4:11).

Psalm 78:66.

He smote his adversaries backward (R.V.).

Psalm 78:72.

So He fed them and guided them. Sincerity of purpose and tact in handling men are essential to a true ruler and guide.

## PSALM 79

WHERE IS THEIR GOD?

This Psalm, like Psa. 74, evidently dates from the Chaldean invasion, in Psa. 74, the destruction of the Temple was the prominent thought. Here its defilement is deplored. There are three stanzas: narrative (Psalm 79:1-4); prayer, especially because God's name and glory are at stake (Psalm 79:5-12); promises of perpetual praise (Psalm 79:13).

Psalm 79:1.

The heathen are come into Thine inheritance.--In other passages God Himself is described as the chief agent. Here we find specified the tools employed by Him (Ezek. 5:11; 23:38).

Psalm 79:2-3.

Blood shed like water.--Fulfilled 2 Chron. 36:17; Zech. 14; see also Rev. 11:7.

Psalm 79:5.

Jealousy like fire.--Jealousy is the reverse side of love. Jehovah was a husband to his people,, hence his severity (Amos 3:2). We should be very particular as to our walk, lest we cause bitter heart-pain to the Lover of souls (1 Cor. 10:22).

Psalm 79:6.

Pour out Thy wrath.--Pour out is the same word as is translated shed in Psalm 79:3. This verse is quoted by (Jeremiah 10:25).

Psalm 79:8.

The iniquities of our forefathers (R.V., Deut. 5:9).--Let us ask God to remember, in his dealings with us, not the sins of our past, but the covenant which He made with our fathers.

Psalm 79:9.

Help us, O God, for the glory of thy name.--We have an irresistible argument when we plead for God's glory (John 14:13).

Psalm 79:10.

Let the revenging of the blood of thy servants be known (R.V.)--Joel quotes the former clause (Psalm 2:17).

Psalm 79:11.

Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee!--The answer is anticipated in Psa. 102:19-20.

Psalm 79:13.

We will give Thee thanks forever.--In pastures of never-failing bliss, we shall give Him perpetual praise (Rev. 7:17).

## PSALM 80

A VINE OUT OF EGYPT

Under the figure of a vine injured by a wild beast (Psalm 80:8-13) the Psalmist laments the degradation of the ten tribes. The house of Joseph always represents Israel as distinct from Judah (Obad 18; Amos 6:6). The mention of Benjamin (Psalm 80:2) does not militate against this view. Though the southern part of the tribe clung to the fortunes of Judah, it is probable that the bulk of the northern portion followed those of the ten tribes to whom they were bound by many ties (Gen. 43:29). These three tribes marched together (Num. 10:22-24). The title of the Psalm reminds us of 45 and 69. "Lilies" are an emblem of what is lovely and hereof the lovely salvation of God.

The division is clearly marked by the recurrence of the refrain (Turn), Psalm 80:3, 7, 14, 19 (R.V.). The name of God being on an ascending scale: God (Psalm 80:3); God of Hosts (Psalm 80:7, 14); Jehovah, God of Hosts (Psalm 80:19).

Psalm 80:1.

Shepherd of Israel.--In Jacob's blessing of Joseph, this title is specially given to God (Gen. 49:24). To sit enthroned upon the cherubim (see R.V.) is an emblem of omnipotence for they represent all creatures. Thus the gentleness of a shepherd and the almighty power of God blend in this verse.

Psalm 80:2.

Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, i.e., at their head, as the pillar of cloud and fire led the wilderness march.

Psalm 80:3.

Turn us again.--What a prayer for a backslider! (Jer. 31:18). When God restores us He puts us back into the very place which we occupied before we fell.

Psalm 80:4.

How long wilt Thou be angry? (smoke, R.V.)--Not the fire of God consuming the sacrifice of God, but burning against the backslider (Psa. 74:1).

Psalm 80:5.

Bread of tears.--Bread composed of tears (Psa. 42:3).

Psalm 80:8.

A vine out of Egypt.--Another reference to Jacob's prediction, "A fruitful bough" (Gen. 49:22). The point of the Psalmist's reference to the past consists in this--that God cannot desert, or destroy, any work which He has once begun.

Psalm 80:10-11.

The hills--those of the southern boundary of Canaan. The cedars represent Lebanon and the extreme north. The sea is the Mediterranean, the river, the Euphrates.

Psalm 80:12.

All they do pluck her.--Pul; Tiglath-pileser; Sargon and others (2 Kings 15:19; 1 Chron. 5:26; 2 Kings 18:11).

Psalm 80:15.

The branch (lit. "the son," as Psalm 80:17) is another term for the spiritual vine. In the allusion to the right hand (Psalm 80:15-17), there is surely a reference to the name which Jacob gave to Benjamin, "Son of my right hand" (Gen. 35:18). The name was given

by the father under Divine inspiration and was a pledge of Divine love, not only to him, but to the whole nation whom he represented.

Psalm 80:17.

The Son of Man.--Surely our Lord alone perfectly fulfils this description. He is that Son of Man whom God has made strong for Himself. And God's hand is pledged to maintain Him until the ravages of Satan are made good, and the vine of his church covers the land.

Psalm 80:18.

So will we not go back.--We are redeemed that we should not go back to our old sins, but show forth the praise of our Deliverer.

## PSALM 81

MY PEOPLE WOULD NOT HEARKEN

Probably written by Asaph himself in the days of David. This Psalm is a call to the people to keep the Passover, the annual feast commemorating the deliverance of Egypt.

Division--A call to celebrate the Passover (Psalm 81:1-3); the basis on which the Passover rests (Psalm 81:4-7); an appeal to Israel to come back from false gods to their allegiance (Psalm 81:8-12); with a promise of the blessings which may yet accrue to them (Psalm 81:13-16).

Psalm 81:1.

Sing aloud unto God!--We can sing aloud unto Him when we realize the great blessings which He is prepared to confer on us, as the remaining verses of this Psalm disclose. Think much of God's resources, all of which are yours in Christ, and then praise Him.

Psalm 81:3.

The new moon or month may probably mean the first and chief month of the year, the Passover month, the month of Abib (Exod. 12:1-2; Deut. 16:1). The time appointed is "the set time." Hengstenberg considers that the whole Psalm refers to the commemoration of the Passover, "our solemn feast day."

Psalm 81:5.

This He ordained in Joseph.--Joseph is mentioned here as representing Israel, because his position in Egypt constituted him the leader among his people. We should never forget our deliverance from a more intolerable servitude, but commemorate it--specially in the Lord's Supper. The change to the first pronoun indicates how closely the Divine Spirit was behind the Psalmist, so that naturally, with no break in the continuity of thought, he passes from one mode of address to another.

Psalm 81:6.

removed his shoulder from the burden.--"His hands were set free from the burden baskets." Such baskets were found in the sepulchral vaults of Thebes and were used in carrying the clay and manufactured bricks. Our Saviour has done more than this, relieving us from care and burden-bearing (Matt. 11:28; Psa. 55:22), admitting us into glorious liberty.

Psalm 81:7.

In the secret place of thunder.--God was supposed specially to reside in the storm cloud. Thence He looked on the hosts of Pharaoh and spoke from the brow of Sinai. We are reminded of that triplet of Lowell's:--

**Behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above his own.**

Psalm 81:8-9.

Hear, O My people!--What a peculiar claim God has on the whole-hearted allegiance and devotion of his own! Let us each time that we are tempted to desert Him, recall the cost at which He has redeemed us.

Psalm 81:10.

Open thy mouth wide!--God wants our emptiness. He calls on us to open our mouth, even as the gaping beak of the young

fledgling. There is nothing which we really need that He is unable or unwilling to supply. Let us ask Him to fill us with the Holy Ghost and reckon that He does keep his word (Eph. 5:18).

Psalm 81:12.

They walked in their own counsels.--"With the froward Thou wilt show thyself froward" (2 Sam. 22:27; Psa. 18:26; see also Rom. 1:24; 2 Thess. 2:10-11).

Psalm 81:13.

Oh that My people had hearkened!--Obedience is the condition of full deliverance. Note the stress laid upon "hearing" and "hearkening" (Psalm 81:8, 11, 13).

Psalm 81:14-15:

The haters of the Lord.--Our enemies and God's haters are identical. What encouragement is here! Notice also the permanence of our standing, "for ever."

Psalm 81:16.

With the finest of the wheat.--Strength and sweetness, necessities and luxuries, complete satisfaction!

## PSALM 82

### THE POOR AND NEEDY

The Psalm of the magistrate; perhaps composed on the appointment of judges by Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 19:5-7). There is an admonishment for past misconduct (Psalm 82:2-4), followed by a lamentation over their obduracy and a declaration of their doom (Psalm 82:5-7). Luther says, "Every prince should get the whole Psalm painted upon the walls of his room; for here such will find what high, princely, noble virtue their situation demands, so that assuredly worldly supremacy, next to the office of the ministry, is the highest service of God and the most profitable duty upon earth." A very interesting and close parallel to this Psalm occurs in Isa. 3:13-15.

Psalm 82:1.

God judgeth among the gods.--Some think that the word "gods" refers to angels, but this will not suit the tenor of the Psalm. The word unquestionably stands for magistrates and judges. In Exod. 22:28, the people were taught to recognize in governors the reflections of the authority of God. Their judgment was said to be God's (Deut. 1:17). Whoever came before them, came before God (Exod. 21:6). There could be no doubt, then, that the Heavenly Judge would call them to his bar, if they grossly misrepresented Him.

Psalm 82:2.

How long will ye judge unjustly?-Compare Lev. 19:15.

Psalm 82:5.

They walk on in darkness.--In spite of Divine protests, men will take their own way. With their back to the true light, they go on towards a darkness which grows denser at every step.

Psalm 82:6.

Ye are gods.--It seems at first strange that men so wicked should be dignified by so high a title. But that appellation rather records God's ideal of their sacred office and calls them to fulfil it. Our Lord quotes this verse in arguing with the Jews (John 10:34). His point being that, if Scripture calls unjust judges "gods," because they filled the place and represented the majesty of God, surely his opponents had no right to accuse Him of blasphemy, because, as "the Sent of God," and engaged in doing his Father's will, He also spoke of Himself as God.

Psalm 82:7.

Like one of the princes.--If man is lifted to high office, he is but man still. His office, but not his nature, is God-like. And if he do wickedly, he must fall as other princes have fallen before him.

Psalm 82:8.

Arise, O God!--This call to God to undertake the judgment of the world is like the cry of the Church to her absent Lord, that He would make haste to right the wrongs of time and to bring in his glorious kingdom (Rev. 6:10).

## PSALM 83

BE NOT STILL, O GOD!

This Psalm was composed on the occasion described in 2 Chron. 22. In that chapter we are told distinctly that the Spirit of the Lord came on Jahaziel, of the sons of Asaph (Psalm 83:14). Perhaps he was the author of this Psalm. This was a song of praise sung before the battle in anticipation of victory.

A short prayer for help (Psalm 83:1), is followed by a description of the agony of the people which drove them to take refuge in their Divine Deliverer; the doings (Psalm 83:2:4) and the numbers (Psalm 83:5-8) of their foes. And then, reminding God of what He had done in the days that were past, the singer entreats Him to do the same again, establishing his glory in an incontestable manner (Psalm 83:9-18).

Psalm 83:2.

Thine enemies.--It is a great source of courage, when we can feel that those who attack us are also in conflict against God; and that God takes our side against our foes and sins.

Psalm 83:3.

Hidden ones (1 Kings 19:18; Psa. 31:20; Matt. 23:37; Col. 3:3).--If only we keep under the covert of God's wings, how safe we are!

Psalm 83:4.

Let us cut them off!--It is a daring attempt indeed, when men deliberately set themselves to annul God's eternal purpose. "The stars in their courses" (Jud. 5:20) fight against all such. There was great wisdom in Gamaliel's counsel (Acts 5:39).

Psalm 83:5-8.

Confederate against Thee.--A great confederacy with one fell purpose. Men who are naturally enemies to each other are allies when they can injure God's people.

Psalm 83:9-12.

Sisera, Oreb, Zalmunna.--Three deliverances of the past are quoted as specimens of the help which the land required (Jud. 4, 5, 7, 8).

Psalm 83:13.

Like a wheel!--"The wheel" is rather "the whirl." And the whole is equivalent to "as the stubble," which is whirled round and carried away.

Psalm 83:14.

As fire on the mountains.--The bracken or furze on the mountains is a ready fuel for the lightning spark which sets it ablaze.

Psalm 83:16-18.

Let them be put to shame!--The disasters which are imprecated on the allied forces are intended to lead them to recognize the supremacy of God. But there is no need to attempt to show the consistency of these petitions with the spirit of Christ. They are evidently inspired by the spirit of that older dispensation, which our Lord so distinctly set aside, as the husk from which the grain has passed into new and more perfect development (Matt. 5:38-39).

## PSALM 84

A DAY IN THY COURTS

One of the sweetest of the Psalms. The Gittith is said to have been a musical instrument on which some of the Psalms were played. The speaker is evidently the anointed king (Psalm 84:9), a title which clearly designates David, who constantly uses it of himself. The conception of this sacred poem must have been his during the exile caused by Absalom's rebellion, even though its elaboration and ultimate form may have been due to the sons of Korah. Psalms 42, 43 are inseparably connected with this in their

plan and structure, in the coloring of their language and in their rare and beautiful figures. See also Psa. 27:4.

The first seven verses, divided into four and three (as is often the case in the Psalms), contain a meditation. The remaining five are a prayer. Note the three Blesseds (Psalm 4, 5, 12).

Psalm 84:1.

How amiable are thy tabernacles!-Amiable in the sense of beloved.

Psalm 84:2.

For the living God!--The longing and fainting are closely joined with rejoicing--for so might crieth out be rendered (see R.V., marg.). Therefore they do not indicate the pain of unsatisfied desire, but of desire which is immediately satisfied, though it still craves for more. The soul which has enjoyed most of God's grace longs most earnestly for it. In proportion to its longing is its joy.

Psalm 84:3.

The sparrow hath found an house.--This does not mean simply that he envies the birds which build in Zion, but that he himself is as a sparrow or swallow: which, after long wandering, has found a home and nest in God's house. "My poor little soul, the terrified little bird, has now found its right house and nest, even thine altars. If I had not found this, I must have been as a lone bird on the house-top or an owl in the desert." Notice that it is in the altar that rest is found, i.e., in the life of consecration and obedience. If you can say, "My King," you have found your nest.

Psalm 84:4.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.--Though not literally, spiritually we may dwell in the Lord's house all our days (Psa. 23:6; 27:4). As long as you are able to praise, you are there.

Psalm 84:5.

Whose strength whose heart--Two conditions of blessedness: to have God as your strength and to have in your heart His ways. Too many hearts are full of cliffs and precipices, but they need leveling, so that there should be a highway for God (Isa. 40:3-4).

Psalm 84:6.

The valley of Baca is the valley of tears. Some speak of it as the valley of tear-shrubs. But there the righteous will find wells of salvation. If you are now in the valley of tears, be sure you are on the way to the city and look out for the wells.

Psalm 84:10.

A doorkeeper in God's house.--Better be Lazarus at the threshold of God's house, than Dives in his palace.

Psalm 84:11.

A Sun and Shield.--A Sun in dark hours and a Shade in scorching ones. Grace is the bud of glory. Glory is the flower of grace. If God has given the first, He will give the second. If He withholds aught on which you have set your heart, believe it is not really good and still trust Him. We stand in grace and look for glory (Rom. 5:1-2).

## PSALM 85

### MERCY AND TRUTH

There is no clue to the historical associations of this Psalm. The description of the distress through which the nation had been passing is quite general. It will, therefore fit all times of anxiety and depression.

We have first a description in seven verses of the long-protracted misery of the people. In the six remaining verses the strong expression of confidence of help and deliverance.

Psalm 85:1-3. Thou hast forgiven iniquity.--The Psalmist recounts a former instance of God's gracious intervention. In this he sets us an example which we may well follow. Our captivity may continue long, but it will be brought back. Iniquity may be aggravated, but it can be forgiven. And the forgiveness of God will cover sin, as the deluge the highest mountains. There is probably an allusion here (Psalm 85:3) to Exod. 32:12: "turn from thy fierce wrath."

Psalm 85:5.

Wilt Thou be angry forever?--God's anger is short-lived where there is contrition ("For a moment " Psa. 30:5).

Psalm 85:6.

Revive us again.--Spiritual revival is the indispensable condition of quickening and rejoicing.

Psalm 85:8.

He will speak peace.--God ever "speaks peace" to his saints, though the world is in revolt (John 20:19-21). Note the recurring references to righteousness and peace (Heb. 7:2).

Psalm 85:10.

Mercy and truth are met.--Mercy and righteousness are on one side; truth and peace on the other. They seem going on different errands and in different directions. But they meet at the cross of Jesus. There we have "'the bridal of the earth and sky" (Isa. 45:8).

Psalm 85:12.

The Lord shall give good.--God gives nought but good and all good is from God (Jas. 1:17).

Psalm 85:13.

Righteousness shall go before Him.--Righteousness not only looked down from heaven, but, in the person of Jesus, it has trod our earth, leaving footprints for us to follow (1 Pet. 2:21).

## **PSALM 86**

BOW DOWN THINE EAR!

David is in straits, deprived of human aid, his life endangered by a band of proud and ungodly men. He quotes the help given him by God (Psalm 86:13). This refers to his sufferings from Absalom and his advisers.

The Psalm is divided into two strophes. The first ten verses make up the first and the remaining ones the second. Notice the refrain in Psalm 5, 10, 15, "Thou art good! ... Thou art great! Thou art God alone! Thou art full of compassion!"

Psalm 86:1-2.

I am poor and needy! He founds his prayer on his misery and on the fact of his being one of God's chosen ones. "'I am holy" might be rendered "I am godly" (R.V.). The Creator is the best Preserver. And He who has begotten passionate desires after Himself can best meet and satisfy them.

Psalm 86:4.

Rejoice the soul of thy servant.--"We may expect comfort from God when we maintain communion with God. God's goodness appears in two things, in giving and forgiving. We may expect that God will meet us with his mercies when we in our prayers send forth our souls to meet Him."

Psalm 86:11.

United my heart to fear thy name.--Our thoughts are apt to wander and scatter. We therefore need so much that God would gather them up into a true unity (Phil. 3:13, 14). The united heart, which has but one purpose and desire to live for God, is the heart which is most sure of God's "way," and most full of praise (Psalm 86:12). That heart experiences His care (Psalm 86:13).

Psalm 86:15.

Full of compassion.--Who can fathom the fullness of God's compassion? (Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:19; Phil. 4:7).

Psalm 86:16.

Give thy strength unto thy servant.--Well is it when we begin to appropriate God's strength (Phil. 4:13).

## **PSALM 87**

THE GATES OF ZION

This is a song of praise for some great deliverance. From end to end it is full of triumphant joy. It seems to have dated from the

times of Hezekiah, when Babylon was still second in power to Rahab (Egypt). Rahab means haughtiness or pride and is used by Isaiah sarcastically (Psalm 87:30:7, R.V.). "I have called her [Egypt] Rahab that sitteth still." "Rahab" (that is Pride or Arrogance) could only be applicable to Egypt before the battle of Carchemish (2 Chron. 35:20-24), which humbled that nation's pride. The appellation "Rahab" is also found in Psa. 89:10 and Isa. 51:9. It seems clear that this (Psalm 87) celebrates the security of Jerusalem after the discomfiture of Assyria by the angel of the Lord.

Psalm 87:1.

His foundation is in the holy mountains.--The foundations of Zion were laid in the eternal choice and determination of God. And those of the Church rest on the chief Corner-stone, our blessed Lord (Isa. 28:16). "Holy" surely means "set apart" from ordinary and common use. All is glory which is set apart for God.

Psalm 87:2.

The gates of Zion.--Are you quite sure that you are safe inside through faith in Jesus?

Psalm 87:3.

Glorious things are spoken of Thee.--What glorious things have been spoken of the people of God! They are a chosen , generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession (1 Pet. 2:9); the body and bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25). To be where Jesus is, at the right hand of God--this its destiny.

Psalm 87:4.

I will mention Rahab and Babylon as among them that know Me (R.V.).--In those days, when the numbers of the chosen people were much reduced, the heart of the Psalmist yearned with peculiar eagerness for the ingathering of the nations, according to ancient promise. There is also here an anticipation of the new birth, which makes different nationalities one family in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 87:5-6.

When He writeth up the people.--There is a reference here to citizen-rolls (Luke 2:3). Whole hosts of nations are even now tracing all that is best in them to the religion which emanated from Mount Zion. The time is coming when the forces of the Gentiles shall literally return to that city, which is to be the metropolis of a redeemed and rejoicing world (Isa. 60:11).

Psalm 87:7.

Singers and players on instruments,--The mention of singers and dancers (R.V.) summons to our thought the idea of a triumphal procession like that of Israel after the passage of the Red Sea. "All my fresh springs," as the Prayer-Book version has it (see also Psa. 84:6; Isa. 12:3). Would that we were more content to be channels through which those springs might visit the world! (John 7:38).

## PSALM 88

INCLINE THINE EAR!

This and the following Psalm constitute a pair. They were probably written during the reign of Zedekiah, but before the Captivity. The nation stood on the brink of a precipice, but the city and temple had not as yet been destroyed. Mahalath Leannoth means "the distress of oppression." It is a Psalm to give instruction to all sufferers as how to bear the griefs which lie heavily upon them. Stier says of this Psalm: "It is the most mournful of all the plaintive Psalms; yea, so wholly plaintive, without any ground of hope, that nothing like it is found in the whole Scriptures." Hengstenberg says: "The fact is all the more striking, that the Psalm begins with the words, "O Lord God of my salvation," after which the darkness grows continually thicker to the close." Surely in its deepest meaning, this psalm is applicable only to the Prince of Sufferers.

Psalm 88:1.

O Lord God of my Salvation!--in the greatest griefs, it is much to be able to say "God of my salvation." Say it, if you do not feel it. You will come to feel it.

Psalm 88:2, 13.

Unto Thee have I cried rain this dark hour the writer still feels that there is hope in God (Psa. 42; 43); and that prayer is the true resource of the overburdened spirit.

Psalm 88:3.

Full of troubles.---O troubled soul, others have trod your path. See the "blazed" trees along the track. You may be sure that this is the way to the reward.

Psalm 88:6.

In the lowest pit.--If we are willing to lie in the grave with Christ, we shall share His resurrection (Phil. 3:10).

Psalm 88:8.

Mine acquaintance far from me (John 8:16; 16:32).

Psalm 88:9.

I have called daily upon Thee.--There are times when prayer seems unavailing. Yet must we keep on praying. So has it ever been (Matt. 15:25).

Psalm 88:14.

Why hidest Thou thy face?--God does not give his reasons. What He does, we know not now, though we shall know (John 13:7).

Psalm 88:18.

Lover and friend far from me.--All forsook the Man of Sorrows and fled. He knew what loneliness meant. But no ledge of rock along which He leads his own is too narrow for Him to go beside them (Isa. 63:9).

## **PSALM 89**

### THE LORD'S MERCIES

This is the other side of our experience, contrasted with that set forth in the previous Psalm. As the two sides of our earth, the one in darkness, the other illuminated. This Psalm especially records God's faithfulness (Psalm 1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33). And though there is a touch of the old melancholy, especially towards the end, on the whole the Psalm rings with a happier tone and glistens with the sparkle of hope.

First, there is a remembrance of God's promise which secured the perpetual existence of David's kingdom (Psalm 89:1-37); then a complaint that the present condition of affairs is in sad contrast to all this (Psalm 89:38-45); last, a prayer that God would interpose (Psalm 89:46-51).

Psalm 89:2.

Mercy shall be built up forever.--Mercy is a structure never done, layer on layer, storey on storey, tier on tier. God's faithfulness is as sure as the heavens (see also Psa. 36:5; 57:10; 108:4).

Psalm 89:3-4.

A covenant with my chosen.--Supply, "For Thou didst say" (2 Sam. 7:8-16). In troublous times we must cling to God's promises.

Psalm 89:5-14.

The heavens and the earth are thine (see also Psa. 19:1, 2; 77:16).--Full of praises, from heaven and earth, from angels, men and nature.

Psalm 89:15-18.

The people that know the joyful sound.--The blessedness of the believer (see also Psa. 1; 32:2; 40:4; 112:1).

Psalm 89:19-37.

Established forever, as the moon.--An exquisite description of the rise and development of David's power, which was a shadow of Christ's. As the sun and moon change not, but remain faithful to their posts in the heavens, so God's covenant is unalterable, made with Christ and all who believe in Him.

Psalm 89:38-51.

Remember, Lord!--In this plea for mercy we may well join, on the behalf not only of Israel, but of the Church. Not only because of the insolence of our foes, but because of the dishonor done to the name of God. Even in the midst of all this sorrow, the Psalmist is

able to grasp deliverance. So the Third Book of the Psalms ends in the light of an ascription of praise (Psalm 89:52).

## PSALM 90

### THREESCORE YEARS AND TEN

There is every reason to accept the superscription of this Psalm as correct. It was written by Moses at the close of the forty years' wanderings, and perhaps about the same time as his other two songs (Deut. 32, 33). If so, it was old when Homer sang. The imagery is all borrowed from the desert march: the desert streams, which soon dry; the night-watch in the camp; the short-lived growth of the grass before it is blasted by the "khamzin," or desert wind (Psalm 90:5). The melancholy strain is due to the incessant funerals and the aimlessness of the desert marchings.

Psalm 90:1.

Thou hast been our dwelling-place.--God is our Home. Let us live in Him. Satan cannot enter to drag us forth (1 John 4:16).

Psalm 90:2.

From everlasting Thou art God.--Earth, our planet; World, the universe. God is above all change, because He lives in the eternal ages. There never was a period in which Jehovah was not. He is more permanent than the most changeless things.

Psalm 90:3.

Thou turnest man to destruction.--In opposition to the eternity of God is the transitory life of men. It seems long to us when we compare it with our last days, but how short, when compared with the eternity of Him who looks on a thousand years as a brief night-watch! (2 Peter 3:8).

Psalm 90:4.

A thousand years are but as yesterday.--"As to a very rich man a thousand sovereigns are as one penny; so, to the eternal God, a thousand years are as one day."--Bengel.

Psalm 90:7.

By the wrath are we troubled.--Moses now ascends from the melancholy fact of the brevity of life to the melancholy cause, that it is due to the wrath of God incurred by our sins (compare Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12).

Psalm 90:8.

Our secret sins.--Does not this teach us that there are sins so secret that none but God detects them? But his eyes carry the light by which they see (Rev. 1:14). What a comfort to turn to the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin!

Psalm 90:9.

As a tale that is told.--"As a sigh" (R.V., marg.). This description is true of the unsaved and rebellious, but of believers we have a gladder description (1 Cor. 6:11).

Psalm 90:11.

The power of thine anger.--God's wrath, which abides (John 3:36) on those who refuse to believe, is worse than those who have feared it most have ever conceived of it.

Psalm 90:12.

So teach us to number our days.--We should reckon our shortening days, and work harder, as the poor seamstress whose last candle is burning low (John 9:4).

Psalm 90:14.

Satisfy us early!--"Early" in life, and each morning, too. "Oh, satisfy us in the morning with Thy mercy" (R.V.).

Psalm 90:16-17.

Thy work; thy glory; thy beauty.--All these blend in Jesus. And, as we abide in Him--his deeds are done through us; his glory shines around us; his beauty adorns us (Psa. 27:4).

## PSALM 91

### THE SECRET PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH

This Psalm is entirely general. But it is of great service to travellers and to all who are exposed to danger and hardship. It alternates between the expressions of personal trust and exhortations to trust; hence the interchange of the pronouns "I" and "Thou." It is attributed by the old Rabbis to Moses, and indeed corresponds to his experience on the night of the first Passover. Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12 to our Lord (Matt. 4:6).

Psalm 91:1-2.

We may regard Psalm 91:2, "I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge," etc., as the soliloquy of the man described in Psalm 91:1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, and abideth under the shadow of the Almighty."

Psalm 91:3.

Surely He shall deliver thee.--Deliverance from guile and traps, as well as from the insidious pestilence of jungle and morass.

Psalm 91:4.

Under his wings shalt thou trust.--The wings of God! (Deut. 32:11-12; Matt. 23:37).

Psalm 91:5-6.

Thou shalt not be afraid.--In each verse we have the alternations of day and night, for there is not an hour which has not its special liabilities of harm. The soldier gets a daredevil courage from the motto: "Every bullet has its billet." The believer flinches not, because his life is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

Psalm 91:9.

Thou hast made the Lord thy habitation.--There must be definite appropriation on our part before there can be deliverance.

Psalm 91:11.

He shall give his angels charge over thee.--Do we make enough of the gentle, careful ministry of the angels? (Heb. 1:14; Luke 22:43). But certainly we must be in God's ways, ere we can claim angel-help.

Psalm 91:13.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.--This reminds one of some marvellous words of our Lord (Luke 10:19-20), and surely refers to our spiritual foes (Mark 16:18; 1 Cor. 15:26).

Psalm 91:15.

I will be with him in trouble.--It is worth our while to be in trouble, to have such a Companion. He is never so near as then.

## PSALM 92

### IT IS A GOOD THING TO GIVE THANKS

This Psalm was intended for use in the public worship of God upon the Sabbath. On this day according to Lev. 23:3, there was held a holy convocation. The Psalm is well fitted for its purpose, for on such a day men ought to find leisure to consider the works of God and to praise Him. One theme for lasting praise is God's preservation of his Church in the midst of a hostile world.

Psalm 92:2-3.

To show forth thy loving-kindness and thy faithfulness.--Perhaps at the morning and evening sacrifice. What themes for morning and evening worship!

Psalm 92:4.

Thou, Lord, hast made me glad.--Let us learn to joy in God Himself (Rom. 5:11; 11:33). But especially on his own day let us remember the work of the Redeemer, which has made us glad for evermore.

Psalm 92:5-8.

Thy thoughts are very deep.--God so often delays the punishment of the wicked, owing to reasons hidden from our sight. His ways are very deep to the eye of man.

Psalm 92:10.

Like an Unicorn.--The wild ox or buffalo (Num. 23:22; Deut. 33:17). Thou enablest me to rise up with spirit, with a sense of strength, in an attitude of attack. The fresh anointing should be sought every morning (1 John 2:27).

Psalm 92:12-15.

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.--In God's 'trees, the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. But on the contrary, the Apostle Paul witnesses in 2 Cor. 4:16.

## PSALM 93

THE LORD REIGNETH!

It is thought that this Psalm dates from the Assyrian invasion. It is the might of the terrible Assyrian foes which is here compared to the mighty breakers of the sea (R.V.). But the Psalm fits all times of anxiety and opposition. It is interesting to remember that this, and the six Psalms which follow, have always been applied by the Jews to the days of the Messiah. Surely then we may apply them to the Lord Jesus.

Psalm 93:1.

The Lord reigneth.--It is a great support to know that above and beyond all that here hinders and distresses us, there exists the great fact of Jehovah's sovereignty. This encourages us in conflict and this sustains us in the hour of trial. Five times in Scripture is this declaration repeated (1 Chron. 16:31; Psa. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; Rev. 19:6). This is also the war-cry of the Church in answer to the defiance of her foes. Calvin says: "All acknowledge with the mouth what the prophet here teaches; but how few place this shield in front of the might of the world, so that they fear nothing, be it ever so terrible." Thus might we oppose all attacks of our spiritual foes and find ourselves ever victorious. What magnificent apparel--majesty and strength!

Psalm 93:3.

The floods have lifted up their voice.--The sea is the usual symbol of the tumultuous masses of the nations. In this splendid reiteration we can almost hear the successive dash of the breakers with foam and fury around the throne of God, which stands out in eternal immovability (Psalm 93:2). We irresistibly contrast this with Canute's throne, which had to be drawn back and back from before the incoming tide.

Psalm 93:4.

The Lord is mightier than many waters.--"As thunder is louder than the loudest noise of the sea, so is Jehovah infinitely more mighty and glorious than the sea, and the world power which it symbolizes." The miracle of Jesus in quieting the storm has symbolic and far-reaching meaning. What! do you fear one man, when this God is yours? (Isa. 51:12).

Psalm 93:5.

Thy testimonies (Psa. 19:7; 25:10).---The sureness of God's testimonies is emphasized here, because the Psalmist would remind us that among their other contents is the sure promise that our foes shall not prevail. Over twenty times God's testimonies are named in Psa. 119.

Holiness is here used in the sense of separation from every evil thing, a condition which God's honor requires Him to maintain. And is there not a pledge implied that He will maintain intact the separateness of the temple of the heart? (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

## PSALM 94

THY MERCY HELD ME UP

This Psalm belongs to the same era as the foregoing one. The mention made of the throne of iniquity (Psalm 94:20) seems to indicate that the Chaldean empire had already arisen and taken up a threatening attitude against the people of God. Still there is no mention made as yet of the destruction of the temple or of the leading into captivity. Therefore, perhaps, the land had not been overrun by the invader.

Luther says: "This Psalm is a prayer of all the pious children of God and of spiritual people against their persecutors. Thus it may

be used by all such from the beginning to the end of the world."

Psalm 94:1.

God, to whom vengeance belongeth.--God's vengeance includes the vindication of the eternal law of righteousness and also of his downtrodden people. We seem to hear already the cry of the martyred saints, "How long, O Lord, holy and true!" (Rev. 6:10). This confident anticipation of God's ultimate decision on the behalf of his down-trodden people is very characteristic of these Psalms.

Psalm 94:5.

They afflict thine heritage.--We are God's heritage, as He is ours. Alas! that after so much culture we return such a poor revenue (Deut. 32:9).

Psalm 94:7.

They say, The Lord shalt not see.--Wicked men are ostrich-like (Psa. 10:11; 59:7).

Psalm 94:8-11.

When will ye be wise?--The Psalmist reasons with those who are both hard of heart and dull of understanding.

Psalm 94:12.

Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest.--What a schooling is this; and what a Teacher! The discipline is severe, but the pupils turn out well, and derive lasting blessedness and rest. Better chastisement than "adversity" (Psalm 94:13).

Psalm 94:14.

The Lord will not cast off neither forsake.--God cannot be surprised by anything He discovers in us. He knew all when He began to love us. The tenacity of his love to his chosen people is a strong encouragement to all the seed (Mal. 2:16; John 10:28).

Psalm 94:16.

Who will rise up for me?--This verse is answered by the next two.

Psalm 94:19.

My thoughts--Thy comforts.--Turn from anxious care to the bosom of thy God, till thy soul begins to sing with holy delight.

Psalm 94:22-23.

The Lord is my defence.--We may very well possess our souls in patience, and not be disturbed by the plottings of our foes. Their time is short, their end sure. But oh the pity that they should incur such a fate at the hands of the God of love!

## **PSALM 95**

LET US SING UNTO THE LORD!

Few of the Psalms have entered so deeply into the worship of the Church as this. It abounds in bold metaphors and comparisons, calculated to awaken praise as well as heart-searching. The two halves of the Psalm, consisting of five verses each, are united by a middle (Psalm 95:6), which summons to worship.

Psalm 95:1.

The Rock of our salvation.--God is a Rock, by virtue of his steadfastness and unchangeableness.

Psalm 95:2.

Let us come before his presence!--His presence never casts a shadow, but prompts to joy. Live joyfully in the perpetual realization of that presence (Psa. 16:11; Exod. 33:14-15).

Psalm 95:4-5.

The deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills.--Depths and heights, sea and land--are full of God. However high we climb or low we descend, in whatever condition we find ourselves, there is always certain evidence of God and a theme for praise.

Psalm 95:6.

Oh come, let us worship!--When the heart is full, it brims over in some outward act of devotion.

Psalm 95:7.

We, the people of his pasture.--His pasture, i.e., the flock whom He feeds and tends; his hand, i.e., with which He counts, guides and defends. Ah, remember how the Shepherd's hand was pierced and still bears a scar!

Psalm 95:8-10.

Harden not your heart!--For the day of Meribah and Massah (R.V.) we must turn to Exod. 17:7. From the last clause of Psalm 95:7 to the end will be found quoted in Heb. 3:7-11.

Psalm 95:11.

My rest is surely that into which God entered at creation. It has been the chosen object of search for all mankind; and it remains for all who believe in the true Joshua, Jesus our Lord (Heb. 4:9-10).

## PSALM 96

### THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

This Psalm and the preceding one form a pair. This one is to be also found in 1 Chron. 16:23-33. It was probably re-edited at the time when the preceding (Psalm 95) was composed. Note the thrice-repeated command, Sing, sing, sing (Psalm 96:1-2), which corresponds to the thrice-repeated, Give, give, give (Psalm 96:7-8); and with the triple call for joy from heaven, sea and field (Psalm 96:11-12).

Psalm 96:1.

Sing unto the Lord a new song!--We should always praise God with fresh emotions, if not with different words. The "new song" is ever in front of us (Rev. 5:9, 10).

Psalm 96:2.

Show forth, not only with our lips, but with our lives.

Psalm 96:5.

Idols, i.e., "things of nought" (R.V., marg.). See 1 Cor. 8:4-6.--The heavens are constantly quoted as a challenge to our poor conceptions of God (Job 26; Isa. 40).

Psalm 96:6.

Honor and majesty are his inseparable attendants. Wherever He is (for here is his sanctuary) there are strength and beauty. These may also be ours as his gifts (Psalm 96:9), but to give them back to Him (Psalm 96:7).

Psalm 96:7-8.

Give unto the Lord! (compare Psa. 29:1-2).---What better offering is there than thyself? (Rom. 12:1).

Psalm 96:10.

The Lord reigneth!--The reign of the Lord in heart or universe must ever be a theme for song. His righteous equity shall yet roll back the curse and hush the groans of a travailing universe (Rom. 8:14-22). "Tell it out!"

## PSALM 97

### LET THE EARTH REJOICE!

The reign of Christ affects all material things. Alas that men are so slow to acknowledge it (Psalm 97:1-6)! the votaries of false gods are bewildered (Psalm 97:7); but the people of God are glad and are encouraged to endure steadfast to the end (Psalm 97:8-12).

Psalm 97:1.

The Lord reigneth!--How different is the Psalmist's exultation at God's reign, to the fear which many have when asked to yield Him the supreme empire of their hearts! (Luke 19:14). And yet the strain of Hallelujah is impossible till it can be said in heart and

universe, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 19:6).

Psalm 97:2.

Clouds and darkness are often around God still (Deut. 4:11; Psa. 18:11); but we can trust Him, because we know that all He does is based on righteousness and truth (see 2 Sam. 22:12).

Psalm 97:4-5.

The earth trembled: the hills melted.-Compare Hab. 3:6-7. Worship Him, all ye gods--This is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews as an address to Angels (Heb. 1:6), a circumstance which is doubtless owing to the quotation being made from the Septuagint. And the fact of this Psalm being there applied to our Lord is a striking evidence of his equality and oneness with Jehovah. Thus we can insert his name in all these Psalms. "The Lord Jesus reigneth!"

Psalm 97:8-12.

Zion was glad! rejoice, ye righteous!--The kingdom of Jesus, like the pillar of fire, has a dark side for Egyptians and a bright one toward the Israel of God.

Psalm 97:10.

He preserved! He Delivereth!--The character, safety and deliverance of the child of God. Herein the great Apostle rejoiced (2 Tim. 4:18).

Psalm 97:11.

Light is sown for the upright.--Coal is sown light in the natural world. Tears, griefs, trials, are the seeds from which the saints shall reap crops of future blessedness. But the harvest day is not yet (Heb. 12:11; Jas. 5:7-8).

Psalm 97:12.

Rejoice! give thanks!--The holiness of God, which was once again us, is now on our side and is the theme of our praise.

## **PSALM 98**

A NEW SONG

In this Psalm the whole creation is summoned to be one great orchestra of praise. It seems as if this summons might have been addressed to all living things, as the elders first began to praise the Lamb in the midst of the Throne (Rev. 5:12-13).

Psalm 98:1.

Marvellous things.--Who can recount them when they include such marvels as redemption, forgiveness, deliverance from the power of sin, the overthrow of Satan and the glory of God through the mystery of pain and evil? The right hand that was nailed to the cross. The holy arm that would not ward off a single blow levelled at Himself.

Psalm 98:2.

His salvation-His righteousness.--It is a great salvation, based on the satisfaction of the noblest moral perfections in God's nature. "He is just, and the justifier of him that believeth." In the face of earth and hell, He is Saviour.

Psalm 98:3.

Mercy and truth.--What a wonderful combination! But it is not the house of Israel only who are permitted to participate in them. Gentiles also at the furthest distance may see and receive.

Psalm 98:4.

All the earth.--The hum of bees, the rustle of woods, the murmur of rivers, the boom of ocean waves, are constituent voices in the "joyful noise" of "all the earth." Inarticulate to man, but precious to God.

Psalm 98:6.

A joyful noise before the King.--There are some who speak as if the Kingship of the Lord Jesus were a subject for melancholy. They dread nothing more than to be the absolute slaves of such a master. How much more faithful is the conception of the Psalmist--that it should be the theme of song!

Psalm 98:9.

He cometh.--To those that love Him, his coming is a theme of joy. This refrain is repeated from Psalm 96, as if the pious heart can never tire of so sweet a theme.

## PSALM 99

EXALT YE THE LORD!

This is the last of these precious Psalms which dwell so rapturously on the reign of Jesus. It falls into three strophes, each ending with God's holiness (Psalm 3, 5, 9).

Psalm 99:1-3.

The Lord is great in Zion.--The majesty of God. But great and awful though He be, we fear Him not, for "He sitteth on the cherubim," a phrase which always recalls the blood-besprinkled mercy-seat--God in Christ, reconciling the world. Though the reign of Christ is closely associated with the temporal restoration of Israel, yet in the meanwhile it is set up in the hearts of believers (Luke 12:32; 17:21; 2 Cor. 10:5).

Psalm 99:4-5.

Exalt ye the Lord! and worship!--A demand for homage. The more we abase ourselves before God, the more we exalt Him.

Psalm 99:6-9.

They called: He answered.--An enforcement from the examples of the past. There never were three such men. Each was a marvellous illustration of the power of prayer and praise. Let us follow in their footsteps, cultivating the meekness of Moses; the holy nearness of the Aaronic priesthood; and the prayers which were so striking a characteristic of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:8-13; 8:6, 21).

Psalm 99:8.

Thou forgavest! Thou tookest vengeance!--Let us beware of sin. It may be forgiven, yet we may have to reap its bitter results. Moses was forgiven, but he did not enter the Promised Land. So was David, but the sword never left his house.

Psalm 99:9.

His holy hill, Our God is holy!--Oh, the holiness of God! Let us not rest until it has been brought into our hearts by the Holy Ghost; so that we may be holy in quality, if not in degree, as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:16).

## PSALM 100

WITH THANKSGIVING!

In the previous Psalm there is a commendation of our Lord Jesus and of the majesty of his kingdom. In this there is an exhortation based on that royal conception, for "all the earth" to worship Him. It is full of holy rapture and has inspired hearts to love and worship through all ages. May our hearts be in tune with the anthem of the universal church, as we peruse these noble and majestic words! But it may be that it has been specially prepared as an anthem for use in that golden coming time, when the kingdoms of this world shall indeed have become the kingdoms of the Son of Man.

Psalm 100:1. All ye lands!--It is especially on the Lord's day that the devout heart thinks of all the lands of men on whom its blessed light is breaking, and asks that the "joyful noise" of loyal and glad hearts may rise from each. All lands have been included in the purchase of Calvary; let all sing! (Rev. 7:9).

Psalm 100:2.

Serve the Lord with gladness!.., with singing!--God" s service is glad--joyous, blessed, perfect freedom. Let us not do his will grudgingly, but gladly.

Psalm 100:3.

Know ye that Jehovah is Elohim: that the Self-existent One is also the Almighty One! The more we know God, the more able shall we be to praise Him. Notice the themes for praise:--

(1) That He is God: the only living and true God; infinitely perfect; self-existent and self-sufficient; the Father of mercies, tender and true, loving and strong--Oh, rapture indeed, that such a one is God!

(2) That He is our Creator: because as such He is responsible for us.

(3) That He is our Proprietor: He hath made us; and we are his (R.V.).

(4) That we are his people: owning Him, therefore, as our liege Lord and King. "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion: thy King cometh!" (Zech. 9:9).

(5) That He is our Shepherd: and it is the Shepherd's part to care--not the sheep's.

Psalm 100:4.

Enter into his gates!--We specially enter his gates, when we mingle with the assemblies of his people. Put on the garment of praise with other Sunday attire!

Psalm 100:5.

The Lord is good!--Yes, good always and only. Equally so when He takes as when He gives; when He chides as when He smiles. And what He has been, He will be. He is the "faithful" God (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:19). Praise Him!

## PSALM 101

### MERCY AND JUDGMENT

Again we come on one of David's Psalms. This was probably composed at the beginning of his reign and contains the ideal programme which he proposed to himself. The principles here laid down are those which not only apply to every Christian community, but which .will assuredly distinguish the kingdom of the blessed Lord, for whose advent the Church daily prayeth.

Psalm 101:1.

will sing of mercy and judgment.--Mercy and judgment marvelously blend in all human lives. They should be alike commemorated in song. Sing your songs to God!

Psalm 101:2.

I will behave myself wisely.--The art of this is given (Psa. 119:99; see also 1 Sam. 18:14-15). The reward of such conduct is the coming of God into the soul (Exod. 20:24; John 14:23). But the pious heart yearns for it to make haste and arrive. Oh, when wilt Thou come unto me? A perfect heart is the blameless, consecrated and wholly yielded heart (1 Kings 3:14; Prov. 20:7).

Psalm 101:3-8.

I will set no base thing before mine eyes!--Here is the picture of a pious palace, or private dwelling-house. No slander or pride; upright and trustworthy servants; deceit and lying banished; and strict discipline maintained (1 Tim. 3:4).

We may well ask ourselves whether this is a true picture of the inner realm of the heart, and whether we are strict and merciless in not permitting traitors there. We do not now use the sword or extermination to men, but we should for evil principles and habits and unholy things.

## PSALM 102

### WITHERED LIKE GRASS

This is the fifth of the penitential Psalms. Some have held that it is one of the later Psalms, asking for deliverance from the captivity. But, from certain special Davidic characteristics, it seems better to refer it to the hand of the royal and sweet Psalmist himself. However, its authorship is of comparatively small consequence. The main thing is to notice the adequateness of the Psalm to those who are afflicted and overwhelmed, and who feel the need of suitable words in which to pour out their hearts to God.

We may arrange the subjects as follows:--A pitiful complaint (Psalm 102:1-11); confidence in the Divine Deliverer (Psalm 102:12-22); a comparison of the greatness of God with the frailty of nature (Psalm 102:23-28).

Psalm 102:4.

My heart is smitten.--A withered heart, from which all joy is gone, as the juice from a sapless bough (see Psalm 102:11).

Psalm 102:5.

My bones cleave to my flesh (see Job 19:20; Lam. 4:8).

Psalm 102:6-7.

I am like a pelican an owl a sparrow.--All symbols of solitariness.

Psalm 102:7.

Alone upon the housetop.--Loneliness is one of the keenest of human sorrows (Psa. 38:11; John 16:32).

Psalm 102:10.

Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.--The devout soul turns from its sorrows to Jehovah. God is ever coming to the soul through human agents and secondary causes. And it deals, with Him at first hand.

Psalm 102:12.

But Thou, O Lord, sittest as King (R.V., marg.). What a comfort to turn from our failures and defeats to that eternal Monarchy, which is as independent of us as the stability of the mountains is of the withered leaves that strew their slopes.

Psalm 102:13.

Thou shalt arise!--As much of this complaint was probably occasioned by the depressed state of the Jewish nation, so comfort is occasioned by a clear conviction that the Divine Deliverer is at hand.

Psalm 102:14.

Thy servants take pleasure in the stones of Zion.--When God leads his people to bemoan their low estate, a revival is near at hand (compare Neh. 1:3-4, with Neh. 12:43).

Psalm 102:15-16.

So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord!--The revival of God's people is indispensable to the awakening of the world. And God's glory is conspicuously manifested in the newly-imparted zeal and life of his servants. Then He indeed appears in glory.

Psalm 102:17.

The prayer of the destitute (Psa. 34:6).

Psalm 102:18.

Written for the generation to come (Matt. 26:13; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

Psalm 102:19-20.

From heaven did the Lord behold the earth.--The Lord (Jah) stoops low to hear the sighs which might seem too slight to penetrate the dungeon wall. Sigh, imprisoned heart, if thou canst not pray! Sighs fly swift to the ear of God.

Psalm 102:25-27.

Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth.--These magnificent verses are applied directly to our Lord (Heb. 1:8, 10-12). Granite rocks and stars of light shall fulfil their purpose and be laid aside as worn-out robes when He speaks their concluded mission (Rev. 21:5). But Jehovah-Jesus will ever be unchangeably the same, able to summon new creations into being with a word.

## **PSALM 103**

### THE PSALM OF GRATITUDE

David's name heads this peerless Psalm of praise, which expresses as none other, the soul of the Church and of the Christian. It has been compared to a still, clear brook of praise.

Psalm 103:1.

All that is within me, bless his holy name!--Let no faculty of the soul be still in God's praise.

Psalm 103:2.

Forget not all his benefits.--Alas! that we forget so often and so many of God's benefits! Memory, awake! and touch thy chords, bring back the blessed past!

Psalm 103:3-5.

Who forgiveth! who redeemeth! who satisfieth!--Notice the "present tenses" in this and the following verses. God's tender dealings run parallel with our lives. He is never weary or exhausted. Enumerate the blessings which He gives, and as the fingers tell the successive beads, praise Him: forgiveness; healing (Exod. 15:26); redemption; crowning; satisfaction (Psa. 36:8; Isa. 58:11); perennial youth. We need not think that the Bible authorizes the belief that the eagle literally renews its youth, but only that the youth, when renewed, is eagle-like in its royal strength (Isa. 40:31).

Psalm 103:7.

He made known his ways unto Moses!--Ways or plans, are only made known to the inner circle of the saints. The ordinary congregation learn only his doings (John 15:15).

Psalm 103:8.

The Lord is merciful and gracious.--A conception of God, which seems strange in its setting of that old Jewish economy, ' but has been confirmed by all subsequent ages.

Psalm 103:9.

He will not always chide.--He does chide and we might question his love if He did not. His chiding is occasioned by our sins. So soon as they are confessed and put away, there is no trace of it left.

Psalm 103:10.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins.--Surely each one can set his seal to this.

Psalm 103:11-12.

As the heaven is high above the earth! As far as is east from west!--These are the largest measurements which imagination can conceive. But they are all too small for the purpose of the Psalmist, in his desire to describe the impossibility of forgiven sin coming back on the soul.

Psalm 103:13-14.

Like as a father pitieth so the Lord pitieth.--We do not half realize our Father's pity. We chastise ourselves bitterly if we do not understand or reach our ideals. We are ever fearful that He will not give us credit for the motives which underlie our sad and fitful experience. We try to make ourselves more fit for his love. And all the time He is tenderly regarding us, and knows so well how much of our failure accrues from temperament, disposition and overstrain (1 Kings 19:5).

Psalm 103:15-18.

As for man, his days are as grass.--What a sublime contrast between man's weakness, at his best--and God's eternity of mercy! There is a promise also here for the grandchildren of God's people.--Remember to do.

Psalm 103:19.

His Kingdom ruleth over all.--Yes, all men and devils are beneath that power. Satan must even get permission before he can tempt (Job 1:11-12; Luke 22:31).

Psalm 103:20.

Bless the Lord, ye his angels!--The mighty and obedient angels! Angelic obedience might well stimulate us (Matt. 6:10).

Psalm 103:22.

Bless the Lord, all his works!--One lonely soul on fire with the love of God may set the whole universe ablaze (Acts 2:41; Rev. 5:11).

## **PSALM 104**

## HOW MANIFOLD ARE THY WORKS!

An anonymous poem; and yet there are many indications of David's touch. Luther has well described it as "a praise of God from the book of Nature." The theme is the greatness of God, as seen in his works. The description follows closely on the description of the several days of creation, as given in Gen. 1, the deviations being accounted for by the special object in the Psalmist's mind, of exalting the greatness of God--not only in the creation, but in the maintenance of his universe.

There is a majestic introductory verse, which is then elaborated--First the light, the heaven and earth, then the formation of the dry land (Psalm 104:2-5); the watering of the earth from His fountains (Psalm 104:6-9); the provision for beasts and men (Psalm 104:10-24); the wonders of the sea (Psalm 104:24-26); God's personal work in nature (Psalm 104:27-30); a noble conclusion of praise (Psalm 104:31-35).

It is almost impossible in a brief space to say aught of this marvellous production. Here poetry at its highest sublimity of conception, and diction and devotional feeling of the most spiritual order blend in one superb and unrivalled poem.

Psalm 104:2.

Who covereth thyself with light.--God has many "garments" ascribed to Him (Psa. 93:1), but this primeval one is, perhaps, the most beautiful of them all.

Psalm 104:4.

Who maketh winds his messengers; his ministers a flaming fire '(R.V.).--The tempest and the flame are his slaves; make friends with their Master.

Psalm 104:6-8.

At thy rebuke the waters fled.--This is the work of the third day--the removal of the water from the earth--and is painted at great length, because the Psalmist sees in it an allegory of the removal of the heathen, who had inundated the Holy Land (Psa. 93). Some have seen in these verses a reference to glacial action, by which so much water is being brought down from the mountains to the valleys.

Psalm 104:9.

That they turn not again (Gen. 9:15; Job 38:8-11).

Psalm 104:11, 12, 14.

Wild asses fowls cattle.--If God is so careful of birds and beasts, how much more of his children! (Matt. 6:26; 10:31).

Psalm 104:15.

Wine oil bread.--The products of the land: the olive; the vine; and corn (Deut. 11:14).

Psalm 104:16.

The trees of the Lord; the cedars of Lebanon.--The earth is satisfied (Psalm 104:13); the trees are satisfied (R.V.); all living things are satisfied (Psalm 104:28, R.V.).

Psalm 104:17-18.

The birds the wild goats the conies.--He who implants natural instincts, provides for their satisfaction.

Psalm 104:20-23.

The beasts of the forest creep: the young lions roar.--Night and morning in the forest pasture-lands.

Psalm 104:24.

How manifold are thy works! (Psa. 111:2). The fertility of God's inventiveness.

Psalm 104:28.

Thou openest thine hand.--To satisfy creation, God has but to open his hand.

Psalm 104:30-31.

The Lord shall rejoice in his works.--Where no human foot treads, God's Spirit broods, rejoicing in his works.

Psalms 104:34.

My meditation of Him shall be sweet.--Here, indeed, is food for holy meditation; sweet because of its theme. Let us alone rejoice in the Lord!

## PSALM 105

### THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

This Psalm is supposed to date from the Babylonian captivity, at which time the hearts of God's people would be specially directed to that faithfulness which could not fail (Psa. 89:33), and must keep for them all that it had promised. It was natural then to recapitulate the past as an argument for a similar interposition again on their behalf.

The past wonders of God are quoted as arguments for the future (Psalm 105:1-7); a recalling of the covenant (Psalm 105:8-12); his care over the early Jewish fathers (Psalm 105:13-15); his guidance of Jacob and his family to Egypt (Psalm 105:16-23); the deliverance of Israel with great wonders and signs (Psalm 105:24-38); the marvels of the wilderness march (Psalm 105:39-42); and the introduction of Israel into Canaan (Psalm 105:43-45).

Psalms 105:2.

Sing unto Him! sing psalms unto Him!--If you cannot sing, talk.

Psalms 105:3.

Glory ye (lit. Praise ye! same word as translated Boast in, Psa. 34:2).---In the midst of our deepest trouble we have reason for joy. Even the seeker has plenty to rejoice over, for he is on a road which must lead him ultimately to blessedness.

Psalms 105:8.

He hath remembered his covenant.--A verbal allusion to Deut. 7:9.

Psalms 105:9.

Which He made with Abraham.--When once you can lay hold of a promise, or the provisions of the covenant, you have a 'leverage with God which enables you to count upon the fulfilment of your petition. God cannot go back from his plighted word.

Psalms 105:12.

But a few men; yea, very few.--And His word is entirely independent of our numbers or power.

Psalms 105:15.

Touch not Mine anointed ones (R.V., see Psa. 20:6).--How safe we are! (Gen. 20:6).

Psalms 105:17-22.

Joseph, who was sold for a slave.--A summary of Joseph's career in Egypt.

Psalms 105:18.

Laid in iron.--Is this not equivalent to the entrance of the iron into his soul?

Psalms 105:19.

His word came.--Until the time that the thing which Joseph had spoken was brought under the notice of Pharaoh, when his "discreet and wise" spirit--the veritable word of the Lord (Gen. 41:38-39)--approved him to the Egyptian monarch. In compliance with his request, the chief butler made mention of Joseph to Pharaoh, and he was "brought out of the prison house" (Gen. 40:14).

Psalms 105:23-27.

Israel also came into Egypt.--The Egyptian experiences of the children of Israel.

Psalms 105:28-36.

Darkness; waters turned into blood; frogs; flies; lice; hail; the smiting of the firstborn.--A magnificent description of the plagues; with several added, and graphic touches.

Psalm 105:39-41.

Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 12-17).

Psalm 105:42.

His holy promise.--If He did all this because of his covenant, it is impossible that He will ever forget or forsake his own.

Psalm 105:43-45.

He brought forth his people with joy.--All the benefits bestowed on Israel are shadows of spiritual blessings. Redeemed; enriched; restored; satisfied with heavenly bread and drinking of the spiritual rock; made to sit in heavenly places. What can we desire more? Only let us not rebel against Him.

## PSALM 106

THEY FORGOT GOD!

The previous Psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel; and this is a history of their rebellions and provocations. Its main character is the confession of sin. If, as is supposed, it dates from the captivity, it is in harmony with the confessions of Daniel and Nehemiah. It tends to show that the sharp discipline had done its work, and that God was about to restore his people to the land of their fathers.

After an introduction of inimitable sweetness (Psalm 106:1-6), the confession extends to the sins of Egypt (Psalm 106:6-12); of the wilderness (Psalm 106:13-33); and of Canaan (Psalm 106:34-43). But as, in spite of all, the mercy of God had so often interposed, so the believer felt able to call on the Lord to complete the work He had begun, and to gather the nation again from among the heathen (Psalm 106:44-48).

Psalm 106:1.

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord!--This is also the commencement of Psa. 107: it likewise forms the opening sentence of Psa. 136; while in the latter Psalm, For his mercy endureth for ever is the oft-recurring refrain.

Psalm 106:4-5.

Remember me, O Lord!--A prayer like this is sure of its answer (see Neh. 13:14, 22-31).

Psalm 106:7-8.

Our fathers provoked Him at the Red Sea.--Our sin cannot shut us out of the love of God. There is ever a Nevertheless (Neh. 9:31; Psa. 73:23; 89:33).

Psalm 106:12-13.

They believed they forgot.--How sad and sudden a contrast!

Psalm 106:15.

He sent leanness into their soul.--Let us ever condition our prayers in the will of God, lest a similar fate overtake us.

Psalm 106:16.

They envied Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:3, 5, 7).

Psalm 106:19-29.

They made a calf; they despised; they murmured.--How sad a catalogue of failures!

Psalm 106:23.

Stood in the breach, as a warrior covers with his body a broken piece of a wall in a besieged city.

Psalm 106:28.

They joined themselves unto Baal-peor.--This was the result of the suggestions of Balaam to Balak (Num. 25:3; Rev. 2:14).

Psalm 106:32-33.

It went in with Moses.--How infectious is unbelief. It spread from the people to their noble leader!

Psalm 106:35-39.

Were mingled among the heathen.--In spite of Joshua's warning (Josh. 23:12, 13; see also Judges 2:2; 3:6).

Psalm 106:43.

Many times did He deliver them.--These are the times of the Judges and the Kings! And how many times has He also delivered us from the results of our sins!

Psalm 106:44.

Nevertheless He regarded their affliction.--Another Nevertheless. See Psalm 106:8.

Psalm 106:46.

He made them to be pitied.--God can put pity into the heart of your most merciless foe.

Psalm 106:48.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.--With this magnificent doxology we close the fourth book of the Psalms. As we do so, we worship and bow down, and join the hallelujahs of heaven and earth.

## **PSALM 107**

OH THAT MEN WOULD PRAISE THE LORD!

This Psalm, according to Psalm 107:32, was composed to be sung at a national religious service in which joy was the keynote. It was also, according to Psalm 107:22, connected with the offering of sacrifices and thank-offerings. It is thought that it was composed for the celebration of the feast of tabernacles, after the return from the exile, when Israel was gathered as one man at Jerusalem, and sacrifices were offered (Ezra 3:1-3). The special references, however, are not very distinct. So the Psalm is appropriate to the whole Church, and to each individual, after experiencing some marked Divine interposition or deliverance.

The Psalm begins with an exhortation to praise for God's gracious deeds. In the following verses we are presented with four tableaux: of the caravan in the wilderness (Psalm 107:4-9); of the prisoner (Psalm 107:10-16); of the sick (Psalm 107:17-22); of the mariner in the storm (Psalm 107:23-32). In each of these paragraphs there is a great similarity of order: first the trouble, then the cry for help, then the gracious deliverance, and, the exhortation to give thanks. After this there is a glad reference to the restored nation (Psalm 107:33-43), which, in spite of the hate of its enemies, had been reinstated in its own land and was already preparing to rebuild the Holy City.

Psalm 107:1-2.

His mercy endureth forever.--It is not enough to think it: say it.

Psalm 107:3.

He gathered them out of the lands.--Evidently in reference to the return from the Captivity (Isa. 43:5-6; 56:8).

Psalm 107:4.

They wandered in the wilderness.--We are in this world as in a wilderness, having no continuing city. But we are under the care of One who is leading us through the desert to our home, and He will not suffer us to lack any good thing.

Psalm 107:8.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!--This prayerful refrain occurs four times (Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31).

Psalm 107:9.

He satisfieth and filleth.--Blessed hunger, which meets with such a provision! (Matt. 5:6).

Psalm 107:10-14.

In darkness and in the shadow of death.--Words fail to describe the miseries of an Oriental prison: a true type, though, of souls under conviction; or of the pressure of some great heart-sorrow. Yet out of these the Lord delivereth (2 Thess. 3:2).

Psalm 107:17.

Because of their transgression.--We are foolish to yield to transgression, which so often brings in its train sickness of body. But let us beware of saying that sickness is a sign of special sin (John 9:2-3).

Psalm 107:20.

He sent his word, and healed them.--His name in all ages has been Jehovah-rophi, "the Lord that healeth thee" (Exod. 15-26). And He heals the diseases of souls as well as of bodies. Oh, put yourselves into the hands of the good Physician of souls!

Psalm 107:25-29.

He raiseth the stormy wind.--We all know what these storms mean. They are valuable if they bring us to an end of ourselves. For then we are at the beginning of God.

Psalm 107:33-38.

He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness.--Those who trust in earthly comforts and seem secure, may in a moment be left destitute. Those who are in the greatest straits may suddenly become enriched with all manner of good. Do not trust in things, but in God.

Psalm 107:43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things.--Let us ask God to give us this true wisdom and spiritual insight, that we may look out for these indications of Divine mercy, treasuring them for encouragement, comfort and praise.

## **PSALM 108**

MY HEART IS FIXED!

This is a Davidic Psalm, and a variation of the sixtieth. It consists of three strophes. The first (Psalm 108:1-5) is borrowed with alterations from Psa. 57:7-11; the second (Psalm 108:6-9) and the third (Psalm 108:10-13) from Psalm 60:5-12. This Psalm expresses on behalf of God's people, their firm confidence that He would deliver them, and ultimately give victory over all their enemies.

Psalm 108:1.

My heart is fixed.--The fixed heart is the singing heart. Glory here stands for mouth or soul, whose praise pleases God (Psa. 30:12).

Psalm 108:2.

I will awake the dawn (R.V., marg.).--There is no time for praise like early morn. Let us ask God to waken us (Isa. 50:4).

Psalm 108:6.

That thy beloved may be delivered.--We are beloved in the "Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). Me in the A.V. is changed to us in R.V. The saint never prays alone; the voice of Jesus and of His Church blends with his.

Psalm 108:7.

God hath spoken.--When God has spoken promising victory, we may begin to exult and divide the spoils of the war.

Psalm 108:8.

Gilead Manasseh Ephraim.--David enumerates the various portions of the land which already owned his sway, and the other portions which he had subjugated. And in Christ the believer learns that all things are his (1 Cor. 3:21). Even his enemies contribute to his possessions and wealth.

Psalm 108:10.

Who will lead me into Edom?--Most of us have an Edom before us, in the form of some difficulty or temptation. If we are abiding by

faith in God, we shall discover the secret of entering as conquerors, even into the city of rock (Petra, the chief city of Edom, was cut in the rock).

Psalm 108:11.

Wilt not Thou, O God?--An implied answer to the question of Psalm 108:10.

Psalm 108:12-13.

Give us help from trouble.--"Vanity of vanities" is written on all human aid and on our resolutions and endeavors. If we will follow where God leads the way, we shall go from victory to victory. He will fight for us and tread down our foes; as when a strong man tramples down the forest undergrowth, and the little children have but to follow in his steps.

## PSALM 109

HOLD NOT THY PEACE, O GOD!

The internal evidence agrees with the inscription as ascribing this Psalm to David. Like others of the same character, it dates probably from the time of the Sauline persecution. It is full of appeals for the Divine vindication of persecuted saints. These old sacred writers had clear, strong, views of the enormity of wrong-doing. They did not scruple to invoke the Divine justice against those who perpetrated it (see Psalm 28:4). There are sentences which exhibit a like spirit in the New Testament (Acts 23:3; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:4). But on the whole we are taught by the Gospel to speak more leniently of those who oppress us (Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). We cannot forget the quotation made from this Psalm (Psalm 109:8) by the Apostle Peter with reference to the betrayer (Acts 1:20). Thus we are led to question whether these strong imprecations may not be a foreshadowing of that awful fate which must overtake such as knowingly and wilfully sin against God's children and cause.

The arrangement of the Psalm is very simple. It consists of three strophes, each of ten verses, and a final verse which gives the conclusion and sum of the whole.

Psalm 109:4.

By omitting the three words in italics, we get a beautiful meaning: But 1-prayer; as if the one response made by the Psalmist was PRAYER; and so much so, that his existence for the time was summed up in the word.

Psalm 109:6-15.

Let him be condemned.--It is held by some that these verses are a quotation of what was desired by his foes. It is better to consider them not as imprecations but as predictions, the imperative mood being put for the future tense as the custom of the Hebrew.

Psalm 109:21.

For thy name's sake!--What an exquisite prayer! Better let God do for you than do for yourself (Psa. 119:124; Jer. 14:7). God's mercy is indeed good.

Psalm 109:22.

I am poor and needy (so also Psa. 70:5).

Psalm 109:26.

Help me, O Lord!--Another of these sweet ejaculatory petitions, of which we should each carry a quiverful for daily use.

Psalm 109:28.

But bless Thou!--It is well to be persecuted, if with every curse of man we can detect the silver tones of the Divine benediction, saying, "Blessed are ye!" (Matt. 5:11).

Psalm 109:31.

He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.--How brave is the accused if he enters court leaning on the arm of the noblest in the land! How futile is it to condemn when the Judge of all stands beside to justify! (Rom. 8:33).

## PSALM 110

SIT THOU AT MY RIGHT HAND!

Luther calls this Psalm "the true, high, main Psalm of our beloved Lord, Jesus Christ." Our Lord Himself says that it was written by David in the Holy Ghost. There is no portion of the Old Testament more frequently quoted in the New (Matt. 22:44; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:8-13; 5:6-10; 7:17-21).

This Psalm was composed when the seat of government and the ark of the covenant were already on Mount Zion. David had already received the grand promise of 2 Sam. 7. There rings through the Psalm a grand anticipation of victory over his foes. But do not all these thoughts fade into comparative insignificance as we read into these words conceptions of the glory, perpetuity and ultimate victory of the kingdom of our Lord?

In the Psalm 110:1, 2, 4 the Hebrew word JEHOVAH is rendered LORD. Where the second mention of the word "LORD" occurs in Psalm 110:1, and also in the instance of Psalm 110:5, the Hebrew word is ADONAI--Master, Ruler, Lord.

Psalm 110:1.

Sit Thou at My right hand!--This was the welcome of the Ascension Day--the word with which the Father greeted Jesus. And all through the ages He has been engaged in making the foes of Christ the footstool of his feet. This is not accomplished yet, but it is sure.

Psalm 110:2.

Out of Zion.--It is out of Judaism, the seat of which was Zion--from the narrowest nation under heaven--that the Gospel has gone forth, which has a message to the entire race and is destined to enclose the whole world in its embrace.

Psalm 110:3.

Thy people shall be willing.--A striking picture of the soldiers of Christ. Their spirit as free-will offerings. Their attire in the beautiful and glistening robes of holiness. Their numbers, youthful warriors, numerous as the dewdrops besprinkling the morning meadows.

Psalm 110:4.

Thou a Priest forever!--In Jesus the offices of King and Priest blend (Zech. 6:12-13). This combination of priesthood and kingship is also the spiritual prerogative of all Christ's true disciples (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). His priesthood, however, is not after the model of Aaron, but according to that of Melchizedek, a more ancient, universal and enduring type, as the Epistle to the Hebrews amply shows (Heb. 7).

Psalm 110:5.

Shall strike through kings.--The triumph of our Lord is guaranteed by the omnipotence of God. But, alas for that day of wrath! Nevertheless, He must bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15).

Psalm 110:6.

He shall judge.--The Gospel of Jesus must be for our blessing or our bane--for salvation or destruction.

Psalm 110:7.

He shall drink of the brook in the way.--As Jonathan in the wood (1 Sam. 14:27) took of the honey and was refreshed, so does our Lord drink of the love and devotion of his people. He goes forward without discouragement to the victory which awaits Him. Have you been as a brook from which He has drunk? Is Jesus refreshed by you?

## **PSALM 111**

THE WORKS OF THE LORD

This Psalm was probably written after the return from the Captivity. The circumstances of the new colony were poor and depressing. And the aim of the religious leaders of the people was to get them to look up to God and expect from Him a gracious repetition of the marvelous works of the past. That word, works, is the keynote of the Psalm, occurring constantly (Psalm 111:2, 3, 4, 6, 7); also the word ever (Psalm 111:3, 5, 8, 9, 10). When tempted to lose heart, because of present difficulty, let us go back on the former deeds of the right hand of the Lord. This Psalm is an alphabetical acrostic.

Psalm 111:1.

I will praise the Lord.--It is not enough to call on others to praise. Each of us must do so, as a matter of personal duty.

Psalm 111:2.

The works of the Lord are great.--Let us search them out--the works of the Lord in nature, with telescope or microscope, on Alpine solitude, by mountain stream or in the great world of human life. We must seek, if we would find. For it is God's pleasure to hide things.

Psalm 111:3.

His work.--Notice the singular. All the "works" (Psalm 111:2) are the WORK, emanating from one source, tending to one result. "One law; one plan; one far-off Divine event."

Psalm 111:5.

He will ever be mindful of his covenant.--Judge not God by his delays but by his promises. "He waits that He may be gracious."

Psalm 111:6.

The heritage of the heathen.--What a heritage is ours in Christ! (Rom. 8:17).

Psalm 111:7.

The works of his hands are verity and judgment.--They are "Yea and Amen in Christ" (2 Cor. 1:20).

Psalm 111:9.

He sent redemption unto his people.--Type of the redemption of Christ (Rev. 5:9).

Psalm 111:10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.--The fear of God here mentioned is childlike fear, which dreads to offend and is compatible with perfect love. To have this is to have a wisdom which enters into God's secrets, reads his meaning and understands Himself. If you want to have a good understanding of things, men and God, you will get it best by being right with God. The standpoint from which we view things is of the utmost importance to our right understanding of them. The margin gives another reading, a good success. But note that all depends on obedience. Those that do, know. Act up to all you know and you will know more (John 7:17). Do God's will and He will prosper you.

## PSALM 112

HALLELUJAH

The HALLELUJAH at the beginning of this Psalm closely relates it to the preceding and following ones. Evidently they were composed about the same time, perhaps by the same author, and belong manifestly to the era of return from the Captivity. Like the preceding Psalm, this also is an alphabetical acrostic.

Psalm 112:1.

Blessed is the man that delighteth in His commandments.--The only way of delighting in God's commandments is to do them (Rev. 22:14).

Psalm 112:2.

The generation of the upright shall be blessed.--We have ample warrant for believing that though godliness is not hereditary, yet the belief of a godly parent has the strongest possible influence on children. Blessing is passed on to after-generations (Psa. 103:17; Isa. 59:21).

Psalm 112:3.

Wealth in his house.--Although the Christian dispensation is one of spiritual, rather than of temporal, blessing--it is nevertheless true that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

Psalm 112:4.

There ariseth light in the darkness.--We may not always see the light, but it is behind the cloud, waiting God's signal (Psa. 97:11;

Isa. 50:10).

Psalm 112:5.

A good man lendeth.--There is a premonition here of our Lord's words (Matt. 5:42). 7. He shall not be afraid.--The heart which is trustfully fixed on God is not afraid. No tidings can reach it save through the Father's care. All tidings must be of the Father's appointment. If you are dreading evil tidings, do not look along the road by which the postman comes, but upward and Godward. Trust is expulsive of fear.

Psalm 112:9.

He hath given to the poor.--There is no great difficulty in giving to the poor, when once we have learned our unsearchable riches in Christ. Oh to be purveyors of these to others! (Eph 3:2-10).

Psalm 112:10.

The wicked shall see, and be grieved.--The wicked are vexed, partly because they are aware that the righteous have possessions of which they are destitute. Partly because their own schemes melt away before their eyes, as wreaths of smoke.

## **PSALM 113**

HE RAISETH UP THE POOR

This and the five following Psalms constitute the Hallel (or Praise-song), sung at the Jewish festivals, particularly at the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles. It is thought to have been the hymn of psalm sung by our Lord and his disciples after the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:30). This Psalm is ruled by the number three; three strophes of three verses each. Three times in Psalm 113:1 we are exhorted to praise.

Psalm 113:1.

Praise the name of the Lord!--God's "name" is his character.

Psalm 113:2.

For evermore!--This verse proceeds on the supposition that our God will forever continue to develop and unfold his glorious nature, so that there will be always some new occasion to adore Him.

Psalm 113:3.

From the rising of the sun unto the going down.--This prediction is yet to be realized (Psa. 72:11; Mal. 1:11; Rev. 15:3, 4), Then the sun's course as it awakens the successive populations of the globe shall be tracked by songs.

Psalm 113:5-6.

Our God, who humbleth Himself.--How humble should we be! Though we familiarly speak to God as our Father, we should never forget the immense distance between Him and us. And yet our Lord stooped through this immense distance to become man! (Phil. 2:6-8).

Psalm 113:7-8.

Out of the dust! out of the dunghill!--These are almost word for word from the prayer of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:8). A woman may lead the songs of the Church.

Psalm 113:9.

A joyful mother.--The "barren woman" here may perhaps typify the Jewish Church in her low estate or the Gentile Church (Isa. 40:13). When God wills, and in answer to prayer, her children are multiplied.

## **PSALM 114**

THE SEA SAW IT, AND FLED!

The authorship of this Psalm cannot be traced. It clearly belongs to the period of return from the Captivity. The writer seeks comfort, under much discouragement, in the recollection of the blessed and glorious past.

Psalm 114:1.

Israel Jacob.--The two names of the patriarch occur in the same verse. Israel must never forget that he was once Jacob. All Jacobs may yet become Israels, by the grace of God. We all have our Egypts and our people of strange tongue. But when the lesson of our bondage is learned, our God brings us out.

Psalm 114:2.

Judah was his sanctuary.--The Eternal finds his home in the midst of his people (Deut. 33:12; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3). Is thy heart his sanctuary and dominion?

Psalm 114:3-6.

The sea saw, and fled.--A poetical description of the passage of the Red Sea and of the Jordan, also of the giving of the law (Psa. 68:16).

Psalm 114:7.

The presence of the God of Jacob.--How gracious that God should call Himself the God of Jacob! (Isa. 41:14). The Divine presence is always with us (Matt. 28:20), though so often we are insensible to its majestic glory. And if earth should tremble before Him, much more should we; not with the fear of slaves, but with the godly fear which dares not grieve his Holy Spirit.

Psalm 114:8.

Who turned the rock into a standing water.--Many such miracles doth He still. The most unlikely things yield the streams which quench our thirst and satisfy our souls. Work such miracles, blessed God, on the rocks and flints which glaciers of trouble have brought down into our lives!

## PSALM 115

NOT UNTO US, O LORD!

Another of the Psalms which date from the Captivity era. We may divide it thus:-- Psalm 115:1., Ascription; Psalm 115:2-7, God (Elohim), contrasted with heathen Deities; Psalm 115:8, A portrait of idolaters; Psalm 115:9-11, Exhortation; Psalm 115:12-15, Assurance; Psalm 115:16-18, Resolution.

Psalm 115:1.

Not unto us, O Lord!--It would eliminate from success and praise their power to harm us, if we would give from the heart, utterance to those noble words. God's mercy and truth are indissoluble.

Psalm 115:2-3.

Where is their God?--Those accustomed to some visible embodiment of God are always amazed at spiritual worship (John 4:24). Pompey, we are told, was very surprised to find nothing in the most Holy Place. God's good pleasure is never arbitrary, but always conditioned by the highest welfare of his creatures. Let us ask Him to work that pleasure out in us that we may please Him! (Heb. 13:21, 11:5).

Psalm 115:4-7.

Their idols.--This sarcastic description recalls the searching passage in Isaiah 44:9-19.

Psalm 115:8

They that make them.--A very striking thought is given in these words. We resemble our ideals. We become like what we worship. And though we may not be now tempted to prostrate ourselves before the idols of the heathen, yet there are idols which may fascinate us (1 Cor. 10:14; Col. 3:5; 1 John 5:21). We ' must not trust gold or success or any earthly thing, but God in Christ, till we become like Him (2 Cor. 3:18).

Psalm 115:9-11.

Trust in the Lord!--A triple appeal for trust, addressed to the congregation. The priests and perhaps the proselytes (Ruth 2:12). The greatest cannot do without God. The least may appropriate Him. Trust in taking what God gives. "Help" and "shield" together make a very assuring combination. The one for succour in every moment of need; the other for defense.

Psalm 115:12-13.

The Lord will bless!--Here is a triple answer to the triple appeal. And we are surely at liberty to argue from the past to the future. What God has done, that He will do. Trust Him!

Psalm 115:15.

Ye are blessed of the Lord!--Then let him curse who may. We have but to turn back to Abraham's life to see what God's blessing includes (Gen. 12:2-3; see also Num. 6:22-27). And we who believe must be blessed, if the Maker of all things blesses us. The lot of God's children may seem arduous and darksome, but it is a blessed one. In Him is our peace and rest.

Psalm 115:17.

The dead praise not.--Views of the HEREAFTER were but partial to the Old Testament saints (2 Tim. 1:10). We have now an opportunity, which even heaven does not present, of praising God amid the obloquy and hate of men. Let his praise be the more hearty and continuous in proportion to their anathemas.

## PSALM 116

I LOVE THE LORD!

This Psalm formed part of the Paschal Hallel, and contains an underlying reference to the deliverance from Egypt and the deliverance from the captivity in Babylon. The Psalmist passes from the national deliverance to his personal sweet experiences of redeeming mercy, and sings his own song of thankfulness. The name "Jehovah" occurs fifteen times and "Jah" once.

Psalm 116:1-2.

He hath heard.--Answered prayer may well incite to renewed love. But let us not love Him less, if He withhold. Perhaps the withholding is a greater proof of love than giving would be (John 11:3-15).

Psalm 116:3-6.

The sorrows of death.--Many who are reading this Psalm may be in a similar position. And excessive grief is some times apt to check prayer. The soul is too sore and hurt even to cry out. Yet it is well worth our while, when we are in such circumstances, to break through all restraints and call out to God. He is very merciful.

Psalm 116:7.

Return unto thy rest, O my soul!--There is no "rest" so warm and safe for the soul, as in the love and care of God. Sometimes, however, like the dove, we seem to get away from it. There is nothing better, at such times, than to return, and we shall be at once pulled in unto Him (Gen. 8:9). Why do we ever leave our rest? Why wander from our home? (Matt. 11:29). The love of God invites us back (Rom. 2:4).

Psalm 116:8.

Thou hast delivered.--He hath delivered; He doth deliver; He will yet deliver (2 Cor. 1:10).

Psalm 116:10.

I believed: therefore have I spoken.--Quoted by the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 4:13). This is the speech which convinces men, because it has in it the accent of the speaker's conviction. Never say more than you believe.

Psalm 116:11.

In my haste.--It is this hasty speaking which lies at the root of so much misery to ourselves and others. An eminent director of souls once said: "I shall have good hopes of you when you can speak and move slowly." Oh for a holy collectedness of spirit!

Psalm 116:13.

The cup of salvation.--The Scripture often speaks of our lot as a "cup." In this case it brims with blessed help. But it is only because our dear Lord drank a cup brimming with bitter sorrow (John 18:11).

Psalm 116:14.

will pay my vows.--A good resolve, repeated in Psalm 116:18 (Eccles. 5:4-5).

Psalm 116:15.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.--Therefore He often raises them from the very borders of the grave. Each saintly death-bed is the scene of minute care on the part of God our Father. It is there that He puts the finishing touch on a perfected character. Balaam's wish (Num. 23:10) was not granted, for it went forth from feigned lips.

Psalm 116:16.

O Lord, truly I am thy servant (thy slave).--A marvelous avowal! The Psalmist dwells with delight on his slavery (ebed, a slave); and through it finds freedom. To be the slave of Jesus is to taste the sweets of liberty. Those who become God's slaves are loosed by Him from all other bonds (John 8:31-36).

Psalm 116:17-19.

The sacrifice of thanksgiving.--"Praise is comely" (Psa. 33:1; 147:1). Shall we withhold from Jehovah that praise which is his due? Thanksgiving should ever be the accompaniment of our prayers (Phil. 4:6). Psalm 116:17-18 are almost identical with Psalm 116:13-14. We ought not to shrink from making mention of God's name (Psa. 66:13-16).

## PSALM 117

ALL YE NATIONS!

This is the shortest chapter in the Bible and its center. Perhaps it was intended to be used as a doxology to the preceding and other Psalms. Though small, and yet, small as it is, it is full of a world-wide spirit, reaching out to all nations. "It is a dewdrop reflecting the universe." The Apostle quotes it in Rom. 15:11, as foretelling the call of the Gentiles. In this Psalm, as also in Isa. 11:10, and elsewhere, the spirit of Judaism forgets its natural exclusiveness and reaches out its hands to the world.

Psalm 117:1.

Oh, praise the Lord, all ye nations!--Before we can appropriate these words, we must have learned to exercise the spirit of praise for ourselves. We must have come to see that the Lord Jesus is infinitely deserving of the love and homage of all mankind. And we must have received into our hearts the spirit of his own great love, which yearns over all men. Men will never be truly happy till they adore and praise Him whom we call Master (Phil. 2:10).

Psalm 117:2.

His merciful kindness is great.--The greatness of his love and the permanence of his word. Here are themes indeed for praise. Do we think enough of them? And are we as prepared to praise in dark and sad days as in bright and happy ones--because God is the same, and the same to us, though our lot may not be quite what it was in other and more gladsome moments?

## PSALM 118

CHASTENED SORE!

This Psalm was sung by the restored exiles, when they laid the foundation of the second Temple (Ezra 3:10, 11). It is believed that our Lord and his disciples sang this Psalm before He went into the garden (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). It was the last Psalm of the Hallel, 113-118. It is said to have been used after the Paschal meal. It is very touching to read into this Psalm some of those thoughts which must have filled the heart of our blessed Saviour, as He stood on the margin of the cold river. Psalm 118:26 had been sung a few days before in chorus by the multitudes who attended the triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9). That same verse will probably be on the nation's lips when Zech. 14 is fulfilled. (Compare Isa. 25:9 with Matt. 23:39). Luther says of Psalm 118, "This is my Psalm, the one which I love." "Jehovah" occurs twenty-two times, corresponding with the numbers of letters in the Hebrew alphabet; "Jah" occurs five times.

Psalm 118:1.

He IS good. Hold this fast in spite of all appearances to the contrary or the maledictions of his foes. And He will not grow weary or change (Mal. 3:6).

Psalm 118:2-4.

His mercy endureth forever.--The triple call of Psa. 115:9-11.

Psalm 118:5.

1 called the Lord answered.--Sin-stricken and sorrowful souls can hardly do better than take this prescription. If it has healed one, why should it not avail for others? (See Psa. 34:6).

Psalm 118:6-7.

The Lord is on my side.--If you would have God on your side, you must take care to be on his side. And when once a poor saint and God are on the same side, victory is certain (Rom. 8:33; Heb. 13:6).

Psalm 118:8-9.

It is better to trust in the Lord.--If our dearest friend were a rich and mighty prince, how secure we should be! Are we less so, when we entrust all our concerns to God? Nay, saith the Psalmist, not worse off, but better. Put your most secret desires and Plans into the hands of Jesus.

Psalm 118:10-12.

In the name of the Lord.--We may say this of our spiritual foes, as well as of all who oppose our endeavors for God's cause.

Psalm 118:14.

The Lord is my strength and song!--A fragment from the Song of Moses (Exod. 15:2). (See also Psa. 27:1; 62:6.)

Psalm 118:16.

The right hand of the Lord.--Our Mediator sits at the right hand of God, the position of activity and might (Mark 16:19). That right hand must therefore prevail for us.

Psalm 118:17-18

. But.--There is always a "but" of merciful reservation in God's dealings with us (Isa. 38:17).

Psalm 118:19-20.

The gates of righteousness.--The Lord hath many gates, through which the righteous pass into the inner chambers of his presence (Rev. 21:12-25).

Psalm 118:22.

The head-stone of the corner.--This verse is supposed to have been suggested by the difficulty experienced by the Temple builders in fitting a certain stone into its place, though it afterwards occupied a very important position in the completed structure. The verse is frequently quoted and applied to the Lord Jesus (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; and 1 Pet. 2:4-7).

Psalm 118:27.

God hath showed us light.--New light demands more devoted service.

## **PSALM 119**

THY LAW DO I LOVE

This long and noble Psalm is devoted to the praise of the Word of God, which it mentions in nearly every verse under one title or another. Ezra probably composed it in order to lead the people better to appreciate and prize the Holy Scriptures. The Psalm is a rich aid to meditation if read thoughtfully and prayerfully. It will be loved in proportion as it is used. Chrysostom, Ambros, Augustine and Luther have left on record very high tributes to its worth.

It is an alphabetical acrostic; and certainly the most remarkable of all the acrostic Psalms in the Scriptures. To make the Psalm easier to commit to memory, its contents are broken into twenty-two short divisions or sections, all the verses in each section beginning with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

It is a pleasant exercise to take up the keywords of this Psalm, which occur throughout its texture, and to dwell on them in all the varying lights flashed thereon by the context in each several case. Take, for instance, that word Quicken (Psalm 119:25, 37, 40, 88, 149, 156, 159).

The following division, founded on that of Pastor C. A. Davis, is proposed.

Psalm 119:1-8.

The undefiled, and their blessedness.

Psalm 119:9-16.

The sanctifying influence of the Word.

Psalm 119:17-24.

The longings of the holy soul.

Psalm 119:25-32.

A cry for quickening.

Psalm 119:33-40.

Faithfulness, the result of the Divine inworking.

Psalm 119:41-48.

Mercies, and their effect.

Psalm 119:49-56.

Hope in affliction.

Psalm 119:57-64.

God our portion.

Psalm 119:65-72.

A review of the Divine dealings.

Psalm 119:73-80.

The creature's appeal to its Creator.

Psalm 119:81-88.

Hope in depression.

Psalm 119:89-96.

## **PSALM 120**

### IN MY DISTRESS

This and the following fourteen Psalms are called "Songs of Degrees," or of "Goings Up." They were, perhaps, composed for singing as the Ark was being borne to its resting place. In any case they became the pilgrim songs of the people who sang them as they went up from all parts of the country to the annual Feasts. This Psalm, like so many of David's, seems to refer to Doeg, or a man of his sort whose lies had brought untold mischief to the singer (1 Sam. 22:9).

Psalm 120:1.

1 cried; and He heard.--Let those that are in distress lay this testimony to heart. If you cannot pray, cry.

Psalm 120:2.

Deliver from lying lips!--Slander is a vine sin. Christian people are not as watchful against it as they should be (James 3).

Psalm 120:3.

Thou false tongue!--The strongest treatment is not too much to be meted out to those who forge lies.

Psalm 120:4.

Sharp arrows with coals of juniper.--A figurative intimation of the punishment in reserve for slanderers. As sure as the poisoned

arrow shot by an expert takes its victim, revenge shall overtake such an offender against God and man.

Psalm 120:5.

Woe is me!--By a proverbial allusion, an outcast life is described. Denied the joys of home and friendship, and participation in the ordinances of God's house, the believer is very like a wanderer among barbarians.

Psalm 120:6-7.

I am for peace they are for war!--Having opened with a statement of the gracious treatment he received at the hands of the Lord, the Psalmist closes with a contrasted reference to man's ill-treatment of him. He was for peace, but his enemy desired war. In like manner the Christian is frequently made painfully aware of the "contradiction of sinners." (Heb. 12:3).

## PSALM 121

THE LORD IS THY KEEPER

Another of the Pilgrim Psalms prepared for the annual festival journeys, This seems to have been specially designed to be sung in view of the mountains about Jerusalem and is probably an evening song for the pilgrim-band. The keynote of the Psalm is the word keep, which occurs six times in one form or another (see R.V.).

Psalm 121:1.

I will lift up mine eyes!--We must not be contented with merely looking at the hills--but must look above and beyond them. The loftiest and mightiest sources of help are too low for us. Nothing short of God will avail for us.

Psalm 121:2.

My help cometh from the Lord!--The term applied to the Lord, as Creator of heaven and earth, indicates his inexhaustible abundance of help. "Despair is madness in any one who has such a God to help him."

Psalm 121:3.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.--The sliding of the foot is a very natural type of misfortune, in so mountainous a land as Canaan, where it is dangerous to lose one's foothold (see also Gen. 28:15; Psa. 26:1; 37:31).

Psalm 121:4.

He shall neither slumber nor sleep.--This is said of Israel's foes (Isa. 5:27); but it is more true of Israel's God. When the pilot comes on board, the captain may turn in to sleep.

Psalm 121:5.

The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.--"Shade" is a metaphor for protection from the scorching heat, like Jonah's , gourd. God is a Sun (Psa. 84:11); but He is a shadow from the heat (Psa. 91:1; Isa. 25:4).

Psalm 121:6.

The sun shall not smite nor the moon.--Heat and cold stand for the extremes of condition to which we are all exposed. Sometimes everything is warm and bright around us. At other times we are lonely and depressed, but in all circumstances God is sufficient (Phil. 4:12).

Psalm 121:7.

The Lord shall preserve!--He shall preserve!--These repeated assurances are to calm and quiet our unbelief, which needs to be told again and again that God will watch over his own. Nothing that happens to us can be evil. Whatever God lets pass through the meshes of his protection must be for our good.

Psalm 121:8.

Thy going out and thy coming in!--The going out is for work and service; the coming in may be for rest and refreshment. The Good Shepherd keeps his flock through all (John 10:9).

## PSALM 122

## PEACE BE WITHIN THY WALLS!

If the former Psalm was sung of the pilgrim band, when retiring to rest on the last evening, when Jerusalem was already in sight--this would be sung one station further on, when the pilgrims had reached the gates of Jerusalem and halted for the purpose of arranging themselves for solemn procession to the temple.

It is ascribed to David, and internal evidence confirms the inscription. The city newly built and beautified was the seat of David's government. The house of the Lord, referred to in Psalm 122:1, 9, is clearly the early sanctuary, which was known by this name (Jud. 18:31; 19:18).

Psalm 122:1.

Let us go into the house of the Lord!--There is an illustration of this in Isa. 2:3. It was much to have reached Jerusalem, but much more to have a desire to visit the Lord's house; for that was not merely a material edifice it was also the place where God met pious souls. Oh for this desire after God!

Psalm 122:2.

Our feet are standing (R.V.)--What a difference a step may make! All the difference between outside and inside--between a stranger and foreigner or a child at home.

Psalm 122:3.

Jerusalem a compact city (Compare 2 Sam. 5:9)--This is an expression of wonder that the stately city had arisen so quickly under the genius of David. What shall we not say, one day, of the new Jerusalem, when she descends from God in his glory! (Rev. 21:2).

Psalm 122:4.

Whither the tribes go up.--From the external splendor of Jerusalem the Psalmist passes on to praise her internal glory. She was the religious center and metropolis of the nation. The law to that effect had been laid down in the opening of the national history (Exod. 23:17, Deut. 16:16).

Psalm 122:6.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.--In the Hebrew there is a graceful alliteration of this verse:-

Peace in the City of Peace:  
May those be at peace who love her!

as though David would make the beloved name as dear to his people as it was to himself. Prosperity still attends those who love the name and cause of God. In such souls there are already present the elements of prosperity and blessedness.

Psalm 122:7.

Peace and prosperity!--Let us never forget to pray for the good estate of the Church Universal, in public and in our private devotions. Such prayers must be dear to her Bridegroom, Christ.

Psalm 122:8.

For my brethren and companions' sakes.--All who are members of that Church are our brethren and friends.

Psalm 122:9.

I will seek thy good.--Let all strive to promote the cause of God by word and life, by exertions and prayers.

## PSALM 123

### UNTO THEE LIFT I MINE EYES

This Psalm must by internal evidence be carried, as to its authorship, to a much later date than the preceding one. It was probably composed after the return from captivity, when Israel was suffering so much from the Samaritans and others (Ezra 4 and Neh. 2:19). Calvin shows the application of the Psalm to the Church of all ages when he says: "The Holy Ghost, by a clear voice, incites us and the whole church to come to God as often as they are unjustly and haughtily oppressed by the passions of her enemies."

Psalm 123:1

Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes!--Our Lord looked upward when He prayed (John 17:1). He has taught us to look up to our Father in heaven. It is his throne (Matt. 5:34).

Psalm 123:2.

Our eyes look unto the Lord our God (R.V.)--It has been truly said that the servant looks to the master's hand: (Psalm 123:1) for direction; (Psalm 123:2) for the supply of his needs; (Psalm 123:3) for protection; (Psalm 123:4) for correction; (Psalm 123:5) for reward. A very slight gesture is enough to indicate the master's will. Oh to be so incessantly occupied with the Lord Jesus as to need but a sign! There is perhaps also here the thought of the eagerness with which the eyes of a slave watch for the master's signal that a fault has been expiated by sufficient chastisement.

Psalm 123:3.

We are exceedingly filled with contempt.--Contempt is hard to bear, but we are taught to expect it, as the followers of Him who passed through storms of contumely, but who despised the shame (Heb. 12:2-4). Fix your hearts on the joy set before you, and "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13).

## PSALM 124

### THE LORD ON OUR SIDE

One of David's Psalms, perhaps written during the Aramaic-Edomitic war (2 Sam. 8:3-13; compare Psalms 44; 60.) Luther says, "We may well sing this Psalm, not only against our enemies who openly hate and persecute us, but also against spiritual wickedness."

Psalm 124:1.

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side!--What an If is this! One shudders to think what and where we might have been without the delivering, preserving hand of our God. If we are on the Lord's side and walking uprightly, we need never doubt as to whether He is on our side. That we may rest assured about.

Psalm 124:2.

The Lord on our-side:--men against us.--Weigh these two in the balances, God and men, and how unworthy do our fears appear! (Psa. 56:11).

Psalm 124:3.

They had swallowed us up quick.--Probably an allusion to the destruction of the company of Korah (Num. 16:32-33). The word quick is old English for "alive."

Psalm 124:4-5.

The waters; the stream; the proud waters.--Yet, as a matter of fact, the proud waters never have gone over us. They have threatened us again and again, but there has always been a "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" (Job 38:11). God makes of soft sand a strong bar to the sea. His voice on high is greater than the voices of the waves (Job 38:8; Psa. 93:3-4). Trust Him! As it has been, so shall it be.

Psalm 124:6.

Blessed be the Lord!--These outbursts of praise are so characteristic of the sweet Psalmist (Psa. 28:6; 31:21).

Psalm 124:7.

Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare.--We have often marvelled at the way in which the Evil One ensnares us. Quite unexpectedly he begins to weave the meshes of some net around the soul and seems about to hold it his captive. And then, all suddenly, the strong and deft hand of our Heavenly Friend interposes, as we sometimes interpose on behalf of a struggling insect in a spider's web. The snare falls into a tangled heap and the soul is free.

Psalm 124:8.

Our help is in the name of the Lord.--All the help of Omnipotence is pledged on the side of the weakest of the saints. Lean back upon it and be strong!

## PSALM 125

AS MOUNT ZION!

"The Church first sang this Psalm under the oppression of heathen rule (Psalm 125:3); but in her own land; from the natural features of which the figures of her security in the Divine protection are taken. Struggling with manifold troubles, which might have led her to doubt the protecting favor of God, she here rises above these in faith." While many of her members were true, others had departed from the living God (4, 5). "These circumstances are exactly those which existed after the deliverance from captivity and at the time when the building of the temple was interrupted" (compare Psa. 120; 126).--Hengstenberg.

Psalm 125:1.

They that trust in the Lord.--Trust so links us and our cause to God that we acquire something of his stability, as the limpet, sticking fast to the rock, partakes of the nature of the rock.

Psalm 125:2.

As the mountains round about Jerusalem.--Robinson says: "The sacred city lies upon the broad and high mountain range, shut in by two deep valleys. All the surrounding hills are higher: in the east, the Mount of Olives; on the south, the Hill of Evil Counsel, which ascends from the Valley of Hinnom." What an exquisite picture this is of the believer--God-encompassed; God-encircled; God-girt! And as the mountains made Jerusalem well-nigh inaccessible and impregnable, so is God round about us, warding off the attacks of our foes. They cannot get at us except through Him. Oh that our eyes might be opened to see the invulnerable walls by which we are surrounded (2 Kings 6:17).

Psalm 125:3.

The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.--The wicked do oppress the righteous, but their oppression shall not be permanent. The righteous may not be tempted to relinquish their righteousness and relapse into backsliding.

Psalm 125:4.

Do good, O Lord, unto, the upright.--God is to us what we are to Him (Psa. 18:25-26).

Psalm 125:5.

Such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.--Crooked ways are by-paths or private ways, apart from the highways. The commandments of God are as the public road. To travel along them is to be at peace. To diverge from them is certain misery.

## PSALM 126

THE CAPTIVITY TURNED

The circumstances in which this Psalm was written are evident upon its face. The exiles were still rejoicing with the new ecstasy of deliverance from captivity, and were extremely anxious as to their future. The first three verses express their joy; the fourth is a prayer for complete deliverance.

Psalm 126:1.

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion.--A partial fulfilment of Isa. 52:8. There are times when the soul seems to dwell in a captivity which hinders both its joy and its free devotion. And then suddenly and unexpectedly the captivity is turned. The soul is restored and is as in times past. It is the Lord's doing and we are as in a blessed dream (Acts 12:9).

Psalm 126:2.

Our mouth was filled with laughter.--God loves the singing and laughter of his saints. Trust and wait! The memory of your present anguish shall be soon forgotten in tumults of joy (Job 8:21). What a contrast to Psa. 137!

Psalm 126:3.

The Lord hath done great things! (Joel 2:21).

Psalm 126:4.

Turn again our captivity.--Much had been done for the exiles. But a large portion of the nation was still in bondage and heavy

disabilities remained on those who had returned. When God has done much for us, we may venture to ask more. The metaphor of "streams in the south" is derived from the rapidity with which, after the heavy rains, the dry watercourses become flushed with torrent streams. Would that to our hearts and churches might come abundant life, as when the snows melt in the springtime and flush the brooks!

Psalm 126:5-6.

Sow in tears: reap in joy.--The sowing and reaping are figurative expressions for the commencement of undertakings and their results. Often the farmer who sows in anxiety is agreeably disappointed with the harvest. And this is invariably the case with the children of God. They are often in pain and sorrow. But when these are undergone for righteousness' sake, they must be followed by a harvest of joy, which shall be a hundredfold compensation (Matt. 19:29; Luke 6:21). Let the Christian worker not count as lost the seeds he sows or the tears in which he steeped them. But let all such rest on that word doubtless, which is God's guarantee. Precious tears! precious seed! precious reward! (compare Jer. 31:9-12).

## PSALM 127

EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD

This Psalm may have been suggested to Solomon by the building of the temple. It teaches us to depend in all our undertakings on the blessing of God. The Divine blessing is the only true source of prosperity. It should be sought on the threshold of every undertaking.

Psalm 127:1.

Except the Lord build the house.--There is no condemnation implied here against our building and watching, but against our doing anything independently of God. If we would succeed, we must be fellow-workers with Him (Prov. 10:22).

Psalm 127:2.

Bread of sorrows is that eaten amid hard labor; rising early and sitting late thereat; reminding us of the ancient curse. What a picture this is of the anxiety and care which fall to the lot of so many! On the other hand, the beloved children of God, while they do not slack their toils (2 Thess. 3:12), are yet relieved of the over-pressure of the nightmare of care. When they have done their best, they leave the results to God and sleep peacefully. By night the blessing or deliverance comes to them, they know not how. There is an alternative reading preferred by some: "He giveth unto his beloved in sleep." Those who know God as a Father know His blessing even when they are resting and asleep.

Psalm 127:3.

Children are an heritage of the Lord.--We have here an illustration of how all we have is due to the Lord's tender care. Our family life is his gift (compare Gen. 30:2; 33:5).

Psalm 127:4-5.

Happy the man that hath his quiver full!--Figures are multiplied in these verses, which have thus been expounded in rhyme by Tate and Brady:-

As arrows in a giant's hand  
When marching forth to war,  
On Fearing the Lord  
E'en so the sons of sprightly youth  
Their parents' safeguard are.

Happy the man whose quiver's filled  
With these prevailing arms;  
He needs not fear to meet his foe  
At law, or war's alarms.

Contending armies of a besieged city would meet at the gate (Jud. 16:2; Isa. 22:7). In view of the teaching of Psalm 127:3, it appears that the comfort and support which dutiful children render to parents is of the Lord's appointment.

## PSALM 128

ON FEARING THE LORD

This Psalm has no authorship or date assigned to it. It is anonymous, as are so many of the sweetest hymns of the Church. But it needs no introduction. It goes on singing through the world, refreshing weary hearts as the Streamlets which run among the hills. The burden is the blessedness of true godliness in the entire range of human life.

Psalm 128:1-4.

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord.--How continuously throughout the Old Testament do we find blessedness associated with godliness! (Deut. 7:12-14; 28:1-14; Job 1:10; Psa. 33:12; 112:1-3; 115:13-15). Note the words, every one, which hand on the blessing to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who comply with these conditions. The fear of the Lord is born of love which dares not grieve. It is the inner temper of the devout soul which always reveals itself in the consistent and obedient walk. We walk in his ways when we walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25).

Psalm 128:2.

Shall eat the labour of thine hands.--A gracious promise! Lev. 26:16-17 and Deut. 28:31-33 present the dark reverse which is the portion of the ungodly. It shall be well with thee.--How often do we meet with this pledge, either direct or implied, in the Book of (Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:16; 6:3, 18; 12:25, 28; 19:13; 22:7); and it is once repeated in the New Testament (Eph. 6:3). Faith can grasp this promise, even when outward appearances seem adverse to its fulfilment (2 Kings 4:26). It shall be well amid calamity and sorrow, in the deepest, best and most permanent sense. Isa. 65:18-25 is the "latter-day" fulfilment of this promise.

Psalm 128:3.

In the innermost parts of thine house (R.V.).--Reminding us of the beautiful courtyard or quadrangle of an Oriental house, in which the fountain plays and around which the vine trails gracefully. Thy children like olive plants.--The petition of Psa. 144:12 is for such a blessing as this. And it has its response. "I am like a green olive tree" (Psa. 52:8; see also Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6). Jesus grew up as a "tender plant" (Isa. 53:2).

Psalm 128:5.

The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion!--Jerusalem, as the center of religious worship where the temple was, stood as the focus for the religious life and thought of the nation (Psa. 20:2). And its prosperity was intimately associated with that of the people (Psa. 122:2-6). The spiritual and temporal act and interact.

Psalm 128:6.

Thy children's children.--The promise of Psa. 103:17 accords with this verse (see also Prov. 13:22). Note the word to restored Israel in Ezek. 37:25. In those days aged men and women shall look with complacency on the boys and girls of a third or fourth generation playing in the streets (Zech. 8:4-5). Happy are those who, even now, can put their finger on the promise in Isa. 59:21, and claim it as their own!

## PSALM 129

### THEY AFFLICTED ME

Another of the nameless pilgrim-songs. The singer looks back on the many and severe oppressions from which Israel had suffered, but from which the Lord had delivered his people (Psalm 129:1-4); and therefore faith concludes that, however proudly the enemy may bear himself, God will certainly visit him with utter ruin (Psalm 129:5-8).

Psalm 129:1.

Many a time have they afflicted me.--The youth of Israel was spent in Egypt (Hos. 2:15; 11:1; Jer. 2:6). As we look back to our youth, once so full of promise, how many are the afflictions through which some of us have passed! We little expected them. We thought that we must escape, but we have had our full measure.

Psalm 129:2.

Many a time; yet they have not prevailed.--But how sweet to remember that every affliction has had its deliverance! There has always been a "yet" (Isa. 44:1; 49:15; Jer. 3:1). We will not therefore dwell on the afflictions, but on the revelation which each has given of the strong and tender care of God. Each has been a dark lantern--in which, when opened, we discovered that his light was burning.

Psalm 129:3.

The ploughers ploughed upon my back.--As the plough tears up the earth, so does the scourge tear up the back. How true was this of Him in whom the ideal Israel was fitly personified--our blessed Lord! (Isa. 1:6; Matt. 27:26).

Psalm 129:4.

The Lord is righteous.--Twelve times throughout the Bible this truth is declared in the same words, besides being continually slated in other forms. It is comforting to know that our God is "righteous in all his ways" (Psa. 11:7; 145:17; see also John 17:25). Some think that the Psalmist refers to the plough cords. The enemies would continue their ploughing, but God suddenly cuts the cords, looses the cattle and the plough stands still.

Psalm 129:5.

Let them be confounded!--The imperatives here may be read as predictions: "They shall be."

Psalm 129:6.

As the grass upon the housetops.--The metaphor of "grass" is borrowed from Isa. 37:27. There is but little soil on the fiat roofs of oriental houses. Grass, which may have taken root there, having no depth of earth, is soon scorched. All the greatness of the world's empires is as grass (Isa. 40:6-7).

Psalm 129:8.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!--We have here the customary salutation with which passers-by greeted the reapers. But such a benediction would never be spoken over the withered grass of the house-tops. So the wicked shall pass away with no silvery note of love or blessing sounding over their decease.

## PSALM 130

### OUT OF THE DEPTHS

A choice Psalm! There are times in our experience when nothing suits us as these words. When like Jonah we are cast unto the deep, and all God's billows and waves are passing over us; when like Peter we lose our foothold, and begin to sink--then, indeed, we may cry: "De profundis clamavi." The name of "Lord" (either as "Jehovah," "Jah," or "Adonai") occurs as many times as there are verses. The soul in trouble loves to repeat to itself again and again that precious name in which all help and comfort are enshrined.

Psalm 130:1.

Out of the depths have I cried.--Great soul-trouble and sorrow are often compared to deep and tumultuous waters (Psa. 42:7; 88:7). There are times when no imagery so well sets forth our experiences as this: "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." But there is no depth so profound that the soul cannot cry there from. If you cannot pray, cry.

Psalm 130:2.

Lord, hear my voice!--Can a mother so forget her child as not to hear its moan in pain? She may, but God cannot so forget his own (Isa. 49:15).

Psalm 130:3.

O Lord, who shall stand?--If God should simply notice our sins and not our tears or faith--or, above all, the atonement of Calvary--we should be without hope.

Psalm 130:4.

There is forgiveness with Thee.--Forgiveness does not lead to lax living, but to a godly fear. The forgiven soul dreads to grieve the Forgiver. Mercy is antiseptic to depravity.

Psalm 130:5-6.

I wait for the Lord.--We are too apt to wait for circumstances, people, things, and to meet with disappointment, because they are apart from Himself. But those who wait for the Lord cannot be ashamed. There may be no Theophany, but, as they wait, a new strength and comfort steal into their hearts. Oh to have the eagerness of the watcher for the dawn, as we wait for God! And should not we all cherish this expectancy for the breaking of that eternal morning, when the day shall dawn on which night never falls?

Psalm 130:7.

With the Lord, plenteous redemption.--In God there is something more than forgiveness--there is deliverance. He does not remember our sins. He redeems us from their tyranny and consequences. He does this plenteously, with good measure, pressed down and running over"; overtopping with a deluge of goodness and loftiest Himalayas of our sins.

Psalms 130:8.

He shall redeem Israel.--HE SHALL! It is certain as his existence, as inevitable as his own glorious nature. If He has made, He can and will redeem.

PSALM 131

AS A WEANED CHILD

This Psalm is ascribed to David. It bears in its small compass distinct traces of its origin. But it was evidently constructed before the dark clouds which overcast the close of his reign had gathered. It must have been composed during that "morning without clouds," in which he ascended the throne of a united people. It is a cry for the child-heart. It becomes us to offer it "in all times of our wealth," when pride and self-will lie in wait against us (see 2Chr 32:25).

Psalms 131:1.

My heart is not haughty.--The home and seat of pride are in the heart, but how often it betrays itself in the eyes! (Psa. 18:27; Prov. 6:17, R.V.). Exercise may be rendered to walk to and fro. Though David had a promise of universal dominion, yet he took no step to secure it for himself. He resisted every temptation to snatch for himself that which was nevertheless divinely assured. There are many things which are great and high, both in revelation and in daily providence. We are not forbidden to use our reason, but after our best attempts, we must feel that God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours. He could not be God, were it not so. Our true attitude then is one of childlike, loving trust, waiting to be taught and led. And to such a spirit, God's Spirit of revelation will draw near, making clear mysteries which had baffled reason and left human genius faint and weary in its quest (Isa. 40:30, 31; Matt. 11:25).

Psalms 131:2.

My soul is even as a weaned child.--The weaned child is no longer filled with tumultuous passion and frenzy for its mother's breast. It is content to do without its wonted sustenance, because it has been led to another source of supply. So, when God turns us from some long-cherished comfort, let us be sure that it is not to starve us, but to give us something more suited to the maturing conditions of our life. And let us not be cross and impatient, but rather let us quiet ourselves. If that seem impossible, beseech that his Spirit may instil his quiet (1Pe 3:4).

Psalms 131:3.

O Israel, hope in the Lord! (R.V.).--The cure for inquietude is to be found in a hope which begins as a struggling ray, but expands into the "for ever" of eternity.

## PSALM 132

LORD, REMEMBER DAVID!

This Psalm is evidently intended as a dedication song composed for the completed temple. The earlier verses tell of David's purpose (Psalm 132:1-7); then follows an earnest prayer (Psalm 132:8-10); and at the conclusion we have the Divine response (Psalm 132:11-18).

Psalms 132:1.

Lord, remember David.--When any design approaches completion, we should not forget those who were concerned in its first conception or gathered the materials. God never forgets them; and we should not (1 Cor. 3:8). The names of the Apostles are not omitted from the stones (Rev. 21:14).

Psalms 132:2.

How he swore unto the Lord.--David's anxiety is recorded in 2 Sam. 7:1-2.

Psalms 132:3.

Surely I will not come into my house.--We ought always to put the interests of God's house before our own. That was a grand

character that Naomi gave of Boaz (Ruth 3:18).

Psalm 132:5.

A Tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob (R.V.)--How wonderful that God is known as the Mighty One of Jacob! But surely no man stood in greater need of a mighty God than Jacob.

Psalm 132:6.

Ephratah perhaps stands for Ephraim and refers to the residence of the Ark in Shiloh. The fields of the wood is Kirjath-jearim where in darkness and solitude the Ark was deposited after its return from the land of the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:1; 2 Sam. 6:3-4).

Psalm 132:8-9.

Arise, O Lord, into thy rest!--These verses are taken almost literally from Solomon's dedication prayer (2 Chron. 6:41; see also Num. 10:35). The Ark was an image and pledge of God's presence with his people. The staves of the Ark were drawn out when it was deposited in the most Holy Place to indicate that its journeyings were complete (2 Chron. 5:9). Oh, weary, tired builders, think of the strength of the true Ark of the Covenant, which is Jesus Christ! In Jesus, ascended and glorified, God rests.

Psalm 132:9.

Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.--Every believer is a priest and should wear this robe of righteousness (Rev. 3:4, 5, 18; Ecc. 9:8). Every saint is more than a conqueror and should shout for joy (Rom. 8:37; Phil. 4:4).

Psalm 132:10.

For thy servant David's sake.--This reminds us of 1 Kings 8:25. God's anointed king asks that he may be remembered.

Psalm 132:13-14.

This is My rest.--These verses are the Divine answer to the petition of Psalm 132:8. Her saints shall shout.--The answer to Psalm 132:9.

Psalm 132:17.

I will make the horn of David to bud.--This is the vindication of the promise quoted in Psalm 132:11. God never forgot his pristine promise to David. He speaks of it centuries afterwards (Isa. 55:3). Its partial realization was in the maintenance of a line of kings on the throne of Judah (1 Psalm 132: Kings 11:36). But its full accomplishment is in our Lord, that lamp of God's grace shining in a dark world (John 8:12; see also Ezek. 29:21).

## **PSALM 133**

AS THE DEW OF HERMON!

This Psalm celebrates the love of God's people. The word "Behold," with which it opens, indicates, possibly, that some lovely manifestation of such unity was taking place under the Psalmist's eyes in connection with a great religious festival. It was probably written by David to celebrate the glad reunion of the nation after its long disunion during the times of the Judges and the opening years of his own reign. This Psalm is a fitting anticipation of our Lord's intercessory prayer (John 17).

Psalm 133:1.

How good and how pleasant!--Brethren of Christ must be brothers of each other (Mark 3:35). It is not enough, however, to be one. We should take all opportunities of manifesting our unity to the world--dwell together. Unity does not mean uniformity, but oneness of heart, feeling and aim (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

Psalm 133:2.

Like the precious ointment.--This oil was specially compounded (Exod. 30:22-25). "Precious," not only because of its intrinsic nature, but more because of its typical character as symbolizing the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27). With that blessed chrism our Lord was anointed at his Baptism (Luke 3:21, 22; 4:18). It was copiously shed forth after his Ascension (Acts 2:33). Moreover, the results of that anointing have descended to ourselves, the weakest and furthest, who are but as the skirts of his robes (Psalm 133:2). Believer, be sure and avail yourself of the copiousness and wealth of our High Priest's enduement! (John 3:34).

Psalm 133:3.

As the dew of Hermon.--The dew which fell on Mount Hermon is cited as being more lovely and holy than common dew. It is therefore employed as a further metaphor of the anointing oil which had been referred to. And the Psalmist says that the love which was represented by the oil--which, in turn, was symbolized by the dews of Hermon--fell on Mount Zion as the dew on parched herbage, wherever the Lord's people met there in the exhibition of brotherly love. Love in the Spirit is the dew which is a symbol and channel of the eternal love and blessing of God.

## PSALM 134

LIFT UP YOUR HANDS!

This is the last of the pilgrim-psalms. It is supposed to be addressed to the priests of the sanctuary--who were prepared to offer the evening sacrifice--by some pilgrim-bands which had just arrived from their distant journey and had presented themselves in the temple. We gather from 1 Chron. 9:33 that the temple was provided with a night-watch of choristers, who kept up the worship of God through the silent hours. And surely God has still such a relay of servants, who come on duty and serve Him through the long dark hours of night. The sufferer from whose eyes sleep has departed; the watcher by the sick bed; the nurse--all these maintain God's blessed worship, when many of his active workers are recruiting from their toils.

Psalm 134:1.

Behold!--Evidently the matter is pressing and arises from the immediate circumstances of the moment. How eager are pious souls that God should be loved and adored! Night is no reason for hushing praise. God's song-birds will sing even in curtained cages. It is in the dark that the nightingale fills the woods with torrents of liquid music.

Psalm 134:2.

Lift up your hands!--The lifted hand is the gesture of prayer (Psa. 28:2; 63:4). It is not unimportant to study the appropriate expression of prayer, as well as its matter.

Psalm 134:3.

The Lord bless thee out of Zion!--This is the answer of the priests as they meet the assembled pilgrims and return their salutations. We can never send up to God our adoration, but that it comes back to us again, as moisture drawn by sunshine from the earth returns to it again in showers.

## PSALM 135

PRAISE YE THE LORD!

This is a call for praise, beginning with the priests, who stand in the Lord's house (Psalm 135:1-4). God's glory in nature (Psalm 135:5-7); in his dealings with Israel (Psalm 135:8-14); and in contrast with idols (Psalm 135:15-21)--is adduced as a theme for praise. It seems rather like a mosaic, as the description of the singers invoked is taken from the previous Psalm; the account of the exodus from the next Psalm; and the description of idols from Psa. 115.

Psalm 135:1.

Praise ye the Lord!--The first word announces the object of the Psalm--PRAISE.

Psalm 135:3.

Sing praises, for it is pleasant.--One rendering of the words, "it is pleasant," is "He is lovely." When the heart is full of the love of Jesus, it seems as if the universe were too small to be an orchestra for his praise.

Psalm 135:4.

The Lord hath chosen Jacob.--God's eternal choice is, indeed, a fit theme for praise! We who have been thus called into the inner circle, that we might bring others there, may well join in the doxology of the Apostle Paul (Eph. 1:3-6).

Psalm 135:5.

I know that the Lord is great.--The soul has convincing proofs of God's glory, which it treasures.

Psalm 135:6.

Whatsoever the Lord pleased.--To its farthest limits, the whole earth is under his mighty working. He draws the veils of vapor over

the hills and shadows over life.

Psalm 135:10-13.

Who smote great nations.--God's deliverance of his people from their foes--and his gifts--are as much subjects for our praise as for Israel's. We have all had our Sihon or Og, barring our pathway to blessedness--some unwelcome intruder on our peace.

Psalm 135:14.

The Lord will judge, He will repent.--A literal quotation of Deut. 32:36. God is said to "repent," when his people turn to Him. The wind may be blowing strongly in one direction across a plain, but it seems to change, when we, who had been walking against it, turn and go with it.

Psalm 135:19-20.

Bless the Lord!--In Psa. 115 the word was TRUST; here it is BLESS. But this is the regular graduation of the Christian life. Trusting ever leads to blessing.

Psalm 135:21.

Out of Zion.--Zion is the place where the believer dwells with God, and may represent the whole Church, or any place, however simple, where two or three meet in his name.

## PSALM 136

HIS MERCY, FOREVER

A magnificent antiphonal Psalm, to be sung by two choirs; or by the temple choir and the people alternately; the response rolling in after every stanza. It seems like an interleaved Bible, and teaches us to interleave all things with the thought of the mercy of God.

Psalm 136:1-3.

The God of gods.--These verses rest on Deut. 10:17. Is there not a trace of the Trinity in this threefold ascription?

Psalm 136:4.

Alone, i.e., without human help (Isa. 40:12-17; 63:3).

Psalm 136:6.

The earth above the waters.--The emergence of the earth from the waters was a favorite thought with the Psalm 24:2; 33:7; 104:6-9.

Psalm 136:7-9.

To Him that made great lights.--Genesis 1:14-18 set to music.

Psalm 136:10-12.

A strong hand, a stretched out arm--The Exodus and the Wilderness Wanderings recounted in thanksgiving.

Psalm 136:15.

Overthrew may be rendered "'shook off," as St. Paul did the viper.

Psalm 136:19-20

Sihon and Og.--Flies preserved in amber! Our greatest difficulties and opponents will one day only be remembered for the love and mercy which they called into manifestation.

Psalm 136:23.

Who remembered us.--Men forget us in our "low estate"; but that is the time when God seems to remember us most.

Psalm 136:25.

Who giveth food.--The provision made for animals and birds and all living things, is a proof of the mercy of God. Will He do less for

his children?

Psalm 136:26.

His mercy forever.--What an unspeakable comfort it is to rest on God's mercy, which is unaffected by our failures and sins and changes not with our fluctuations! Like Himself his mercy is immutably the same.

## PSALM 137

BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON!

One of the most touching of the Psalms. It reminds us of the emotions excited in an army on a distant march by hearing the strains of a home song. It was evidently composed by a returned exile. But it is also clear that the destruction of Babylon herself was imminent (Psalm 137:8). We are thus led to the conquest of Babylon by Darius (Dan. 5:31), whereby its entire destruction, as foretold in prophecy, was brought within a measureable range. The Psalm falls into three strophes, each consisting of three verses.

Psalm 137:1.

By the rivers of Babylon.--The streams of Babylon had probably a special fascination for the exiles. First, because they were removed from the busy rush of the city and thus afforded opportunity for reflection. Secondly, because they were an image and symbol of their floods of tears (Lam. 2:18; 3:48). Daniel loved and sought them (Dan. 8:2; 10:4).

Psalm 137:2.

Our harps upon the willows.--This touching metaphor has passed into all languages as an expression of extreme grief. Of what use is the harp when the heart is nigh to breaking?

Psalm 137:3.

They required of us a song.--This demand may have originated from the far-famed power of Hebrew Psalmody. Across the desert the news had come of the sweetness of the temple minstrelsy. Or, it may be that their captors were anxious that the Israelites should reconcile themselves to their lot and feel at home in their banishment. But in any case the treatment by those captors had made compliance with their demand impossible.

Psalm 137:4.

How shall we sing in a strange land?--"The Lord's song" is only possible in the Lord's house, where his presence is manifested and felt. To be separated from Zion was to be separated from God. To lose God was to lose all. When we have lost the sense of God's presence, having been led captive by our sins, we too are sure to lose our joy, peace and blessedness. The land of the stranger and the song of the Lord can never be found together.

Psalm 137:5-6.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem.--The imprecation here made is on the hand and tongue; on the one if it should be misemployed in playing and on the other in singing. Would that we were constantly able to apply these words to our Lord Jesus! Why do we remember all things and people beside and forget Him? Surely we court failure in every other direction, so long as we do not make Him the crown and head of our chief joy.

Psalm 137:7.

The children of Edom.--Edom took malicious pleasure in the destruction of Jerusalem. The punishment of Edom is often referred to (Jer. 49:7-22; Lam. 4:21, 22; Ezek. 25:12-14).

Psalm 137:8-9.

O daughter of Babylon!--Calvin says that the Psalmist acts here as the Divine herald of coming judgment, but there seems a flavor of something more personal and vindictive in these terrible words. We can understand the spirit which breathes through them, but it is rather that of the Old Dispensation than of the New (Matt. Psalm 137:5:43-48).

## PSALM 138

I WILL PRAISE THEE

This is the first of a cycle of Davidic Psalms and is founded on the promise of 2 Sam. 7. Here, as there, the promised blessing is

dwelt upon with gladness. The idols, which could exhibit nothing to compare with it, retreat ashamed (Psalm 138:1); the Lord has done more to glorify Himself by it than by all his previous wonders (Psalm 138:2); all kings will one day praise the Lord on account of it (Psalm 138:4); and it is the beginning of a chain of blessings that can never end (Psalm 138:8).

Psalm 138:1.

Before the gods may, however, refer to angels (Psa. 8:5; Heb. 2:7); or to princes (Psa. 82:6; John 10:34-36); or to idols (Psa. 97:7).

Psalm 138:2.

Toward thy holy temple.--This reminds us of (Jonah 2:4), and of (Daniel 6:10). The temple, as being the seat of religious worship and of sacrifice, is symbolic of that propitiation through which alone sinners may approach God. God's promise, prompted by love and founded on truth, was a fuller manifestation of God's character than any previous revelation.

Psalm 138:3.

Thou answeredst me.--Our God does not always answer our prayers as we request. But He does for us, as for our Lord in the Garden--He strengthens us (Luke 22:43). Let us not forget that He is "the strength of our heart."

Psalm 138:4.

All the kings of the earth.--It is pleasant to think how many of the great of this world have been included in the ranks of the servants of God and more shall be (Psa. 68:29; 102:15). And it may be that not a few of them shall be found to have been influenced in their choice by the sweet words of David the king. Each man can best influence the men of his own class. 5. They shall sing of the ways of the Lord (R.V.).--So great is the glory of our God, that the noblest of this world may count it an honor to carry his train.

Psalm 138:6.

To have respect unto is to "regard." God eyes with loving regard those who are true to Him. He is repelled from those whose hearts are proud, so as to look on them only from a distance (2 Chron. 16:9).

Psalm 138:7.

Thou wilt revive me.--The revival of the soul is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. How blessedly and unexpectedly these revivings steal into our hearts so often when heavy trouble lies on us from without.

Psalm 138:8.

The Lord will perfect.--There are no unfinished pictures on the walls of God's studio; no incomplete statues in his halls of sculpture. When He begins, He pledges Himself to complete. His mercy endures forever. We cannot tire it or wear it out. But our assurance ought always to take on the language of pleading, that He would not forsake.

## **PSALM 139**

THOU HAST SEARCHED ME!

It is rather interesting to notice the position of this sublime ode on the omniscience and omnipresence of God. In earlier Psalms David has again and again reminded us of the love and mercy of God, which "endure forever." Here he bids us take heed that we do not make that love an excuse for sin, because his eyes are as a flame of fire. There is the same combination, though in the reverse order, in Heb. 4:12-16.

Observe: the fact of God's omniscience (Psalm 139:1-12); its ground on his creatorship of man (Psalm 139:13-18); its consolatory aspect, that as God knows the innocence of his people, so He will not condemn them with the wicked, but lead them in his everlasting way (Psalm 139:19-24).

Psalm 139:1.

O Lord, Thou hast known me.--What ineffable comfort there is in the thought that our hearts closed to all else, are open to Him! Because, as He can detect the secret source of our disease, He can cure it. As He can read our secret sorrow, He can apply the healing balm. "He knows all, but loves us better than He knows."

Psalm 139:2.

Downsitting is our time of quiet rest; uprising, the going forth to work. Afar off perhaps means that God anticipates our thoughts and purposes before they are matured in our mind.

Psalm 139:3.

Thou winnowest (marg.); as if God were ever applying the fan of his judgment to our active life and to the thoughts which chase each other across our mind in sleep.

Psalm 139:5.

Thou hast beset me.--The All-knowing is also the All-present. We are God-encompassed, God-environed. Behind, that none may attack in the rear. Before, that He may search out the way and meet our foes. Laid thine hand; as if a child were to put one hand over the hollow of another to keep some frail insect from its pursuer (John 10:28-29).

Psalm 139:6.

Too wonderful!--We must worship, where we fail to comprehend.

Psalm 139:7-8.

Whither shall I go?--It used to be said that the whole world was but one vast prison-house for the Roman Emperors, so complete was their power. And what hope can the sinner have in escaping God? (Amos 9:2).

Psalm 139:9-12.

The wings of the morning.--Neither change of hemisphere, nor distance, nor darkness, can at all alter the soul's proximity to God. What bliss this is to those who know Him as Father and Friend!

Psalm 139:13.

Possessed is "formed" (R.V., marg. ).--The reins are the seat of the desires and feelings. How much transpires on that secret workshop! Nothing can be concealed from our Maker.

Psalm 139:15-16.

Not hid from Thee.--We may refer these words to the mystical body of Christ, which even now is being secretly prepared and composed of many who are as the lowest on the earth. God's book contains, through his foreknowledge the names of those who are to be incorporated in the one body (Rom. 8:29; Rev. 17:8).

Psalm 139:17-18.

How precious are thy thoughts unto me!--The Psalmist is so occupied with the thoughts of God, which teem in his mind that he pursues his meditations sleeping as well as waking. When he starts from slumber, his first bright waking consciousness is that God is by his side.

Psalm 139:19-22.

Am not I grieved?--When we are startled at the strong expressions of David, we may well ask ourselves where in our tender pity for sinners.

Psalm 139:23-24.

Search me, O God!--This prayer is a worthy culmination of the Psalm. Lead me is the one incessant cry of the devout soul. "Lead, kindly Light!" We long to get forward on that way which is everlasting, founded on the permanent principles of Truth, Righteousness, Light, and Love. The way planned from eternity by the Eternal, and leading to the eternal home.

## **PSALM 140**

THOU ART MY GOD!

The tone of this Psalm corresponds with the inscription and attests its Davidic origin. It perhaps dates from those early troubled days at court, when his steps were taken with difficulty, because of the gins and snares that lined his pathway.

The Psalm consists of five verses as the beginning and five as the conclusion. In the middle occurs a strophe of three verses, the heart of the Psalm, distinguished by the fourfold use of the name Jehovah.

Psalm 140:1.

Deliver me from the evil man.--We pray "Deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13, R.V.).

Psalm 140:2.

Gathered together: as Psa. 56:6; and 59:3.

Psalm 140:3.

Adders" poison under their lips.--Who can describe the mischief caused by a false and slanderous tongue? See also Psa. 58:4; Rom. 3:13-14.

Psalm 140:4.

Keep me, O Lord!--A good prayer for all times (Psa. 17:8; 25:20).

Psalm 140:5.

A snare for me, and cords.--We have every reason to be afraid of Satan who adds cunning to his malice. He is not content with hidden assaults, but weaves insidious toils, which may take months to mature--in order to do us harm and grieve our Master, Christ, wounding Him through us.

Psalm 140:6.

Thou art my God!--The first portion of the verse corresponds with Psa. 31:14. If He is ours and we are his, we may have confidence that He will "hear the voice of our supplications."

Psalm 140:7.

Thou hast covered; Thou dost cover; Thou wilt cover.--Such is the force of the tense used here (as in Psa. 5:11; 139:13). As we go down into the fight, let us never forget that helmet of salvation provided for us by the Lord Himself (Eph. 6:17; 1 Thess. 5:8). What a contrast to the "head" of the wicked! (Psalm 140:9).

Psalm 140:9.

Mischief of their lips.--Slander is like a man starting an avalanche, which ultimately overwhelms and covers his own dwelling (Psa. 7:15-16).

Psalm 140:10-11.

Burning coals.--We have not so learned Christ (Rom. 12:20). We must endorse the Psalmist's confidence that evil cannot ultimately prevail in God's world. However great may be the momentary triumph of the wicked, they are destined to utter and disastrous downfall.

Psalm 140:12.

The Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted (Psa. 9:12; 18:27; Zeph. 3:19).

Psalm 140:13.

Shall give thanks.--Not only hereafter, but here and now, do those who love and serve God walk and live in the manifested light of God's presence (Psa. 16:11; Eph. 5:20).

## PSALM 141

LET MY PRAYER BE AS INCENSE!

Another of David's Psalms. De Wette is led by the language to class it with Psa. 10 as one of the oldest.

Psalm 141:1.

1 cry! Make haste! Give ear!--The word Kara, to call, or to cry, continually occurs in the Scriptures (Psa. 17:6; 22:2). Psalm 3:4 shows the answer. Make haste! (Psa. 38:22; 40:13; 70:1). Give ear! (Psa. 17:1; 60:1; 86:6).

Psalm 141:2.

Let my prayer be as incense!--The smoke of the sweet-smelling incense is often used in Scripture as a symbol of the prayer of

believers, which is precious to God (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). The offering of incense morning and evening under the Levitical dispensation symbolized prayer (Exod. 30:7-8).

Psalm 141:3-4.

Set a watch before my mouth.--The Psalmist prays for preservation from the danger of lip sins, heart sins and life sins. God's sentry is God's peace (Phil. 4:7). How wise to make God the doorkeeper of our mouth! (Prov. 4:24).

Psalm 141:4.

Let me not eat of their dainties.--The child of God does not eat of the "dainties" of the wicked. Yet amid tribulation he seems to sit at a banqueting table, anointed as a guest with oil (Psa. 23:5).

Psalm 141:5.

Let the righteous smite me.--"The righteous" is referred by some commentators to God, who alone, in its full sense, deserves the appellation (2 Sam. 7:14-15). But it may also refer to that loving care which one believer may exercise over another, in rebuke and admonition. For, "Which shall not break my head," the R.V. more correctly translates, "let not my head refuse it." The last clause should be rendered, as in the R.V., Even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue. That prayer rises like a geyser in winter's frost as under summer skies.

Psalm 141:6.

When their judges.--When the enemies of the Lord are overthrown, they will be the more prepared to listen to words which they had rejected before, but the intrinsic sweetness of which will then commend them to their hearts.

Psalm 141:8.

Mine eyes are unto Thee.--"Looking off unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2) is a good motto. And it is marvelous how the feet are kept from snares and pitfalls, when the eyes, instead of being fixed upon the ground, are lifted upwards to the Throne (Psa. 119:110).

Psalm 141:9-10.

That I withal escape.--Another petition that the Psalmist may be kept. Prov. 3:26 gives an encouraging promise--"The Lord shall keep."

## **PSALM 142**

WITH MY VOICE

One of David's Cave-Psalms. Maschil means Instruction. How much instruction individuals and the Church have gained from the strait dark caves in which, in every age, the saints have been immured! The prison and the persecutor oppress the soul of the sweet singer, who yet towards the close catches sight of a brighter and better time.

Psalm 142:1.

I cry with my voice.--In the R.V. each clause is rendered in the present tense. To use audible words is sometimes a great incentive to prayer, stirring up the spirit to more vehemency and concentration.

Psalm 142:2.

I poured out my complaint.--Of course God knows all before we tell Him, but it is our duty--and a great relief--to unbosom ourselves to Him. We often miss the benefit of prayer, because we deal so much in general and do not enough dwell on the particulars of our need.

Psalm 142:3.

When my spirit was overwhelmed.--There are times when however bravely we would bear ourselves, our spirit faints (R.V. marg.). What is here said of the "spirit" (rooakh) is oftener predicted of the "soul" (nephesh) (Psa. 42:6; 43:5); but the dejection and fainting of the spirit is a more sorrowful condition. Yet how consolatory that God knows our path! His eye is ever fixed on its perplexities. He sees its hidden pitfalls and snares.

Psalm 142:4.

Look on my right hand (R.V.).--It was the Jewish custom for the advocate as well as the accuser to stand on the right hand of the

accused (Psa. 110:5; 16:8; Zech. 3:1). Observe the contrast--no man knoweth; no man careth: Thou knewest my path (Psalm 142:3). Refuge failed me; Thou art my refuge (Psalm 142:5).

Psalm 142:5.

I said, Thou my refuge my portion!--The loneliness and isolation of the soul from all human love often makes us turn the more urgently to God, who can be loved without satiety and whose love is unchangeable, unselfish and eternal. How often does God diminish and break off our portion in this life that we may be driven to seek it again in Himself! (Lam. 3:24).

Psalm 142:6.

I am brought very low.--How well did these words fit the lips of our Lord when He descended into the dust of death for us. He was brought very low when he became obedient to the death of the cross. "Stronger than I," but not than Thou! His weakness is stronger than men (Psa. 105:24; Jer. 33:11; Luke 11:22; 1 Cor. 1:25).

Psalm 142:7.

Bring my soul out of prison.--Is there not an allusion here to the history of Joseph? "Lead me out of distress," as Joseph from prison (see also Psa. 102:10, 13; Isa. 42:7; Acts 12:7-9; 16:39). The compassing of the righteous indicates their sympathy with the Psalmist when they press in to offer their congratulations as garlands and crowns. God's mercy to him would be a source of joy to others, who would bind the story on their brows as a festal crown ("shall crown themselves," R.V., marg.).

## PSALM 143

HEAR MY PRAYER, O LORD!

The spirit and language of this Psalm are so in unison with the earlier Davidic Psalms as to confirm the genuineness of the superscription. It is the last of the penitential Psalms. The pause divides the Psalm exactly. It may be viewed as consisting of four stanzas, each of three verses.

Psalm 143:1.

In thy faithfulness.--When we are in Christ, the sterner attributes of God are on our side. A dying woman said, "I rely on the justice of God." Adding, however, when the words excited surprise, "justice, not to me, but to my Substitute in whom I trust" (1 John 1:9).

Psalm 143:2.

In thy sight shall no man be justified.--The holiest of men have least confidence in themselves (Job 9:3; Phil. 3:7-9). Bernard of Clairvaux said, "So far from being able to answer for my sins, I cannot answer even for my righteousness." There is a sense in which God will never "enter into judgment" with us, because the great white throne has nought to say to those who are in Christ Jesus. Being justified, who is he that condemneth? (Rom. 5:1; 8:34).

Psalm 143:3.

As those that have been long dead.--The dead are soon forgotten by the living. David felt that long haunting of the caves and dens of the earth was like a living burial, which was bearing him from the homes and memories of his fellows.

Psalm 143:4.

Overwhelmed! Desolate!--Those who are capable of the gladdest heights of joy are also capable of the saddest depths of depression. David was permitted to touch each, that he might be able to give expression to all kinds of emotion--to every phase of feeling. So was it with our great High Priest, "tempted in all points like as we are." But how unutterable the sorrows of this fainting, desolate heart!

Psalm 143:5.

The days of old. The work of Thy hands.--Memory--Meditation--Musing.

Psalm 143:6.

I stretch forth my hands.--Stretch forth your hands and you will certainly touch God. My soul thirsteth! This thirst is blessed (Psa. 42:1, 2; 63:1; Isa. 44:3). To have it is to be satisfied. There is no natural desire which has not its satisfaction. In the woods, birds do not hunger for food which is not to be had. So the very existence of this thirst is a proof of the being and sufficiency of Him for whom it yearns and in whom it is allayed.

Psalm 143:7.

Hear me speedily!--Prayer gets more earnest as it proceeds. Speedily does not imply impatience, but vehement yearning. We sometimes think our spirit is going to faint--when there is strength enough left in it to suffer still and in suffering to attain the strength of steel. But God is very pitiful and keeps his finger on our pulse while we pass through the operation (Isa. 57:16).

Psalm 143:8.

Cause me to hear! cause me to know!--God's "loving-kindness" speaks continually in the ears of his people, but they may be deaf to it--hence the prayer, "Cause me to hear!" (Job 33:16; 36:10; Isa. 50:5). It is well to hear it in the morning before other thoughts enter to engross our attention. Our prayer will be fully answered when the morning of eternity breaks.

When you are uncertain about your path, lift your soul into the presence of God, until He saturate it with his light and guidance.

Psalm 143:9.

I flee unto Thee!--Satan outwits himself when he drives us to our God (Psa. 27:5).

Psalm 143:10.

Teach me to do thy will.--It is more important to be taught to do than to know. The Good Spirit's leadings must be good to follow (Neh. 9:20; Eph. 5:9). The land of uprightness is, literally, the level tableland.

Psalm 143:11.

For thy Name's sake!--God's credit and glory are involved in the succor and deliverance of his saints.

Psalm 143:12.

I am thy servant.--God makes Himself responsible for the safety of his servants. Therefore to be his servant is a better position than to be an Emperor or a Czar.

## **PSALM 144**

LORD, WHAT IS MAN!

Dr. Alexander says, "the Davidic origin of this Psalm is as marked as that of any in the Psalter." It is partly compiled of passages taken from other Psalms, Psalm 8:4, 18:13-15. But the last verses (Psalm 144:9-15) are a valuable addition. This Psalm forms a point of transition between the Prayer Psalms and the Songs of Praise. The cloud of adversity is breaking; the beams of the sun are already struggling through.

Psalm 144:1.

The Lord, teacheth my hands to war.--In all spiritual warfare we need to be taught. Our weapons are only mighty through God (2 Cor. 10:4). Is there not an illustration of this in 2 Sam. 5:17-25? (See also 2 Sam. 22:25-26).

Psalm 144:2.

My Goodness, and my Fortress.--Each of these seven titles for God is a pathway which leads into his very heart. The all-subduing grace of God is indeed a theme for song. The Breaker is ever going before us (Micah 2:13). The Goliaths among men cannot stand before Him, or his weakest servant.

Psalm 144:3.

Lord, what is man!--Man would be insignificant indeed if he were not the favored of Jehovah (see Job 7:17; Psa. 8:4; 2 Sam. 7:18-19).

Psalm 144:4.

As a shadow that passeth.--The shadows of the clouds darken miles of sea--and anon they are gone. So evanescent and so impalpable (Psa. 102:11; 109:23; Ecc. 6:12; 8:13).

Psalm 144:5.

Bow Thy heavens, O Lord!--David calls to mind what is recorded (in the past tense) in Psalm 18:9. Here he asks God to repeat former deliverances.

Psalm 144:9.

I will sing a new song!--New songs are demanded by new mercies. Let us give God freshly baked loaves for His table (1Sa 21:6).

Psalm 144:10.

Give them! deliver them!--Comp. Psa. 33:16.

Psalm 144:11-12.

Our sons as plants; our daughters as corner stones rain times of war the children are often the first to suffer from privation and hardship. So the king asks for deliverance, that the sons may grow up as vigorous plants and that the daughters may be as the exquisitely polished corner-stones which connect the walls of a palace or even as pillars. Nothing is more important than the nurture of a beautiful family life. For this the deliverances of God on the behalf of its head are all-important. Let the daughters who read these words seek the polishing which comes of God's cuttings. The Prayer-book and other versions substitute the word temple for palace.

Psalm 144:13-14.

That our garners may be full.--In this picture of national prosperity, consequent on devotion to the cause and service of God, we are taught to realize the immense blessing which follows godliness, even in this life (1 Tim. 4:8). Breaking in refers to the violence of the thief; going out to enforced emigration, like that which took Elimelech and his family to Moab (Ruth 1:1-2). The Hebrew word rendered oxen (aluphim) may be translated captains or governors.

Psalm 144:15.

Happy the people whose God is the Lord!--True happiness is only to be found among the people of the Lord, and in the service of the blessed God.

## PSALM 145

I WILL EXTOL THEE!

This Psalm is a song of thanksgiving and praise on the part of the house of David--and of the Church--after all their tribulations have come to a close. It is an acrostic Psalm, the verse beginning in the Hebrew with the successive letters of the alphabet. Somehow the couplet for the fourteenth letter dropped out of the text as it has come down to us. The Septuagint, however, and other ancient versions (with one Hebrew manuscript), supply the omission thus:--"The Lord is faithful in his words, and holy in all his works., The place of this verse is between Psalm 145:13 and Psalm 145:14 in our English Bibles.

The word all is throughout characteristic of this Praise-source. The Psalm was the Te Deum of the Old Testament and was perhaps the germ of that great Christian hymn. The Jews were accustomed to say that he who could pray this Psalm from the heart three times daily was preparing himself best for the praise of the world to come.

Gilfillan, writing of this and the following Psalms, says, "They are the Beulah of the Book, where the sun shineth night and day, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. Coming at the close after all the mournful, plaintive, penitential, prayerful, varying notes, they unconsciously typify the joy and rest of glory."

Psalm 145:1.

I will extol Thee, my God, O King!--Praise will be the employment of eternity. There prayer and faith and hope, will not be possible, but we shall bless forever.

Our days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life, and thought, and being last,  
And immortality endures.

Psalm 145:2.

Every day will I bless Thee!--Let us not wait for eternity, but begin today. Let us practice on our harps every day, intermitting none, but in dark days as well as in bright! There is always something left to bless God for. There is always Himself. Said the poor old woman at her meager meal, "All this, and Christ!"

Psalm 145:3.

His greatness unsearchable.--The sense is, "His greatness cannot be fathomed." Out of Christ, men can only find out about God; but they cannot find HIM out.

Psalm 145:4.

One generation ... to another!--The generations as they pass transmit, each to the next, the story of God's love and power; and so the record can never die (Psa. 44:1; 78:3).

Psalm 145:5.

I will meditate of the glorious majesty of thine honor (R.V.). Psalm 145:6-7. Men shall speak! they shall utter!--What a tumult of voices! As if the time shall come when the hearts of men shall boil with holy love and their voices rise in song.

Psalm 145:8.

The Lord is gracious!--Founded on his own proclamation (Exod. 34:6-7). We set to our seal that God is true.

Psalm 145:9.

The Lord is good!--Even to the worst; even towards the most insignificant. Tender mercy is the blue canopy which arches over all.

Psalm 145:10.

All thy works shall praise Thee!--Creation praises God, but not with intelligence. Hence the saints are called upon to interpret her, and to express what she would say but cannot.

Psalm 145:13.

Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all eternities, is a sound translation. It will survive the mightiest kingdoms of this world and "stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

Psalm 145:14.

The Lord upholdeth all that fall.--What a contrast to the preceding majesty! (Psalm 145:5-7; Psa. 146:8).

Psalm 145:16.

Thou openest thine hand.--To supply the wants of creation He has but to open his hand. In God we are satisfied.

Psalm 145:17.

The Lord is righteous.--In all his dealings with us may we have the faith to dare to say this!

Psalm 145:18-19.

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call.--What pathos! What exquisite comfort! How nigh He comes! Yet none but the devout soul hears his footfall. He will fulfil the desire. He first instils the desire and then fulfils it.

Psalm 145:21.

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord.--Holy praise is contagious, from lonely hearts to all flesh (Rev. 5:11-13).

## **PSALM 146**

WHILE I LIVE WILL I PRAISE

In the Septuagint this Psalm is ascribed to Haggai and Zechariah. If they were not the actual authors, these Psalms were probably composed during their times. The term "Hallelujah" (Praise Jah!) is not characteristic of the Psalms which date from the times of David.

Psalm 146:2.

While I live will I praise the Lord.--Our being is to run parallel with God's forever. But we shall never come to an end of his fulness. So new discoveries will ever incite to new songs.

Psalm 146:3.

Put not your trust in princes.--This was quoted by the Earl of Stratford, on hearing that, in spite of his royal and solemn pledge, Charles I. had given assent to the Bill of Attainder. The son of man in this passage cannot refer to the Lord Jesus, for none would dare to apply to Him the succeeding words: "in whom is no help." The Hebrew is distinct: Confide ye not in a son of man (see Jer. 17:5; John 2:25). The Prayer-book version has: "nor in any child of man."

Psalm 146:4.

Thoughts--i.e., "purposes" (R.V. marg.).--At the moment of death the most definite projects of human life are at an end (Luke 12:16-20).

Psalm 146:5.

The God of Jacob.--Jehovah is thus spoken of twenty-one times in the Old Testament, and six times in the New Testament. If God helped Jacob, He will help the least and meanest of us. The reasons for this happiness, appear in the following enumeration.

Psalm 146:6.

Who made heaven, and earth, the sea, &c.--Nearly twenty times the creative work of God is thus referred to in the Bible. Even if we believe not yet He abideth faithful. Who keepeth truth. He is true to his promises and covenant-engagements.

Psalm 146:7.

Who executeth judgment for the oppressed.--We need not avenge ourselves. God will vindicate us (Psa. 103:6; Rom. 12:19; 1 Pet. 2:23). Psalm 146:7-9. The Lord looseth the prisoners.--These verses are an epitome of the mission of the Comforter (Psa. 68:5-6; 107:10, 14; Isa. 35:5; 61:3).

Psalm 146:8.

The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind.--What a true portraiture is this of the ministry of Christ through the ages (Luke 4:18; see also John 9:1-33). Mark these present tenses! This is his unceasing work. Victor Immanuel--Emancipator!

Psalm 146:9.

The Lord preserveth: He relieveth.--There are traces of this in all the old Hebrew legislation (Deut. 10:18; 14:28, 29; 26:12, 13; Psa. 68:5). To turn upside down is to defeat the designs of the wicked.

Psalm 146:10.

The Lord shall reign for ever.--The eternity of the reign of God is contrasted with the brevity of man's (Psalm 146:3-4). It is a perpetual theme for praise, because it carries with it the blessedness of all souls and all worlds.

## PSALM 147

IT IS GOOD TO SING PRAISES!

It is supposed that this Psalm dates from the re-establishment of Jerusalem (Psalm 147:2), and the re-building of its walls (Psalm 147:13). It might have been composed for the occasion mentioned in Neh. 12:27.

Psalm 147:1.

Praise ye the Lord! Heb. "Hallelujah!" Praise ye Jah!--The first verse is compiled from three other Psalms--92:1; 135:3; 33:1. The R.V. (marg.) suggests a beautiful alternative reading: "For He is good; sing praises unto our God, for His is gracious."

Psalm 147:2.

The Lord doth build.--Though Nehemiah and his companions wrought, yet they realized that the Lord was the true builder (Zech. 6:12; Matt. 16:18).

Psalm 147:3-4.

He healeth the broken in heart.--Another of these marvellous contrasts. God of all the stars, yet healer of broken hearts, needing such gentle touches (Psa. 51:17; Isa. 57:15; 66:2). The Creator and Monarch is also Father. One "broken heart" is of more value than the stars. Bigness is not greatness.

Psalm 147:6.

The Lord lifteth up the meek.--What reversals are here! Hannah and Mary and a host of saints have celebrated them in song (1 Sam. 2:7, 8; Luke 1:48, 51-53). And in our Lord there is the most notable example of all (Acts 5:30-31).

Psalm 147:8.

Who covereth the heaven with clouds.--To the devout heart there are no second causes. God is all, and in all (Psa. 104:13-14).

Psalm 147:9.

He giveth to the beast his food.--"Shall God give a ton of herrings to a whale for breakfast, and will He not care for me and my children?"

Psalm 147:10.

He delighteth not in the strength of a horse.--These clauses represent the cavalry and infantry, on which nations are accustomed to rely. God's deliverances are not given to these, but to those who trust Him utterly.

Psalm 147:14.

He maketh peace.--Here is the hope of distracted communities. God is the great Peacemaker (Job 34:29; Prov. 16:7).

Psalm 147:15.

He speaks His word runneth.--"He spake and it was done" (Psa. 33:9).

Psalm 147:16-17.

He giveth snow.--The snow is like wool, not only because it is white, but because it acts as a blanket, and, being a non-conductor, conserves the latent heat of the soil. The hoar frost resembles the fine grey ash of wood burned in the open air. Who can stand before his cold? Think of the retreat from Moscow!

Psalm 147:18.

He, melteth them.--"so it was on the day of Pentecost. The winter of spiritual captivity was thawed and dissolved by the soft breath of the Holy Ghost." And such gracious spring-tides come to us all by the direct and sovereign grace of God (Sol. Song 2:11-12).

Psalm 147:19-20.

He showeth his words.--We may plead for this--that He would manifest Himself and his Divine truth to us as He does not unto the world (John 14:22, 23).

## **PSALM 148**

PRAISE HIM, ALL HIS ANGELS!

The universe is summoned to praise God. When Mr. Jane way was dying, he said: "Come, help me with praises!--yet all is too little. Come, help me, all ye mighty and glorious angels, who are so well skilled in the heavenly work of praise! Praise Him, all ye creatures upon earth! Let everything that hath being help me to praise God! Praise is now my work. I shall be engaged in this sweet employ now and forever." Similarly in our loftiest hours we turn to these Psalms and find that their expressions fit the tumultuous rush of our emotions.

Psalm 148:1.

Praise ye the Lord!--Gloria in excelsis!

Psalm 148:2.

Praise Him, all his angels! (Psa. 103:20-21).--Not angels only, but all other created intelligences are to sound out Jehovah's praise.

Psalm 148:3.

Praise Him, sun and moon!--Here is the fabled music of the spheres.

Psalm 148:4.

Praise Him, ye heavens! and ye waters!--The very clouds, dark and sombre, or steeped in glory, praise Him. And all the

immensities of space are vocal. Storey upon storey, the whole is one temple of unceasing adoration.

Psalm 148:6.

He hath stablished!--Two things are here: the permanence and the order of creation, which shall not be impaired, though the Lord shall make new heavens and new earth, any more than man loses his identity when passing through the dust of death. What a marvellous miracle is continually in process around us in the renewal and maintenance of creation! And remember that all is directly due to our blessed Lord, to whom these praises are ascribed (Col. 1:15-19).

Psalm 148:7.

Dragons, i.e., sea-monsters (R V marg.).

Psalm 148:8.

Fire, and hail!--The tempests which sweep our lives have music in their hearts. There is a chord in the rush of every storm. Let us praise God in unison! All stormy winds only fulfil His command.

Psalm 148:9.

We speak of the silence of the hills. But they too have a voice. Every tree claps its hands or sings in its myriad leaves (Psa. 95:4; Isa. 55:12).

Psalm 148:10.

Beasts, and all cattle.--The lowing of the cattle; the songs of the birds; the hum of the insects--all are indispensable notes in the great hallelujah chorus.

Psalm 148:11.

Kings and all peoples (see Psa. 72:11; Prov. 8:15-16).

Psalm 148:12-13.

Young men and maidens; old men and children.--"The Psalms are Church songs, and all who from her congregations should join in them."

Psalm 148:14.

"A people near unto Him."--"Far off, made nigh (Eph. 2:13).

## **PSALM 149**

SING A NEW SONG!

This Psalm, like the rest of these closing songs of Hallelujah belongs to the days of Nehemiah and Ezra, when -the long restrained joy of the restored people broke into vigorous manifestation (Ezra 6:22). The praises of the "King" are throughout the theme and substance.

Psalm 149:1.

In the congregation.--We must not sing lonely songs. If for no other purpose, we should frequent the meetings of God's people, to share the enkindlings of common worship.

Psalm 149:2.

Let Israel rejoice! let Zion be joyful!--Our first creation and our second; our making and re-making; our natural and our supernatural life, with all that belongs to them of provision and nourishment--suggest themes of constant praise.

Psalm 149:3.

Praise his name!--The Kingship of Jesus is a matter not of terror, but of great and abounding joy. We never learn the secret of true gladness till Jesus holds court in our heart, then the joy-bells ring, while the sounds of rejoicing are heard (Psa. 118:15).

Psalm 149:4.

He will beautify the meek.--It is a solemn question with which to close each day, "Art thou pleased with me, O blessed Master!" And

this is the one prayer for every morning, "May 1 walk today so as to please God!" (John 8:29; Col. 1:10; Heb. 11:5).

Psalm 149:5.

Let the saints be joyful!--This may mean either that the saints already enjoy a foretaste of glory--or that they may be glad in anticipation of glory. But, though we devote our nights as well as our days of it, we shall never reach the limits of praise. The nights of the exiles' grief are exchanged for nights of song (Job 35:10).

Psalm 149:6.

In their mouth in their hand.--While we praise God with our lips, let us never lay aside the sword, but imitate the servants of the good Nehemiah (Neh. 4:17-18). Then the devil will be resisted, the flesh crucified and the word vanquished, to the music of unceasing adoration (Eph. 6:17).

Psalm 149:7.

To execute vengeance.--Not their vengeance, but God's. But the Divine method of vengeance was also nobly illustrated in the sending of a Pentecost blessing on those who had been the murderers of the Lord (Acts 2:23-33).

Psalm 149:8-9.

To bind their kings.--The law was very stringent in its denunciation of such as refused to acknowledge God (Deut. 7:2; 32:41). And there is coming a time when He shall put down all rule, and authority and power; for He must reign (1 Cor. 15:24-25). This Psalm may await the consummation described in Rev. 15:2-3. Then we will sing it, as Israel its song of deliverance on the shore of the Red Sea.

## PSALM 150

PRAISE GOD IN HIS SANCTUARY!

The last Psalm is a tumultuous outburst of praise. The sea of adoration is swept by mighty tempests of feeling, which roll the billows forward to break in thunderous acclaim upon the shore. "The Psalms," says Dr. Chalmers, "have their final and most appropriate outgoing in praise that highest of all the exercises of godliness." "As the life of the faithful," says Hengstenberg, "and the history of the Church, so also the Psalter, with all its cries from the depths, runs out in a Hallelujah." "There is nothing in the Psalter," says Dr. Alexander, "more majestic or more beautiful than this brief but most significant finale. As if in emblematical allusion to the triumph which awaits the Church and all its members, when through much tribulation, they shall enter into rest."

"We have the place (Psalm 150:1); the theme (Psalm 150:2); the mode (Psalm 150:3-5); and the universality (Psalm 150:6)--of the praise to be presented to Jehovah. This Psalm is said by a Jewish tradition to have been sung by persons who came to present the first-fruits, while the Levites met them singing" (Psa. 30).

Psalm 150:1.

In his Sanctuary.--The sanctuary is the earthly temple; the firmament of his power the heavenly. Earth and heaven blend in common acts of praise. Every true act of worship on earth excites a response in yonder world--the home of praise.

Psalm 150:2.

Praise Him for his mighty acts.--For the enumeration of these, we should turn to such recitals as Psa. 105, 106, or to Col. 1:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

Psalm 150:3.

With trumpet, psaltery, and harp.--We are not concerned as to the nature of these instruments. But let us remember that each of our emotions and faculties may be a musical instrument in the best sense. Praise Him with the sound of your love!

Praise Him with hope and faith! Praise Him with meekness and patience! Praise Him with courage and strength! Praise Him in Christian work! Praise Him when tied by pain and weariness in a sick-bed!

Psalm 150:6.

Let every thing ... praise the Lord!--Pull out the mighty stops in nature's organ!

Let the bright Seraphim in burning row,  
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow.

Let the gnat make music with the vibrations of its wings. Let every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea (Rev. 5:12-13) be heard saying, "Blessing, and honor and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Hallelujah! Amen.

THE END

**Go to Gems from the Psalms 1-75**