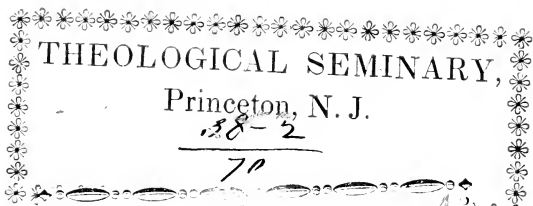




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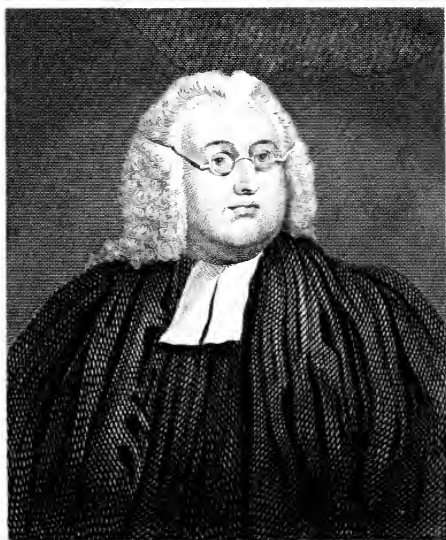


SELECT  
CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,  
WITH  
INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.









WILLIAM

A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF PSALMS.

BY

GEORGE HORNE, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH.

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WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE

REV. EDWARD IRVING, A.M.

MINISTER OF THE CALEDONIAN CHURCH, LONDON.

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## INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

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As in political affairs the enlightened Scottish patriot and statesman, in order to work upon the people, asked for the songs of a nation, rather than its profound and laborious literature; and, in ecclesiastical affairs, the politic churchmen of Rome apprehended more danger to their craft and mystery, from Luther's spiritual songs, than from all his writings of controversial and popular theology; so, in spiritual affairs, it is to be believed that no book of the sacred canon seizeth such a hold upon the spiritual man, and engendereth in the church so much fruitfulness of goodness and truth, of comfort and joy, as doth the Book of Psalms. We say not that the Psalms are so well fitted as the pure light of the Gospel by John, and Paul's Epistles, which are the refraction of that pure light over the fields of human well-being, to break the iron-bone, and bruise the millstone-heart of the natural man; but that they are the kindest medicine for healing his wounds, and the most proper food for nourishing the new life which comes from the death and destruction of the old. For, as the songs and lyrical poems of a na-

tion, which have survived the changes of time by being enshrined in the hearts of a people, contain the true form, and finer essence of its character, and convey the most genial moods of its spirit, whether in seasons of grief or joy, down to the children, and the children's children, perpetuating the strongest vitality of choice spirits, awakened by soul-moving events, and holding, as in a vessel, to the lips of posterity, the collected spirit of venerable antiquity: so the Psalms, which are the songs and odes, and lyrical poems of the people of God, inspired not of wine, or festal mirth, of war, or love, but spoken by holy men as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST, contain the words of GOD'S SPIRIT taught to the souls of his servants, when they were exercised with the most intense experiences, whether of conviction, penitence, and sorrow; or faith, love, and joy; and are fit not only to express the same most vital moods of every renewed soul, but also powerful to produce those broad awakenings of spirit, to create those overpowering emotions, and propagate that energy of spiritual life in which they had their birth.

Be it observed, moreover, that these Songs of Zion express not only the most remarkable passages which have occurred in the spiritual experience of the most gifted saints, but are the record of the most wonderful dispensations of God's providence unto his church:—containing pathetic dirges sung over her deepest calamities, jubilees over her mighty deliverances, songs of sadness for her captivity, and songs of mirth for her prosperity, prophetic announcement of her increase to the end of time, and splendid anticipations of her ultimate glory.

Not indeed the exact narrative of the events as they happened, or are to happen, nor the prosaic improvement of the same to the minds of men; but the poetical form and monument of the event, where it is laid up and embalmed in honourable-wise, after it hath been incensed and perfumed with the spiritual odours of the souls of inspired men. And if they contain not the code of the divine law, as it is written in the Books of Moses, and more briefly, yet better written in our Lord's Sermon on the mount, they celebrate the excellency and glory of the Law, its light, life, wisdom, contentment, and blessedness, with the joys of the soul which keepeth it, and the miseries of the soul which keepeth it not. And if they contain not the argument of the simple doctrines, and the detail of the issues of the gospel, to reveal which the word of God became flesh, and dwelt among us: yet now that the key is given, and the door of spiritual life is opened, where do we find such spiritual treasures as in the book of Psalms, wherein are revealed the depths of the soul's sinfulness, the stoutness of her rebellion against God, the horrors of spiritual desertion, the agonies of contrition, the blessedness of pardon, the joys of restoration, the constancy of faith, and every other variety of Christian experience? And if they contain not the narrative of Messiah's birth, and life, and death; or the labours of his apostolic servants, and the strugglings of his infant church, as these are written in the books of the New Testament; where, in the whole Scriptures, can we find such declarations of the work of Christ, in its humiliation and its glory, the spiritual agonies of his death, and glo-

rious issues of his resurrection, the wrestling of his kingdom with the powers of darkness, its triumph over the heathen, and the overthrow of all its enemies, until the heads of many lands shall have been wounded, and the people made willing in the day of his power? And where are there such outbursting representations of all the attributes of Jehovah, before whom, when he rideth through the heavens, the very heavens seem to rend in twain, to give the vision of his going forth, and we seem to see the haste of the universe to do her homage, and to hear the quaking of nature's pillars, the shaking of her foundations, and the horrible outcry of her terror? And oh! it is sweet in the midst of these soarings into the third heavens of vision, to feel that you are borne upon the words of a man, not upon the wings of an archangel; to hear ever and anon the frail but faithful voice of humanity, making her trust under the shadow of His wings, and her hiding place in the secret of His tent; and singing to Him in faithful strains, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." So that, as well by reason of the matter which it contains, as of the form in which it is expressed, the Book of Psalms, take it all in all, may be safely pronounced one of the divinest books in all the Scriptures; which hath exercised the hearts and lips of all saints, and become dear in the sight of the church; which is replenished with the types of all possible spiritual feelings, and suggests the forms



of all God-ward emotions, and furnishing the choice expressions of all true worship, the utterances of all divine praise, the confession of all spiritual humility, with the raptures of all spiritual joy.

If now we turn ourselves to consider the manner or style of the Book, and to draw it into comparison with the lyrical productions of cultivated and classical nations, it may well be said, that as the heavens are high above the earth, so are the songs of Zion high above the noblest strains which have been sung in any land. For, take out of the lyrical poetry of Greece and Rome, the praises of women, and of wine, the flatteries of men, and idle invocations of the muse and lyre, and what have we left? What dedication of song and music is there to the noble and exalted powers of the human spirit—what to the chaste and honourable relations of human society—what to the excitement of tender emotions towards the widow and the fatherless, the stranger and the oppressed—what to the awful sanctity of law and government, and the practical forms of justice and equity! We know, that in the more ancient time, when men dwelt nearer to God, the lyre of Orpheus was employed to exalt and pacify the soul; that the Pythagorean verses contain the intimations of a deep theology, a divine philosophy and a virtuous life; that the lyre of Tyrtæus was used by the wisdom of Lycurgus, for accomplishing his great work of forming a peculiar people, a nation of brave and virtuous men: but in the times which we call classical, and with the compositions of which we imbue our youth, we find little purity of sentiment, little elevation of soul, no spiritual represen-

tations of God, nothing pertaining to heavenly knowledge or holy feeling: but, on the other hand, impurity of life, low sensual ideas of God, and the pollution of religion, so often as they touch it. But the Songs of Zion are comprehensive as the human soul, and varied as human life; where no possible state of natural feeling shall not find itself tenderly expressed and divinely treated with appropriate remedies; where no condition of human life shall not find its rebuke or consolation: because they treat not life after the fashion of an age or people, but life in its rudiments, the life of the soul, with the joys and sorrows to which it is amenable, from concourse with the outward necessity of the fallen world. Which breadth of application they compass not by the sacrifice of lyrical propriety, or poetical method: for if there be poems strictly lyrical, that is, whose spirit and sentiment move congenial with the movements of music, and which, by their very nature, call for the accompaniment of music, these Odes of a people despised as illiterate, are such. For pure pathos and tenderness of heart, for sublime imaginations, for touching pictures of natural scenery, and genial sympathy with nature's various moods; for patriotism, whether in national weal or national wo, for beautiful imagery, whether derived from the relationship of human life, or the forms of the created universe, and for the illustration, by their help, of spiritual conditions: moreover, for those rapid transitions in which the lyrical muse delighteth, her lightsome graces at one time, her deep and full inspiration at another, her exuberance of joy and her lowest falls of grief, and for every other form of the natural soul, which

is wont to be shadowed forth by this kind of composition, we challenge any thing to be produced from the literature of all ages and countries, worthy to be compared with what we find even in the English version of the Book of Psalms. Were the distinction of spiritual from natural life, the dream of mystical enthusiasts, and the theology of the Jews, a cunningly devised fable, like the mythologies of Greece and Rome, these few Odes should be dearer to the man of true feeling and natural taste, than all which have been derived to us from classical times, though they could be sifted of their abominations, and cleansed from the incrustation of impurity which defiles their most exquisite parts. But into these questions of style we enter no further, our present aim being higher. *Paulo majora canamus.* Let us employ the few pages which we have devoted to this Essay, on something more noble than questions of taste, and more enduring than the gratifications of the natural man.

These Songs of Zion have always been very dear unto Zion's children, and the various churches of the Christian faith, as by one harmonious and universal consent, have adopted the Psalms as the outward form by which they shall express the inward feelings of the Christian life. However much the infinitely varying expositors of Christian doctrine may differ in the opinions and views which they deduce from the Scripture at large; in this they are agreed, that the effusions of the inspired Psalmist must always be the true and expressive language of the believing soul. An organ of utterance well and rightly attuned to every aspiration, and to every

emotion of that soul which hath been quickened from spiritual death, and made alive in Christ Jesus the Lord. The pious ARMINIAN, who resteth content with the infant state of Christ, and seeth no more in the rich treasures of God's word than a free gift to all men, shrinking back with a feeling of dismay from such parts of the sacred volume as favour a system of doctrine suited to the manly state of Christian life, can yet trust himself without dismay or doubt to give back, from his inmost spirit, the sentiments and thoughts which he finds embodied in the book of Psalms, veiled with no obscurity of speech, and perplexed with no form of controversy. He delighteth to read that "the Lord is loving unto every one, and that his tender mercy governs all his works." His spirit hath its liberty amidst those unlimited declarations of the divine beneficence, sung by Zion's King, when he calleth upon all nature's children to take part with him in his song of praise, and in his liberality includeth the lower creatures, and the very forms of inanimate nature; gathering the voice of all the earth into one, and joining it in symphony with the hosannahs of the unfallen and redeemed spirits which are around the throne of God. And the more enlightened and not less pious CALVINIST, who is not content evermore to dwell in the outer court of the holy temple, but resolveth for his soul's better peace and higher joy, to enter into the holy and most holy place, which is no longer veiled and forbidden, finds in this Book of Psalms, a full declaration of the deepest secrets of his faith, expression for his inmost knowledge of the truth, and forms for his

most profound feelings upon the peculiar, and appropriate, and never-failing love of a covenant God towards his own peculiar people; and in concert with David, the Father of a spiritual seed, he doth celebrate the praises of that God, who freely and for his own sake hath loved his people with an everlasting love; “visiting their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes, but not suffering his loving-kindness to fail, or his goodness to depart for evermore.” And from whatever point between these two extremes of spiritual life (the former the infancy, the latter the mature and perfect manhood) any church hath contemplated the scheme of its doctrine—by whatever name they have thought good to designate themselves, and however bitterly opposed to one another in church government, observance of rites, or administration of sacraments, you still find them with one voice consenting to employ those inspired Songs, as well fitted to express the emotions of their spirits, when stirred up to devout and holy aspirations of prayer and praise.

The reason why the Psalms have found such constant favour in the sight of the Christian church, and come to constitute a chief portion of every missal and liturgy, and form of worship, public or private, while forms of doctrine and discourse have undergone such manifold changes, in order to represent the changing spirit of the age, and the diverse conditions of the human mind, is to be found in this—that they address themselves to the simple instinctive feelings of the renewed soul, which are its most constant and permanent part, whereas, the forms of doctrine and discourse address themselves to the

spiritual understanding, which differs in ages, and countries according to the degree of spiritual illumination, and the energy of spiritual life. For, as those instincts of our nature, which put themselves forth in infancy and early life, towards our parents, and our kindred, and our friends, and derive thence the nourishment upon which they live, are far more constant, than those opinions which we afterwards form concerning society, civil polity, and the world in general; and, as those impressions of place, and scene, and incident, which come in upon us in our early years, are not only more constant in their endurance, but more uniform in their effect upon the various minds which are submitted to them, than any which are afterwards made by objects better fitted to affect us both permanently and powerfully—so we reckon that there is an infancy of the spiritual man, which, with all its instincts, wanders abroad over the word of God, to receive the impressions thereof, and grow upon their wholesome variety into a maturity of spiritual reason, when it becomes desirous to combine and arrange into conceptions, and systems of conceptions, the manifoldness and variety of those simple impressions which it hath obtained. During those days of its spiritual infancy, the soul rejoiceth as a little child at the breast of its mother; feeds upon the word of God with a constant relish; delights in the views and prospects which open upon every side, and glories in its heavenly birthright and royal kindred; and considereth with wonder the kingdom of which it is become a denizen, its origin, its miraculous progress, and everlasting glory: and as the infant life opens

itself to the Sun of Righteousness, it delights in its activity, and exhales on all around the odour of its breathing joy. To this season of the spiritual mind, the Psalms come most opportunely as its natural food. We say not that they quicken the life, to which nothing is so appropriate as the words of our Lord recorded in the Gospels, but being quickened, they nourish up the life to manhood, and when its manly age is come, prepare it for the strong meat which is to be found in the writings of the prophets and the apostles. But ever afterwards the souls of believers recur to these Psalms as the home of their childhood, where they came to know the loving-kindness of their heavenly Father, the fatness of his house, and the full river of his goodness, his pastoral carefulness, his sure defence, and his eye that slumbereth not, nor sleepeth, with every other simple representation of divine things, to the simple affections of the renewed soul. Therefore are these psalms to the Christian what the love of parents and the sweet affections of home, and the clinging memory of infant scenes, and the generous love of country, are to men of every rank and order, and employment; of every kindred, and tongue, and nation.

This principle which binds these psalms with cords of love to the renewed soul, and the right use and application of them to the bringing up of spiritual children, will be more clearly manifested, if, from the varieties of Christian experience, we select those great leading features, which are common to all, and show how fitly they are expressed in the Book of Psalms, with how much beauty and tenderness of feeling, with how much richness of allusion to the

ancient history of the church, and with whatever other accompaniments which can make them sweet to the present perusal of the soul, easy and delightful to it in its recollective and reflective mood. Thereby we shall give, as it were, a fit spiritual introduction to the excellent COMMENTARY of the good BISHOP HORNE, whose book is full of the particulars of such spiritual application.

Without dispute or controversy upon minor points of difference, the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, meet upon the common ground of a fallen nature. Once they had supposed themselves upright before God, strong in natural integrity, possessing an undoubted claim to the final approbation of a righteous judge. But it was in the days of their ignorance that they thus conceived of their own worth; and now that the rays of divine light and truth have penetrated the darkness in which their souls were shrouded, they see an end of that perfection which was heretofore their boast. The breadth of the divine commandment is revealed to them, and being sorely pressed with an even present sense of their defilement, they afflict their souls together, falling prostrate before the thrice Holy Majesty, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and confess with the royal penitent, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Whatever point of faith or doctrine any one of Zion's children may seem to be deficient in, if he be but a babe of Christ, able to feed only upon the nourishment of babes, and rejecting the food of



riper years, yet shall he have come to the knowledge of the plagues of his own heart, and be moved to spread forth his hands in supplication towards the temple of the Lord, and to say, "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me." The universal church afflicteth her soul under the abiding sense of the loss of her original beauty, and under a deep feeling of her present misery, she deploreth her bondage to the powers of darkness and the God of this world; and her children mingle their tears together by the waters of their captivity, and wail because of the oppression of their mother, and they cry out of the depths of their desolation, "Let the sighing of the prisoners come before thee; and according to the greatness of thy power preserve those that are appointed unto death." "Save us, O Lord, by thy name, judge us by thy strength, for strangers are risen up against us, and oppressors seek after our souls." Oh, how do the true mourners with one accord come unto the Lord weeping and with supplication, "that their captivity may be turned, and salvation brought them out of Zion!" How do they beseech the Lord, "giving him no rest till he make Jacob to rejoice, and Israel to be glad; till he do good in his good pleasure unto Zion, and build up again the walls of Jerusalem!" and when the Lord hath hearkened unto the voice of the cry of his people, and turned their captivity, delivering them from the strong enemy that held them, bringing them forth also into a large place, and subduing under them the foes that were too mighty for them; how do they with one accord magnify the Lord, and extol his name together, and with one

harmonious voice celebrate the praise of him who, strong to save them, hath trodden upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon hath trampled under foot. "Oh Lord of Hosts, who is a strong God like unto thee? thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that was slain. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth shall go before thy face."

The true Israel of God, the spiritual worshippers under the gospel dispensation, being rescued from this worse than Egyptian bondage, by the strong hand and outstretched arm of the God of their salvation, commemorate in many a song sung in Zion of old, the interposition of divine love and grace, and oft looking back upon the raging sea, which was fain to yield them a safe passage; they proceed onward in their course through the weary wilderness, to the abode of their rest, and the promised city of their habitation: and they had hoped they were safe from the power of their cruel adversary, and that their foot was safely planted upon their own land. But now they find, to the travail of their souls, that though they be no longer the willing slaves of Satan, but partakers of the glorious liberty wherewith Christ hath set his people free, they must use the arms of freemen to retain their newly acquired liberty, march militant, and build the wall of their city in troublous times, and abide unto the death the faithful soldiers of the Captain of their salvation. "Each one had said in his prosperity, I shall never be moved, thou, Lord, of thy favour hadst made my mountain to stand strong." But

ere long, each one for himself exclaims, “ Oh God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled, and made Jerusalem a heap of stones.”—“ Send thine hand from above, rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.” And oh, how do Zion’s children cry out ever and anon together, in pain to be delivered from the remaining and continually reviving power of that sin which cleaveth to them with all the force of nature, and is only kept in check and brought under subjection, by the more powerful operation of the Spirit of grace which dwelleth in them! And they continually cry out with the king of Israel, “ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me: purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow.” The experience of the Lord’s saints is ever one. As face answereth to face in a glass, so the heart of man to man, whether it be the heart in its unrenewed or renewed state, its workings will not be found diverse, but the same,—moods of the mind common to every child of the second as of the first Adam. Whatever is written in Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, concerning the former church, must be fulfilled in the experience of every saint of the present church; and there is no spiritual song, which they do not appropriate and make their own. In them it is fulfilled. For, it is but the Spirit of Christ speaking at various times; of whom no word is mortal, but every word immortal. And it is their constant work to search out the personal

application of the Spirit, and appropriate it to themselves: and through every trial and stage of their spiritual life, they say, with the Psalmist, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path; open thou mine eyes that I may discern wondrous things out of thy law." Ah, how they meditate thereon day and night! and truly can every child of David's kingdom say, "Lord, how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day; mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate on thy word." And the anxious and diligent travail of Zion's children in the study of their Master's word, is repaid by the sweet and pleasant contemplations which they are continually deriving thence, for the refreshment and consolation of their spirit. And the language of their soul is ever, "How sweet are thy words to my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth! the law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

But the saints of God mourn not for themselves alone, nor do they rejoice only for themselves. Nor is it for their own solitary rescue from the jaws of the devouring lion, that they offer up strong cries unto the Lord; nor for their single salvation, that they sing the praises of redeeming love. They are not altogether absorbed with the variety of their own spiritual conflicts, or swallowed up in the sense of their own manifold trials and temptations; nor for themselves alone do they study the precious word of God, or dig for its hid treasure with the avarice of the man who knoweth not the riches of communicated wealth. The utterances of individual feeling, of whatever kind, form but a part, perhaps the

lesser part, of the spiritual exercises of the man of God. If he fears with a salutary fear, lest it be said of him at any time, "The vineyard of others hath he kept, but his own vineyard hath he not kept:" he hath yet a heart to mourn with those that mourn, and to rejoice with those that rejoice. He is a member of the mystical body of his Lord, whereof when any member suffers, all the members suffer with it; when any member is honoured, all the members rejoice. Therefore it is a first instinct of the spiritual man, to have a deep and abiding sympathy with every brother of human kind, upon whose renewed spirit he discovers the impress of his Master's image: and he says, "All my delight is in the saints that are upon the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue." Unlike the natural man, who at his best estate is built up in selfish feeling or unholy emulation, the man of God looks not only at his own things, but at the things of others. With the love that is peculiar to the true saint, he desires the well-being of his brother, and rejoiceth over it even as if it were his own. How doth he continually make supplication for all saints, that their faith and love may abound unto the glory of God: how earnestly doth he desire their increase of grace, and that they may be filled with all the knowledge of God! and he ever prays for the peace of Jerusalem, saying evermore, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, peace be with thee. Because of the house of our God, I will seek thy good. Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good; and strengthen the up-

right in heart." In Zion's troubles his spirit is troubled, and he hangeth his harp upon the willows, refusing the song of mirth, and preferring the cause of captive Zion, before his own chief joy. And he prayeth on her behalf continually, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." Send thou help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. Remember all thy offerings, and accept all thy burnt sacrifices. Grant thee according to thy heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.

Now there hath grown up in these lean years, a miserable notion, that the Psalms are not so appropriate for expressing the communion of the Christian church, for the reason that they contain allusions to places and events which are of Jewish, and not of Christian association. And some have gone so far as to weed out all those venerable associations, by introducing modern names of places in their stead. Why do they not upon the same principle weed out the Jewish allusions of the four Gospels, and the Epistles? But it is as poor in taste and wrong in feeling, as it is daring in the thought, and bold in the execution. In doing so, they consult for the *homely* feeling of the *natural*, not of the *spiritual* man, because the *home* of the spiritual was in Jerusalem, and Mount Zion and the temple of God, with which the soul connects her anticipations, no less than her recollections, being taught that the new Jerusalem is to come down from heaven like a bride, decked for her bridegroom, and that those who are sealed are to stand upon Mount Zion with the Lamb of God. Every name in the Psalms, whether of person or of

place, hath a mystical meaning given to it in the Christian Scriptures. Jerusalem is not the Jerusalem that was, nor is Babylon the Babylon that was, and even David hath lost his personality in the everlasting David. Judah and Israel mean not now the cast-away root, but the branch that hath been grafted in. Besides, we hold at present only one cycle of the revolution of God's purpose; the Jews shall yet be brought in, and Jerusalem become glorious, and the dwelling of God be again with men. Why then should any part of everlasting Scripture be made the property of an age or place, which suppose every Christian nation to do, and where were the community of the Christian church! It is heady innovation, and leanness of spirit which hath brought this to pass, for no end that we can see, save to gratify national vanity, and connect religion in a strange league with patriotism; thereby breaking the continuity of God's dispensation; and destroying all lyrical propriety. As if you would render the odes of Horace into English, with English names of men and places, in order to make them more edifying to the English reader. But more need not be said upon this blunder in piety, which will disappear when the lean years are over and gone. If we take not our forms for expressing spiritual patriotism, from those inspired songs through which, in the old time, the church breathed the spirit of her high privilege, and separate community, where shall we obtain them of like unction and equal authority, in the experience of times during which no prophet hath arisen in the holy city? For though the church hath been as sorely tried under the Gentile, as under the Jew-

ish dispensation, it hath not pleased the Lord to bestow upon any of her priests or people, the garment of inspiration, with which to clothe in spiritual songs the depths of her sorrow, or the exultation of her joy. And we are shut up to the necessity, either of responding to the voice of the Spirit in the ancient Psalmist, or to re-echo the poetical effusions of uninspired men,—either to address the living God in the language of his own word, or in the language of some vernacular poet, whose taste and forms of thinking, whose forms of feeling, yea, and forms of opinion, we must make mediators between our soul and the ear of God,—which is a great evil to be avoided, whenever it can be avoided. For Christians must be forms of the everlasting and common Spirit; not mannerists of mortal and individual men.

But to return. Not only do the personal instincts, and the social instincts of the child of God, find in these Psalms the milk and honey of their existence, a cradle and a home where to wax and grow, and a multifarious world of imagery to awaken and entertain its various senses; but also those instincts of pity, and compassion, and longing charity, which it hath towards the enemies of Christ, not indeed as his enemies, but as the hopeful prodigals of the human family, which he loveth in common with the rest, and would, in like manner, save. The true disciples of the compassionate and tender-hearted Friend of sinners, adopt the language of Israel's king, when he pours out his soul in anxious longings for the salvation of the wicked, deprecating their stout-hearted rebellion against the King of kings, and exhorting



to be timely wise, lest they fail of their final and everlasting rest. The new man in Christ Jesus, the regenerate, adopted child of the second Adam, who, under the sweet and enlightening influence of many newly awakened feelings, perceives himself to be linked in new and constraining bonds of sympathy with every kindred soul in Christ, is, nevertheless, not so absorbed in the joyful consciousness of those newly formed relations into which he hath been introduced by grace, as to forget that he is still united by many dear and tender ties to his brethren in the flesh. His original descent from the first Adam, he does not cease to recollect; and the conviction that, in virtue of this descent, he was by nature a child of wrath even as others, stimulates his zeal in behalf of those who appear to be less highly favoured than himself, and will not suffer his love towards them to fail. If, to the inexpressible peace and consolation of his soul, he finds himself to be now under the royal law of liberty, he grieveth to behold his kindred, his friends, his neighbours, the world at large, still oppressed with the yoke of bondage, heedless of their degradation, and careless to take up their purchased redemption. If the law of God be precious to him, and he discover in it a beauty, and excellence, and a goodness ever commending it to the love and admiration of his enlightened spirit, how doth he weep and mourn on account of those by whom it is ignorantly set at nought and utterly despised! He adopteth the language of Israel's king, "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep

not thy law. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Beware now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the right way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

There are many passages in the Psalms which seem to breathe an opposite spirit of hostility and revenge upon the personal enemies of the Psalmist, and to heap upon their heads all the curses which are written in the book of the law of God. Concerning this, and many other points, it is well stated in the Preface to this Commentary, whereof we would not repeat any thing, but add, for the further explication of this matter, that though the gospel law be "charity out of a pure heart," this charity doth manifest itself under various forms, some pleasant, but most of them painful to the natural man. Rebuke is a form of charity; and censure, and excommunication, yea, and total abandonment for a while. Truth is always a form of charity; or, to speak more properly, truth is the soul of which charity is but the beautiful, graceful, and lovely member. Charity, therefore, is not to be known by soft words, and fair speeches and gentle actions, which are oftener the form of policy and courtesy; but must be sought in the principle of the heart, out of which all our words, speeches, and actions come forth. It is love to God producing love to all his family, by which we are moved; then is it charity, be its form commendation or blame, mildness or zeal, the soft and gentle moods of mercy, or the stern inflictions of justice, or the hasty strokes

of hot and fiery indignation: and wisdom must determine the form which is proper to the occasion. Is not God a God of love? and how diversified are the moods of his providence even to his own beloved children? Christ brought mercy to the earth, and in the gospel builded for her an ark, in which she might swim over the deluge of cruelty which covereth the earth. Yet how terrible is that gospel in its revelation to the wicked, how unsparing of the world, how cruel to the flesh, how contemptuous of good-natured formality, how awfully vindictive against hypocrisy; taking every one of its children, and swearing him upon the altar to be an enemy, till death, against the world, the devil and the flesh! Against the various forms then of the devil, the world and the flesh we are sworn, and, in order to their destruction, must make war with the two-edged sword which proceedeth out of the mouth of the word of God. Of these strong actings of the soul against the wickedness of the wicked, the Psalmist's language of cursing is but the breath. The world is the heathen whom he prays God to break in pieces. And for ever let the Christian exercise himself with that warfare, else he shall never know the fellowship of the Redeemer's sufferings. It is the capital principle of all sound doctrine, That the world is to be destroyed. It is the deep-rooted source of all heretical doctrine, That the world is to be mended. And to keep the one in mind, the other out of mind, it is most necessary that no mean portion of the devotion of a Christian church should be to express the desires of their soul on this behalf. Charity being unviolated; yea, charity being edified; for until the

sceptre of the world is broken in pieces, charity can find no room, but is fain to flee into the wilderness. Out of the same charity, therefore, ought the Christian to adopt these expressions of his hatred to the form, and fruits of wickedness, that he expresseth his longing desire that the souls of the wicked should be set free and saved.

Such is the food, exercise, and entertainment which the child of God receives in this precious portion of his word, to all those instincts of the renewed spirit which regard self-preservation, the communion of saints and the salvation of the world. But beyond these objects which dwell upon the earth, he is carried upward to hold communion with the God and Father of his spirit, from whom he hath obtained the new birth, and by whom this new principle is kept alive in its uncongenial habitation. Many are the conflicts of Zion's children in their way to the heavenly city, and great the travail of their souls, under the variety and might of which they need appropriate encouragement from Him who is greater than all their enemies, and in whom is their trust. Their own individual salvation, their own peculiar trials, their own besetting enemies, Zion's well-being, and the share of all her sorrows till her warfare is ended; the world's salvation, in which they must travail till the number of the elect is accomplished, and, as priests unto God, offer up continual supplication: how shall they prosper in such an arduous work, without constant communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? For which communion with the Godhead, these divine songs of Israel furnish the

most sublime, the most pathetic and the most varied forms. Here the perfections of Jehovah are revealed to all his saints, whether in his strength as the God of Hosts, or in his righteousness, as before whom the heavens are not clean; or in his intelligence as the pure light in whom is no darkness at all; or in his all pervading presence in the highest heavens, and the deepest hell, and the uttermost parts of the earth, and the dwelling place of darkness; or as the Father of all life, and the Creator of all wealth, and the liberal Provider for the wants of every thing that liveth, as the Glory of the hosts above, and the Terror of the hosts beneath; the Eternal, Unchangeable, without variableness or the shadow of turning; who of old laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands; which, when they wax old, he shall fold up as a vesture, and cover them with a new garment of creation, while he remaineth the same and his years have no end. Oh, my soul! that thou couldst tell how thou hast been enlarged into the liberty of divine thought, and borne upon the wings of contemplation beyond the bounds of time and space, wrapt into the mysteries of the divine life, and with a strong heart and serene countenance, brought back to fight and finish thy warfare, till thy change come, by the glorious representations of Jehovah and his acts, contained in the Book of Psalms, which truly are the fiery chariot, the vehicle sent from God to carry the saints into the third heavens, that they may breathe an imperial air, and return lightened of their troubles, and quickened in their spirit, to finish the heavy work which God hath given them to do.

Of this, indeed, no one will doubt, be he spiritual or carnal, that these Psalms contain such representations of the great and mighty God, as mind of man never conceived, or pen of man indited; but more marvellous is it still to find in these Psalms, which looked afar off at the day of Christ, all the perfections and peculiar attributes of Messiah, which form to his redeemed people the endless theme of praise, issuing from the heart, and returning into the heart again, like the waters which the firmament draweth from the earth, and droppeth again upon the earth in dews and refreshing showers. These are set forth in a way most noble, most true, and most full of feeling. In such a wonderful way is the man Christ Jesus represented in these Psalms, uttering his soul unto his Father, unto his people, unto his persecutors, or unto his own bosom, that the children are able to take part in them, and find to their inexpressible joy that he is one with them in mind, in heart, in deed and in very word. And now, let us take free scope to set forth this, the most soul-quieting, and soul-delighting virtue of these Songs of Zion: that they contain the symphonies of Messiah and his children, of Immanuel and his people.

But first, like the bride who loveth to look upon the face of the bridegroom, and to hear of all his excellence, that she may with the more gladness give herself into his bosom, and rejoice in his embrace; the church doth well love and much delight to hear it said of him by Jehovah, "I will declare the decree, Thou art mine only Son; this day have I begotten thee." "Thou wast set up from ever-

lasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was;" "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God, the same who did appoint the foundation of the earth, establish the clouds above, and strengthen the fountains of the deep; of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands." And how her glory rejoiceth to hear, that for the love of her that he might wash her in his blood, and present her without spot or wrinkle in the presence of his Father, he became a partaker of flesh and blood, and was found in fashion as a man, yea, took upon him the form of a servant; that by toil, and servitude, and suffering, and death, he might purchase her love. Making request unto his Father, thus—"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: mine ears hast thou bored. Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" Remembering how he fulfilled all righteousness for her sake, and redeemed her from the curse, by becoming a curse for her, she thus sings her unbounded love, "And he bowed the heavens and came down, darkness was under his feet. He made darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. He took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me." And looking on him whom she caused to be pierced, whose beauty was wasted by death, and the joy of his soul drunk up by the fierce arrows of his Father, she mourns and weeps, and her eyes distil with tears, at the thought of those stripes by which she was healed; and by the deepest

of all sympathies, the sufferings of Messiah became the sufferings of the church, and she crieth out, with her suffering Lord, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ! O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest me not, and in the night season, and am not silent ! I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ; thou hast brought me to the dust of death.”

But the symphonies which the Church singeth with Christ out of this book, are not all a fellowship of suffering. For, not only by the shedding of his blood did Messiah make propitiation for her sins, and destroy her writing of condemnation, and put a new song in her mouth—“ Who is he that condemneth,” but also for her hath he purchased the raiment of an everlasting righteousness, and the beauties of holiness, and the spirit of a perfect obedience, which, by precious justifying faith, she claimeth as her own, and over which she singeth other symphonies of gladness : “ I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteous dealing, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eye sight.” And in the greatness of her loyal love, how many a song singeth the daughter of Zion, touching the things that belong unto the King, when her tongue is as the pen of a ready writer : “ Thou art fairer than the children of men ; grace is poured upon thy lips, therefore God



hath blessed thee for ever. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness, and tender mercies." And with what a brave pulse of glory doth her heart exult towards the accomplishment of Messiah's kingdom, and the fulness of his power; when all lands shall call upon his name, and all nations shall bow before him, and there shall be given to him of Sheba's gold, and his name shall endure for ever, and last like the sun, and men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed! Then his people sing in high symphony with their triumphant King, and all-conquering Lord, in whom each one seeth himself to be a conqueror and a king, seated on his throne, and sharing in his royal sovereignty, "Thou hast made me the head of the heathen; a people whom I have not known shall serve me, as soon as they hear of me they shall obey me. The strangers shall submit themselves unto me."

For what are the conquests of David, or the greater conquests of David's everlasting Son, over the kingdoms of the earth, but a shadow of that inward conquest which Christ worketh over his enemies within our soul, which is more valuable than the earth, and to conquer which is a higher achievement than to subdue the kingdoms of the earth! The history of the church is such a shadow of soul-history, as creation is of the omnipotent Spirit which made it. The soul is a thing for the Son of God to conquer, the world is for Cesar, or the son of Philip. The soul, the boundless world of the soul to recover, to reconcile its warring powers,

to breathe the life of God over its chaotic wastes—this is a work whereof all outward works are only fit to be the emblems; a work, in the execution of which every spiritual man feels the going forth of his Saviour conquering and to conquer. And he hath every outward action of holy writ realized inwardly every groan of the conquered, every struggle of the conqueror, his toil, his sweat, his wounds, his death, his resurrection, his second going forth in the plenitude of the Spirit, his unconquered resolution, his long-abiding labour, the turning of the tide of battle, his sword upon the neck of his enemies, the shout of victory, the treading of the nations in the wine-press of his fury, his shivering them with his iron sceptre like a potsherd, his driving them with death, and the grave, and him that had the power of death, into the bottomless pit. His reign of peace, its joy, full contentment, and perfect assurance, what are they all, but letters, words, and similitudes, whereby the believer may better understand, and better express the spiritual work which is going on with his own soul, by the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ? If a company of musical and melodious souls feel in unison with the sounds which flow from chords touched by the hands of a master musician, and a company of rich and poetical souls feel in harmony, while the drama of a master poet is rehearsed with true action in their ears, shall not the souls of spiritual men be in harmony, while perusing the outward action, whereof they

are the subject? Be in harmony! aye, in truest harmony. For they are the end of it all, the meaning of it all. In them it hath its reality, and till realized in them, it is an incomprehensible world to words and images, a hieroglyphic with no interpretation; a musical instrument, with no hand cunning enough to bring out its infinite streams of liquid music. Therefore, by no mystery but reality, though it be *deep* spiritual reality, deeper far than nature's penetration, they sing, "He hath ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for us, even for the rebellious, that the Lord our God may dwell among us. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." And in spirit they see the heavens to have opened their glorious gates, and behold the desire of their soul seated at the right hand of God, and they hear the welcome of Jehovah to the Son of man, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool, and thy people willing in the day of thy power, when the rod of thy strength shall be sent out of Zion."

But the sympathy of the church with her glorified Head endeth not with his exaltation to the right hand of the Highest, but from the new office to which she heareth him appointed—"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," she doth derive an

assurance, a blessed confidence, that he standeth ever on high, to revive the drooping faith of his people. He is passed within the veil, to offer the blood of his own sacrifice, and intercede for the sins of his people, whose hope is passed in along with him, and anchored within the veil. And when their souls languish even to the gates of death, and the adversary presseth sore upon them, that they might fall, and for a moment darkness covereth their soul, and they say, Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Straightway, they remember their infirmity, and call to mind the years of the right hand of the Most High; and are assured that Messiah ever liveth to make intercession for them, and that if any man sin, he has an advocate with the Most High, even Christ Jesus, the righteous. They remember the man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief, and can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as they are, yet without sin. And taking heart, they exclaim, "The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident, the Lord is my rock and my fortress, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my high tower." And thus the children of God are exercised between the troubles of life, and the consolations of faith, between a body of sin and death, and a life which is

born of God, and hidden with Christ in God. The principalities and powers of darkness would fain overwhelm the light and life of their soul, but they know that the powers of the flesh cannot oppress the powers of the Spirit. They see the body of Christ, which was rescued by the power of the Spirit from the jaws of the grave, standing in the presence of God on high. And they are assured thereby that the holy seed, born within them of the same Spirit, will, in like manner, quicken their mortal flesh, and at length re-demand and rescue from the grave the body, that it may live and reign with Christ for evermore.

At length cometh the end of all trial and experiences, for which there is an abundant preparation made in this storehouse of spiritual feeling. Messiah's spiritual seed, the heirs of many exceeding great and precious promises, who know that to them an abundant entrance shall be ministered into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, anticipate with hope and joy, not with fear and dismay, the time when their earthly house of this tabernacle being dissolved, they shall enter into the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Many a dark and gloomy valley have they passed through, since the time at which they find all their faces Zionward, and became pilgrims in the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life. The last sad and dismal vale through which they have to pass, before their earthly pilgrimage be accomplished, is the valley of the shadow of death, which so many appalling shapes and forms of terror, hover around. The deep shades

of an eternal night seem evermore to rest upon it. Dark and portentous clouds hang round about it, and shut it in, impervious to mortal sight. Nature looks upon the gloom, and attempts in vain to discover the limits of the inhospitable region. Knowledge is baffled, and discovery is set at nought. Visions of terror trouble the eye which comes near it. Unearthly sounds of horror strike upon his ear who approacheth it. New and mysterious emotions seize upon the appalled spirit, which feels no capacity of dying, nor symptoms of death, while the tabernacle is all crumbling into dust, and she shrinks back aghast, and asks herself how she is to fare alone, with no one to cheer or accompany her. And though nature would fain nerve herself to it, she feels how utterly weak she is, how profitless strength, wealth, knowledge, friendship, and what else she boasted in. "My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed my soul." None can wrestle with death but He who overcame death, and those to whom he giveth power to overcome that king of terrors. Whom he hath taught with the eye of faith to peruse the dark vale, and pierce its gloom, and know the bright and happy region which to them lies revealed within, though to others it be the mouth of the yawning pit. And as the man of God walks onwards through the valley, he says unto his God, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth, my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nei-

ther wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.”

Now the man of God looks to the end of the race he has been patiently running, and beholds the goal at hand. He looks upon the recompense of reward which is awaiting him, the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. The last enemy that he has to overcome is death. The king of terrors is to be met face to face. He cannot avoid the combat if he would, and he would not if he could. How often, in the travail of his soul, hath he exclaimed, “Wo is me that I am constrained to dwell in Meshech, and to have my habitation amongst the tents of Kedar? O that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!” How often hath he said, “In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore! As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness. When I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.” And now that his conflicts are about to cease for ever, and his sorrows to have an end, he lifteth up his head, because the day of his redemption draweth nigh. In vision his spirit, already winged to take its everlasting flight, discerneth the throne of God encircled by a thousand times ten thousand sons of light. In vision he mingles with the glorious throng. He tunes his harp to the heavenly theme, and sings the song of Moses and the Lamb. Sprinkled with the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, he ascends in spirit “to the Mount Zion, the city of the living God, making one with the innumerable company of angels, and general assembly and church of the first-born, whose

names are written in heaven. Ah! how doth it grieve his soul to wake once again out of the trance of bliss, to open his eyes once again upon the dull, cold, blank realities of life. The syren world hath no longer charms for him. He hath proved the falseness of her beauty: he hath seen the glory that excelleth, and hath no eye to look upon fictitious brightness. He hath seen the King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off: how shall he endure to soil his feet again with the base mould of the degenerate earth, to breathe any longer the polluted atmosphere of a world poisoned with sin, and full of the voices of sorrow! In this tabernacle he groans, being burdened. And when the grisly king shakes against him his terrible dart, he openeth his bosom to receive the stroke of grace, saying the while, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And looking up to heaven, he takes his departure, saying, "Into thy hand I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!"

It has been our purpose to show, by the above sketch and commentary of Christian life, that the multiplied experiences of the soul, the various states of mind through which the regenerate children of the second Adam pass, from their first entrance upon the life of faith, to the period when that life is swallowed up in light, are all exemplified in the book of Psalms. So that the believer cannot be in any condition whether of joy or sorrow, but he will find in this book most appropriate forms of utterance, ready prepared for the expression of his feelings of what-



ever kind. We have only brought to light a portion of these feelings, tracing their genuine and expressive utterance, as it were with the Psalmist's pen. But it would not be difficult to show, that in the Psalms, the expressions of spiritual feeling are infinitely varied, and correspond to every emotion, and to every aspiration of the soul, quickened to the life of faith and holiness, yet groaning still under the partial bondage of a fleshly nature, exposed to the assaults of innumerable enemies, and compassed upon every side with temptation and infirmity. So that this Book is to be regarded as a spiritual world, with which the new-born spirit may converse, and acquire the knowledge and use of its faculties, as well as the knowledge and use of those objects which are revealed therein. And hence it hath a charm which it can never lose, being associated with the simple and true affections of the spirit, and with the joy and satisfaction which attend the revelation of any new faculty within us. And this charm must grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength; for according as we increase in spiritual strength, we are able to make more of those feelings our own; and the more we become acquainted with dialectic methods, the more we discern their difficulty and uncertainty, and desire to return to the simple impressions made upon the soul by the words of the Holy Spirit. And we reckon also that the more we advance in divine life, the simpler our discourse will become, and the more delivered from the forms of human learning, into the forms of the Spirit's teaching, until in the end, if by reason of extreme age or languor, we can say no more, we will

say, as is reported of the Apostle John, "Little children, love one another;" and when speech is denied us to utter any thing, we will occupy our spiritual musings with some simple forms of divine truth, as the learned Baxter is reported to have said upon his death-bed, that he had been meditating all night long upon the great wisdom of the Lord's prayer and the ten commandments. So that we very much question if these Psalms, which have the charm of having unloosed to us the secrets of our own spiritual selves, may not, like a true and faithful friend, continue to add to their first loveliness and value unto the end. For, as was said in the beginning, and hath been amply illustrated, the part of our being which they take hold upon, is not our opinions or our reasonings, or any of our peculiarities, but those universal feelings of the spiritual man, which being constant in all, we have denominated *spiritual instincts*; in the abiding of which is the abiding of spiritual life, and upon the experiences of which all spiritual knowledge is built up.

While executing this sketch of spiritual experience, in order to exhibit the proper character and true value of the Book of Psalms, several questions arose to our minds besides those we touched in passing, from the consideration of which we withheld ourselves till we should have completed the main purpose of our Essay, but which cannot be omitted, without leaving it, in a good measure hypothetical, and to which therefore we now address ourselves.

The first is, How far we are justified in applying to Christian life in general, those feelings and ex-

pressions of feeling, which, in the first instance, pertained to individuals, and in general to one individual—David, the son of Jesse. To this we answer, that spiritual men are the only proper judges of that which is appropriate to the expression of their feelings, who, from the beginning of the church in the days of Moses, even until now, have gathered up, and preserved, and appropriated these morsels of divine instruction, as they fell from the lips of the men who spake them; and that not in the Jewish church, but in the Christian church, and these not in latter days, but in primitive days, and the days of the Fathers, to an extent and depth of spirituality unknown in our times. The universal church of Christ hath therefore given its witness, that these Psalms are not made for one age, but for all ages; not for one place, but for all places; not for one soul, but for all souls; time, place, and person, being only so far present in them, as to associate them with that generation to which they were first given, not to dissociate them from any other generation of spiritual children, which, in after ages, was to be born to the same Spirit by the seed of the word, which liveth and abideth for ever. The temptations of David's soul, and its experiences under them, are as much the property of every saint, and of every age of the church, as are the discourses, remonstrances, parables, and instructions of our Lord to his untoward generation—as are the arguments, and demonstrations, and Epistles of Paul to the early churches which he planted or watered. They are all equally personal, (for the Son of God himself was a person,) and the personal runneth like a

thread of humanity through the heavenly hues of their discourse. They are all equally secular, and the conditions of the age are the frame-work upon which the tissue of the web is woven. Which presence of the personal, and intermixture of the temporary, instead of taking from the force and power of the revelations, do only apply them with the more force and power to the *personality* of every other saint, and the *peculiarity* of every other age. For, had the revelations not breathed of the man who spoke them, and told of the condition of the age to which they were given, the former would have been an automaton, and the latter a looker upon the wonders which the automaton spoke; neither the one nor the other feeling any interest or concern in the marvellous display of divine art. But God wished both prophet and people to take heed, and to stand in awe of fearful issues, if they heeded not; therefore, he moulded his man to his purpose, and cast him into the conditions which suited his ends, and still he was a man, acted on by course of nature, and manifest to the people as a fellow-man, through whom, indeed, they heard soul-stirring truths, uttered with ear-piercing words, and, when need was, sustained by attention-rivetting works; but still suited to their case, and thrust in their way, and spoken to their feelings, and pressed on their consciences, and rivetted there by the most mighty sanctions of life and death, present and eternal. But they are not the less spoken to us. No, not the less, on that account, spoken to us. Yet, that we might have no shadow of excuse, nor shield of self-delusion, the Lord appointed a race of prophets, or ministers, to

abide until his coming, who should be gifted of his Spirit, to apply the *universal* and *unchangeable*, in all his revelation, to the condition of every time, place, and individual; and so far from abandoning the *peculiarity* of the revelation, to use that no less than the other, wherever it will accommodate itself to the case in hand, and to bring it home with ten-fold force, by the application of the parable, “Thou, even thou thyself, art the very man”—this, even this, is the very season—this, even this in which we live, is the very condition to which this revelation was given. We do admire how this automaton-inspiration can stand a thought, when it is the very RULE of heaven’s communications, that in every word of God there should be a *humanity*, as well as a *divinity* present. And as THE WORD which was in the beginning took not voice—nor intelligence, but flesh, human flesh, and the fulness of the Godhead was manifested *bodily*; so, when that same word came unto the fathers by the prophets, and discovered a part of his fulness, it was through their flesh or their humanity, that is, through their present conditions of spirit, and mind, and body, and outward estate, that he discovered himself to the flesh or the humanity of the people, that is, their present conditions of spirit, and body, and outward estate. Whence, if it be said that Moses was Christ under the veil, and if Paul says of himself, that not he but Christ lived in him, then it may be said, that David was the humiliation and the exaltation of the church under the veil.

Now, as the apostle, in writing to the Hebrews concerning the priesthood of Christ, calls upon them to consider Melchizedek, his solitary majesty, and

singular condition, and remarkable honour; so call we upon the church to consider David, the son of Jesse, his unexampled accumulation of gifts, his wonderful variety of conditions, his spiritual riches and his spiritual desolation, and the multifarious contingencies of his life; with his faculty, his unrivalled faculty of expressing the emotions of his soul, under all the days of brightness and days of darkness which passed over his head. For thereby shall the church understand how this the lawgiver of her devotion was prepared by God for the work which he accomplished, and how it hath happened that one man should have brought forth that vast variety of experience, in which every soul rejoiceth to find itself reflected. For Moses was not more prepared by all the wisdom and learning of Egypt, for becoming a fit vehicle to carry from God unto the people an institution of law, than David was prepared, by the experiences of his life between the sheepcot and the throne, for becoming a fit vehicle to carry from God unto his church, an institution of spiritual experience, and devotional feeling.

And we the more gladly enter upon the education and gifts of this saint, the great revealer of the moods of the renewed soul, that we may ashamed or silence the Rabshekas who rail upon this great type of Messiah's humiliation and exaltation, the man after God's own heart. We call upon the Church, and all reasonable men, to consider this man David, how well furnished he was by nature, and educated by providence, for the great honour to which the Christian church hath preferred him.

There never was a specimen of manhood, so rich

and ennobled as David, the son of Jesse, whom other saints haply may have equalled in single features of his character, but such a combination of manly, heroic qualities, such a flush of generous godlike excellencies, hath never yet been seen embodied in a single man. His Psalms, to speak as a man, do place him in the highest rank of lyrical poets, as they set him above all the inspired writers of the Old Testament,—equalling in sublimity the flights of Isaiah himself, and revealing the cloudy mystery of Ezekiel; but in love of country, and gloryings in its heavenly patronage, surpassing them all. And where are there such expressions of the varied conditions into which human nature is cast by the accidents of Providence, such delineations of deep affliction, and inconsolable anguish, and anon such joy, such rapture, such revelry of emotion, in the worship of the living God! Such invocations to all nature, animate and inanimate, such summonings of the hidden powers of harmony, and of the breathing instruments of melody! Single hymns of this Poet would have conferred immortality upon any mortal, and borne down his name as one of the most favoured of the sons of men.

But it is not the writings of the man, which strike us with such wonder, as the actions and events of his wonderful history. He was a hero without a peer, bold in battle, and generous in victory; by distress, or by triumph, never overcome. Though hunted like a wild beast, among the mountains, and forsaken like a pelican in the wilderness, by the country whose armies he had delivered from disgrace, and by the monarch whose daughter he had won—whose son he had

bound to him with cords of brotherly love, and whose own soul he was wont to charm with the sacredness of his minstrelsy—he never indulged malice or revenge against his unnatural enemies. Twice, at the peril of his life, he brought his blood-hunter within his power, and twice he spared him, and would not be persuaded to injure a hair upon his head—who, when he fell in his high plans, was lamented over by David, with the bitterness of a son, and his death avenged upon the sacrilegious man who had lifted his sword against the Lord's anointed. In friendship, and love, and also in domestic affection, he was not less notable than in heroical endowments, and in piety towards God he was most remarkable of all. He had to flee from his bed-chamber in the dead of night, his friendly meetings had to be concerted upon the perilous edge of captivity and death—his food he had to seek at the risk of sacrilege—for a refuge from death, to cast himself upon the people of Gath—to counterfeit idiocy, and become the laughing-stock of his enemies. And who shall tell of his hidings in the cave of Adullam, and of his wanderings in the wilderness of Ziph; in the weariness of which he had power to stand before his armed enemy with all his host, and, by the generosity of his deeds, and the affectionate language which flowed from his lips, to melt into childlike weeping the obdurate spirit of king Saul, which had the nerve to evoke the spirits of the dead!

King David was a man extreme in all his excellencies—a man of the highest strain, whether for counsel, for expression, or for action, in peace and



in war, in exile and on the throne. That such a warm and ebullient spirit should have given way before the tide of its affections, we wonder not. We rather wonder that, tried by such extremes, his mighty spirit should not often have burst control, and enacted right forward the conqueror, the avenger, and the destroyer. But God, who anointed him from his childhood, had given him store of the best natural and inspired gifts, which preserved him from sinking under the long delay of his promised crown, and kept him from contracting any of the craft or cruelty of a hunted, persecuted man. And adversity did but bring out the splendour of his character, which might have slumbered like the fire in the flint, or the precious metal in the dull and earthy ore.

But to conceive aright of the gracefulness and strength of king David's character, we must draw him into comparison with men similarly conditioned, and then shall we see how vain the world is to cope with him. Conceive a man who had saved his country, and clothed himself with gracefulness and renown in the sight of all the people, by the chivalry of his deeds won for himself intermarriage with the royal line, and by unction of the Lord's prophet been set apart to the throne itself; such a one conceive driven with fury from house and hold, and, through tedious years, deserted of every stay but heaven, with no soothing sympathies of quiet life, harassed for ever between famine and the edge of the sword, and kept in savage holds and deserts: and tell us, in the annals of men, of one so disappointed, so bereaved and straitened, maintaining not

fortitude alone, but sweet composure and a heavenly frame of soul, inditing praise to no avenging deity, and couching songs in no revengeful mood, according with his outcast and unsocial life; but inditing praises to the God of mercy, and songs which soar into the third heavens of the soul: not indeed, without the burst of sorrow, and the complaint of solitariness, and prophetic warnings to his blood-thirsty foes, but ever closing in sweet preludes of good to come, and desire of present contentment. Find us such a one in the annals of men, and we yield the argument of this controversy. Men there have been, driven before the wrath of kings to wander outlaws and exiles, whose musings and actings have been recorded to us in the minstrelsy of our native land. Draw these songs of the exile into comparison with the Psalms of David, and know the spirit of the man after God's own heart: the stern defiance of the one, with the tranquil acquiescence of the other; the deep despair of the one, with the rooted trust of the other; the vindictive imprecations of the one, with the tender regret and forgiveness of the other. Show us an outlaw who never spoiled the country which had forsaken him, nor turned his hand in self-defence or revenge upon his persecutors, who used the vigour of his arm only against the enemies of his country, yea, lifted up his arm in behalf of that mother, which had cast her son, crowned with salvation, away from her bosom, and held him at a distance from her love, and raised the rest of her family to hunt him to the death;—in the defence of that thankless, unnatural, mother-country, find us such a repudiated son lifting up his arm, and

spending its vigour, in smiting and utterly discomfiting her enemies, whose spoils he kept not to enrich himself and his ruthless followers, but dispensed to comfort her and her happier children. Find us among the Themistocles, and Coriolani, and Cromwells, and Napoleons of the earth such a man, and we will yield the argument of this controversy which we maintain for the peerless son of Jesse.

But we fear that not such another man is to be found in the recorded annals of men. Though he rose from the peasantry to fill the throne, and enlarge the borders of his native land, he gave himself neither to ambition nor to glory; though more basely treated than the sons of men, he gave not place to despondency or revenge; though of the highest genius in poetry, he gave it not license to sing his own deeds, nor to depict loose and licentious life, nor to ennoble any worldly sentiment or attachment of the human heart, however virtuous or honourable, but constrained it to sing the praises of God, and the victories of the right hand of the Lord of Hosts, and his admirable works which are of old from everlasting. And he hath dressed out religion in such a rich and beautiful garment of divine poesy as beseemeth her majesty, in which, being arrayed, she can stand up before the eyes even of her enemies, in more royal state, than any personification of love, or glory, or pleasure, to which highly gifted mortals have devoted their genius.

The force of his character was vast, and the scope of his life was immense. His harp was full-stringed, and every angel of joy and of sorrow swept over the chords as he past; but the melody always breathed

of heaven. And such oceans of affection lay within his breast, as could not always slumber in their calmness. For the hearts of a hundred men strove and struggled together within the narrow continent of his single heart: and will the scornful men have no sympathy for one so conditioned, but scorn him, because he ruled not with constant quietness, the unruly host of divers natures which dwelt within his single soul? Of self-command surely he will not be held deficient, who endured Saul's javelin to be so often launched at him, while the people without were ready to hail him king; who endured all bodily hardships, and taunts of his enemies, when revenge was in his hand; and ruled his desperate band like a company of saints, and restrained them from their country's injury. But that he should not be able to enact all characters without a fault, the simple shepherd, the conquering hero, and the romantic lover; the perfect friend, the innocent outlaw, and the royal monarch; the poet, the prophet and the regenerator of the church; and, withal, the *man*, the *man* of vast soul, who played not these parts by turns, but was the original of them all, and wholly present in them all; oh! that he should have fulfilled this high priesthood of humanity, this universal ministry of manhood without an error, were more than human. With the defence of his backslidings, which he hath himself more keenly scrutinized, more clearly discerned against, and more bitterly lamented than any of his censors, we do not charge ourselves, because they were, in a manner, necessary, that he might be the full-orbed man which was needed to utter every

form of spiritual feeling : but if, when of these acts he became convinced, he be found less true to God, and to righteousness ; indisposed to repentance and sorrow, and anguish ; exculpatory of himself ; stout-hearted in his courses, a formalist in his penitence, or in any way less worthy of a spiritual man in those than in the rest of his infinite moods, then, verily, strike him from the canon, and let his Psalms become monkish legends, or what you please. But if these penitential Psalms discover the soul's deepest hell of agony, and lay bare the iron ribs of misery, whereon the very heart dissolveth, and if they, expressing the same in words which melt the soul that conceiveth, and bow the head that uttereth them, then, we say, let us keep these records of the Psalmist's grief and despondency, as the most precious of his utterances, and sure to be needed in the case of every man who essayeth to live a spiritual life. For, though the self-satisfied moralist, and the diligent Pharisee, and all that pigmy breed of purists, who make unto themselves a small and puny theory of life, and please their meagre souls with the idea of keeping it thoroughly, smiting upon their thigh, and protesting by their unsullied honour and inviolate truth, and playing other tricks of self-sufficiency, will little understand what we are about to say, we will, nevertheless, for truth's sake, utter it ; that, until a man, however pure, honest, and honourable he may have thought himself, and been thought by others, discovereth himself to be utterly fallen, defiled, and sinful in the sight of God, a worm of the earth and no man, his soul cleaving to the dust, and bearing

about with it a body of sin and death; and until, for expressions of his utter worthlessness, he seek those Psalms in which the Psalmist describes the abasement of his soul, yea, and can make them his own, that man hath not known the beginnings of the spiritual life within the soul: for (let him that readeth understand) a man must break up before there is any hope of him; he must be contrite and broken in spirit, before the Lord will dwell with him.

Of all the delusions with which Satan lulls man into sweet security, this of our completeness and integrity is the most fatal. While we dwell in the idea of our rectitude, our unsullied purity, our inflexible honesty, our truth, our moral worth, and think that we implement any, the lowest, of God's commandments, (but they are all equally high) we are like the hard and baked earth, whose surface haply some sward of greenness may cover, but which will not wave with the rich and fruitful harvest, until you bury that first crop of nature under the share of the plough, and turn up the black rough mould to the heat of the sun, and the genial action of the air, and, the ancient roots being scorched up, sow it anew with precious seed, and wait upon the same with diligent husbandry. When this soul-tillage hath taken place, and the integrity of selfishness is broken up, and the poisonous weeds of selfishness are cut down, and our shallow and insufficient righteousness trodden under foot; when the old man hath broken into pieces, and we feel ourselves murderers, adulterers, thieves, liars, in the sight of God, then shall we come to use, and thank God that we have at hand, the penitential Psalms of

David; the confessions, the groanings, the languishings of the desolate king of Israel. It booteth not that we have not committed the acts, we wanted power, we wanted opportunity, we wanted means; but ah! we wanted not will. It was in our heart, out of which proceed murders, adulteries, thefts, false witness. It hath been all the while in our heart, and we knew it not. It was rooted there, and we fostered it. Ay, and it will cause us bitter groans, ere it will leave the place of its roots.

But to return from these rebukes of the scorers, to the instruction of the Christian church upon the fitness of David to be their Psalmist.—Why were such oceans of feeling poured unto David's soul, such true and graceful utterance of poetry infused into his lips, and such skill of music seated in his right hand? Such oceans of feeling did God infuse into his soul, and such utterance of poetry he placed between his lips, and such skilful music he seated in his right hand, in order that he might conceive forms of feeling for all saints, and create an everlasting psalmody, and hand down an organ for expressing the melody of the renewed soul. The Lord did not intend that his church should be without a rule for uttering its gladness and its glory, its lamentation and its grief; and to bring such a rule and institute into being, he raised up his servant David, as formerly he raised up Moses to give to the church an institute of Law. And to that end he led him the round of all human conditions, that he might catch the spirit proper to every one, and utter it according to truth; he allowed him not to curtail his being by treading the round

of one function, but by every variety of functions, he cultivated his whole being, and filled his soul with wisdom and feeling. He found him objects for every affection, that the affection might not slumber and die. He brought him up in the sheep-pastures, that the groundwork of his character might be laid amongst the simple and universal forms of feeling. He took him to the camp, and made him a conqueror, that he might be filled with nobleness of soul and ideas of glory. He placed him in the palace, that he might be filled with ideas of majesty and sovereign might. He carried him to the wilderness, and placed him in solitudes, that his soul might dwell alone in the sublime conceptions of God, and his mighty works; and he kept him there for long years, with only one step between him and death, that he might be well schooled to trust and depend upon the Providence of God. And in none of these various conditions and avocations of life, did he take away from him his Holy Spirit. His trials were but the tuning of the instrument with which the Spirit might express the various melodies which he designed to utter by him for the consolation and edification of spiritual men. It was the education of the man most appropriate for the divine vocation of the man. John the Baptist being to be used for rough work, was trained in the rough desert; Paul being to be used for contentious and learned work, was trained at Gamaliel's feet; Daniel being to be used for judgment and revelation, was trained in the wisdom of the east; Joseph being to be used as a providence to Egypt and his Father's house, was trained in the hardest school



of providence; and every one hath been disciplined by the providence of God, as well as furnished in the fountains of his being, for that particular work for which the Spirit of God designed him. Therefore, David had that brilliant galaxy of natural gifts, that rich and varied education, in order to fit him for executing the high office to which he was called by the Spirit, of giving to the church those universal forms of spiritual feeling, whereof we have been endeavouring to set forth the excellent applications. And, though we neither excuse his acts of wickedness, nor impute them to the temptation of God, who cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth any man, we will also add, that by his loss the church hath gained; and that out of the evil of his ways, much good hath been made to arise; and that if he had not passed through every valley of humiliation, and stumbled upon the dark mountains, we should not have had a language for the souls of the penitent, or an expression for the dark troubles which compass the soul, that feareth to be deserted by its God. So much for the fitness of the Psalmist to have been made the organ of spiritual feeling unto the church.

There is another question which remains for resolution, before bringing this Essay to a close. In how far the good Bishop Horne and others, are justified in referring so much of these Psalms to Messiah.

In maintaining for these Psalms the high place which the universal voice of the Christian church hath assigned to them, there is a tendency to pass into the extreme of applying them wholly to Christ,

and finding some experience of Christ's soul in every experience of the Psalmist's soul. Now, while it is true, that all of these Psalms are still applicable to the saints and to the church, because the saints and the church are still compassed about with the same fleshly nature, and worldly dispositions, liable to the same backslidings, idolatries, and oppositions as heretofore, none of them which confess transgression, and lament over indwelling sin, are at any time applicable unto Christ, who suffered indeed as David, and all his seed have suffered from the plottings of the world, and the enmity of the devil, and was in all points tempted as they are,—yet without sin, without sliding back, without opposing himself to his Father, without yielding to the temptation; wherefore, it is little short of blasphemy to apply unto the spotless and blameless Saviour, any or all of those spiritual experiences, any or all of those deep self-accusations, any or all of those entreaties for forgiveness which compose so large a portion of the Psalms of David, and the spiritual utterances of David's seed. Surely no spiritual man in these times would apply to Christ his personal experiences of sin and sorrow for sin. No more can the Psalmist's be applied unto Christ, without confounding the workings of the first Adam with the workings of the second Adam, and destroying all those distinctions between good and evil, which it is the end of revelation to define and demonstrate. The workings of the second Adam, by which we become convinced of sin, and desirous of holiness, separate from the world, and hated of it, united to God, and beloved of him, are in us as in David,

all derived from Christ, and will apply to Christ's own experience in the flesh. For the word of God manifested in the Son of Mary, is the same word of God which came by the Spirit unto the prophets, and which is applied by the Spirit unto us who believe, who are only members of Christ suffering and enjoying with our living and life-giving Head. And, therefore, we may well apply to him, what by his Spirit is revealed in us. But that other part within us which holdeth of the first Adam, and which lusteth against the Spirit, loveth the world, and with all its instincts warreth against God, whose evil deeds a Christian, if he speak truth, must constantly confess, and seek grace to overcome;—to apply any of the foul deeds, or wicked experiences thereof unto Christ, is a wonderful blindness which hath come over certain holy men in the church, from their eagerness to find Christ every-where in these consecrated songs.

And yet the path to this error is open, and very easily fallen upon. For in those Psalms which have been applied in the New Testament unto Christ, it is found difficult, if not impossible, to separate the Psalmist's personal experience from that of Christ, or to find how, without much violence, they can be wholly appropriate to Messiah. Now, with as little straining of interpretation, they judge that another and another, and at length all may be applied to Christ, in a typical, or in a real signification. But this is to err from ignorance of the prophetic scriptures. Except the prophecies of Daniel, and the prophecies of the Apocalypse, and one or two of the visions of Esdras, (especially that of the

three-headed ten-feathered eagle) the other prophecies are always of a mixed character, belonging partly to the times, and partly surpassing the conditions of the times, and occasionally glancing through to the very end of time. So that in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets, even in our Lord's prophecies of his second coming, and the Apostles' constant reference thereto, you cannot by any endeavour make a clear separation between that which was then fulfilled, or hath been since fulfilled, and that which still standeth over to be fulfilled. The reason of which doubtless is explained by our Lord, that the times and the seasons, the Father hath kept in his own power, so that even the Son himself was not permitted to reveal them. And Peter saith, that the prophets inquired diligently, but could not discover what and what manner of things the Spirit which was in them did signify. And I doubt not that the Apostles might themselves be as ignorant of the time of the second coming of Christ, as the prophets were of his first coming. Which taken together, is an illustration of this great law which may be gathered from the very face of the prophetic writings, That they arose by the suggestion of some condition of the church, present in the days of the prophets, as the particular case, but passing beyond this in time, and passing beyond it in aggravation of every circumstance, they give, as it were, a consecutive glance of all the like cases, and kindred passages in the history of the church, and bring out the general law of God's providence and grace in the present, and in all the future parallel cases;—yet with such mark of dif-

ferent times interspersed as may be sufficient, by a skilful comparison with the exact and historical prophecies of Daniel and the Revelations, to draw the attention of the wise to their coming, and suffice to the convictions of the unwise when they are past. Of this great law of prophetic writing, the confusion of David and Messiah in the Psalms referred to, are only one instance. David's prophecies of Messiah which are *personal*, arose by suggestion of the Spirit, from his own *personal* experiences, and include it. His prophecies of Messiah, which are *royal* and *kingly*, arose out of his kingly experience, and the two persons are interwoven with one another in such a manner as not to be separable, just as in the other prophecies, the first, and second, and third events to which they have reference, are, in like manner, interwoven.

Which so far from being an evil, is a great beauty in the Psalms; so far from being an inconvenience, is a great advantage to those who understand aright. In connecting David with Messiah, it connects the church and every particular saint who adopts David's feelings with Messiah, the children with their parent, the subjects with their king; so that we cannot sing his praise or his triumphs, but we must take ourselves in as a part, and be embraced in the very praises of our great Head, and are not permitted to separate ourselves from him; but at once are we constrained to worship the *objective* Saviour, who is at the right hand of God; and the *subjective* Saviour, who is in us; the *objective* Saviour who humbled himself to the cross, and the *subjective* Saviour who humbled himself to behold and redeem

his servant; the *objective* Saviour who ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and the *subjective* Saviour who in us hath triumphed over death, and raised us to newness of life, who liveth with us and is seated in the throne of our hearts. Which happy blending of our spiritual nature, suffering or enjoying with Christ suffering or enjoying, we should have lost, had we been able to separate between David and Christ in those Psalms which have a reference to Christ. For at one time we should have sung objectively of Christ, and at another subjectively of ourselves, as represented in David, and so lost the intermarriage of the object with the subject, which is the true propagation of religion in the soul;—a loss this which the Christians are beginning to experience in those modern Hymns which are coming into use, and those metrical versions which have the boldness to paraphrase the Psalms, and new-model them to the present times, (a most daring innovation upon a book of Scripture). Therefore, while we reject the puerile conceit, and most mischievous dogma which would make every word of these Psalms to be applicable to Christ, we feel greatly indebted to any commentator, who, preserving sound principles of interpretation, can find the Saviour present in the Psalms, which is to give not only more sacredness and spirituality to them, but to increase that happy blending of subjective and objective religion, which is the best condition for true and spiritual worship. And if the commentary of Bishop Horne be more valuable on one account than another, it is for this very reason, that his strong spiritual senses have been able

to discern and point out the presence of Christ in many Psalms, where the reader had not perceived it before. In doing which, he hath not strained the sense of the passage, nor generalized and refined upon the character and person of Christ, but simply exercised that spiritual sense which was strong in him to perceive, and to adore his Lord.

And now that we are brought to speak of this Commentary of Bishop Horne, we would, before delivering our opinion of it, with which we shall conclude, beg it to be understood, that we have no such idea in our mind, as that any thing we can say should commend a book which hath commended itself to Christians ever since the time of its publication; and that we have had no such aim or intention before us in this Essay. But in a Series of SELECT CHRISTIAN AUTHORS, which should present to the Christian world the spirit of Christian divinity in its most practical and profitable form, we felt that it would have been a great blank indeed, if we did not offer some work which should contain an enlightened and spiritual exposition of the gospel as it is written in the Book of Psalms; for what are the Psalms but the poetical lyrical form of the gospel? And what work could we put into our Series so worthy of a place, and so fit to fill the blank, as the Commentary of Bishop Horne, from which the souls of the pious have derived so much edification? It is a book of a most orthodox and evangelical odour, of great learning though not displayed, of a sufficient knowledge and of a pure classical taste, by which the whole man may be furnished to every good word and work; his soul ele-

vated, his mind filled, his heart purified and refined; his knowledge enlarged, his faith quickened, his new obedience enlarged; but above all, his love and affections drawn out and fixed upon the blessed Saviour and Redeemer of his soul. With a too frequent reference to Messiah he hath been charged, but this is the charge of those but half-enlightened in spiritual truth, and far short of the mark of Christian doctrine, and which will of itself be forgotten, (as indeed it is already in a good measure forgotten,) when they shall have risen into the comprehension of a more spiritual and enlarged theology, and the divines of the church shall have constructed out of the ruins, the noble shafts, and columns, and massive remains of former systems of theology, another building, which may represent the glory of divine truth to the outward eye of these present times, which differ widely from the times in which those former buildings were erected. If, instead of making collections of Hymns, many of them disgusting both to taste and feeling, and all of them beneath the mark of divine Psalmody, (on which account we have deemed it for the edification of the pious, to present, in our Series, a selection\* made by a Poet truly Christian, whose praise is in all the churches,) if instead of making other editions of the Book of Psalms with improvements, if instead of multiplying paraphrases and translations, the churches would require of their ministers (what heretofore the ministers of their own accord were wont to do,) to *preface* upon the Psalms, or set forth

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\* "The Christian Psalmist," by Montgomery.



their spiritual significations to the people, their prophetic anticipations, and their rich unction of heavenly poesy—that would be to do for the people every Sabbath, what Bishop Horne hath done for the church in this excellent book; then, from our old metrical versions of the Psalms, however bald, and especially from our Scottish version because of its very baldness, that is its want of what they call poetic diction, (but the simplest, truest diction is the most poetical,) we would anticipate infinitely more benefit to the spiritual life of the saints, and the conviction of the ungodly, than if you were to congregate a whole sanhedrim of poets, (as that name goes at present,) and require of them to work up the remnant of their wits into Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. But there be a few poets of the ancient seed still extant in the land, and of these there are some who have shown themselves masters in the simple stanza of the old song, and who add thereto the faith and feeling of revealed religion,\* to whom we would recommend it as an object worthy of their muse, to give to us an improved metrical version of the Psalms, whose improvement should consist in not sacrificing the true expression of the original to mere poetical language, but in a close adherence to the words of the original, even a more close condensation of them than in the prose version, of which condensation our Scottish version contains many admirable examples.

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\* We may only name Montgomery, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

But to return to the good Bishop Horne. We know of no Commentary upon the Book of Psalms, more likely to be influential in awakening the natural heart to a due sense of their real signification, than that which he hath gathered from all sources, both of his own learning and experience, and those of others, and combined together in this brief but sufficient Treatise. He was eminently qualified to perform the task which he had undertaken to execute. His spiritual elucidations, and deeply affecting applications, must approve themselves to every feeling and unprejudiced heart; to every mind which is not altogether dead and callous to the words of spiritual truth; to every ear which is not deaf as the adder to the sweet and pleasant voice of the charmer. Here the man of polished taste will meet with nothing to discompose his nicest associations of intellectual refinement with religion, but will find himself addressed in the language of the schools with much beauty of style and harmony of diction. Good taste in the widest and fullest acceptation of the term, is a never-failing characteristic of the pious and classical Author of this Commentary. Himself a high dignitary in the church of England, and the president of one of the colleges of a learned university, our author is at once upon a level with his most critical and his most dignified readers. We cannot therefore but rejoice, that a Christian BISHOP should be found consecrating his pen to the sacred cause of spiritual truth, and presenting its sane and salutary lessons to the religious votaries of rank, who love an outward dignity in the church as in the world.

But the truly pious of all ranks will here find a food well suited to their spiritual taste, a nourishment proper to their growth in knowledge and in grace, many a rich and precious cordial for the support of their fainting spirits, many a sweet physician-like application of the balm that is in Gilead, and of the leaves which are for the healing of the nations. And if the man of critical taste and dignified associations will never be shocked by vulgarity of style or homeliness of diction, but rather attracted by the grace and beauty of the discourse; so also will the Christian, whose enlarged spirit hath been set free to soar far beyond the narrow confines of polemical theology, never find himself aggrieved by the strait narrow moulds of a mind, or the angular points of controversial bigotry. Every sentiment in this exposition he will find free of that sickening leaven, which leaveneth many a loaf of wholesome food. Finally, we may venture to assert, that believers of all churches and denominations will be able to peruse, with satisfaction and delight, this spiritual exposition of the Book of Psalms, and that whilst they read they will find themselves identified after a new and delightful manner, with the inspired son of Jesse: above all, if they drink deep into the spirit of this Commentary, will they find themselves linked to the spiritual David by a thousand minute and tender ties, whose existence they may not hitherto have perceived, or of which they may at least have been but faintly conscious. For every line breathes of Messiah, and every sentiment leads to him. In every thought the spiritual David

hath a share, who is here, what in all Christian works he should be, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last of the Author's desire and delight.

E. I.

*London, May, 1825.*

## PREFACE.

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THE Psalms are an epitome of the Bible, adapted to the purposes of devotion. They treat occasionally of the creation and formation of the world; the dispensations of Providence, and the economy of grace; the transactions of the patriarchs; the exodus of the children of Israel; their journey through the wilderness, and settlement in Canaan; their law, priesthood, and ritual; the exploits of their great men, wrought through faith; their sins and captivities; their repentances and restorations; the sufferings and victories of David; the peaceful and happy reign of Solomon; the advent of Messiah, with its effects and consequences; his incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom, and priesthood; the effusion of the Spirit; the conversion of the nations; the rejection of the Jews; the establishment, increase, and perpetuity of the Christian church; the end of the world; the general judgment; the condemnation of the wicked, and the final triumph of the righteous with their Lord and King. These are the subjects here presented to our meditations. We are instructed how to conceive of them aright, and to express the different affections which, when so conceived of, they must

excite in our minds. They are, for this purpose, adorned with the figures, and set off with all the graces, of poetry; and poetry itself is designed yet farther to be recommended by the charms of music, thus consecrated to the service of God; that so delight may prepare the way for improvement, and pleasure become the handmaid of wisdom, while every turbulent passion is calmed by sacred melody, and the evil spirit is still dispossessed by the harp of the son of Jesse. This little volume, like the paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, every thing that groweth elsewhere, “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food;” and above all, what was there lost, but is here restored, the tree of life in the midst of the garden. That which we read, as matter of speculation, in the other Scriptures, is reduced to practice, when we recite it in the Psalms; in those, repentance and faith are described, but in these, they are acted; by a perusal of the former, we learn how others served God, but, by using the latter, we serve him ourselves. “What is there necessary for man to know,” says the pious and judicious Hooker, “which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys

of that world which is to come; all good necessarily to be either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not, in this treasure-house, a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found.”\* In the language of this divine book, therefore, the prayers and praises of the church have been offered up to the throne of grace, from age to age. And it appears to have been the manual of the Son of God, in the days of his flesh; who, at the conclusion of his last supper, is generally supposed, and that upon good grounds, to have sung an hymn taken from it;† who pronounced, on the cross, the beginning of the xxii. Psalm; “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and expired with a part of the xxi. Psalm in his mouth; “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Thus He, who had not the Spirit by measure, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who spake as never man spake, yet chose to conclude his life, to solace himself in his greatest agony, and at last to breathe out his soul, in the Psalmist’s form of words rather than his own. No tongue of man or angel, as Dr. Hammond justly observes, can convey a higher idea of any book, and of their felicity who use it aright.

Proportionable to the excellency of the Psalms,

\* Hooker’s Ecclesiast. Pol. b. v. sect. 37.

† St. Matthew informs us, chap. xxvi. 30. that he and his apostles “sung an hymn;” and the hymn usually sung by the Jews upon that occasion, was, what they called the “great Hallel,” consisting of the Psalms from the cxiii. to the cxviii. inclusive.

hath been the number of their expositors. The ancients were chiefly taken up in making spiritual or evangelical applications of them; in adapting their discourses on them to the general exigencies of the Christian church, or to the particular necessities of the age in which they wrote. The moderns have set themselves to investigate with diligence, and ascertain with accuracy, their literal scope and meaning. Piety and devotion characterize the writings of the ancients; the commentaries of the moderns display more learning and judgment. The ancients have taught us how to rear a goodly superstructure; but the moderns have laid the surest foundation. To bring them in some measure together, is the design of the following work; in which the author has not laboured to point out what seemed wrong in either, but to extract what he judged to be right from both; to make the annotations of the latter a ground-work for improvements like those of the former; and thus to construct an edifice, solid as well as spacious. Materials, and good ones, he cannot be said to have wanted; so that if the building should give way, the cement must have been faulty, or the workman unskilful.

The right of the Psalter to a place in the sacred canon, hath never been disputed; and it is often cited by our Lord and his apostles in the New Testament, as the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether David therefore, or any other prophet, was employed as the instrument of communicating to the church such or such a particular Psalm, is a question which, if it cannot always be satisfactorily answered, needs not disquiet our minds. When we discern, in an epistle,



the well known hand of a friend, we are not solicitous about the pen with which it was written.

The number of Psalms is the same in the original, and in the version of the LXX; only these last have, by some mistake, thrown the ninth and tenth into one, as also the hundred and fourteenth and the hundred and fifteenth, and have divided the hundred and sixteenth into two, as also the hundred and forty-seventh. The Hebrews have distributed them into five books; but for what reason, or upon what authority, we know not. This is certain, that the apostles quote from “the Book of Psalms,”\* and that they quote the “second Psalm” of that book, in the order in which it now stands.† That division, which our own church hath made of them, into thirty portions, assigning one to each day of the month, it hath been thought expedient to set down in the margin; as persons may often choose to turn to the commentary on those Psalms, which occur in their daily course of reading.

In the titles, prefixed to some of the Psalms, there is so much obscurity, and in the conjectures which have been made concerning them, both in a literal and spiritual way, so great a variety and uncertainty, that the author, finding himself, after all his searches, unable to offer any thing which he thought could content the learned, or edify the unlearned, at length determined to omit them; as the sight of them unexplained, only distracts the eye and attention of the reader. The omission of the word *selah* must be apologised for in the same manner. The informa-

\* Acts i. 20.

† Acts xiii. 33.

tion obtained from the historical titles will be found in the Argument placed at the head of each Psalm; though even that is not always to be relied on.

Where this information failed, the occasion and drift of a Psalm were to be collected from the internal evidence contained in itself, by a diligent perusal of it, with a view to the sacred history; the light of which, when held to the Psalms, often dissipates the darkness that must otherwise for ever envelop allusions to particular events and circumstances. Sometimes, indeed, the descriptions are couched in terms more general; and then, the want of such information is less perceived. If it appear, for instance, that David, at the time of composing any Psalm, was under persecution, or had been lately delivered from it, it may not be of any great consequence, if we cannot determine with precision, whether his persecution by Saul and Doeg, or that by Absalom and Ahithophel, be intended and referred to. The expressions either of his sorrow or his joy, his strains, whether plaintive or jubilant, may be nearly the same, in both cases, respectively. This observation may be extended to many other instances of calamities bewailed, or deliverances celebrated, in the Psalms, sometimes by the prince, sometimes by the community, and frequently by both together. Upon the whole, it is hoped, that the design of each Psalm hath been sufficiently discovered, to explain and apply it, for the instruction and comfort of believers.

The result of such critical inquiries as were found necessary to be made, is given in as few words as possible; often only by inserting into a verse, or subjoining to it, that sense of a word, or phrase,

which seemed upon mature deliberation to be the best; as it was deemed improper to clog, with prolix disquisitions of this kind, a work intended for general use. The reader will, however, reap the benefit of many such, which have been carefully consulted for him. And he will not, it is presumed, have reason to complain, that any verse is passed over without a tolerable consistent interpretation, and some useful improvement.—Where the literal sense was plain, it is noticed only so far as was necessary to make an application, or form a reflection. Where there appeared any obscurity or difficulty, recourse was had to the best critics, and that solution, which seemed the most satisfactory, given in the concisest manner. Much labour hath here been bestowed, where little appears. The plan of every Psalm hath been attentively studied, with the connexion and dependence of its parts, which it is the design of the Argument to exhibit at one view, and of the Commentary to pursue and explain from beginning to end.\*

No person is more thoroughly sensible than the author is, of the respect and gratitude due from all lovers of the sacred writings, to those who have laboured in the field of literal criticism: great and illustrious characters, whose names will be had by the church in everlasting remembrance! All, who desire to understand the Scriptures, must enter into

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\* Nos Lectoris pium hunc laborem adjuvandum suscepimus: dum constitutis argumentis scopum attentioni figimus; dum scrutarum literam, et ex sacra historia, quantum possumus, omnia repetimus; dum annotamus quæ pietatem inflamment; alia eo exemplo quærenda indicamus. Bossuet Dissertat. in Psal. cap. vii.

their labours, and make the proper advantage of them, as he himself hath endeavoured to do. But let us also bear in mind, that all is not done when this is done. A work of the utmost importance still remains, which it is the business of Theology\* to undertake and execute; since, with respect to the Old Testament, and the Psalter more especially, a person may attain a critical and grammatical knowledge of them, and yet continue a Jew, with a veil upon his heart; an utter stranger to that sense of the holy books, evidently intended, in such a variety of instances, to bear a testimony to the Saviour of the world; that sense, which is styled, by divines, the prophetic, evangelical, mystical, or spiritual sense. As it is one great design of the following work to investigate that sense in many of the Psalms, this is the proper place to lay before the reader those grounds and reasons upon which such investigation has been made.

That the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture, like all other good things, is liable to abuse, and that it hath been actually abused, both in ancient and modern days, cannot be denied. He who shall go about, to apply in this way, any passage, before he hath attained its literal meaning, may say what in itself is pious and true, but foreign to the text from which he endeavoureth to deduce it. St. Jerome, it is well known, when grown older and wiser, lamented, that, in the fervours of a youthful fancy, he had spiritualized the prophecy of Obadiah, before he

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\* *Theologiæ insignis hic usus est, ut, verborum sensu exposito, REM intelligas. Elsner. Præfat. ad Observat. Sacr.*

understood it. And it must be allowed, that a due attention to the occasion and scope of the Psalms, would have pared off many unseemly excrescences, which now deform the commentaries of St. Augustin, and other fathers, upon them. But these, and other concessions of the same kind, being made, as they are made very freely, “men of sense will consider, that a principle is not therefore to be rejected, because it has been abused;”\* since human errors can never invalidate the truths of God.

It may not be amiss, therefore, to run through the Psalter, and point out some of the more remarkable passages, which are cited from thence by our Lord and his apostles, and applied to matters evangelical.

No sooner have we opened the book, than the second Psalm presenteth itself, to all appearance, as an inauguration hymn, composed by David, the anointed of Jehovah, when by him crowned with victory, and placed triumphant on the sacred hill of Sion. But let us turn to Acts iv. 25. and there we find the apostles, with one voice, declaring the Psalm to be descriptive of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, and of the opposition raised against his Gospel, both by Jew and Gentile.

In the eighth Psalm we imagine the writer to be setting forth the pre-eminence of man in general, above the rest of the creation; but by Heb. ii. 6. we are informed, that the supremacy conferred on the second Adam, the man Christ Jesus, over all

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\* Bishop Hurd's Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies, p. 64.

things in heaven and earth, is the subject there treated of.

St. Peter stands up, Acts ii. 24. and preaches the resurrection of Jesus from the latter part of the sixteenth Psalm; and, lo! three thousand souls are converted by the sermon.

Of the eighteenth Psalm we are told, in the course of the sacred history, 2 Sam. xxii. that "David spake before the Lord the words of that song, in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." Yet in Rom. xv. 9. the 49th verse of that Psalm is adduced as a proof, that "the Gentiles should glorify God for his mercy in Jesus Christ, as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name."

In the nineteenth Psalm, David seems to be speaking of the material heavens, and their operations only, when he says, "their sound is gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." But St. Paul, Rom. x. 18. quotes the passage to show, that the Gospel had been universally published by the apostles.

The twenty-second Psalm Christ appropriated to himself, by beginning it in the midst of his sufferings on the cross; "My God, my God," &c. Three other verses of it are, in the New Testament, applied to him; and the words of the 8th verse were actually used by the chief priests, when they reviled him; "He trusted in God," &c. Matt. xxvii. 43.

When David saith, in the fortieth Psalm, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire—Lo, I come to do thy will:" we might suppose him only

to declare in his own person, that obedience is better than sacrifice. But from Heb. x. 5. we learn, that Messiah, in that place, speaketh of his advent in the flesh, to abolish the legal sacrifices, and to do away sin, by the oblation of himself, once for all.

That tender and pathetic complaint, in the forty-first Psalm, "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me," undoubtedly might be, and probably was, originally uttered by David, upon the revolt of his old friend and counsellor, Ahithophel, to the party of his rebellious son, Absalom. But we are certain, from John xiii. 18. that this Scripture was fulfilled, when Christ was betrayed by his apostate disciple—"I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scriptures may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lift up his heel against me."

The forty-fourth Psalm we must suppose to have been written on occasion of a persecution under which the church at that time laboured; but a verse of it is cited, Rom. viii. 36. as expressive of what Christians were to suffer, on their blessed Master's account: "As it is written, For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep appointed to be slain."

A quotation from the forty-fifth Psalm, in Heb. i. 8. certifies us, that the whole is addressed to the Son of God, and therefore celebrates his spiritual union with the church, and the happy fruits of it.

The sixty-eighth Psalm, though apparently conversant about Israelitish victories, the translation of the ark to Sion, and the services of the tabernacle,

yet does, under those figures, treat of Christ's resurrection, his going up on high, leading captivity captive, pouring out the gifts of the Spirit, erecting his church in the world, and enlarging it by the accession of the nations to the faith; as will be evident to any one who considers the force and consequence of the apostle's citation from it, Ephes. iv. 7, 8. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

The sixty-ninth Psalm is five times referred to in the Gospels, as being uttered by the prophet, in the person of Messiah. The imprecations, or rather predictions, at the latter end of it, are applied, Rom. xi. 9, 10. to the Jews; and to Judas, Acts i. 20. where the hundred and ninth Psalm is also cited, as prophetic of the sore judgments which should befall that arch-traitor, and the wretched nation of which he was an epitome.

St. Matthew, informing us, chap. xiii. 34. that Jesus spake to the multitude in parables, gives it as one reason why he did so, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," Psalm lxxviii. 2. "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

The ninety-first Psalm was applied, by the tempter, to Messiah; nor did our Lord object to the application, but only to the false inference, which his adversary suggested from it. Matt. iv. 6, 7.

The ninety-fifth Psalm is explained at large in Heb. iii. and iv. as relative to the state and trial of



Christians in the world, and to their attainment of the heavenly rest.

The hundred and tenth Psalm is cited by Christ himself, Matt. xxii. 44. as treating of his exaltation, kingdom, and priesthood.

The hundred and seventeenth Psalm, consisting only of two verses, is employed, Rom. xv. 11. to prove, that the Gentiles were one day to praise God for the mercies of redemption.

The 22d verse of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm, "The stone which the builders refused," &c. is quoted six different times, as spoken of our Saviour.

And, lastly, "the fruit of David's body," which God is said, in the hundred and thirty-second Psalm, to have promised that he would place upon his "throne," is asserted, Acts ii. 30. to be Jesus Christ.

These citations, lying dispersed through the Scriptures of the New Testament, are often suffered by common readers to pass unnoticed. And many others content themselves with saying, that they are made in a sense of accommodation, as passages may be quoted from poems or histories merely human, for the illustration of truths, of which their authors never thought. "And this," as a learned critic observes, "is no fault, but rather a beauty in writing. A passage applied justly, and in a new sense, is ever pleasing to an ingenious reader, who loves to be agreeably surprised, and to see a likeness and pertinency where he expected none. He has that surprise, which the Latin poet so poetically gives to the tree;

"Miraturque novas frondes, et non sua pona."

The readers, who have been accustomed to consider the New Testament citations in this view of accommodation only, must perceive the necessity of such accommodation, at least, to adapt the use of the Psalms, as a part of divine service, to the times and circumstances of the Gospel; and cannot therefore reasonably object, upon their own principles, to the applications made in the following sheets for that purpose. But not to inquire, at present, whether passages are not sometimes cited in this manner, surely no one can attentively review the above-made collection of New Testament citations from the book of Psalms, as they have been placed together before him, without perceiving that the Psalms are written on a divine, pre-concerted, prophetic plan, and contain much more than, at first sight, they appear to do. They are beautiful without, but all glorious within, like “apples of gold in pictures, or network cases, of silver;” Prov. xxv. 11. The brightness of the casket attracts our attention, till, through it, upon a nearer approach, we discover its contents. And then, indeed, it may be said to have “no glory, by reason of the glory that so far excelleth.”\* Very delightful and profitable they are, in their literal and historical sense, which well repayeth all the pains taken to come at it. But that once obtained, a farther scene begins to open upon us, and all the blessings of the Gospel present themselves to the eye of faith. So that the expositor is as a traveller ascending an eminence, neither unfruitful, nor unpleasant; at the top of which, when he is arrived, he beholds, like Moses from the summit of Mount Nebo,

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\* 2 Cor. iii. 10.

a more lovely and extensive prospect lying beyond it, and stretching away to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. He sees valleys covered over with corn, blooming gardens, and verdant meadows, with flocks and herds feeding by rivers of water; till, ravished with the sight, he cries out, as Peter did at the view of his Master's glory, "It is good to be here!"

It would be unreasonable to suppose, that no parts of the Psalms may by us be spiritually applied, but such as are already expressly applied for us by the inspired writers. Let any man consider attentively a New Testament citation; then let him as carefully read over, with a view to it, the Psalm from which it is taken, and see if it will not serve him as a key wherewith to unlock the treasures of eternal wisdom; if it will not "open his eyes," and show him "wonderful things" in God's laws. When we are taught to consider one verse of a Psalm as spoken by Messiah, and there is no change of person, what can we conclude, but that he is the speaker through the whole? In that case, the Psalm becomes at once as much transfigured, as the blessed Person, supposed to be the subject of it, was on Mount Tabor. And if Messiah be the speaker of one Psalm, what should hinder, but that another Psalm, where the same kind of scene is evidently described, and the same expressions are used, may be expounded in the same manner?

It is very justly observed by Dr. Allix, that "although the sense of near fifty Psalms be fixed and settled by divine authors, yet Christ and his apostles did not undertake to quote all the Psalms they

could quote, but only to give a key to their hearers, by which they might apply to the same subjects the Psalms of the same composure and expression.”\* The citations in the New Testament were made incidentally, and as occasion was given. But can we imagine, that the church was not farther instructed in the manner of applying the Psalms to her Redeemer and to herself? Did she stop at the applications thus incidentally and occasionally made by the inspired writers? Did she stop, because they had directed her how to proceed? We know she did not. The primitive fathers, it is true, for want of critical learning, and particularly a competent knowledge of the original Hebrew, often wandered in their expositions; but they are unexceptionable witnesses to us of this matter of fact, that such a method of expounding the Psalms, built upon the practice of the apostles in their writings and preachings, did universally prevail in the church from the beginning. They, who have ever looked into St. Augustin, know, that he pursues this plan invariably, treating of the Psalms as proceeding from the mouth of Christ, or of the church, or of both, considered as one mystical person. The same is true of Jerom, Ambrose, Arnobius, Cassiodore, Hilary, and Prosper. Chrysostom studies to make the Psalter useful to believers under the Gospel. Theodoret attends both to the literal and prophetic sense. But what is very observable, Tertullian, who flourished at the beginning of the third century, mentions it, as if it were then an allowed point in the

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\* Preface to his Book of Psalms, p. 9.

church, that “almost all the Psalms are spoken in the person of Christ, being addressed by the Son to the Father, that is, by Christ to God.”\* In this channel flows the stream of the earliest Christian expositors. Nor did they depart, in this point, from the doctrine held in the church of the ancient Jews, who were always taught to regard Messiah as the capital object of the Psalter. And though, when the time came, that people would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, it does not appear that they ever objected to the propriety of the citations made by our Lord and his apostles, or thought such passages applicable to David only and his concerns. Nay, the most learned of their Rabbis, who have written since the commencement of the Christian era, still agree with us in referring many of the Psalms to Messiah and his kingdom; differing only about the person of the one, and the nature of the other.

When learning arose, as it were, from the dead, in the sixteenth century, and the study of primitive theology by that means revived, the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures revived with it. It was adopted at that time, by one admirably qualified to do it justice, and to recommend it again to the world by every charm of genius, and every ornament of language. I mean the accomplished Erasmus, who omitteth no opportunity of insisting on the usefulness and even the necessity of it, for the right understanding of the Scriptures; for the attainment of

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\* Omnes pene Psalmi Christi personam sustinent.—Filius ad Patrem, id est Christum ad Deum verba facientem representant.

that wisdom which they teach, and that holiness which they prescribe; seeming to think himself never better employed, than when he is removing the earth and rubbish with which those Philistines, the monks, had stopped up the wells of salvation, opened by the apostles and first fathers of the church, for the benefit of mankind.\* This great man was much importuned by his learned friends, as he informeth us in an epistle to Cardinal Sadolet, to write a commentary on the Psalms.† Such a work, executed by him, had been one of the richest gifts that were ever cast into the Christian treasury; as we may judge from the specimen which he hath left us, in his discourses on eleven of them. Some of these were drawn up with a view to enlarge upon the transactions of the times; and in all of them he is more diffuse and luxuriant, than, it is to be presumed, he would have been in a general exposition. But they abound with a rich variety of sacred learning, communicated in a manner ever pleasing, and ever instructive. If at any time he takes us out of the road, it is to show us a fine country, and we are still in company with Erasmus. He considers a Psalm, as it may relate to Christ, either suffering or triumphant: as it may concern the church, whether consisting of Jews or Gentiles, whether in adversity or prosperity, through the

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\* *Enchirid. Mil. Christ. in Præfat. Canon. 5. et passim.*

† *Lib. xxv. Epist. II. edit. Froben. 10085, edit. Cler. Non semel rogatus sum, quum ab aliis, tum ab Anglorum rege, ut in omnes Psalmos ederem Commentarios; sed deterrebant me quum alia multa, tum illa duo potissimum; quod viderem hoc argumentum vix posse pro dignitate tractari, nisi quis calleat Hebræorum literas, atque etiam antiquitates; partim quod verber ne turbâ Commentariorum obscuraretur Sermo Propheticus, citius quam illustraretur.*

several stages and periods of its existence; and as it may be applicable to the different states and circumstances of individuals, during the trials and temptations which they meet with, in the course of their Christian pilgrimage and warfare here below, till, having overcome their last enemy, they shall sit down with their Lord in his kingdom; when the scheme of prophecy shall receive its final accomplishment, and “the mystery of God be finished.”\*

It is obvious, that every part of the Psalter, when explicated according to this Scriptural and primitive method, is rendered universally “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;” and the propriety immediately appears of its having been always used in the devotional way, both by the Jewish and the Christian church. With regard to the Jews, bishop Chandler very pertinently remarks, that “they must have understood David, their prince, to have been a figure of Messiah. They would not otherwise have made his Psalms part of their daily worship, nor would David have delivered them to the church to be so employed, were it not to instruct and support them in the knowledge and belief of this fundamental article. Was the Messiah not concerned in the Psalms, it were absurd to celebrate twice a day, in their public devotions, the events of one man’s life, who was deceased so long ago as to have no relation now to the Jews, and the circumstances of their affairs; or to transcribe whole passages from them, into their prayers for the coming of the Mes-

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\* Rev. x. 7.

siah.”\* Upon the same principle, it is easily seen, that the objections which may seem to lie against the use of Jewish services in Christian congregations cease at once. Thus, it may be said, Are we concerned with the affairs of David and Israel? Have we any thing to do with the ark and the temple? They are no more. Are we to go up to Jerusalem, and to worship on Sion? They are desolated and trodden under foot by the Turks. Are we to sacrifice young bullocks, according to the law? The law is abolished, never to be observed again. Do we pray for victory over Moab, Edom, and Philistia; or for deliverance from Babylon? There are no such nations, no such places in the world. What then do we mean, when, taking such expressions into our mouths, we utter them in our own persons, as parts of our devotions, before God? Assuredly we must mean a spiritual Jerusalem and Sion; a spiritual ark and temple; a spiritual law; spiritual sacrifices; and spiritual victories over spiritual enemies; all described under the old names, which are still retained, though “old things are passed away, and all things are become new.”† By substituting Messiah for David, the Gospel for the Law, the church Christian for that of Israel, and the enemies of the one for those of the other, the Psalms are made our

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\* Defence of Christianity, First Part, p. 241.

† 2 Cor. v. 17. Ergo arrige aures, Christiane Lector, et ubi talia in Davide legeris, tu mihi fac cogitas, non Arcam, fragile lignum, aut Tabernaculum contactum pellibus; non urbem lapidibus compositam; non Templum divinæ Majestati augustum: sed Christi et Ecclesiæ Sacramenta, sed vivos lapides, Christo angulari lapidi coaptatos; sed ipsam Eucharistiam præsentis Dei testem; denique cæleste regnum et æternam felicitatem.—BOSWET Dissertat. de Psal. cap. i. ad fin.



own. Nay, they are, with more fulness and propriety, applied now to the substance, than they were of old to the “shadow of good things then to come.”\* And, therefore, ever since the commencement of the Christian era, the church hath chosen to celebrate the Gospel mysteries in the words of these ancient hymns, rather than to compose for that purpose new ones of her own. For, let it not pass unobserved, that, when, upon the first publication of the Gospel, the apostles had occasion to utter their transports of joy, on their being counted worthy to suffer for the name of their dear Lord and Master, which was then opposed by Jew and Gentile, they brake forth into an application of the second Psalm to the transactions then before their eyes: see Acts iv. 25. The primitive Christians constantly followed this method, in their devotions; and particularly when delivered out of the hands of persecuting tyrants by the victories of Constantine, they praised God for his goodness, and the glorious success and establishment of Christ’s religion, no words were found so exquisitely adapted to the purpose, as those of David, in the xvi. xviii. and other Psalms — “Sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and praise his name: be telling of his salvation from day to day. Declare his honour unto the heathen, his worship unto all people,” &c. &c. &c. In these, and the like Psalms, we continue to praise God, for all his spiritual mercies in Christ, to this day.

The Psalms, thus applied, have advantages which

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\* Heb. x. 1.

no fresh compositions, however finely executed, can possibly have; since, besides their incomparable fitness to express our sentiments, they are, at the same time, memorials of, and appeals to, former mercies and deliverances; they are acknowledgments of prophecies accomplished; they point out the connexion between the old and new dispensations, thereby teaching us to admire and adore the wisdom of God displayed in both, and furnishing, while we read or sing them, an inexhaustible variety of the noblest matter that can engage the contemplations of man.

Why is the mind more than ordinarily affected, and either melted into sorrow, or transported with joy, when on the days set apart for the commemoration of our Saviour's birth, passion, resurrection, &c. the Proper Psalms are read, which the church hath appointed, following herein the directions of evangelists and apostles, and the usage of the early ages? Why, but because, by such appointment, we are necessarily put upon transferring our ideas from the complaints or exultations of David and Israel, to those of a suffering or glorified Messiah, of whose sufferings or glories we participate, as members of his mystical body! And how much more intense would be the effect, if, in the sermons preached on those occasions, such Proper Psalms were expounded to the people, and their propriety evinced, as it might easily be! Discourses of this kind would make the hearts of the auditors to "burn within them;" and men would cease to wonder, that three thousand Jews were converted to the faith by St. Peter's animated discourse on part of the sixteenth Psalm. Were believers once brought well acquainted with

these Proper Psalms, they would be better enabled to study and apply the rest, which might likewise be explained to them, at different times, and certainly afford the finest subjects on which a Christian orator can apply his eloquence. That this was done in the primitive church, we learn from the exposition of the Psalms left us by St. Chrysostom in the east, and St. Augustin in the west, those expositions still subsisting in the form of homilies, as delivered to their respective congregations. Is it not to be feared that, for want of such instructions, the repetition of the Psalms, as performed by multitudes, is but one degree above mechanism? And is it not a melancholy reflection to be made, at the close of a long life, that, after reciting them, at proper seasons, through the greatest part of it, no more should be known of their true meaning and application, than when the Psalter was first taken in hand at school?

Many sensible and well-disposed persons, therefore, who, when they read or sing the Psalms, desire to read or sing "with the spirit and the understanding," have long called for a commentary which might enable them to do so, which might not only explain the literal sense of these divine compositions, and show how they may be accommodated to our temporal affairs, as members of civil society;”\*

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\* A concern for the present peace and prosperity of the world, and of that kingdom in it to which we belong, ought ever to be entertained and cherished by the most exalted Christian. And if this part of the subject should, at any time, in the following work, appear to be but slightly touched upon, the reason is, because it lies obvious upon the surface, and has been so frequently inculcated by other expositors. Nor are mankind indeed so liable to forget the relation they bear to the world, as they are to

but might also unfold the mysteries of the kingdom of God, which are involved in them, and teach their application to us, as members of that spiritual and heavenly society of which Christ Jesus is the head, and for whose use, in every age, they were intended by their omniscient Author. A work of this kind, though often desired, has never yet been executed, upon any regular and consistent plan. The survey of a province in theology, hitherto almost unoccupied among the moderns, which promised a great deal of pleasing as well as profitable employment, gave birth to the attempt which had been made to cultivate it, in the ensuing Commentary; in which the author has only endeavoured to evince, by an induction of particulars, the truth of what so many learned and good men have asserted in general, concerning the prophetic, or evangelical, import of the Psalter. Dr. Hammond, in the preface to his Annotations, tells us, he chose to leave every man to make applications of this kind for himself, finding he had work enough upon his hands in the literal way. But so much having been done by him, and other able critics, in that way, it seems to be now time that something should be done in the other, and some directions given, in a case where directions cannot but be greatly wanted.

Very few of the Psalms, comparatively, appear to be simply prophetic, and to belong only to Messiah, without the intervention of any other person. Most of them, it is apprehended, have a double

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overlook that which subsists between them and their Creator and Redeemer.

sense, which stands upon this ground and foundation, that the ancient patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings, were typical characters, in their several offices, and in the more remarkable passages of their lives, their extraordinary depressions, and miraculous exultations, foreshowing Him who was to arise, as the Head of the holy family, the great Prophet, the true Priest, the everlasting King. The Israelitish polity, and the law of Moses, were purposely framed after the example and shadow of things spiritual and heavenly; and the events which happened to the ancient people of God, were designed to shadow out parallel occurrences, which should afterwards take place, in the accomplishment of man's redemption, and the rise and progress of the Christian church. For this reason, the Psalms composed for the use of Israel, and Israel's monarch, and by them accordingly used at the time, do admit of an application to us, who are now "the Israel of God,"\* and to our Redeemer, who is the king of this Israel.†

Nor will this seem strange to us, if we reflect, that the same divine Person, who inspired the Psalms, did also foreknow and predispose all the events of which he intended them to treat. And hence it is evident, that the spiritual sense is, and must be, peculiar to the Scriptures; because of those persons and transactions only, which are there mentioned

\* Gal. vi. 16.

† That expressions and descriptions in human writings are often so framed as to admit of a double sense, without any impropriety or confusion, is shown by the very learned Mr. Merrick, on his excellent Observations on Dr. Benson's Essay concerning the Unity of Sense, &c. subjoined to his Annotations on the Psalms.

and recorded, can it be affirmed for certain, that they were designed to be figurative. And should any one attempt to apply the narrative of Alexander's expedition by Quintus Curtius, or the Commentaries of Cesar, as the New Testament writers have done, and taught us to do, the histories of the Old, he would find himself unable to proceed three steps with consistency and propriety. The argument, therefore, which would infer the absurdity of supposing the Scriptures to have a spiritual sense, from the acknowledged absurdity of supposing histories or poems merely human to have it, is inconclusive; the sacred writings differing, in this respect, from all other writings in the world, as much as the nature of the transactions which they relate differs from that of all other transactions, and the author who relates them differs from all other authors.

“ This double, or secondary, sense of prophecy, was so far from giving offence to Lord Bacon, that he speaks of it with admiration, as one striking argument of its divinity. ‘ In sorting the prophecies of Scripture with their events, we must allow,’ says he, ‘ for that latitude, which is agreeable and familiar unto divine prophecies, being of the nature of the Author, with whom *a thousand years are but as one day*; and therefore they are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment through many ages, though the height or fulness of them, may refer to some one age.’

“ But that we may not mistake, or pervert, this fine observation of our great philosopher, it may be proper to take notice, that the reason of it holds, in such prophecies only as respect the several successive

parts of one system; which being intimately connected together, may be supposed to come within the view and contemplation of the same prophecy; whereas it would be endless, and one sees not on what grounds of reason we are authorized, to look out for the accomplishment of prophecy, in any casual unrelated events of general history. The Scripture speaks of prophecy, as respecting Jesus, that is, as being one connected scheme of Providence, of which the Jewish dispensation makes a part; so that here we are led to expect, that ‘springing and germinant accomplishment,’ which is mentioned. But had the Jewish law been complete in itself, and totally unrelated to the Christian, the general principle—that ‘a thousand years are with God but as one day’—would no more justify us in extending a Jewish prophecy to Christian events, because perhaps it was eminently fulfilled in them, than it would justify us in extending it to any other signally corresponding events whatsoever. It is only when the prophet hath one uniform connected design before him, that we are authorized to use this latitude of interpretation. For then the prophetic spirit naturally runs along the several parts of such design, and unites the remotest events with the nearest: the style of the prophet, in the mean time, so adapting itself to this double prospect, as to paint the near and subordinate event in terms that emphatically represent the distant and more considerable. So that, with this explanation, nothing can be more just or philosophical, than the idea which Lord Bacon suggests of divine prophecy.

“The great scheme of redemption, we are now

considering, being the only scheme in the plan of Providence, which, as far as we know, hath been prepared and dignified by a continued system of prophecy, at least this being the only scheme to which we have seen a prophetic system applied, men do not so readily apprehend the doctrine of *double senses* in prophecy, as they would do if they saw it exemplified in other cases. But what the history of mankind does not supply, we may represent to ourselves by many obvious suppositions; which cannot justify, indeed, such a scheme of things, but may facilitate the conception of it.”\*

In allegories framed by man, the ground-work is generally fiction,† because of the difficulty of finding one true series of facts, which shall exactly represent another. But the great Disposer of events, “known unto whom are all his works,” from the beginning to the end of time, was able to effect this; and the Scripture allegories are therefore equally true in the letter and in the spirit of them. The events signifying, no less than those signified, really happened as they are said to have done.‡ Why the allegories

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\* Bishop Hurd’s excellent Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies. Serm. iii.

† I say, “generally,” since, as the above-cited Mr. Merrick justly observes, “It is possible (for example) in a complimentary address to a modern statesman, or general, to relate the actions of some ancient patriot of the same character, in such a manner, that the parallel intended to be drawn between them, shall be readily known, and the praises expressly bestowed on the one, be transferred, by the reader’s own application, to the other.”

‡ Neque propterea ab historico, sive laterali atque immediato, ut aiunt, sensu aberrare nos oportet: quin eo erit clarior et fundatior secretioris illius intelligentiæ sensus, quo typum ipsum, hoc est, historiam ac literam figemus certius.—BOSSUET Dissertat. in Psal. ad finem.



of this most perfect form, with which the book of God abounds, and which are all pregnant with truths of the highest import, should be treated with neglect and contempt, while the imperfect allegories of man's devising are universally sought after and admired, as the most pleasing and efficacious method of conveying instruction, it is not easy to say. Why should it not afford a believer as much delight, to contemplate the lineaments of his Saviour portrayed in one of the patriarchs, as to be informed, that the character of Iapis was designed by Virgil to adumbrate that of Antonius Musa, physician to Augustus? Or why should not a discourse upon the redemption of the church, as foreshadowed by the exodus of Israel, have as many admirers among Christians, as a dissertation, however ingeniously composed, on the descent of Æneas to the infernal regions, considered as typical of an initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries?

A learned, judicious, and most elegant writer of the present age, hath stated and illustrated the subject we are now upon, with a felicity of thought and expression peculiar to himself. I shall endeavour to gratify the English reader with a view of his sentiments. The beauties of his language are not to be translated.

“ It would be an arduous and adventurous undertaking to attempt to lay down the rules observed in the conduct of the Mystic Allegory; so diverse are the modes in which the Holy Spirit has thought proper to communicate his counsels to different persons, upon different occasions; inspiring and directing the minds of the prophets according to his good pleasure;

at one time vouchsafing more full and free discoveries of future events; while, at another, he is more obscure and sparing in his intimations. From hence, of course, ariseth a great variety in the Scripture usage of this kind of allegory, as to the manner in which the spiritual sense is couched under the other. Sometimes it can hardly break forth and show itself at intervals through the literal, which meets the eye as the ruling sense, and seems to have taken entire possession of the words and phrases. On the contrary, it is much oftener the capital figure in the piece, and stands confessed at once by such splendour of language, that the letter, in its turn, is thrown into shade, and almost totally disappears. Sometimes it shines with a constant equable light; and sometimes it darts upon us on a sudden, like a flash of lightning from the clouds. But a composition is never more truly elegant and beautiful, that when the two senses, alike conspicuous, run parallel together through the whole poem, mutually corresponding with, and illustrating each other. I will produce an undoubted instance or two of this kind, which will show my meaning, and confirm what has hitherto been advanced on this subject of the mystic allegory.

“ The establishment of David upon his throne, notwithstanding the opposition made to it by his enemies, is the subject of the second Psalm. David sustains in it a twofold character, literal and allegorical. If we read over the Psalm, first with an eye to the literal David, the meaning is obvious, and put out of all dispute by the sacred history. There is indeed an uncommon glow in the expression, and

sublimity in the figures, and the diction is now and then exaggerated, as it were on purpose to intimate, and lead us to, the contemplation of higher and more important matters concealed within. In compliance with this admonition, if we take another survey of the Psalm, as relative to the person and concerns of the spiritual David, a nobler series of events instantly rises to view, and the meaning becomes more evident, as well as exalted. The colouring, which may perhaps seem too bold and glaring for the king of Israel, will no longer appear so, when laid upon his great anti-type. After we have thus attentively considered the subjects apart, let us look at them together, and we shall behold the full beauty and majesty of this most charming poem. We shall perceive the two senses, very distinct from each other, yet conspiring in perfect harmony, and bearing a wonderful resemblance in every feature and lineament, while the analogy between them is so exactly preserved, that either may pass for the original from whence the other was copied. New light is continually cast upon the phraseology, fresh weight and dignity are added to the sentiment, till gradually ascending from things below to things above, from human affairs to those which are divine, they bear the great important theme upwards with them, and at length place it in the height and brightness of heaven.

“ What hath been observed with regard to this Psalm, may also be applied to the seventy-second; the subject of which is of the same kind, and treated in the same manner. Its title might be, ‘The Inauguration of Solomon.’ The scheme of the alle-

gory is alike in both; but a diversity of matter occasions an alteration in the diction. For whereas one is employed in celebrating the magnificent triumphs of victory, it is the design of the other to draw a pleasing picture of peace, and of that felicity which is her inseparable attendant. The style is, therefore, of a more even and temperate sort, and more richly ornamented. It aboundeth not with those sudden changes of the person speaking, which dazzle and astonish; but the imagery is borrowed from the delightful scenes with which creation cheers the sight, and the pencil of the divine artist is dipped in the softer colours of nature. And here we may take notice how peculiarly adapted to the genius of this kind of allegory the parabolical style is, on account of that great variety of natural images to be found in it. For as these images are capable of being employed in the illustration of things divine and human, between which there is a certain analogy maintained, so they easily afford that ambiguity which is necessary in this species of composition, where the language is applicable to each sense, and obscure in neither; it comprehends both parts of the allegory, and may be clearly and distinctly referred to one or the other.”\*

The scheme of exposition so beautifully delineated and illustrated in two instances by this truly valuable author, has been extended, in theory, by another learned writer, to a great part of the Psalter; and that upon a principle deduced from the attributes of God, and the nature and design of the divine dispen-

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\* Bishop Lowth on the Hebrew Poetry. Lect. xi.

sations; though his own labours, like those of Dr. Hammond, were employed chiefly in literal criticism. His reasoning is as follows:

“ In this point (namely, the application of the Psalms to the mysteries of the Gospel) I am very clear. The Jews only, as a nation, acknowledged the one supreme God, under the name of Jehovah; they must be, therefore, his peculiar people. There is nothing capricious in this; they are correlates, and of necessity answer reciprocally to each other. Hence that singular intercourse between God and them. Hence, among other instances of his favour, his communication of himself to them by supernatural ways of Oracles, Inspiration, &c. When the acknowledgment of the one God branched itself, from this Jewish stock, over the face of the earth, and by that means he was become the God of all mankind, they must all, for the same reason, become his people. As God is ever the same, and his doings uniform, his conduct towards mankind must exactly be proportioned to his conduct towards the Jewish nation. Let us, therefore, place God in common over them both: and there will be—on one side, the Jewish nation; and on the other, mankind: on one side, Canaan, and a national prosperity; on the other, heaven, and human happiness: on one side, a redemption from Egyptian servitude, and national evils; on the other, a redemption of the whole human race from absolute evil: on one side, national crimes atoned by national ceremonies, sacrifices, priests; on the other, sins expiated by the one universal sacrifice of Jesus Christ: on one side, national and temporary saviours, kings, prophets, &c.

on the other, all this universal, and eternal: on one side, the law, and every branch of it, adapted to a favourite nation; on the other, the everlasting Gospel, suited to all mankind. It is impossible, therefore, that God can say any thing to David, under the quality of king of this chosen nation, which he does not speak, at the same time, to Jesus Christ, as King of all the elect; and that in a truer and nobler sense. To each of them he speaks in a sense adapted to the nature of their respective kingdoms. Nor is the latter a bare accommodation of words, but the first and highest meaning of them, and which only, absolutely speaking, can be the true sense of God; the other being this sense, confined to a particular circumstance; in other words, an absolute truth, made history and matter of fact. This is a principle, which shows, that, far from denying the Christian application, I consider the literal and historical sense only as a kind of vehicle for it.”\*

Upon this plan it is, that many of the Psalms are interpreted in the following sheets.

In such of them as were written by David, and treat of his affairs, that extraordinary person is considered as an illustrious representative of Messiah, who is more than once foretold under the name of David, and to whom are applied, in the New Testament, Psalms which do undoubtedly, in the letter of them, relate to David, and were composed on occasion of particular occurrences which befel him; a circumstance in theology, to be accounted for upon no other principle.

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\* Preface to an Essay towards a New English Version of the Book of Psalms, by the Rev. Mr. Mudge.

When, therefore, he described himself as one hated and persecuted without a cause; as one accused of crimes which he never committed, and suffering for sins the very thoughts of which he abhorred; as one whose life was imbittered by affliction, and his soul overwhelmed with sorrows; yet withal, as one whom no troubles could induce to renounce his trust and confidence in the promises of God concerning him; when he repeated his resolutions of adhering to the divine law, setting forth its various excellencies, and the comforts which it afforded him in the days of adversity; when he complaineth of that implacable malice, and unrelenting fury, with which he was pursued by Saul and his attendants, by Doeg the Edomite, by rebellious Absalom, traitorous Ahithophel, &c. and when, contrary to all appearances, he predicteth their destruction, with his own final exaltation; in expounding the Psalms of this cast and complexion, it hath been my endeavour to direct the reader's thoughts to parallel circumstances, which present themselves in the history of the true David; his sorrows and sufferings; his resignation under them all; his obedience to the will of his Father; the temper and behaviour of his betrayers and murderers; the prophecies of judgments to be inflicted upon them, and of glory to be conferred upon him. As the Psalter was the liturgy of the Jewish church, of which our Lord was a member, and to which he therefore entirely conformed during his abode and humiliation upon earth, he might pour forth his complaints, and "offer up his prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears,"\* in the very words

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\* Heb. v. 7.

which his progenitor David had before used under his own troubles, but which were given by inspiration, with a view to the case of that blessed person whom, in those troubles, he had the honour to prefigure.

Other Psalms there are, which disclose far different scenes. In them, the sorrows of David are at an end; and the day of his deliverance hath already dawned. The heavens are opened, and Jehovah appeareth in the cause of his afflicted servant. He descendeth from above, encompassed with clouds and darkness, preceded by fire and hail, proclaimed by thunder and earthquake, and attended by lightnings and whirlwinds. The mountains smoke, and the rocks melt before him; the foundations of the globe are uncovered, and the deep from beneath is moved at his presence. The adversary is dismayed and confounded; opposition, in the height of its career, feels the blast through all its powers, and instantly withers away. The anointed of God, according to his original designation, is at length elevated to the throne; his sceptre is extended over the nations; the temple is planned by him, and erected by his son; the services of religion are appointed in perfect order and beauty; Jerusalem becometh a praise in all the earth: and the kingdom is established in honour, peace, and felicity. If in Psalms of the former kind the holy Jesus might behold those persecutions and sufferings, under which he was to be humbled, and to mourn, during his pilgrimage here below; in Psalms of this latter sort, he might strengthen and console himself, as a man “ touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted in



all points like as we are," by viewing "the glory that should follow;" by contemplating the manifestation of the Father in favour of his beloved Son; his own joyful resurrection, triumphant ascension, and magnificent inauguration; the conversion of the world, and the establishment of the church; events which were foreshadowed by those above-mentioned: and to which, when the strongest expressions made use of by the divine Psalmist are applied, they will no longer appear hyperbolic; especially if we bear in mind, that these prophetic descriptions wait for their full and final accomplishment at that day, when the mystical "body of Christ," having "filled up that which is behind of his afflictions,"\* shall also, amidst the pangs and convulsions of departing nature, arise from the dead, and ascend into heaven; where all the members of that body, which have been afflicted, and have mourned with their Lord and Master, shall be comforted and glorified together with him.†

In some of the Psalms, David appears as one suffering for his sins. When man speaks of sin, he

\* Col. i. 24.

† Neque prætermittendum illud Augustini passim; tunc Psalmos videri suavissimos, ac divinissima luce perfusos, cum in his caput et membra, Christum et Ecclesiam, sive aperte propalatos, sive latenter designatos intelligimus—Quare iterum atque iterum erigamus animos; atque ubi Davidem atque Solomonem; ubi Davidis hostes, Saulem, Achitophellem, alios; ubi bella et pacem, captivitatem, libertatem, ac cætera ejusmodi audimus; tum animo infigamus Christum; et Ecclesiam laboribus periculisque exercitam, atque inter adversa et prospera peregrinantem; tum sanctorum persecutores, non modo visibles, sed etiam invisibiles illas atque aëreas potestates, pugnasque in hac vita perpetes, ac securam postea pacem sempiternam. BOSSUET Dissertat. in Psalm. ad fin.

speaks of what is his own; and, therefore, every Psalm where sin is confessed to be the cause of sorrow, belongs originally and properly to us, as fallen sons of Adam, like David and all other men. This is the case of the fifty-first, and the rest of those which are styled Penitential Psalms, and have always been used in the church as such. Sometimes, indeed, it happens, that we meet with heavy complaints of the number and burden of sins, in Psalms from which passages are quoted in the New Testament as uttered by our Redeemer, and in which there seems to be no change of person, from beginning to end. We are assured, for instance, by the apostle, Heb. x. 5. that the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses of the fortieth Psalm, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire," &c. are spoken by Messiah coming to abolish the legal sacrifices, by the oblation of himself once for all. The same person, to appearance, continues speaking, and, only three verses after complains in the following terms: "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me." So again, there are no less than five quotations from different parts of the sixty-ninth Psalm, all concurring to inform us that Christ is the speaker through that whole Psalm. Yet the fifth verse of it runs thus: "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my  $\text{כַּחַשׁ}$  guiltiness is not hid from thee." The solution of this difficulty given, and continually insisted on, in the writings of the Fathers is this; that Christ, in the day of his passion, standing charged with the sin and guilt of

his people, speaks of such their sin and guilt as if they were his own, appropriating to himself those debts for which, in the capacity of a surety, he had made himself responsible. The lamb which, under the law, was offered for sin, took the name חַטָּאת, "guilt," because the guilt contracted by the offerer was transferred to that innocent creature, and typically expiated by its blood.\* Was not this exactly the case, in truth and reality, with the Lamb of God? "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; but he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.† He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."‡ Christ and the church compose one mystical person, of which he is the head, and the church the body; and as the body speaks by the head, and the head for the body, he speaks of her sin, and she of his righteousness; which consideration is at the same time a key to any claims of righteousness made in the Psalms by her, and to any confession of sin made by him. This seems to be a satisfactory account of the matter. Such, at least, appears to have been the idea generally adopted and received, in the first ages of the Christian Church; a circumstance which, it is presumed, will be deemed a sufficient apology for the author, if, in the explication of such passages, he hath ventured to proceed accordingly. Nay, and even in reciting the Penitential Psalms, when the unhappy sufferer is ready to sink down under that weight of woe which sin hath laid upon him, if he will extend his thoughts,

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\* See Levit. v. 6.

† 1 Pet. ii. 22.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

as he is sometimes directed to do, to that holy and most innocent person, who felt and sorrowed so much for us all, he will thereby furnish himself with the best argument for patience, and an inexhaustible source of comfort. Nor can it, indeed, well be imagined, that our blessed Lord, as a member of the Jewish church, and an attendant on the service of the synagogue, though conscious to himself of no sin, did not frequently join with his "brethren according to the flesh," in the repetition of the Penitential, as well as the other Psalms, on the days of humiliation and expiation, when the use of them might be prescribed. If, from his circumcision to his crucifixion, "he bare our sins in his own body;" why should it be thought strange, that he should confess them on our behalf, with his own mouth?

The offence taken at the supposed uncharitable and vindictive spirit of the imprecations, which occur in some of the Psalms, ceases immediately, if we change the imperative for the future, and read, not "let them be confounded," &c. but, "they shall be confounded," &c. of which the Hebrew is equally capable. Such passages will then have no more difficulty in them, than the other frequent predictions of divine vengeance in the writings of the prophets, or denunciations of it in the Gospels, intended to warn, to alarm, and to lead sinners to repentance, that they may fly from the wrath to come. This is Dr. Hammond's observation; who very properly remarks, at the same time, that in many places of this sort, as particularly in Psalm cix. (and the same may be said of Psalm lxi.) it is reasonable to resolve, that Christ himself speaketh in the prophet; as be-

ing the person there principally concerned, and the completion most signal in many circumstances there mentioned; the succession especially of Matthias to the apostleship of Judas. It is true, that in the citation made by St. Peter from Psal. cix. in Acts i. 20. as also, in that made by St. Paul from Psalm lxix. in Rom. xi. 9. the imperative form is preserved; "Let his habitation be void," &c. "Let their table be made a snare," &c. But it may be considered, that the apostles generally cited from the Greek of the LXX version; and took it as they found it, making no alteration, when the passage, as it there stood, was sufficient to prove the main point which it was adduced to prove. If the imprecatory form be still contended for, all that can be meant by it, whether uttered by the prophet, by Messiah, or by ourselves, must be a solemn ratification of the just judgments of the Almighty against his impenitent enemies, like what we find ascribed to the blessed spirits in heaven, when such judgments were executed: Rev. xi. 17, 18. xvi. 5, 6, 7. See Merriek's Annotations on Ps. cix. and Witsii Miscellan. Sacr. lib. i. cap. xviii. sect. 24. But, by the future rendering of the verbs, every possible objection is precluded at once. This method has therefore been adopted in the ensuing Commentary.

Of the Psalms which relate to Israel, some are employed in celebrating the mercies vouchsafed them, from their going forth out of Egypt, to their complete settlement in Canaan. These were the constant standing subjects of praise and thanksgiving in the Israelitish church. But we are taught, by the writers of the New Testament, to consider this part

of their history as one continued figure, or allegory. We are told, that there is another spiritual Israel of God; other children of Abraham, and heirs of the promise; another circumcision; another Egypt, from the bondage of which they are redeemed; another wilderness through which they journey; other dangers and difficulties which there await them; other bread from heaven for their support; and another rock to supply them with living water; other enemies to overcome; another land of Canaan, and another Jerusalem, which they are to obtain, and to possess for ever. In the same light are to be viewed the various provocations and punishments, captivities and restorations, of old Israel afterwards, concerning which it is likewise true, that they “happened unto them for ensamples,”\* types, or figures, “and were written for our admonition.”† Care has therefore been taken to open and apply, for that salutary purpose, the Psalms which treat of the above-mentioned particulars.

What is said in the Psalms occasionally of the law and its ceremonies, sacrifices, ablutions, and purifications; of the tabernacle and temple, with the services therein performed; and of the Aaronical priesthood; all this Christians transfer to the new law; to the oblation of Christ; to justification by his blood, and sanctification by his Spirit; to the true tabernacle, or temple not made with hands; and to what was therein done for the salvation of the world, by Him who was, in one respect a Sacrifice; in another a Temple; and in a third, an High Priest for

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\* Gr. Τυποι.

† 1 Cor. x. 11.

ever, after the order of Melchisedek. That such was the intention of these legal figures, is declared at large in the Epistle to the Hebrews: and they are of great assistance to us now, in forming our ideas of the realities to which they correspond. “Under the Jewish economy,” says the excellent Mr. Pascal, “truth appeared but in a figure; in heaven it is open, and without a veil; in the church militant it is so veiled, as to be yet discerned by its correspondence to the figure. As the figure was first built upon the truth, so the truth is now distinguishable by the figure.” The variety of strong expressions used by David in the nineteenth and the hundred and nineteenth Psalms, to extol the enlivening, saving, healing, comforting, efficacy of a law, which in the letter of it, whether ceremonial or moral, without pardon and grace, could minister nothing but condemnation, do sufficiently prove, that David understood the spirit of it, which was the Gospel itself.\* And if any, who recited those Psalms, had

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\* Hæc inter, veri et spirituales Judæi, hoc est, ante Christum Christi discipuli, altiora cogitabant, et rerum cœlestium Sacramenta venerati, novam Jerusalem, novum templum, novam arcam intuebantur.—Bossuet Dissertat. in Psal. cap. i. Lex, juxta Spiritum accepta, ipsum erat Evangelium, sub veteribus figuris delitescens, et cerimoniarum velis obtectum, ab ipso quidem Mose (imprimis in Deuteronomio) aliquatenus et pro temporum ratione explicatum, a prophetis vero succedentibus (ut visum est Divinæ Sapientiæ) dilucidus ostensum, demum a Christo et apostolis plenissime et luce ipso sole clariori patefactum.—Bulli Opera per Grabe, p. 614. If the Jews, as our Saviour tells them, “thought they had eternal life in their Scriptures,” they must needs have understood them in a spiritual sense: and I know not what other spiritual sense, that should lead them to the expectation of eternal life, they could put on their Scriptures, but that prophetic or typical sense, which respected the Messiah. Jesus expressly asserts, at the same time, that their

not the same idea, it was not the fault of the Law or of the Psalms, of Moses or of David, or of him who inspired both, but it was their own; as it is that of the Jews, at this hour, though their prophecies have now been fulfilled, and their types realized. "He that takes his estimate of the Jewish religion from the grossness of the Jewish multitude," as the last cited author observes, "cannot fail of making a very wrong judgment. It is to be sought for in the sacred writings of the prophets, who have given us sufficient assurance, that they understood the law not according to the letter. Our religion, in like manner, is true and divine in the Gospels, and in the preaching of the apostles; but it appears utterly disfigured in those who maim or corrupt it."

Besides the figure supplied by the history of Israel, and by the law, there is another set of images often employed in the Psalms, to describe the blessings of redemption. These are borrowed from the natural world, the manner of its original production, and the operations continually carried on in it. The visible works of God are formed to lead us, under the direction of his word, to a knowledge of those which are invisible; they give us ideas, by analogy, of a new creation rising gradually, like the old one, out of darkness and deformity, until at length it arrives at the perfection of glory and beauty; so that while we praise the Lord for all the wonders of his

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"Scriptures testified of Him." How generally they did so, he explained at large, in that remarkable conversation with two of his disciples after his resurrection; when, "beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." Hurd's *Introd. to the Study of the Prophecies*, Sermon. ii.



power, wisdom, and love, displayed in a system which is to wax old and perish, we may therein contemplate, as in a glass, those new heavens, and that new earth, of whose duration there shall be no end.\* The sun, that fountain of life, and heart of the world, that bright leader of the armies of heaven, enthroned in glorious majesty; the moon shining with a lustre borrowed from his beams; the stars glittering by night in the clear firmament; the air giving breath to all things that live and move; the interchanges of light and darkness; the course of the year, and the sweet vicissitudes of seasons; the rain and the dew descending from above, and the fruitfulness of the earth caused by them; the bow bent by the hands of the Most High, which compasseth the heaven about with a glorious circle; the awful voice of thunder, and the piercing power of lightning; the instincts of animals,† and the qualities of vegetables and mine-

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\* Read nature; nature is a friend to truth;  
 Nature is Christian, preaches to mankind;  
 And bids dead matter aid us in our creed.      YOUNG.

† “I believe, a good natural philosopher might show, with great reason and probability, that there is scarce beast, bird, reptile, or insect, that does not, in each particular climate, instruct and admonish mankind of some necessary truth for their happiness either in body or mind.” Dr. Cheyne’s *Philosophical Conjectures on the Preference of Vegetable Food*, p. 73. That which a celebrated writer has observed concerning a poet, may perhaps be equally applicable to a divine—“To him nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is dreadful, should be familiar to his imagination, he should be conversant with all that is awfully vast, or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the minerals of the earth, and meteors of the sky, should all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety; for every idea is useful for the enforcement or decoration of moral or religious truth; and he who knows most, will have most power of diversifying his scenes, and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions, and unexpected in-

rals; the great and wide sea, with its unnumbered inhabitants; all these are ready to instruct us in the mysteries of faith, and the duties of morality:—

They speak their Maker as they can,  
But want and ask the tongue of man.

PARNELL.

The advantages of Messiah's reign are represented, in some of the Psalms, under images of this kind. We behold a renovation of all things, and the world, as it were, new created, breaks forth into singing. The earth is crowned with sudden verdure and fertility; the field is joyful, and all that is in it; the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; the floods clap their hands in concert, and ocean fills up the mighty chorus, to celebrate the advent of the Great King.

Similar to these, are the representations of spiritual mercies by temporal deliverances from sickness, prison, danger of perishing in storms at sea, and from the sundry kinds of calamity and death, to which the body of man is subject; as also by scenes of domestic felicity, and by the flourishing state of well ordered communities, especially that of Israel in Canaan, which, while the benediction of Jehovah rested upon it, was a picture of heaven itself. The foregoing and

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struction. By him, therefore, no kind of knowledge should be overlooked. He should range mountains and deserts for images and resemblances, and picture upon his mind every tree of the forest, and flower of the valley; the crags of the rock, and the mazes of the stream." *Rasselas*, chap. x. The reader may see this exemplified in some "Disquisitions on Select Subjects of Scripture," by my worthy friend, the reverend Mr. Jones, whose labours make it evident, that true philosophy will ever be the handmaid of true divinity.

every other species of the sacred imagery, if there be any other not hitherto included, it hath been the author's main endeavour to illustrate. And a view of what is done in this way will, it is humbly hoped, afford some reasons to think, there may not be that necessary connexion, which a late noble writer has been pleased to suppose, between devotion and dulness.

The Psalms which remain, are such as treat, in plain terms, without figures or examples, of wisdom and folly, righteousness and sin; the happiness produced by one, and the misery caused by the other; of particular virtues and vices; of the vanity of human life; of the attributes of God; of that patience with which the faithful should learn to bear the sight of wickedness triumphant in this world, looking forward to the day of final retribution; and subjects of the like nature. As Psalms of this kind call for little in the expository way, the general doctrines or precepts implied in them, or suggested by them, are drawn forth in short reflections, attempted after the manner of those made by Father Quesnel on each verse of the New Testament. The opportunity of doing this, where nothing else seemed to be required, and indeed of doing, upon every occasion, what did seem to be required in any way, was the reason for throwing the work into its present form, rather than that of a paraphrase, or any other. Some repetitions, in a performance of this sort, are unavoidable. But a Commentary on the Book of Psalms is not to be read all at once;\* and it was thought better to

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\* The most profitable way of reading it, perhaps, would be, by small portions, often reviewing the text and the comment, and

give the exposition of each Psalm complete in itself, than to refer the reader elsewhere; which, therefore, is only done, when passages of a considerable length occur in two Psalms without any material difference.

Such is the method the Author has taken, such the authorities upon which he has proceeded, and such the rules by which he has directed himself. If consistency and uniformity in the comment have been the result, they will afford, it is hoped, no contemptible argument on its behalf; since it is scarce possible to expound uniformly, on an erroneous plan, so great a variety of figurative language, as is to be found in the book of Psalms.\*

Let us stop for a moment, to contemplate the true character of these sacred hymns.

Greatness confers no exemption from the cares and sorrows of life. Its share of them frequently

comparing them carefully together; at times when the mind is most free, vacant, and calm: in the morning more especially, to prepare and fortify it for the business of the day; and in the evening, to recompose, and set it in order, for the approaching season of rest.

\* The student in theology, who is desirous of farther information upon a subject so curious, so entertaining, and so interesting as that of the figurative language of Scripture, the principles on which it is founded, and the best rules to be observed in the sober and rational interpretation of it, may find satisfaction, by consulting the following authors:

- Lowth's Preface to his Commentary on the Prophets.
- Lowth's Prælect. de Sac. Poes. Heb. Prælect. iv.—xii.
- Paschal's Thoughts, sect. x.—xiv.
- Hurd's Introd. to the Study of the Prophecies. Serm. ii. iii. iv.
- Vitringa, Observat. Sac. lib. vi. cap. xx. et lib. vii.
- Vitringa, Præfat. ad Comment. in Jesaiam.
- Glassii Philologia Sacra, lib. ii.
- Witsii Miscellan. Sacra, tom. i. lib. iii. cap. iii. lib. ii. Dissert. i. ii. Œconom. Fœd. lib. iv. cap. vi.—x.
- Waterland's General Preface to *Scripture Vindicated*.

bears a melancholy proportion to its exaltation. This the Israelitish monarch experienced. He sought in piety, that peace which he could not find in empire, and alleviated the disquietudes of state with the exercises of devotion.

His invaluable Psalms convey those comforts to others which they afforded to himself. Composed upon particular occasions, yet designed for general use; delivered out as services for Israelites under the Law yet no less adapted to the circumstances of Christians under the Gospel; they present religion to us in the most engaging dress; communicating truths which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry can never equal; while history is made the vehicle of prophecy, and creation lends all its charms to paint the glories of redemption. Calculated alike to profit and to please, they inform the understanding, elevate the affections, and entertain the imagination. Indited under the influence of Him to whom all hearts are known, and all events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations, grateful as the manna which descended from above, and conformed itself to every palate. The fairest productions of human wit, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands, and lose their fragraney; but these unfading plants of paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful; their bloom appears to be daily heightened; fresh odours are emitted, and new sweets extracted from them. He who hath once tasted their excellencies, will desire to taste them yet again; and he who tastes them oftenest will relish them best.

And now, could the Author flatter himself, that any one would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly; vanity and vexation flew away for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose, fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every Psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last: for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these meditations on the Songs of Sion, he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved smoothly and swiftly along: for when thus engaged, he counted no time.—They are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet.

—But, alas! these are the fond effusions of parental tenderness. Others will view the production with very different eyes; and the harsh voice of inexorable criticism will too soon awaken him from his pleasing dream. He is not insensible, that many learned and good men, whom he does not therefore value and respect the less, have conceived strong prejudices against the scheme of interpretation here pursued; and he knows how little the generality of modern Christians have been accustomed to speculations of this kind; which, it may likewise, perhaps, be said, will give occasion to the scoffs of our adversaries,

the Jews and the Deists. Yet, if in the preceding pages it hath been made to appear, that the application of the Psalms to evangelical subjects, times, and circumstances, stands upon firm ground; that it may be prosecuted upon a regular and consistent plan; and that it is not only expedient, but even necessary to render the use of them in our devotions rational and profitable; will it be presumption in him to hope that, upon a calm and dispassionate review of the matter, prejudices may subside, and be done away? If men, in these days, have not been accustomed to such contemplations, is it not high time they should become so? Can they begin too soon to study, and make themselves masters of, a science which promises to its votaries so much entertainment, as well as improvement; which recommends the Scriptures to persons of true taste and genius, as books intended equally for our delight and instruction; which demonstrates the ways of celestial wisdom to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace indeed? From the most sober, deliberate, and attentive survey of the sentiments which prevailed upon this point, in the first ages of the church, when the apostolical method of citing and expounding the Psalms was fresh upon the minds of their followers, the Author cannot but be confident, that his Commentary, if it had then made its appearance, would have been universally received and approved, as to the general design of it, by the whole Christian world. And, however the Jews, in their present state of alienation and unbelief, may reject and set at nought such applications of their Scriptures to our Messiah and his chosen people, as they certainly will do; he

is not less confident, that, whenever the happy and glorious day of their conversion shall come, and the veil shall be taken from their hearts, they will behold the Psalter in that light in which he has endeavoured to place it.\* As to the deists, they, while they continue such, can have neither lot nor part in this matter; for giving no credit to the Scripture account of things, either in the Old Testament or the New, to discourse with them concerning a connexion and analogy subsisting between the one and the other, is to reason about a fifth sense with a man who has only four. For the conviction both of the Jews and deists, other arguments are to be urged; arguments from undeniable miracles openly wrought, and plain prophecies literally fulfilled. Such proofs are “for them that believe not.” And such have been repeatedly urged, in their full force, by the many able

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\* “If this appears to be the case in so many of the Psalms (namely, that they are predictive of Messiah), how strongly does it justify our Lord’s appeal to them as treating of Him! And what a noble argument may hence arise, for the conviction and conversion of that extraordinary people, to whom they were originally communicated, when once *the veil that is on their hearts shall be taken away*, as by the same Spirit of prophecy we are assured it shall!” The Bishop of Carlisle’s *Theory of Religion*, p. 176, 6th edit. With what transports of zeal and devotion, of faith and love, will *they* recite these holy hymns, in the day when the whole body of the Jews, returning to the Lord their God, shall acknowledge their unparalleled crime in the murder of their King, and their penitential sorrow for the same, perhaps as his Lordship intimates, in the words of the fifty-first Psalm: “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. O do good in thy good pleasure to Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem!”



champions, who have stood forth (success evermore attend their labours!) in defence of the evidences of Christianity. Expositions and meditations, like those in the subsequent pages, serve not, nor are intended to serve, “for them who believe not, but for them who believe;”\* who will exercise their faculties in discerning and contemplating the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and who are going on unto perfection; to increase their faith, and inflame their charity: to delight them in prosperity, to comfort them in adversity, to edify them at all times. Such effects, the Author doubts not, will be experienced by believers, who will read this book with an honest and good heart, with seriousness and attention; for though he humbly trusts it will not be deemed altogether unworthy a place in the libraries of the learned, he builds chiefly on that approbation which he is sollicitous it should receive in the closets of the devout; as considering, that it is love, heavenly love, which “never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”† They who find not the wished-for satisfaction in one portion, will find it in another; they who disapprove of an interpretation at the first reading, may, perhaps, approve of it at the second; and they who still continue to disapprove of some particulars, will not therefore disdain to accept the benefit of the rest. He

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\* 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

has written to gratify no sect or party, but for the common service of all who call upon the name of Jesus, wheresoever dispersed, and howsoever distressed, upon the earth. When he views the innumerable unhappy differences among Christians, all of whom are equally oppressed with the cares and calamities of life, he often calls to mind those beautiful and affecting words which Milton represents Adam as addressing to Eve, after they had wearied themselves with mutual complaints and accusations of each other:—

But rise ; let us no more contend, nor blame  
 Each other, blam'd enough elsewhere ; but strive,  
 In offices of love, how we may lighten  
 Each other's burden in our share of woe.

B. x. v. 958.

Enough has been given to the arts of controversy. Let something be given to the studies of piety and a holy life. If we can once unite in these, our tempers may be better disposed to unite in doctrine. When we shall be duly prepared to receive it, “ God may reveal even this unto us.” To increase the number of disputes among us, is, therefore, by no means the intent of this publication. The Author having, for many years, accustomed himself to consider and apply the Psalms, while he recited them, according to the method now laid down, has never failed to experience the unspeakable benefit of it, both in public and in private; and would wish, if it so pleased God, that death might find him employed in meditations of this kind.\* He has likewise frequently taken oc-

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\* “ I have lost a world of time,” said the learned Salmasius, on his death-bed; “ if I had one year more, I would spend it in reading *David's Psalms*, and *Paul's Epistles*.”

casion, in the course of his ministry, to explain a Psalm, upon the same plan, from the pulpit; and whenever he has done so, whether the audience were learned or unlearned, polite or rustic, he has generally had the happiness to find the discourse, in an especial manner, noticed and remembered. But still many may be of a different opinion, who may conscientiously believe the doctrines, and practise the duties of the Gospel, whether they see them shadowed out in the Psalms or not. Such will enjoy their own liberty, and permit their brethren to do the same. Or, if they shall think it necessary to take up the polemical pen, he desires only to receive that treatment, which he has himself shown to every writer, cited or referred to by him.\* Instead of engaging in a tedious, and, perhaps, unprofitable altercation upon the subject, he feels himself at present much rather inclined, in such a case, to follow, at his proper distance, the amiable example of his greatly respected Diocesan, who reprinted in England the objections made by a foreign professor, to some parts of his Lectures on the Hebrew Poetry, and left the public to form its own judgment between them.†

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\* *Detur igitur erratis meis venia: ipse demum exemplo meo mihi prosim, qui neminem eorum, a quibus dissenserim, contumeliis affeci; qui non, vitio criticorum, in diversæ sententiæ propugnatores acriter invectus sum; qui denique eam veniam antecessoribus meis libens tribui, quam ab iis, qui hæc in manus sumturi sint, velim impetrare.* Pearce in Præfat. ad edit. Cic. de Oratore.

† “In his si quæ sunt, quæ mihi minus persuasit Vir Clarissimus, ea malui hoc modo libero lectorum nostrorum judicio permittere, quam in disceptationem et controversiam injucundam, et fortasse infructuosam, vocare.” Lowth in Præf. ad edit. 2dam Prælect. de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum.—“Authors should avoid, as much as they can,” says another very learned critic, “replies and rejoinders, the usual consequences of which are, loss of time and

From that public, the Author of the following work is now to expect the determination of his fate. Should its sentence be in his disfavour, nothing further remains to be said, than that he has honestly and faithfully endeavoured to serve it, to the utmost of his power, in the way in which he thought himself best able; and to give the world some account of that time, and those opportunities, which, by the providence of a gracious God, and the munificence of a pious Founder, he has long enjoyed in the happy retirement of a college.

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loss of temper. Happy is he who is engaged in controversy with his own passions, and comes off superior; who makes it his endeavour, that his follies and weaknesses may die before him, and who daily meditates on mortality and immortality." Jortin's Preface to his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, p. xxxiv.

THAT the Reader may the more easily turn to such Psalms as will best suit the present state of his mind, according to the different circumstances, whether external or internal, into which, by the changes and chances of life, or the variations of temper and disposition, he may, at any time, be thrown, the common Table of Psalms, classed under their several subjects, is here subjoined.

#### PRAYERS.

- I. Prayers for pardon of Sin. Psalm 6, 25, 38, 51, 130. Psalms styled *Penitential*, 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.
- II. Prayers composed when the Psalmist was deprived of an opportunity of the public exercise of religion. Psalm 42, 43, 63, 84.
- III. Prayers wherein the Psalmist seems extremely dejected, though not totally deprived of consolation, under his afflictions. Psalm 13, 22, 69, 77, 88, 143.
- IV. Prayers wherein the Psalmist asketh help of GOD, in consideration of his own integrity, and the uprightness of his cause. Psalm 7, 17, 26, 35.
- V. Prayers expressing the firmest trust and confidence in GOD under afflictions. Psalm 3, 16, 27, 31, 54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 71, 86.
- VI. Prayers composed when the people of GOD were under affliction or persecution. Psalm 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, 94, 102, 123, 137.
- VII. The following are likewise Prayers in time of trouble and affliction. Psalm 4, 5, 11, 28, 41, 55, 59, 64, 70, 109, 120, 140, 141, 142.
- VIII. Prayers of *Intercession*. Psalm 20, 67, 122, 132, 144.

#### PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING.

- I. Thanksgivings for mercies vouchsafed to particular persons. Psalm 9, 18, 22, 30, 34, 40, 75, 103, 108, 116, 118, 138, 144.

- II. Thanksgivings for mercies vouchsafed to the Israelites in general. Psalm 46, 48, 65, 66, 68, 76, 81, 85, 98, 105, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 149.

PSALMS OF PRAISE AND ADORATION, DISPLAYING THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

- I. General acknowledgments of GOD's *Goodness* and *Mercy*, and particularly his care and protection of good men. Psalm 23, 34, 36, 91, 100, 103, 107, 117, 121, 145, 146.
- II. Psalms displaying the *Power*, *Majesty*, *Glory*, and other attributes of the Divine Being. Psalm 8, 19, 24, 29, 33, 47, 50, 65, 66, 76, 77, 93, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 111, 113, 114, 115, 134, 139, 147, 148, 150.

INSTRUCTIVE PSALMS.

- I. The different characters of good and bad men: The happiness of the one, and the miseries of the other, are represented in the following Psalms, 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 50, 52, 53, 58, 73, 75, 84, 91, 92, 94, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127, 128, 133.
- II. The Excellence of GOD's Law. Psalm 19, 119.
- III. The Vanity of Human Life. Psalm 39, 49, 90.
- IV. Advice to Magistrates. Psalm 82, 101.
- V. The Virtue of Humility. Psalm 131.

PSALMS MORE EMINENTLY AND DIRECTLY  
PROPHETICAL.

Psalm 2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 72, 87, 110, 118.

HISTORICAL PSALMS.

Psalm 78, 105, 106.

A  
COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
BOOK OF PSALMS.

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PSALM I.

*First Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, which is generally looked upon by expositors as a preface or introduction to the rest, describes the blessedness of the righteous, consisting, verse 1, negatively, in their abstaining from sin; 2. positively, in holy meditation of the Scriptures, productive of continual growth in grace, which 3. is beautifully represented under an image borrowed from vegetation; as, 4. is the opposite state of the unbelieving and ungodly, by a comparison taken from the threshing-floor. The last two verses foretel the final issue of things, with respect to both good and bad men, at the great day.

VERSE “1. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

The Psalter, like the Sermon on the Mount, openeth with a “beatitude,” for our comfort and

encouragement, directing us immediately to that happiness which all mankind, in different ways, are seeking, and inquiring after. All would secure themselves from the incursions of misery; but all do not consider that misery is the offspring of sin, from which it is therefore necessary to be delivered and preserved in order to become happy, or “blessed.” The variety of expressions, here used by David, intimateth to us, that there is a gradation in wickedness; and that he who would not persist in evil courses, or commence a scoffer at the mystery of godliness, must have no fellowship with bad men: since it is impossible for any one who forsakes the right path, to say, whither he shall wander; and few, when they begin to “walk in the counsel of the ungodly,” propose finally to sit down in the “seat of the scornful.” O thou second Adam, who alone, since the transgression of the first, has attained a sinless perfection, make thy servants “blessed,” by making them “righteous,” through thy merits and grace!

“2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

He who hath once brought himself to “delight” in the Scriptures, will find no temptation to exchange that pleasure for any which the world or the flesh can offer him. Such a one will make the lively oracles of God his companions by day and by night. He will have recourse to them for direction, in the bright and cheerful hours of prosperity; to them he will apply for comfort in the dark and dreary seasons of adversity. The enemy, when advancing to the



assault, will always find him well employed, and will be received with—"Get thee behind me, Satan!" When the law of God is the object of our studies and meditations, we are conformed to the example of our Redeemer himself, who, as a man, while he, "increased in stature," increased likewise "in wisdom," and grew powerful in the knowledge of the law which he was to fulfil, and of those prophecies which he was to accomplish; so that, at twelve years of age, he appeared to "have more understanding than all his teachers; for the divine testimonies had been his meditation." Ps. cxix. 99.

"3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

By continual meditation in the sacred writings, a man as naturally improves and advances in holiness, as a "tree" thrives and flourishes in a kindly and well-watered soil. All the "fruits" of righteousness show themselves at their proper "season" as opportunity calls for them; and his words, which are to his actions what the "leaves" are to the fruit, fall not to the ground, but are profitable as well as ornamental. Every thing in him and about him serves the purpose for which it was intended; his brethren are benefited by him, and his Maker is glorified. How eminently is this the case with that TREE OF LIFE, which Jehovah planted in the midst of his new paradise, by the waters of comfort; a tree which sprung out of the earth, but its height reached to heaven, and its breadth to the ends of the

world! its shadow is for the protection, its fruits for the support, and its leaves for the healing, of the nations. It flourishes in immortal youth, and blooms for ever in unfading beauty. See Rev. xxii. 2.

“4. The ungodly *are* not so; but like the chaff, which the wind driveth away.”

In the foregoing description of the righteous, all appeared verdant and fruitful, lovely and enduring; but here, by way of contrast, we are presented with nothing but what is withered and worthless, without form or stability, blown about by every wind, and at length finally dispersed from the face of the earth, by the breath of God's displeasure, and driven into the fire prepared for it. Such is the state, such the lot of the “ungodly;” and so justly are they compared to “chaff.”

“5. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.”

A day is coming when the divine Husbandman shall appear with his “fan in his hand,” and shall “thoroughly purge his floor.” The wheat, which shall stand the winnowing of that day, will be gathered into the celestial granary; while the chaff, for ever separated from it, shall be hurried out of the floor, and carried, by a mighty whirlwind, to its own place. Then shall there be a “congregation of the righteous,” in which “sinners shall not stand.” At present, wheat and chaff lie on one floor; wheat and tares shall grow in one field; good and bad fishes

are comprehended in one net; good and bad men are contained in the visible church. Let us wait with patience God's time of separation.

“6. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

In the present scene of confusion, we may be, and often are, deceived in the judgments we form of men. But it cannot be so with the Omniscient. “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his:” 2 Tim. ii. 19. Their good deeds are not unobserved, nor will they be forgotten by him. His eye seeth them in secret, and his hand will reward them openly, in the day of final retribution: when crowns of glory shall sparkle on the heads of the righteous, but shame and torment shall be the portion of the wicked; “the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

## PSALM II.

ARGUMENT.—David, seated upon the throne of Israel, notwithstanding the opposition made against him, and now about to carry his victorious arms amongst the neighbouring heathen nations, may be supposed to have penned this, as a kind of inauguration psalm. But that “a greater than David is here,” appears not only from the strength of the expressions, which are more properly applicable to Messiah, than to David himself; but also from the citations made in the New Testament; the appointment of the Psalm by the church to be read on Easter day; and the confessions of the Jewish Rabbis. It treats therefore, 1—3. of the opposition raised, both by Jew and Gentile, against the kingdom of Jesus Christ; 4—6. of his victory, and the confusion of his enemies; 7—9. after his re-

surrection, he preaches the Gospel, and 10—12. calls the kings of the earth to accept it; denouncing vengeance against those who shall not do so, and pronouncing a blessing on those who shall.

“ 1. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his Anointed, *saying,*” —

The true David is introduced, like his ancestor of old, expostulating with the nations, for their vain attempts to frustrate the divine decree in his favour. These two verses are cited, Acts iv. 27. and thus expounded—“ Lord—of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” Persecution may be carried on by the people, but it is raised and fomented by kings and rulers. After the ascension of Christ, and the effusion of the Spirit, the whole power of the Roman empire was employed in the same cause, by those who, from time to time, swayed the sceptre of the world. But still, they who intended to extirpate the faith, and destroy the church, how many and how mighty soever they might be, were found only to “ imagine a vain thing.” And equally vain will every imagination be, that exalteth itself against the counsels of God for the salvation of his people.

“ 3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”

These words, supposed to be spoken by the powers in arms against Messiah, discover to us the true ground of opposition, namely, the unwillingness of rebellious nature to submit to the obligations of divine laws, which cross the interests, and lay a restraint upon the desires of men. Corrupt affections are the most inveterate enemies of Christ; and their language is, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Doctrines will be readily believed, if they involved in them no precepts; and the church may be tolerated by the world, if she will only give up her discipline.

“4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”

By these, and such like expressions, which frequently occur in the Scripture, we are taught, in a language which we understand, because borrowed from ourselves, and our manner of showing contempt, how the schemes of worldly politicians appear to him, who, sitting upon his heavenly throne, surveys at a glance whatever men are doing, or contriving to do, upon earth. This is the idea intended to be conveyed; and from it we are to separate all notions of levity, or whatever else may offend when applied to the Godhead, though adhering to the phrases as in use among the sons of Adam. The same is to be said with regard to words which seem to attribute many other human passions and affections to the Deity: as, for instance, these which follow:

“5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,

and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.”

The meaning is, that by pouring out his indignation upon the adversaries of Messiah, as formerly upon those of David, God would no less evidently convict and reprove their folly and impiety, than if he had actually thus spoken to them from his eternal throne above: “ Yet, notwithstanding all your rage against him, have I raised from the dead, and exalted as the Head of the church, my appointed King Messiah; in like manner as I once set his victorious representative David upon my holy hill of Sion, in the earthly Jerusalem, out of the reach of his numerous and implacable enemies.” Let us reflect for our comfort, that He who raised up his Son Jesus, has promised to raise up us also who believe in him; and that the world can no more prevent the exaltation of the members, than it could prevent that of the Head.

“ 7. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with honour and immortality, upon the holy hill of Zion, in the new Jerusalem, now “ declares the decree,” or preaches the Gospel of the everlasting covenant. His part in the covenant was performed by keeping the law, and dying for the sins of men. Nothing therefore remained, but the accomplishment of the promise made to him by the Father, upon those conditions. One part of this promise was fulfilled, saith

St. Paul, "in that he had raised up Jesus again; as it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:" Acts xiii. 33. Another part was fulfilled in the ascension of Christ, and his inauguration to an eternal kingdom, and an unchangeable priesthood, as the true Melchizedek, King of righteousness, King of peace, and Priest of the most high God. The next article in the covenant, on the Father's side, was the enlargement of Messiah's spiritual kingdom, by the accession of the nations to the church. And accordingly, this was the next thing which "Jehovah said unto him," after having proclaimed his Sonship and pre-eminence; as we find by the following verse:

"8. Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession."

Christ was to enter upon the exercise of the intercessorial branch of his priestly office, with a request of the Father, that the "heathen world might be given for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," in return for the labours he had undergone, and the pains he had endured: as also to supply the place of the Jews, who were his original "inheritance and possession," but were cast off because of unbelief. That such request was made by Christ, and granted by the Father, the person who writes this, and he who reads it, in a once Pagan, but now a Christian island, are both witnesses.

"9. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;

thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

The irresistible power and inflexible justice of Christ's kingdom are signified by his "ruling with a rod of iron;" the impotence of those who presume to oppose him, is compared to that of "a potter's vessel," which must fly in pieces at the first stroke of the iron rod. The power of Christ will be manifested in all, by the destruction either of sin, or the sinner. The hearts which now yield to the impressions of his Spirit, are broken only in order to be formed anew, and to become vessels of honour, fitted for the Master's use. Those which continue stubborn and hardened, must be dashed in pieces by the stroke of eternal vengeance.

"10. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

The decree of the Father, concerning the kingdom of the Son, being thus promulgated by the latter, an exhortation is made to the kings of the earth, that they should learn true wisdom, and suffer themselves to be instructed into salvation; that they would bow their sceptres to the cross of Jesus, and cast their crowns before his throne; esteeming it a far greater honour, as well as a more exalted pleasure, to serve Him, than to find themselves at the head of victorious armies, surrounded by applauding nations.

"12. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a



little: blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.”

Christ beseeches kings no less than their subjects, to be reconciled to him, and by him to the Father; since a day is at hand, when mighty men shall have no distinction, but that of being mightily tormented. And then will be seen the “blessedness” of those who “put their trust in” the Lord Jesus. For when the glory of man shall fade away as the short-lived flower of the field, and when all, that is called great and honourable in princes, shall be laid low in the dust, he shall give unto his faithful servants a crown without cares, and a kingdom which cannot be moved.

### PSALM III.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is said to have been composed by David, when he fled from his son Absalom. Thus circumstanced, he expressed himself in terms well adapted to the parallel case of the Son of David, persecuted by rebellious Israel; as also to that of his church suffering tribulation in the world; 1, 2. he complains in much anguish, of the multitude of his enemies, and of the reproaches cast upon him, as one forsaken by God; but, 3. declares, notwithstanding, his sure trust in the divine promises; 4, 5. he relates the success of his prayers, 6—8. derides the impotent malice of his enemies, and ascribes salvation to Jehovah.

“1. LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? Many *are* they that rise up against me.”

David is astonished to find, that “the hearts of

the men of Israel are after Absalom," 2 Sam. xv. 13. that his counsellors are revolted, and his friends falling off continually; and that the king of Israel is forced to leave his capital mourning and weeping. Thus, led forth out of Jerusalem by his own children in arms against him, the holy Jesus went forsaken and sorrowing, to the cross, in the day of trouble. Thus is the church oftentimes opposed and betrayed by her sons, and the Christian by his passions and affections. So true it is, that "a man's foes are they of his own household." But he who by prayer engages the assistance of Jehovah, will rise superior to them all.

"2. Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is no help for him in GOD.*"

Affliction and desertion are two very different things, but often confounded by the world. Shimei reviled David, as reprobated by heaven? and the language of the Shimeis afterward, concerning the Son of David, was, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him." See 2 Sam. xvi. 8. Matt. xxvii. 43. The fearful imaginations of our own desponding hearts, and the suggestions of our crafty adversary, frequently join to help forward this most dangerous temptation, in the hour of sorrow. What therefore hath faith to offer? We shall hear—

"3. But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head."

Such is the answer of David, and of all the saints, but above all, of the King of saints, to the temptation

before-mentioned. Jehovah is a "shield" against this, and all other fiery darts, shot by Satan and his associates: he is the "glory" of Christ and the church, with which they will one day be seen invested, though for a season it appear not to the world, any more than did the royalty of David, when, weeping and barefoot, he went up to Mount Olivet: 2 Sam. xv. 30. The same Jehovah is "the lifter up of our heads," by the gift of holy confidence, and the hope of a resurrection, through that of Jesus Christ, prefigured by the triumphant and happy return of David to Jerusalem.

"4. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill."

David, driven from Jerusalem, still looked and prayed towards the "holy hill" of Sion. Christ, when a stranger on the earth, "made supplication with strong crying," to his Father in heaven. Christ was heard for his own sake: David was heard, and we shall be heard through him.

"5. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me."

Behold David, in the midst of danger, sleeping without fear; secure, through the divine protection, of awakening to engage and vanquish his enemies. Behold the Son of David composing himself to his rest upon the cross, that bed of sorrows; and commending his spirit into his Father's hands, in full confidence of a joyful resurrection, according to the promise, at the time appointed. Behold this, O Christian, and let faith teach thee how to sleep, and

how to die; while it assures thee, that as sleep is a short death, so death is only a longer sleep; and that the same God watches over thee, in thy bed, and in thy grave.

“ 6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about.”

Faith, revived and invigorated by prayer, and fixed on God alone, is a stranger to fear, in the worst of times. The innumerable examples of saints rescued from tribulation, and, above all, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead, render the believer bold as a lion, although the name of his adversary be “ Legion.”

“ 7. Arise, O LORD! save me, O my GOD! for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.”

The church, through Christ, prayeth in these words of David, that Jehovah would arise, as of old time, in the power of his might; that he would finally break the power of Satan and his adherents; pluck the spoil out of the jaws of those beasts of prey; and work that glorious deliverance for the members, which is already wrought for the Head, of the body mystical.

“ 8. Salvation *belongeth*, or, be ascribed, unto the LORD; thy blessing *is*, or be, upon thy people.”

The Psalm ends with an acknowledgment, which ought always to fill the heart, and upon every proper

occasion, to flow from the mouth of a Christian; namely, that “salvation” is not to be had from man, from the kings of the earth, or the gods of the heathen, from saints or angels, but from Jehovah alone: to whom alone, therefore, the glory should be ascribed. If He will save, none can destroy; if He will destroy, none can save. Let Balak, then, curse Israel, or hire Balaam to curse them for him; be but “thy blessing,” O Lord, upon thy people, and it sufficeth.

### PSALM IV.

ARGUMENT.—The person speaking in this Psalm, 1. prayeth to be heard by God; 2. convinceth the world of sin; 3. declareth the righteous to be under the divine protection; 4, 5. prescribeth solitude and meditation, as the proper means to lead men to repentance and faith; 6. showing that in God alone peace and comfort are to be found, and, 7. how superior the joys of the Spirit are to those of sense; 8. repositeth himself, in full assurance of faith, on the loving kindness of the Lord.

“1. Hear me when I call, O GOD of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.”

The church, like David, “calls” aloud, as one in great affliction, for God’s assistance; she addresses him as the “God of her righteousness,” as the fountain of pardon and grace; she reminds him of that spiritual liberty, and “enlargement” from bondage, which he had purchased for her, and oftentimes wrought in her; and, conscious of her demerits, makes her prayer for “mercy.”

“ 2. O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame? *How long* will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing, *or, falsehood?*”

If the Israelitish monarch conceived he had just cause to expostulate with his enemies, for despising the royal majesty with which Jehovah had invested his Anointed; of how much severer reproof shall they be thought worthy, who blaspheme the essential “glory” of King Messiah, which shines forth by his Gospel in the church? Thou, O Christ, art everlasting Truth; all is “vanity and falsehood,” transient and fallacious, but the love of thee!

“ 3. But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call upon him.”

Be the opinions or the practices of men what they will, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Is David “set apart” for the kingdom of Israel? Saul shall not be able to detain, nor Absalom to wrest it from him. Is Messiah ordained to be King of the Israel of God? death and hell shall not prevent it. Are his disciples appointed to reign with him? infallibly they shall. Our Intercessor is already on high; and for his sake, the Lord will hear us when “we call upon him.” What, then, can be said for us, if we neglect to call upon him?

“ 4. Stand in awe, *Heb.* tremble, and sin not; commune with your own heart, upon your bed, and be still.”

The enemies of Christ, as well as those of David,

are here called to repentance, and the process of conversion is described. The above-mentioned consideration of the divine counsel, and the certainty of its being carried into execution, by the salvation of the righteous, and the confusion of their enemies, makes the wicked "tremble." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:" it arrests the sinner in his course, and "he sins not," he goes no farther in the way of sin, but stops and reflects upon what he has been doing: he "communes with his own heart upon his bed, and is still;" his conscience suffers him not to rest in the night, but takes the advantage of solitude and silence, to set before him his transgressions, with all the terrors of death and judgment; stirring him up to confess the former, and deprecate the latter, with unfeigned compunction and sorrow of heart; to turn unto the Lord, and to do works meet for repentance; to learn to do good, as well as to cease from doing evil.

"5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD."

The Jews are no longer to offer the shadowy sacrifices of their law, since He, who is the substance of them all, is come into the world. The Gentiles are no more to offer their idolatrous sacrifices, since their idols have fallen before the cross. But returning sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, are to offer the same sacrifices of evangelical "righteousness;" not "putting their trust" in them, but "in the Lord" Jesus, through whose Spirit they are enabled to offer, and through whose blood their offerings are acceptable unto God. Faith, hope, and charity,

mutually strengthen each other, and compose “a threefold cord,” which is not easily broken.

“6. *There* be many that say, Who will show us *any* good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!”

The two former verses were addressed to rebellious sinners, inviting them to repentance and reformation. This seems to relate to the righteous, who, in times of calamity and persecution, like the friends of distressed David, are tempted to despond, on seeing no end to their troubles. The Psalmist, therefore, prescribes prayer to all such, as an antidote against the temptation; he directs them, in the darkest night, to look towards heaven, nor doubt the return of day, when the rising sun shall diffuse light and salvation, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away. How many are continually asking the question in this verse! How few applying to Him, who alone can give an answer of peace and comfort!

“7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.”

No sooner is the prayer preferred, but the answer is given; and the devout soul declares herself to experience a joy in the midst of tribulation, far superior to the joy with which men rejoice in the time of harvest, or that of vintage; a joy bright and pure, as the regions from whence it descends. Such is the difference between the bread of earth, and that of heaven; between the juice of the grape, and the cup of salvation. Teach us, O Lord, to discern this difference, and to choose aright.



“ 8. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.”

This conclusion affords ample matter for profitable and delightful meditation, if it be considered, first, as spoken by David, or any other believer, when lying down to rest, full of the joys of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned; secondly, as pronounced by the true David, when composing himself to his rest, in certain hope of a resurrection. And happy the Christian, who having nightly, with this verse, committed himself to his bed, as to his grave, shall at last, with the same words, resign himself to his grave, as to his bed, from which he expects in due time to arise, and sing a morning hymn, with the children of the resurrection.

## PSALM V.

ARGUMENT.—The Psalmist in affliction, 1—3. continues and resolves to continue instant in prayer; 4—6. declares the irreconcilable hatred which God bears to sin, and, 7. his own confidence of being accepted; 8. he petitions for grace to direct and preserve him in the way; 9. sets forth the wickedness of his enemies; 10. foretels their punishment, and, 11, 12. the salvation of the faithful.

“ 1. Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my meditation, *or*, my dove-like mournings.”

Although nothing can really hinder or divert the divine attention, yet God is represented as “not hearing,” when either the person is unacceptable, or the petition improper, or when he would thoroughly

prove the faith and patience of the petitioner. Christ, the church, and the believing soul, are all in Scripture styled “doves,” from their possessing the amiable properties of that bird of meekness and innocence, purity and love. The “mournings” of such are always heard and attended to in heaven.

“2. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my GOD: for unto thee will I pray.”

The voice of the suppliant’s cry will be in proportion to the sense which he hath of his sin. Whom should a subject solicit, but his King? to whom should a sinner pray, but to his God? Let us often think upon the strong cryings of him who suffered for the sins of the world, and upon that intercession by which the pardon of those sins was procured.

“3. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer*, *Heb.* dispose, *or*, set myself in order, unto, *or*, for thee, and will look up.”

He who is good in earnest, and hath his heart fully bent upon the work of salvation, like other skilful and diligent artificers, will be “early” in his application to it; he will get the start of the world, and take the advantage of the “sweet hour of prime,” to “dispose,” and “set himself in order,” for the day. What is a slothful sinner to think of himself, when he reads concerning the holy Jesus, that “in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed!” Mark i. 35.

“ 4. For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee.”

The Psalmist was encouraged to make his early prayers to God in the day of trouble, upon this consideration, that his righteous cause must finally prosper, and the divine counsels be accomplished in his exaltation, and the depression of his enemies, who were likewise the enemies of God. The same was the case and the confidence of a suffering Messiah; and such is that of his church and people in the world, where “wickedness” may prosper, and “evil” not only live, but reign. Nevertheless, we know that “God hath no pleasure” in them, nor shall they “dwell with him,” as we hope to do.

“ 5. The foolish, *Heb.* mad, shall not stand in thy sight; for thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing, *or* falsehood; the Lord doth abhor the blood-thirsty and deceitful man.”

No objects of the senses can be so nauseous to them, as the various kinds of sin are in the sight of God. O could we but think, as he does, concerning these, we should rather choose “madness” than transgression, and as soon fall in love with a plague-sore, as a temptation. “Falsehood, blood-thirstiness, and deceitfulness,” are marked out as characteristic of the enemies of David, of Christ, and the church; and history evinces them so to have been. Let us never go within the infection of such pestilential crimes.

“ 7. But as for me, I will come *into* thy house

in the multitude of thy mercy; *and* in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple.”

Wisdom, righteousness, truth, mercy, and sincerity, form a character the reverse of that drawn in the preceding verses, and such a one as God will accept, when appearing before him in his house, and offering with humility and reverence, the sacrifices of the new law, as David did those of the old, through faith in Him who alone filled up the character, and procured acceptance for believers, and their oblations.

“ 8. Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.”

The child of God, admitted into his holy temple, there prefers this petition, praying to be led by the divine Spirit in a course of holy obedience, all impediments being removed out of the way, which otherwise might obstruct the progress, or cause the fall, of one beginning to walk in the path of life; of one who had many “enemies” ready to contrive, to take advantage of, to rejoice and triumph in, his ruin. Thus a man’s enemies, while they oblige him to pray more fervently, and to watch more narrowly over his conduct, oftentimes become his best friends.

“ 9. For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* very wickedness; their throat *is* an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.”

A part of this verse is cited, Rom. iii. 13. together with several other passages from the Psalms and Prophets, to evince the depravity of mankind,

whether Jews or Gentiles, till justified by faith, and renewed by grace. It is plain, therefore, that the description was designed for others, besides the enemies of the literal David, and is of more general import, reaching to the world of the ungodly, and to the enemies of all righteousness, as manifested in the person of Messiah, and in his church. The charge brought against these is, that "truth" and "fidelity" were not to be found in their dealings with God or each other; that their "inward parts" were very wickedness; their first thoughts and imaginations were defiled, and the stream was poisoned at the fountain; that their "throat was an open sepulchre," continually emitting, in obscene and impious language, the noisome and infectious exhalations of a putrid heart, entombed in a body of sin; and that, if ever they put on the appearance of goodness, they "flattered with their tongue," in order the more effectually to deceive and destroy. So low is human nature fallen! "O thou Adam, what hast thou done? for though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee." 2 Esd. vii. 48.

"10. Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee."

Concerning passages of this imprecatory kind in the book of Psalms, it is to be observed, that they are not spoken of private and personal enemies, but of the opposers of God and his Anointed; nor of any among these, but the irreclaimable and finally im-

penitent; and this by way of prediction, rather than imprecation; which would appear, if the original verbs were translated uniformly in the future tense, as they might be, and indeed, to cut off all occasion from them which desire it, should be translated. The verse before us would then run thus—"Thou wilt destroy them, O God; they shall perish by their own counsels: thou wilt cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee." The words, when rendered in this form, contain a prophecy of the infatuation, rejection, and destruction of such as should obstinately persevere in their opposition to the counsels of heaven, whether relating to David, to Christ, or to the church. The fate of Ahithophel and Absalom, of Judas and the Jews, should warn others not to offend after the same example.

"11. But let all those that trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them; let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. *Heb.* All they that trust in thee *shall* rejoice," &c.

As the last verse foretold the perdition of the ungodly, this describes the felicity of the saints; who, trusting in God, rejoice evermore, and sing aloud in the church the praises of their Saviour and mighty defender; the love of whose name fills their hearts with joy unspeakable, while they experience the comforts of grace, and expect the rewards of glory.

"12. For thou, LORD, will bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield."

The “blessing” of God descends upon us through Jesus Christ “the righteous,” or “just one,” as of old it did upon Israel through David, whom, for the benefit of his chosen, God protected, delivered, and placed upon the throne. Thou, O Christ, art the righteous Saviour, thou art the King of Israel, thou art the blessed of Jehovah, the fountain of blessing to all believers, and thy “favour” is the defence and protection of the church militant.

## PSALM VI.

### *First Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—This is the first of those Psalms which are styled penitential. It contains, 1. a deprecation of eternal vengeance, and 2, 3. a petition for pardon; which is enforced from the consideration of the penitent’s sufferings; 4. from that of the divine mercy; 5. from that of the praise and glory which God would fail to receive, if man were destroyed; 6, 7. from that of the penitent’s humiliation and contrition; 8—10. the strain changes into one of joy and triumph, upon the success and return of the prayer.

“1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.”

Let us suppose a sinner awakened to a true sense of his condition, and looking around him for help. Above is an angry God preparing to take vengeance; beneath, the fiery gulf ready to receive him: without him, a world in flames; within, the gnawing worm. Thus situated, he begins, in extreme agony of spirit, “O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.” He expects that God will “rebuke” him, but only prays that it

may not be “in anger” finally to destroy him; he desires to be chastened, but chastened in fatherly love, not in the “hot displeasure” of an inexorable judge. As often as we are led thus to express our sense of sin, and dread of punishment, let us reflect on Him, whose righteous soul, endued with a sensibility peculiar to itself, sustained the sins of the world, and the displeasure of the Father.

“2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed, *Heb.* shaken, *or*, made to tremble.”

The penitent entreats for mercy, first, by representing his pitiable case, under the image of sickness. He describes his soul as deprived of all its health and vigour, as languishing and fainting, by reason of sin, which had eat out the vitals, and shaken all the powers and supporters of the spiritual frame, so that the breath of life seemed to be departing. Enough however was left, to supplicate the healing aid of the God of mercy and comfort; to petition for oil and wine at the hands of the Physician of spirits. How happy is it for us, that we have a physician, who cannot but be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, seeing that he himself once took them upon him, and suffered for them, even unto the death of the cross, under which he “fainted,” and on which “his bones were vexed!”

“3. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?”

Another argument is drawn from the sense which the penitent hath of this his woful condition, and the



consternation and anxiety produced thereby in his troubled mind. These cause him to fly for refuge to the hope set before him. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" he is therefore beautifully represented as crying out, with a fond and longing impatience, "But thou, O Lord, how long?" His strength is supposed to fail him, and the sentence is left imperfect. What, blessed Jesus, were thy "troubles," when to thy companions thou saidst, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?" By those thy sorrows we beseech thee to hear the voice of thine afflicted church, crying to thee from the earth, "My soul also is sore troubled; but thou, O Lord, how long?"

"4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercies' sake."

A third argument is formed upon the consideration of God's "mercy;" for the sake of which, as it is promised to penitents, he is requested to "return," or to turn himself towards the suppliant; to lift up his countenance on the desponding heart; to deliver it from darkness and the shadow of death, and to diffuse around it light and life, salvation, joy, and gladness, like the sun in the morning, when he revisits a benighted world, and calls up the creation, to bless the Maker of so glorious a luminary, so bright a representative of redeeming love.

"5. For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"

The fourth argument proceeds upon a supposition, that God created man for his own glory, which,

therefore, would be so far diminished, if man were permitted finally to perish. The body could not glorify God, unless raised from the dead, nor could the soul, if left in hell. The voice of thanksgiving is not heard in the grave, and no hallelujahs are sung in the pit of destruction. This plea, now urged by the church, was urged for her without all doubt, by her Saviour in his devotions, and prevailed in his mouth, as, through him, it will do in hers.

“ 6. I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears.”

The penitent is supplied with a fifth argument, by the signs and fruits of a sincere repentance, which put forth themselves in him. Such was his sorrow, and such revenge did he take upon himself, that for every idle word he now poured forth a groan, like him that is in anguish through extremity of bodily pain, until he was “weary,” but yet continued groaning; while the sad remembrance of each wanton folly drew a tear from the fountains of grief. The all-righteous Saviour himself wept over sinners; sinners read the story, and yet return again to their sins!

“ 7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief: it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.”

Grief exhausts the animal spirits, dims the eyes, and brings on old age before its time. Thus it is said, concerning the man of sorrows, that “many were astonished at him, his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the

sons of men:" Isa. lii. 14. How long, in these times, might youth and beauty last, were godly sorrow their only enemy?

" 8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9. The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will hear, *or*, hath heard, my prayer."

Repentance, having performed her task, having taught her votary to forsake sin, and to renounce all communication with sinners, now gives place to faith, which appears with the glad tidings of pardon and acceptance, causing the penitent to rejoice in God his Saviour, with joy unspeakable: and inspiring his heart with vigour and resolution to run his course in the way of righteousness. Risen to newness of life, he defies the malice, and predicts the final overthrow of his spiritual adversaries.

" 10. Let all mine enemies, *or*, all mine enemies shall be ashamed, and sore vexed; let them, *or*, they shall return, *and* be ashamed suddenly."

Many of the mournful Psalms end in this manner, to instruct the believer, that he is continually to look forward, and solace himself with beholding that day, when his warfare shall be accomplished; when sin and sorrow shall be no more; when sudden and everlasting confusion shall cover the enemies of righteousness; when the sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for a robe of glory, and every tear become a sparkling gem in his crown: when to sighs and groans shall succeed the songs of heaven, set to angelic harps, and faith shall be resolved into the vision of the Almighty.

## PSALM VII.

ARGUMENT.—David is said to have composed this Psalm concerning the words, or the matter of Cush the Benjamite. Whether Saul, or Shimei, or any one else, be intended under this name, it is sufficiently clear, that David had been maliciously aspersed and calumniated by such a person; that the Psalm was written to vindicate himself from the imputation, whatever was the nature of it; and, consequently, may be considered as the appeal of the true David and his disciples, against the grand Accuser and his associates. The person speaking, 1, 2. declares his trust to be in God; 3—5. protests his innocence; 6—8. desires that judgment may be given in the cause; 9, 10. prays for the abolition of sin, and the full establishment of righteousness; 11—13. sets forth the divine judgments against sinners; 14—16. describes the beginning, progress, and end, of sin, with, 17. the joy and triumph of the faithful.

“1. O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust; save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:”

To a tender and ingenuous spirit, the “persecution” of the tongue is worse than that of the sword, and with more difficulty submitted to; as indeed a good name is more precious than bodily life. Believers in every age have been persecuted in this way; and the King of saints often mentions it as one of the bitterest ingredients in his cup of sorrows. Faith and prayer are the arms with which this formidable temptation must be encountered, and may be overcome. The former assures us, that God can “save and deliver” us from it; the latter induces him so to do.

“ 2. Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.”

The “lion,” of whom David stood in fear, was probably Saul, roused, by a false accusation, to destroy him. The rage of tyrants is often in the same manner excited against the church. And we all have reason to dread the fury of one who is “the roaring lion,” as well as the “accuser of the brethren.” From him none can deliver us but God only.

“ 3. O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;”

David makes a solemn appeal to God, the searcher of hearts, to judge of his innocence, with regard to the particular crime laid to his charge. Any person, when slandered, may do the same. But Christ only could call upon heaven to attest his universal uprightness. In his “hands” there was no “iniquity;” all his works were wrought in perfect righteousness; and when the prince of this world came to try and explore him, he found nothing whereof justly to accuse him. The vessel was thoroughly shaken, but the liquor in it continued pure.

“ 4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me: (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)”

David probably alludes to the life of Saul, which was twice preserved by him, when he had been pressed by his attendants to embrace the opportunity of taking it away. See 1 Sam. xxiv. xxvi. Of the

Son of David, St. Paul says, "In this he commended his love to us, that when we were sinners, he died for us:" Rom. v. 8. In so exalted a sense did he "deliver him that without cause was his enemy." Wretched they who persecute their benefactor; happy he who can reflect, that he has been a benefactor to his persecutors.

"5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it*; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay my honour in the dust."

These are the evils which David imprecates on himself, if he were such as his adversaries represented him; persecution, apprehension, death, and disgrace. Christ, for our sakes, submitting to the imputation of guilt, suffered all these; but being innocent in himself, he triumphed over them all; he was raised and released, glorified and adored; he pursued and overtook his enemies, he conquered the conquerors, and trampled them under his feet; and he enableth us, through grace, to do the same.

"6. Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself, because of the rage of mine enemies; and awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded."

To a protestation of innocence succeeds a prayer for judgment upon the case, which is formed on these two considerations: first, the unreasonable and unrelenting fury of the persecutors; secondly, the justice which God has "commanded" others to execute, and which therefore he himself will doubtless execute upon such occasions. How did he "awake," and "arise," and "lift up himself to judgment;"

on the behalf of his Anointed, in the day of the resurrection of Jesus, and the subsequent confusion of his enemies! And let injured innocence ever comfort itself with the remembrance of another day to come, when, every earth-born cloud being removed, it shall dazzle its oppressors with a lustre far superior to that of the noon-day sun.

“7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.”

The meaning is, that a visible display of God's righteous judgment would induce multitudes, who should behold, or hear of it, to adore and glorify him. For their sakes, therefore, as well as that of the sufferer, he is entreated to re-ascend the tribunal as formerly, and pronounce the wished-for sentence. Thus the determination of the cause between Jesus and his adversaries, by his resurrection, and “return on high,” brought “the congregation of the nations” around him, and effected the conversion of the world. Nor, in human affairs, does any thing more advance the reputation of a people among their neighbours, than an equitable sentence in the mouth of him who sitteth in judgment.

“8. The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity *that is in me.*”

Conscious of his “righteousness” and “integrity,” as to the matter in question, David desires to be judged by him who is to judge the world at the last day. How few, among Christians, have seriously

and deliberately considered, whether the sentence of that day is likely to be in their favour! Yet, how many, with the utmost composure and self-complacency, repeat continually the words of this Psalm, as well as those in the *Te Deum*, “We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge!” Legal, or perfect righteousness and integrity, are peculiar to the Redeemer; but evangelical righteousness and integrity all must have, who would be saved.

“9. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: *or*, the wickedness of the wicked shall, &c. for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins. 10. My defence *is* of God, who saveth the upright in heart.”

It is predicted, that wickedness will, in the end, be abolished, and the just immoveably established, by Him who knoweth intimately the very thoughts and desires of both good and bad men, and will give to each their due reward. How can we doubt of this, when it has pleased God to afford so many examples and preludes to it, in his dispensations of old time? The righteous cause hath already triumphed in Christ; let us not doubt, but that it will do so in the church. Happy the man, whose hope is therefore in God, because “he saveth the upright in heart.”

“11. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the* wicked every day.”

The sense seems to be, that there are daily instances in the world of God’s favour towards his people; as also of his displeasure against the un-



godly, who are frequently visited by sore judgments, and taken away in their sins. In this light we should consider and regard all history, whether that of our own age and nation, or of any other.

“ 12. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. 13. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.”

The sinner who is not converted by the vengeance inflicted on others, will himself at length be made an example of. The wrath of God may be slow, but it is always sure. In thoughtless security man wantons and whiles away the precious hours; he knows not that every transgression sets a fresh edge on the sword, which is thus continually whetting for his destruction; nor considers, that he is the mark of an archer who never errs, and who, at this very instant, perhaps, has fitted to the string that arrow which is to pierce his soul with everlasting anguish.

“ 14. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.”

This is not to be understood as if “travail” were previous to “conception.” The first is a general expression; “Behold, he travaileth with iniquity:” the latter part of the verse is more particular; as if it had been said, “and having conceived mischief,” he “bringeth forth falsehood.” When an evil thought is instilled into the heart of a man, then the seed of the wicked one is sown; by admitting, retaining, and cherishing the diabolical suggestion in

his mind, he “conceiveth” a purpose of “mischief;” when that purpose is gradually formed and matured for the birth, he “travaileth with iniquity;” at length, by carrying it into action, he “bringeth forth falsehood.” The purity of the soul, like that of the body, from whence the image is borrowed, must be preserved, by keeping out of the way of temptation.

“15. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made. 16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.”

All the world agrees to acknowledge the equity of that sentence which inflicts upon the guilty the punishment intended by them for the innocent. No one pities the fate of a man buried in that pit which he had dug to receive his neighbour; or of him who owes his death-wound to the return of an arrow shot against heaven. Saul was overthrown by those Philistines whom he would have made the instruments of cutting off David. Haman was hanged on his own gallows. The Jews, who excited the Romans to crucify Christ, were themselves, by the Romans, crucified in crowds. Striking instances these of the vengeance to be one day executed on all tempters and persecutors of others; when men and angels shall lift up their voices, and cry out together, “Righteous art thou, O LORD, and just are thy judgments.”

“17. I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.”

Whatever doubts may at present arise concerning the ways of God, let us rest assured that they will all receive a solution; and that the "righteousness" of the great judge, manifested in his final determinations, will be the subject of everlasting hallelujahs.

## PSALM VIII.

ARGUMENT.—This is the first of those Psalms which the Church has appointed to be read on Ascension-day. It treats, as appears from Heb. ii. 6, &c. of the wonderful love of God, shown by the exaltation of our nature in Messiah, or the second Adam, to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and by the subjection of all creatures to the word of his power.

“ 1. O LORD, our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.”

The Prophet beholds in spirit the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; like St. Stephen afterward, he sees heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; the sight fills his heart with wonder, love, and devotion, which break forth in this address to “Jehovah,” as “our Lord;” for such he is by the twofold right of creation and redemption, having made us, and purchased us. On both accounts, “how excellent,” how full of beauty and honour, is his name, diffused by the Gospel through “all the earth!” But more especially do men and angels admire and adore him for the exaltation of his “glory,” the glory of the only begotten, high “above the heavens,” and all created

nature, to the throne prepared for him before the foundation of the world.

“ 2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained, *Heb.* founded, or constituted, strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.”

This verse is cited by our Lord, Matt. xxi. 16. and applied to “little children in the temple, crying, Hosanna to the son of David!” which vexed and confounded his malignant adversaries. The import of the words, therefore, plainly is, that the praises of Messiah, celebrated in the church by his children, have in them a strength and power which nothing can withstand; they can abash infidelity, when at its greatest height, and strike hell itself dumb. In the citation made by our Lord, which the Evangelist gives from the Greek of the LXX, we read, “thou hast perfected praise,” which seems to be rather a paraphrase than a translation of the Hebrew, literally rendered by our translators, “thou hast ordained strength.”

“ 3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

At the time of inditing this Psalm, David is evidently supposed to have had before his eyes the heavens as they appear by night. He is struck with the awful magnificence of the wide extended firmament, adorned by the moon walking in brightness, and rendered brilliant by the vivid lustre of a multi-

tude of shining orbs, differing from each other in magnitude and splendour. And when, from surveying the beauty of heaven, with its glorious show, he turns to take a view of the creature man, he is still more affected by the mercy, than he had before been by the majesty of the Lord; since far less wonderful it is, that God should make such a world as this, than that He who made such a world as this, should be “mindful of man,” in his fallen estate, and should “visit” human nature with his salvation.

“5. For thou hast made him a little, *or*, for a little while, lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6. Thou madst him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet.”

On these two verses, with that preceding, St. Paul has left the following comment: “One in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than [*marg.* a little while inferior to] the angels; thou crownedest him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him: but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.” Heb. ii. 6, &c. See also 1 Cor. xv. 27.

“7. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of

the field; 8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the sea.”

Adam, upon his creation, was invested with sovereign dominion over the creatures, in words of the same import with these; Gen. i. 28. which are therefore here used, and the creatures particularised, to inform us, that what the first Adam lost by transgression, the second Adam regained by obedience. That “glory” which was “set above the heavens,” could not but be over all things “on the earth.” And accordingly, we hear our Lord saying, after his resurrection, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth:” Matt. xxviii. 18. Nor is it a speculation unpleasing or unprofitable, to consider, that he who rules over the material world, is Lord also of the intellectual, or spiritual creation represented thereby. The souls of the faithful, lowly and harmless, are the sheep of his pasture; those who, like oxen, are strong to labour in the church, and who, by expounding the word of life, tread out the corn for the nourishment of the people, own him for their kind and beneficent Master; nay, tempers fierce and untractable as the wild beasts of the desert, are yet subject to his will; spirits of the angelic kind, that, like the bird of the air, traverse freely the superior region, move at his command; and those evil ones, whose habitation is in the deep abyss, even to the great Leviathan himself; all, all, are put under the feet of King Messiah: who, “because, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, was therefore highly exalted,

and had a name given him above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, whether of things in heaven, or things on earth, or things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is LORD, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii. 8, &c.

“ 9. O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth !”

Let therefore the universal chorus of men and angels join their voices together, and make their sound to be heard as one, in honour of the Redeemer, evermore praising him, and saying, O LORD, our Lord Jesus Christ, King of Righteousness, Peace, and Glory, King of kings, and Lord of lords, how excellent, how precious, how lovely, how great and glorious is thy Name, diffused over all the earth, for the salvation of thy chosen! Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And let heaven and earth say, *Amen.*

## PSALM IX.

*Second Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm consists of two parts, a thanksgiving, 1—12. and a prayer, 13—20. Upon what particular occasion it was composed, is not known; probably to celebrate the victories gained by David over the neighbouring nations, after God had exalted him to be king in Sion. See verse 11. But most certainly the Psalm was intended for the use of the Christian Church; and she continually, by using it, 1, 2. declares her resolution to celebrate the praises of her God; since

3, 4. her enemies were vanquished, and her cause was carried; 5, 6. the empire of Satan was subverted, and 7, 8. the kingdom of Christ established: 9, 10. affording to believers refuge and salvation. For all these blessings, 11. Christians are excited to praise their Redeemer, who, 12. forgets nothing that is done or suffered for his sake. 13, 14. The church petitions for final deliverance from the world, and the evil thereof; 15, 16. building her hope upon the mercies already received, 17, 18. she foretells the destruction of the wicked; and 19, 20. prays for the manifestation of God.

“ 1. I will praise *thee*, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works.”

In this animated and exalted hymn, the church begins with declaring her resolution to “praise Jehovah,” as the author of her salvation: and that neither coldly, as if the salvation were little worth; nor partially, reserving a share of the glory of it to herself: but with the “whole heart,” with an affection pure and flaming, like the holy fire upon the altar. She is determined to “show forth” to the world, for its conviction and conversion, “all his marvellous works,” the most “marvellous” of which are those wrought for, and in, the souls of men. Outward miracles strike more forcibly upon the senses; but they are introductory only to those internal operations, which they are intended to represent.

“ 2. I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.”

Christians are taught to “be glad and rejoice,” not in abundance of wealth, or plenitude of power, not in the pleasures of sense, or the praise of men, but in God their Saviour; and their joy is as far superior to the joy of the worldly, as the object of the



one is to that of the other. He who, with the spirit and the understanding, as well as with the voice, “sings praise to thy name, O most High,” is employed as the angels are, and experiences a foretaste of the delight they feel.

“3. When mine enemies are driven back, they shall fall, *or*, they stumble, *or* fall, and perish at thy presence.”

The church begins to explain the subject of her joy, which is a victory over her “enemies;” a victory not gained by herself, but by the “presence of God” in the midst of her. The grand enemy of our salvation was first vanquished by Christ in the wilderness, and “driven back,” with the words, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” The same blessed person afterwards completely triumphed over him upon the cross, when the “prince of this world was cast out.” This is that great victory, which we celebrate in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, from generation to generation; and, through faith in him who achieved it, we likewise are enabled to fight and to overcome.

“4. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.”

The same important transaction is here described in forensic, as before it was in military terms. Satan having gotten possession of mankind, might have pleaded his right to keep it, since by transgression they had left God, and sold themselves to him. But Christ, as the church’s representative and advocate, made the satisfaction required, paid down the price

of redemption, “took the prey from the mighty, and delivered the lawful captive:” Isa. xlix. 24. Thus was our “right and our cause maintained;” thus we were rescued from the oppressor, and he who “sat on the throne judged righteous judgment.” Something of this sort may be supposed to pass, concerning each individual, between the Accuser of the brethren and the eternal Intercessor, in the court of heaven.

“5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.”

To the victory of Christ succeeded the overthrow of Satan’s empire in the pagan world. “The heathen were rebuked,” when, through the power of the Spirit, in those who preached the Gospel, men were convinced of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; “the wicked were destroyed, and their name put out for ever,” when the Roman power became Christian, and the ancient idolatry sunk, to rise no more. A day is coming when all iniquity shall perish and be forgotten in like manner.

“6. O thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end, or, The destructions of the enemy are completed to the utmost; and thou, O GOD, hast destroyed their cities, their memorial is perished with them!”\*

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\* Bishop Lowth renders this verse to the same effect. “Desolations have consumed the enemy for ever; and as to the cities which thou, O God, hast destroyed, their memory is perished with them.” See Merrick’s Annotations on the Psalms, p. 9.

The Christian church, when repeating these words, may be supposed to take a retrospect view of the successive fall of those empires, with their capital "cities," in which the "enemy" had from time to time fixed his residence, and which had vexed and persecuted the people of God in different ages. Such were the Assyrian, or Babylonian, the Persian, and the Grecian monarchies. All these vanished away, and came to nothing: Nay, the very "memorial" of the stupendous Nineveh and Babylon is so "perished with them," that the place where they once stood is now no more to be found. The Roman empire was the last of the pagan persecuting powers; and when the church saw "that" under her feet, well might she cry out, "The destructions of the enemy are completed to the utmost!" How lovely will this song be, in the day when the last enemy shall be destroyed, and the world itself shall become what Babylon is at present! Next to the glory and triumph of that day, is the jubilee which the Christian celebrates, upon his conquest over the body of sin.

"7. But the LORD shall endure for ever; he hath prepared his throne for judgment. 8. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."

In opposition to the transient nature of earthly kingdoms, the eternal duration of Messiah's kingdom is asserted; as also its universality, extending over the whole "world;" together with the consummate rectitude of its administration. To him, as supreme judge in an unerring court of equity,

lies an appeal from the unjust determinations here below: and by him in person shall every cause be reheard, when that court shall sit, and all nations shall be summoned to appear before it.

“9. The LORD will also be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.”

In the mean time, and until he returneth to judgment, the poor in spirit, the meek and lowly penitent, however “oppressed in times of trouble,” by worldly and ungodly men, and by the frequent assaults of the wicked one, still finds a refuge in Jesus; who renews his strength by fresh supplies of grace, arms him with faith and patience, and animates him with the hope of glory.

“10. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.”

Therefore they who “know God’s name,” that is, who are acquainted with, and have experienced his merciful nature and disposition, expressed in that name, will take no unlawful methods to escape affliction, nor “put their trust” in any but “him,” for deliverance: since a most undoubted truth (and, O what a comfortable truth!) it is, that “thou, Lord Jesus, hast not forsaken,” nor ever wilt finally “forsake them that” sincerely and diligently, with their whole heart, “seek” to “thee” for help; as a child upon apprehension of danger, flies to the arms of its tender and indulgent parent.

“11. Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion; declare among the people his doings.”

The church, having celebrated the power and the goodness of her Lord, exhorteth all her children to lift up their voices, and sing together, in full chorus, the praises of him whose tabernacle is in "Zion," who resides with men, upon the mountain of his holiness, and saith, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And thus, not only "among the people," but also to principalities and powers in heavenly places, will be "declared" and made known by the voice of thanksgiving in the church, the manifold wisdom and mercy of God, in his "doings" towards man. See Ephes. iii. 10.

"12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them, and forgetteth not the cry of the humble."

An objection might be started to the so much extolled loving-kindness of God, namely, that in this world his faithful people are often afflicted, and persecuted; nay, sometimes suffered to be killed all the day long, as sheep appointed to the slaughter. But this is obviated by the consideration, that all is not over, as wicked men may suppose, at death; that a strict "inquisition" will be appointed hereafter, when the "blood" of martyrs, and the sufferings of confessors shall not be "forgotten." He remembereth "them," that is, those who seek him, mentioned verse 10; so that the exhortation to "sing praises," &c. verse 11. seems parenthetical.

"13. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider the trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death."

We are now come to the second part of the Psalm. The church, after having, in the former part strengthened her faith by commemoration of the mighty works God had wrought for her, proceeds, in this, to pour forth a prayer for farther and final deliverance. She speaks as still militant upon earth, still in an enemy's country, surrounded by them that hate her, and suffering much from them. To whom therefore should she address herself, but to him whose high prerogative it is, literally to "raise from the gates of death;" to him who is in every possible sense, "the resurrection and the life?"

"14. That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation."

The members of the church militant despair of being able to "show forth all God's praise," till they become members of the church triumphant. There is a beautiful contrast between the "gates of death," in the preceding verse, and "the gates of the daughter of Zion," or the heavenly Jerusalem, in this: the one leads down to the pit, the other up to the mount of God; the one opens into perpetual darkness, the other into light eternal; from the one proceeds nothing but what is evil, from the other nothing but what is good; infernal spirits watch at the one, the other are unbarred by the hands of angels. What a blessing then is it, to be snatched from the former, and transported to the latter! Who but must rejoice in such "salvation?"

"15. The heathen are sunk, *or*, sink, down in

the pit *that* they made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. 16. The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands."

Faith beholds, as already executed, that righteous judgment, whereby wicked men and evil spirits will fall into the perdition which they had prepared for others, either openly by persecution, or more covertly by temptation. See Psal. vii. 15, 16.

"17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."

All wickedness came originally with the wicked one from hell; thither it will be again remitted, and they who hold on its side must accompany it on its return to that place of torment, there to be shut up for ever. The true state both of "nations," and the individuals of which they are composed, is to be estimated from one single circumstance, namely, whether in their doings they remember or "forget God." Remembrance of Him is the well-spring of virtue; forgetfulness of Him, the fountain of vice.

"18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever."

They who remember God shall infallibly be remembered by Him; and let this be their anchor, in the most tempestuous seasons. The body of a martyr is buried in the earth; and so is the root of the fairest flower: but neither of them "perisheth for ever." Let but the winter pass, and the spring re-

turn, and, lo, the faded and withered flower blooms; the body sown in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, rises in incorruption, glory, and power.

“ 19. Arise, O LORD, let not men prevail; let the heathen be judged in thy sight.”

And now, the Spirit and the Bride say, Come: Arise, O Lord Jesus, from thy throne of glory, and come quickly; “let not” the “man” of sin “prevail” against thy church; but let the long depending cause between her and her adversaries, “be judged” and finally determined “in thy sight.”

“ 20. Put them in fear, O LORD; *that* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men.”

Strange, that man, dust in his original, sinful by his fall, and continually reminded of both by every thing in him and about him, should yet stand in need of some sharp affliction, some severe visitation from God, to bring him to the knowledge of himself, and make him feel, who, and what he is. But this is frequently the case; and when it is, as there are wounds which cannot be healed without a previous application of caustics, mercy is necessitated to begin her work with an infliction of judgment.

## PSALM X.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is, in the LXX, joined to the preceding, but, in the Hebrew, divided from it. The church, under persecution from the spirit of antichrist in the world, after, 1. an humble expostulation with her Lord, setteth down the marks whereby that spirit may be known; such as, 2.



hatred of the faithful; 3. self-willedness and worldly-mindedness; 4. infidelity; 5, 6. profligacy and pride; 7. profaneness and perjury; 8—10. subtlety and treachery employed against the people of God; 11. security and presumption. From the persecutions of such a spirit, the church, 12—15. prayeth earnestly to be delivered; and, 16—18. through faith, rejoiceth in tribulation.

“ 1. Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? *why* hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?”

During the conflict between the church and her adversaries, God is represented as one withdrawing to a distance, instead of affording succour; nay, as one concealing himself, so as not to be found by those who petitioned for aid, or counsel. To behold the righteous cause oppressed, and good men seemingly deserted by heaven, at a time when they most need its assistance, is apt to offend the weak, and oftentimes stagger those who are strong. It is indeed a sore trial, but intended to make us perfect in the practice of three most important duties, humility, resignation, and faith. That we may not faint under the severity of this discipline, let us ever bear in mind, that the beloved Son of the Father, the Son in whom he was well pleased, had once occasion to utter these words, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?”

“ 2. The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor; let them, *or*, they shall, be taken in the devices that they have imagined.”

Inconceivable is that malignant fury, with which a conceited infidel persecutes an humble believer, though that believer hath no otherwise offended him

than by being such. And what wonder? since it is a copy of the hatred which Satan bears to Christ. But the devices of the adversaries, like those of their leader, will end in their own eternal confusion.

“ 3. For the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.”

The first part of this verse points out that alarming symptom of a reprobate mind, a disposition to exult and glory in those lusts, which are the shame and disgrace of human nature, whether the world or the flesh be their object. The latter clause is differently rendered, as implying either that “the wicked blesseth the covetous, whom God abhorreth,” or that “the wicked, being covetous, or oppressive, blesseth himself and abhorreth God.” Either way, an oppressing, griping, worldly spirit, is characterized, with its direct opposition to the Spirit of God, which teaches, that sin is to be confessed with shame and sorrow; that in God alone man is to make his boast; and that it is more blessed to give, than to receive.

“ 4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*; God is not in all his thoughts; *or*, all his imaginations are, There is no God.”

The counsels of heaven are not known by the wicked, because they are not sought after; and they are not sought after, because of a diabolical self-sufficiency, which, having taken possession of the heart, displays itself in the countenance, and reigns throughout the man. He wants no Prophet to teach him, no

Priest to atone for him, no King to conduct him; he needs neither a Christ to redeem, nor a Spirit to sanctify him; he believes no Providence, adores no Creator, and fears no Judge. Thus he lives a “stranger from the covenants of promise, and without God in the world:” Ephes. ii. 12. O that this character now existed only in the Psalmist’s description.

“ 5. His ways are always grievous, *or*, corrupt; thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight: *as for* all his enemies, he puffeth at them.”

As are a man’s principles, such will be his practices; and if he hath not God in his thoughts, his course of life will be corrupt and abominable, his end, his means, and his motives being all wrong, and polluted with concupiscence. There would have been some chance of holding him by fear, but that is gone with his faith; for no man can tremble at judgments in which he does not believe.

“ 6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; for *I shall* never *be* in adversity.”

Prosperity begets presumption, and he who has been long accustomed to see his designs succeed, begins to think it impossible they should ever do otherwise. The long-suffering of God, instead of leading such a one to repentance, only hardens him in his iniquity. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, he thinks it will not be executed at all. He vaunteth himself, therefore, like the proud Chaldean monarch, in the Babylon which he hath erected, and fondly pronounceth it to

be immortal. Such, it is too evident, are often the vain imaginations of triumphant wickedness.

“ 7. His mouth is full of cursing, and deceit, and fraud; under his tongue *is* mischief and vanity.”

From the thoughts of the sinner’s “ heart,” mentioned in the preceding verse, David goes on to describe the words of his “ mouth.” And here we may illustrate the character of antichrist, by setting that of Christ in opposition to it. The mouth of one poureth forth a torrent of curses and lies; from that of the other flowed a clear and copious stream of benediction and truth. Under the serpentine tongue of the former is a bag of mischief and vanity; but honey and milk were under the tongue of the latter, so pleasant and so nourishing to the spirits of men were all his communications.

“ 8. He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages; in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.”

From “ words,” the description proceeds to “ actions.” And with regard to these, as the Son of God went publicly preaching through cities and villages to save men’s lives, so this child of Satan lieth in ambush to destroy them, privily bringing into the church, and diffusing among the people, pestilent errors, and damnable heresies, for that purpose.

“ 9. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den; he lieth in wait to catch the poor; he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.”

The disciples of Jesus, like their blessed Master,

are ever vigilant to catch men in the evangelical net, in order to draw them from the world to God; the partisans of Satan, in imitation of their leader, are employed in watching, from their lurking-places, the footsteps of the Christian pilgrim, that they may spring upon him in an unguarded moment, and draw him from God to the world, and from thence to the devil.

“ 10. He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.”

Our Lord, who is styled “ the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” became a “ Lamb,” for the salvation of mankind; but when his adversary at any time “ humbleth” himself, when the wolf appears in sheep’s clothing, let the flock beware; it is for their more effectual destruction. And, if allured by an outward show of moderation and benevolence, the simple ones shall venture themselves within his reach, they will soon find that his nature is disguised, but not altered.

“ 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see *it*.”

For the chastisement of his people, God often suffers the enemy to prevail and prosper, who then ridicules the faith and hope of the church, and solaces himself in the conceit, that if there be a God, he either knows not, or cares not, what is done upon earth. These Epicurean notions, however absurd and unworthy of the Deity they may seem, do yet in some measure take possession of every man’s mind at the instant of his committing a sin; since it is most

certain, that, with a due impression of the divine omniscience upon his soul at the time, he would not commit it, for all that the tempter could offer him. But faith is apt to sleep, and then sin awakes.

“ 12. Arise, O LORD; O God lift up thine hand; forget not the humble. 13. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not requite *it*.”

The church now prays, that Jehovah, in vindication of his own honour and attributes, would arise to judgment, and make bare his glorious arm for the defence of his elect, who cry day and night unto him. Thus would the insolence of the wicked one and his agents, founded on the divine forbearance, be repressed, and all the world would see, that God had not forgotten, but still, as ever, remembered and regarded the low estate of his handmaid.

“ 14. Thou hast seen *it*, for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite *it* with thine hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.”

“ The wicked,” above, “ saith in his heart, thou wilt not requite *it*.” But the faithful are taught other things by the promises in Scripture, and the experience of unnumbered histories. They know assuredly, that God beholds all that travail and vexation which some inflict, and others sustain, upon the earth; and that he will infallibly recompense to the former their deeds, to the latter their sufferings. Destitute should we be of every earthly help, in the state of beggars and orphans, yet in him will we

trust, who, as the father and protector of all such, saith unto every one of us, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

"15. Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man*: seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none."

This may be either a prayer, or a prediction, implying that the time will come, when the power of Jehovah will dash in pieces that of the enemy, by the demolition either of sin or the sinner, until wickedness be come utterly to an end, and righteousness be established for ever in the kingdom of Messiah. And, lo,

"16. The LORD is King for ever and ever; the heathen are perished out of the land."

Faith beholds the Lord Jesus, as already manifested in his glorious majesty, the kingdoms of this world became his, and the Canaanite no more in the land of promise. Each individual experiences in himself a happy prelude to this manifestation, when Christ rules in his heart by the Spirit, and every appetite and affection is obedient to the sceptre of his kingdom.

"17. LORD, thou hast heard, *or*, hearest, the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare, *or*, thou prearest, their heart; thou wilt cause, *or*, thou causest, thine ear to hear."

How many important and comforting truths have we here, in a few words! As, that the "humble" and lowly, whatever they may suffer in the world,

are the favourites of Jehovah: that he attends to the very "desires" of their hearts: that such hearts "prepared" to prayer, are so many instruments strung and tuned by the hand of heaven: and that their prayer is as music, to which the Almighty himself listens with pleasure.

"18. To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress."

For the sake of the elect, and their prayers, the days of persecution and tribulation will be shortened; the insolence of the earth-born oppressor, the man of sin, will be chastised; the cause of the church will be heard at the tribunal of God; and victory, triumph, and glory will be given unto her. In the foregoing exposition, regard has been chiefly had to the case of the church, and to her sufferings from the spirit of antichrist, in whomsoever existing and acting, from time to time, in the world; this being judged the most generally useful application, which Christians, as such, can make of the Psalm. Particular accommodations of it to the various oppressions of innocent poverty, by iniquitous opulence, will meet the eye, and offer themselves at once to persons so circumstanced, for their support and comfort, under their respective afflictions; which will be also not a little alleviated by the consideration, that the whole church of God groaneth with them, and travaileth in pain, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. Then, and not till then, tears shall cease to run down the cheeks of misery; and sorrow and sighing shall fly away, to return no more for ever.



## PSALM XI.

ARGUMENT.—The Psalmist under persecution, 1—3. declareth himself resolved to trust in God alone, at a time when he was advised to fly to some place of refuge; 4. he expresses his faith in the omniscience and over-ruling power of Jehovah; 5. assigns the reason why good men are afflicted; who, after that the wicked, 6. shall be destroyed, will appear to have been all along, 7. the favoured of God.

“1. In the LORD put I my trust; how say ye to my soul, Flee *as* a bird to your mountain?”

The Christian, like David, in perilous times, should make God his fortress, and continue doing his duty in his station; he should not, at the instigation of those about him, like a poor, silly, timorous, inconstant bird, either fly for refuge to the devices of worldly wisdom, or desert his post, and retire into solitude, while he can serve the cause in which he is engaged. Nor indeed is there any “mountain” on earth out of the reach of care and trouble. Temptations are every where; and so is the grace of God.

“2. For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.”

These seem to be still the words of David's friends, representing to him, as a motive for his flight, the extreme danger he was in from the “arrows” of the enemy, already, as it were, fitted to the “string,” and pointed at him “in secret,” so that not knowing from whence they were to come, he could not guard

against them. The Christian's danger from the darts of the infernal archers, lying in wait for his soul, is full as great as that of David. But "the shield of FAITH" sufficeth, in both cases.

"3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

This likewise seems to be spoken by the same persons, discouraging David from making any further resistance, by the consideration, that all was over; the "foundations" of religion and law were subverted; and what could a man, engaged in the most "righteous" designs, hope to "do," when that was the case? Such arguments are often urged by the timid, in similar circumstances; but they are fallacious; since all is not over, while there is a man left to reprove error, and bear testimony to the truth. And a man who does it with becoming spirit, may stop a prince, or senate, when in full career, and recover the day. But let us hear David's farther reply to his advisers.

"4. The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD's throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men."

In the first verse, the Psalmist had declared his trust to be in Jehovah. After reciting the reasonings of his friends, he now proceeds to evince the fitness and propriety of such trust, notwithstanding the seemingly desperate situation of affairs. "Jehovah is in his holy temple;" into which, therefore, unholy men, however triumphant in this world, can never enter: "Jehovah's throne is in heaven;"

and consequently superior to all power upon earth, which may be controlled and over-ruled by him in a moment; “his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men;” so that no secret wickedness can escape his knowledge, who scrutinizeth the hearts as well as the lives of all the sons of Adam. Why, then, should the man despair, who hath on his side holiness, omnipotence, and omniscience?

“5. The LORD trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.”

As to the afflictions which persons may suffer, who are embarked in a righteous cause, they are intended to purge away the dross, and to refine them for the Master’s use. “Gold,” saith the son of Sirach, “is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity:” Eccclus. ii. 5. In the mean time, God’s displeasure against the wicked is ever the same, and their prosperity, instead of benefiting, will in the end destroy them. The cases of David and Saul, Christ and the Jews, the martyrs and their persecutors, are all cases in point, and should be often in our thoughts to teach us patience, and guard us against despair, in seasons of calamity, pain, or disgrace.

“6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, or, burning coals, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; *this shall be the portion of their cup.*”

St. Jude, ver. 7. tell us, that the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, &c. for their abominable sins, “*πρὸς κειντὰς δευγμα*, are set forth for an example, or

specimen, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." And here we see the images are plainly taken from the dreadful judgment inflicted on those cities, and transferred to the vengeance of the last day. Then the sons of faithful Abraham shall behold a prospect, like that which once presented itself to the eyes of their father; when rising early in the morning, and looking towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, he "beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace!" Gen. xix. 28. Such must be the "portion of their cup," who have dashed from them the cup of salvation. He, therefore, who would enjoy the prosperity of the wicked here, must take with it their torment hereafter; as he who is ambitious of wearing the crown of righteousness in heaven, must be content to endure tribulation upon earth.

"7. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."

He who is in himself essential righteousness, cannot but love his own resemblance, wrought in the faithful by his good Spirit; with a countenance full of paternal affection, he beholds, and speaks peace and comfort to them, in the midst of their sorrows; until, admitted, through mercy, to the glory, from which justice excludes the wicked, and beholding that countenance which has always beheld them, they shall enter upon a life of boundless and everlasting felicity.

## PSALM XII.

*Second Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—The church, through David, 1, 2. laments the decrease of God's faithful servants, and the universal corruption among men, but 3—5. rests upon the divine promises, the truth and certainty of which, 6, 7. she celebrates, and comforts herself therewith, while in a world where oftentimes, 8. the wicked walk uncontrolled.

“ 1. Help, *Heb.* Save, LORD, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”

Our Lord foretells, that in the latter days, “ because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold;” and seems to question whether, “ when the Son of Man cometh, he shall find faith upon the earth.” The universal depravity of Jew and Gentile caused the church, of old, to pray earnestly for the first advent of Christ; and a like depravity among those who call themselves Christians, may induce her to pray no less earnestly for his appearance the second time unto salvation. It is frequently a benefit, to be destitute of help from man, both as it puts us upon seeking it from God, and inclines him to grant it, when we do seek.

“ 2. They speak vanity, *or*, a lie, every one with his neighbour: *with* flattering lips, *and* with a double heart, do they speak.”

When men cease to be faithful to their God, he who expects to find them so to each other, will be

much disappointed. The primitive sincerity will accompany the primitive piety in her flight from the earth; and then interest will succeed conscience in the regulation of human conduct, till one man cannot trust another farther than he holds him by that tie. Hence, by the way, it is, that although many are infidels themselves, yet few choose to have their families and dependents such; as judging, and rightly judging, that true Christians are the only persons to be depended on, for the exact discharge of social duties.

“ 3. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: 4. Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own: who is lord over us?”

They who take pleasure in deceiving others, will, at the last, find themselves most of all deceived, when the Sun of Truth, by the brightness of his rising, shall at once detect and consume hypocrisy. And as to men of another stamp, who speak great swelling words of vanity; who vaunt themselves in the arm of flesh, thinking to prevail by human wit, or human power; equally deplorable will be their case, when the Lord God “omnipotent” reigneth.

“ 5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD, I will set him in safety *from him that puffeth at him.*”

For the consolation of the afflicted and poor in spirit, Jehovah is here introduced promising, out of compassion to their sufferings, to “arise and set

them in safety," or place them in a state of salvation. Such all along has been his promise to the church, who, by looking back to the deliverances wrought of old for the servants of God, and, above all, to that wrought for the Son of God, is now encouraged to look forward, and expect her final redemption from the scorn and insolence of infidelity.

“ 6. The words of the LORD *are* pure words; *as* silver tried in a furnace, *or*, crucible of earth, purified seven times.”

The church rejoices in the promises of God her Saviour, because they are such as she can confide in. His words are not like those of deceitful boasting man, but true and righteous altogether. Often have they been put to the test, in the trials of the faithful, like silver committed to the furnace, in an earthen crucible; but like silver in its most refined and exalted purity, found to contain no dross of imperfection, no alloy of fallibility in them. The words of Jehovah are holy in his precepts, just in his laws, gracious in his promises, significant in his institutions, true in his narrations, and infallible in his predictions. What are the thousands of gold and silver, compared to the treasures of the sacred page!

“ 7. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”

As if it had been said, Yes, blessed Lord, what thou hast promised shall surely be performed, since there is with thee no variableness, nor shadow of turning: thou wilt keep thy poor and lowly servants as thou hast promised, from being circumvented by

treachery, or crushed by power; thou wilt preserve them undefiled amidst an evil and adulterous generation; thou wilt be with thy church to the end of the world, and then admit her to be with thee for ever.

“ 8. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.”

While the faithful repose, as they ought to do, an unlimited confidence in God's promises, they have, in the mean time, but too much reason to mourn the prevalence of wickedness, stalking like its author, to and fro, and up and down in the earth, uncontrolled by those who bear the sword, but who either blunt its edge, or turn it the wrong way. Such is often the state of things here below; and a reflection, made upon the subject by our Lord, when his enemies drew near to apprehend him, may satisfy us how it comes to be so: “ It is your hour, and the power of darkness.” But that hour will quickly pass with us, as it did with him, and the power of darkness will be overthrown; the Lord will be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

### PSALM XIII.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm contains, 1, 2. a complaint of desertion; 3, 4. a prayer for the divine assistance; 5, 6. an act of faith and thanksgiving.

“ 1. How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?”



While God permits his servants to continue under affliction, he is said, after the manner of men, to have “forgotten, and hid his face from them.” For the use, therefore, of persons in such circumstances, is this Psalm intended; and consequently, it suits the different cases of the church universal, languishing for the advent of our Lord to deliver her from this evil world; of any particular church, in time of persecution; and of each individual, when harassed by temptations, or broken by sickness, pain, and sorrow. He who bore our sins, and carried our sorrows, may likewise be presumed to have made it a part of his devotions in the day of trouble.

“2. How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?”

To excite compassion, and prevail for help from above, the petitioner mentions three aggravating circumstances of his misery: the perplexity of his soul not knowing which way to turn, or what course to take; his heart-felt sorrow, uttering itself in sighs and groanings: and the mortifying reflection, that his enemies were exulting in their conquest over him. All this will happen, and be particularly painful to him who has yielded to temptation, and committed sin.

“3. Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*.”

On the preceding considerations is founded a prayer to Jehovah, that he would no longer hide his

face, but “consider,” or, more literally, “have respect to, favourably behold” his servant; that he would “hear, attend to, be mindful of” his supplication in distress. The deliverance requested is expressed figuratively, “Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.” In time of sickness and grief, the “eyes” are dull and heavy: and they grow more and more so as death approaches, which closes them in darkness. On the other hand, health and joy render the organs of vision bright and sparkling, seeming, as it were, to impart “light” to them from within. The words, therefore, may be fitly applied to a recovery of the body natural, and thence to the body politic, from their respective maladies. Nor do they less significantly describe the restoration of the soul to a state of spiritual health and holy joy, which will manifest themselves in like manner, by “the eyes of the understanding being enlightened;” and in this case, the soul is saved from the sleep of sin, as the body is, in the other, from the sleep of death.

“4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; *and* those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.”

This argument we often find urged in prayer to God, that he should be pleased to work salvation for his people, lest his and their enemies should seem to triumph over him as well as them; which would indeed have been the case, had Satan either seduced the true David to sin, or confined him in the grave. And certainly it should be a powerful motive to restrain us from transgression, when we consider,

that as the conversion of a sinner brings glory to God, and causes joy among the angels of heaven; so the fall of a believer disgraces the Gospel of Jesus, opens the mouths of the adversaries, and would produce joy, if such a thing could be, in hell itself.

“ 5. But I have trusted, *or*, I trust, in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice, *or*, rejoices in thy salvation. 6. I will sing unto the LORD because he hath dealt, *or*, deals bountifully with me.”

The heart which “trusteth in God’s mercy,” shall alone “rejoice in his salvation,” and celebrate by the tongue, in songs of praise, the loving kindness of the Lord. It is observable, that this, and many other Psalms, with a mournful beginning, have a triumphant ending; to show us the prevailing power of devotion, and to convince us of the certain return of prayer, sooner or later, bringing with it the comforts of heaven, to revive and enrich our weary and barren spirits in the gloomy seasons of sorrow and temptation, like the dew descending by night upon the withered summit of an eastern mountain.

## PSALM XIV.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm is in a manner the same with the 53d. It sets forth, 1—3. the corruption of the world; 4—6. its enmity against the people of God; 7. the prophet longs and prays for salvation.

“ 1. The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; *there is none that doeth good.*”

It does not appear upon what occasion David composed this Psalm. The revolt of Israel in Absalom's rebellion, is by most writers pitched upon as the subject of it. But, be this as it may, the expressions are general, and evidently designed to extend beyond a private interpretation. And accordingly, the apostle, Rom. iii. 10, &c. produces some passages from it, to evince the apostacy of both Jews and Gentiles from their King and their God, and to prove them to be all under sin. In this light, therefore, we are to consider it, as characterizing the principles and practices of those who oppose the Gospel of Christ in all ages. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Infidelity is the beginning of sin, folly the foundation of infidelity, and the heart, the seat of both. "Their foolish heart (says St. Paul of the heathen, Rom. i. 21.) was darkened." The sad consequence of defection in principle, is corruption in practice. "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." On these words the reader may see a full comment, Rom. i. 28—32.

"2. *The* LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there was any that did understand, *and* seek God. 3. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy, *or*, putrefied: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one."

Like a watchman on the top of some lofty tower, God is represented as surveying, from his heavenly throne, the sons of Adam, and their proceedings upon the earth; he scrutinizes them, and as it were searches diligently, to find among them a man of true

wisdom, one whose heart was turned toward the Lord his God, one who was inquiring the way to salvation and glory, that he might walk therein. But as the result of this extensive and accurate survey, God informs his prophet, and commissions him to inform the world, that all had declined from the paths of wisdom and righteousness; that the mass of human nature was become putrid, requiring to be cleansed, and the vessels made up of it to be formed anew. Such is the Scripture account of man, not having received grace, or having fallen from it; of man without Christ, or in arms against him. See Rom. iii. 11, 12.

“ 4.\* Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.”

The “workers of iniquity” work for the wages of death; they fight against God and their own souls; they barter eternity for time, and part with happiness for misery, both in possession and reversion. Well therefore may it be asked, “Have they no knowledge!” For common sense, after all, is what they want. They who, with an appetite keen as that to their food, prey upon the poor, and devour the people of God, will themselves be preyed upon and devoured by that roaring lion, whose agents for

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\* Between the preceding verse and this, are three others inserted in our common translation, which, though taken by St. Paul from other parts of Scripture, yet because (Rom. iii. 13.) they followed the words cited from this Psalm, were probably added thereunto in this place by some transcribers of the copies of the LXX. For in other copies of the LXX, they exist not any more than in the Hebrew, Chaldee, or Syriac.

the present they are; and such as now “call not on” the name of “the Lord” Jesus for pardon and salvation, shall hereafter call in vain upon the rocks and mountains, to shelter them from his power and vengeance.

“5. There were they in great fear; for God is in the generation of the righteous.”

In the parallel place, Ps. liii. 5. after the words, “There were they in great fear,” are added these, “where no fear was,” which certainly connect better with what follows, “for God is in the generation of the righteous.” David is supposed to be speaking primarily of Israel’s defection from him to Absalom, and here to be assigning the motive of that defection in many, namely, fear of the rebel’s growing power, and distrust of his ability to protect them; which fear, he observes, was groundless, because his cause was the cause of God, who would not fail to appear in its support and vindication. The subjects of Christ, in times of persecution, are often tempted to renounce their allegiance, upon the same principle of fear; although of them it may more emphatically be said, that they “fear where no fear is, since God is in the generation of the righteous;” and they who are engaged on the side of Messiah, will, in the end, most assuredly be triumphant. The latter clause of this verse, in Psalm liii. runs thus: “For God hath scattered, or, shall scatter, the bones of him that encampeth against thee; thou hast, or shalt, put them to shame, because God hath despised them:” the sense of which is evidently the same with—“God is in the generation of the righteous:”

he will defend them and overthrow their enemies: therefore let them not fear, neither let their hearts be troubled. If this interpretation be disapproved, the words, "There were they in great fear," must be understood of the enemy; and the clause, "where no fear was," must be rendered interrogatively thus, "and was there not cause for them to fear? since God is in the generation of the righteous, or, will scatter the bones of him that encampeth against thee," &c.

"6. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD *is* his refuge."

This is plainly addressed to the adversaries, and charges them with reproaching and scoffing at that confidence in the Lord, expressed by the afflicted righteous, in the preceding verse.

"7. O that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad."

The consideration of the apostacy and corruption of mankind, described in this Psalm, makes the prophet express a longing desire for the salvation of Israel, which was to go forth out of Zion, and to bring back the people of God from that most dreadful of all captivities, the captivity under sin and death; a salvation, at which Jacob would indeed rejoice, and Israel be glad. And how doth the whole church, at this time, languish for the consummation of her felicity, looking, even until her eyes fail, for that glorious day of final redemption, when every believing

heart shall exult, and all the sons of God shout aloud for joy!

## PSALM XV.

*Third Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—This is one of the Psalms appointed to be used on Ascension day. The prophet, 1. inquires concerning the person, who should ascend into the hill, and dwell in the temple of Jehovah; 2—5. he receives, in answer to his question, a character of such person.

“1. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?”

The prophet alludes to the hill of Sion in the earthly Jerusalem, to the tabernacle of God which was thereon, and the character of the priest, who should officiate in that tabernacle. But all these were figures of a celestial Jerusalem, a spiritual Sion, a true Tabernacle, and an eternal Priest. To the great originals therefore we must transfer our ideas, and consider the inquiry as made after Him, who should fix his resting-place on the heavenly mount, and exercise his unchangeable priesthood in the temple not made with hands. And since the disciples of this new and great High Priest become righteous in him, and are by the Spirit conformed to his image, the character which essentially and inherently belongs only to him, will derivatively belong to them also, who must follow his steps below, if they would reign with him above.

“2. He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.”



The man, therefore, who would be a citizen of Zion, and there enter into the rest and joy of his Lord, must set that Lord always before him. Renewed through grace, endued with a lively faith, and an operative charity, he must consider and imitate the life of that blessed Person who walked amongst men, without partaking of their corruptions; who conversed unblameably with sinners; who could give this challenge to his inveterate enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" in whom the grand Accuser, when he came, "found nothing;" who, being himself "the Truth," thought and spake of nothing else; making many promises, and performing them all.

"3. *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour."

Who, knowing the sins, follies, and infirmities of all mankind, made his tongue an instrument, not of disclosing and exasperating, but of covering and healing these sores in human nature; who, esteeming every son of Adam as his neighbour, went about doing good; and then laid down his life, and resigned his breath in prayer for his murderers; who, instead of taking up a reproach, and listening to the calumniator, cast him out, and silenced him, by erasing the hand-writing that was against us, and nailing the cancelled indictment to the cross.

"4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD: *he that* sweareth to his *own* hurt, and changeth not."

Who rejected the wicked, however rich and honourable; and chose the well-inclined, however poor and contemptible in the world; who having, by covenant with the Father, engaged to keep the law, and to taste death for every man, went willingly and steadily through this work, and surmounted every obstacle which could be thrown in his way, until he declared, concerning the task appointed him, "It is finished."

"5. *He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.*"

Who was so far from desiring to amass the earthly mammon, that he would touch none of it; and received the true riches, only that he might bestow them upon others; who, instead of taking a reward against the innocent, died for the guilty; and whose sentence, when he shall sit on the throne of judgment, will be equally impartial and immutable.

"6. *He that doth these things, shall never be moved.*"

In the above comment, it was thought most advisable to open and display the full intent of what was both enjoined and forbidden, by exemplifying each particular, as receiving its utmost completion, in the character and conduct of our blessed Lord. And whoever shall survey and copy these virtues and graces, as they present themselves in his life, will, it is humbly apprehended, take the best and shortest way to the heavenly Zion, and make that use of the 15th Psalm, which the Church may be supposed to have had in view, when she appointed it as one of the proper Psalms for Ascension-day.

## PSALM XVI.

ARGUMENT.—Upon whatever occasion, or in whatever distress, David might compose this Psalm, we are taught by St. Peter and St. Paul, Acts ii. 24. and xiii. 35. to consider him as speaking in the person of Christ our Lord, of whom alone the latter part of the Psalm is true. The contents are, 1. a prayer for support; 2, 3. a declaration of love to the saints; 4. a protestation against idolaters; 5—8. acts of love, joy, and confidence in Jehovah; and 9—11. one of hope in an approaching resurrection and glorification.

“ 1. Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.”

These words are evidently spoken by one in great distress, who addresses himself to heaven for support under his sufferings, pleading his confidence in God, still unshaken by all the storms that had set themselves against it. This might be the case of David, and may be that of any believer. But since the Psalm is a continued speech without change of person, we may consider the whole as uttered by Him who only could utter the concluding verses, and who in this first verse makes his supplication to the Father, for the promised and expected deliverance.

“ 2. *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, *Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee; 3. But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.*”

In the Chaldee and Syriac, the latter clause of the former of these two verses is rendered—“ My

goodness is from thee.” An ingenious writer thinks the Hebrew will bear this sense, in the elliptical way, thus—“My goodness: shall I mention that? By no means; it is all to be ascribed to thee.” The goodness of man is all derived from God, and should be extended to his brethren. That of Messiah owed its original to his union with the Divinity; and promoted the salvation of those to whom it was communicated, that is to say, of those who thereby became “the saints and excellent ones in the earth.” For their sakes obedience was performed, and the propitiation made, by the Son of God, because he loved them with an everlasting love, and placed “all his delight” in making them happy. He rejoiced in “the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.” Prov. viii. 31.

“4. Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another *God*: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.”

Christ denounceth vengeance against those who should make to themselves other gods, run after other saviours, or suffer any creature to rival him in their affections; declaring of such, that their offerings should not be presented by him to the Father, nor should they be partakers of the benefits of his intercession. Even the bloody sacrifices of the law, instituted for a time by God himself, became abomination to him when that time was expired, and the one great sacrifice had been offered upon the altar of the cross.

“5. The LORD is the portion of mine inheri-

tance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.  
6. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places*;  
yea, I have a goodly heritage."

The true David, anointed to his everlasting kingdom, yet first a man of sorrows and a stranger upon earth, prefers the promised inheritance of the church, that spiritual kingdom, city, and temple of Jehovah, before all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; he is sure that Jehovah will maintain his lot, that he will both give and preserve to him this his patrimony; and therefore rejoices at the divine beauty and excellency of the heavenly Canaan. And hence the Christian learns wherein his duty and his happiness consist; namely, in making choice of God for "the portion of his inheritance and of his cup," for his support and for his delight; in preferring the spirit to the flesh, the church to the world, and eternity to time.

"7. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night seasons."

The person speaking here blesses Jehovah for communicating that divine "counsel," that celestial wisdom, by which he was incited and enabled to make the foregoing choice and resolution. In the latter part of the verse is intimated the mode of these gracious and spiritual communications, which in the dark seasons of adversity were conveyed to the inmost thoughts and affections of the mind, thereby to instruct, to comfort, and to strengthen the sufferer, until his passion should be accomplished, and the

morning of the resurrection should dawn, in which, as we shall see, all his hope and confidence were placed.

“ 8. I have set the LORD always before me; because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”

The method taken by Christ as man, to support himself in time of trouble, and persevere unto the end, was to maintain a constant actual sense of the presence of Jehovah, whom when he thus saw standing at his right hand, ready, at the appointed hour, to succour and deliver him, he then feared not the powers of earth and hell combined for his destruction. Why are our fears great, but because our faith is little?

“ 9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope.”

Through confidence in the almighty power engaged on his side, joy filled the heart of Christ, and rendered his tongue an instrument of giving glory to Jehovah, in the midst of his sufferings; because when they were ended, as they must soon be, his flesh was only to make its bed, and rest a while, in the grave, after the labours of the day, in sure and certain hope of a speedy resurrection and glorification. This same consideration is to the afflicted, the sick, and the dying Christian, a never-failing source of comfort, an inexhaustible fountain of joy: sin and infidelity are the enemies, who would fill it with earth.

“ 10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.”

It was a part of the covenant of grace, and promised by the mouth of God's prophets, that after the death of Messiah, his animal frame, נפש, should not continue, like those of other men, in the grave, שאול, nor should corruption be permitted to seize on the body, by which all others were to be raised to incorruption and immortality. As members of Christ, this same promise and assurance is so far ours, that although our mortal part must see corruption, yet it shall not be finally left under the power of the enemy, but shall be raised again, and reunited to its old companion the soul, which exists, meanwhile, in secret and undiscerned regions, there waiting for the day when its Redeemer shall triumph over corruption, in his mystical, as he hath already done in his natural body.

“ 11. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.”

The return of Christ from the grave is beautifully described by Jehovah “ showing,” or discovering to him a “ path of life,” leading through the valley of the shadow of death, and from that valley to the summit of the hill of Zion, or to the mount of God in heaven, on which he now sits enthroned. There exalted at the right hand of the Father, that human body, which expired on the cross, and slept in the sepulchre, lives and reigns, filled with delight, and encircled by glory incomprehensible and endless. Through this thy beloved Son and our dear Saviour, “ thou shalt show” us likewise, O Lord, “ the path of life;” thou shalt justify our souls by thy grace.

now, and raise our bodies by thy power at the last day; when earthly sorrow shall terminate in heavenly joy, and momentary pain shall be rewarded with everlasting felicity.

## PSALM XVII.

ARGUMENT.—The Psalmist, confiding in the justice of his cause, 1—4. prayeth for a hearing and decision of it, 5—9. he petitioneth for the divine guidance and protection; 10—12. he describeth the temper and behaviour of his enemies; 13, 14. beseecheth God to disappoint them, and to deliver him; he endeth with an act of faith.

“ 1. Hear the right, O LORD, *or*, Hear, O righteous LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.”

The righteousness of the judge, and the importunity and sincerity of the petitioner, are the arguments here urged for a speedy and favourable determination. Slander and calumny were the portion of David, and of a greater than David, till the righteous Lord manifested himself on their behalf. And shall not God, in like manner, judge and avenge the cause of “ his own elect, who cry day and night unto him? I tell you,” saith Christ himself, “ that he will avenge them speedily.” Luke xviii. 8. “ Men ought always to pray, therefore, and not to faint.”

“ 2. Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.”



A court of equity is ever sitting in heaven, to receive appeals from the wrongful decisions of men here below; and in that court a judge presides, whose impartial hand holds the scales of justice even; whose unerring eye marks the least inclination of either; and from whose sentence injured innocence is therefore taught to expect redress.

“3. Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing: I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.”

The sufferer's “heart condemns him not, and he has confidence towards God,” to whom he applies as the proper judge, because the only witness, of his integrity. God had “proved” not only his words and actions, but his “heart,” which man could not do: God had “visited,” observed, and explored him “in the night,” when secrecy and solitude prompt the hypocrite to sin, and when the undisciplined imagination wanders abroad, like the bird of darkness, after forbidden objects: God had “tried” him, as silver or gold, in the fiery furnace of adversity; and if there be any dross or scum in the metal, it will then rise to the top, and show itself; yet nothing appeared, not so much as the alloy of an intemperate word. Absolutely and universally this could only be true of the holy Jesus; however, through his grace, it may be true of some of his disciples in particular instances of crimes falsely laid to their charge. Let us pray that it may be true of us, whenever God shall please to prove and try us.

“ 4. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer.”

The way to hold fast our integrity, in time of temptation, is here pointed out. “ Concerning the works of men,” that is, such works as fallen, depraved man has recourse to, when in distress, “ by the word of thy lips,” by treasuring up thy word in my heart, as the rule of my actions, and the guide of my life, “ I have watched,” observed, that is, in order to avoid, “ the paths of the destroyer.” This seems to be the literal construction, and to convey the full meaning of the verse, which contains exactly the same sentiment with that in Psalm exix. 11. “ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” If the word either be not in the heart at all, or if it be not there in such a manner as to be ready at all times for use and application, the man is in danger, at every turn, of going astray.

“ 5. Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not.”

The word of God affords us direction, but the grace of God must enable us to follow its direction, and that grace must be obtained by prayer. The “ paths of God” are opposed to the “ paths of the destroyer,” the way of righteousness to that of sin. The image here is taken from one walking in a slippery path, for such is that of human life, by reason of temptations; so that the believer, especially if he be young, feeble, and inexperienced, has great need of a divine supporter in every step he takes.

“ 6. I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, *or*, because thou hast heard me, O God: incline thine ear to me, *and* hear my speech.”

The sweet experience of former deliverances giveth a comfortable assurance of protection in present and future dangers; and this should cause us to fly for refuge at all times, by strong supplication and prayer, to him, who is able and willing to save us from death.

“ 7. Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee*, from those that rise up *against them*.”

This is an address to the “loving-kindness,” or mercy of God, which the Psalmist entreats him to display and magnify in his favour, since it was the promise, the delight, and the glory of Jehovah, to save those who believed and trusted in him. There are two ways of rendering the latter clause of this verse: either, “Thou who savest by thy right hand,” &c. as our translation has it: or, “Thou that savest them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up at, or, against thy right hand,” meaning the opposers of the divine counsels and dispensations: as in Zech. iii. 1. Satan is said to “stand at Joshua’s right hand,” to obstruct the building of the temple.

“ 8. Keep me as the apple of the eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings. 9. From the wicked that oppress me, *from* my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.”

He who has so fenced and guarded that precious and tender part, the pupil of the eye, and who has provided for the security of a young and helpless brood under the wings of their dam, is here entreated to extend the same providential care and parental love to the souls of his elect, equally exposed to danger, equally beset with enemies. Of his readiness so to do he elsewhere assureth us, under the same exquisite imagery, Zech. ii. 8. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." Matth. xxiii. 37. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!"

"10. They are enclosed in their own fat; with their mouth they speak proudly."

The last argument made use of by the Psalmist, in his address to God, is the character of his adversaries. He begins with their "pride," and its cause, "fulness of bread," or high living. Dr. Hammond prefers the rendering which follows: "They have shut up their mouth with fat; they speak proudly." Either way the meaning plainly is, that pride is the child of plenty, begotten by self-indulgence, which hardens the hearts of men against the fear of God, and the love of their neighbours; rendering them insensible to the judgments of the former, and the miseries of the latter. Let every man take care, that, by pampering the flesh, he do not raise up an enemy of this stamp against himself.

"11. They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the ground."

“ They have compassed us in our steps;” that is, literally, Saul and his followers had watched, pursued, and at last hemmed in David and his men: “ They have set, or fixed their eyes” upon us, בְּאֵדָי לִנְטוֹת, “ to lay us prostrate upon the earth,” or finally to make an end of us. Such are our spiritual enemies; such is their intention and our danger.

“ 12. Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.”

The similitude of a lion, either roaring abroad in quest of his prey, or couching in secret, ready to spring upon it the moment it comes within his reach, is often employed by David, to describe the power and malice of his enemies. Christians cannot forget, that they likewise have an adversary of the same nature and character; one ever seeking whom, and contriving how, he may devour.

“ 13. Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, *which* is thy sword; 14. From men *which* are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, *which* have their portion in *this* life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure*: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.”

The Psalmist, having characterized those who pursued after him to take away his life, now entreats God to “ arise” or appear in his cause, “ to disappoint or “ prevent” the enemy in his designs, and to “ cast him down,” to overthrow and subdue him. The next words may be thus rendered: “ Deliver

my soul from the wicked by thy sword, from men by thy hand, O LORD, from the men of the world;" the expressions, "sword" and "hand of Jehovah," being frequently used to denote his power and vengeance. The *מחית מזולת*, or "mortals of the transitory world," from whom David prays to be delivered, are said to be such as have "their portion in this life," such as, in our Saviour's language, "have their reward" here, and are not to expect it hereafter; "whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasure;" whom thou permittest to enjoy thy temporal blessings in abundance, to "receive their good things" upon earth, and to "fare sumptuously every day;" as if it were to convince us, in what estimation we ought to hold the world, when we see the largest shares of it dealt out to the most worthless of the sons of Adam: "They are full of, or abound in children, and leave the residue of their substance to their babes;" after living in plenty, perhaps to a good old age, they leave behind them a numerous and flourishing posterity, who inherit their estates, and go on, as their fathers did before them, without piety to God, or charity to the poor. From these men and their ways, we have all reason to say with David, "Good Lord deliver us!"

"15. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

Instead of setting our affections on things below, the prophet instructs us, after his example, to place all our happiness in the vision of God, and in that righteousness which leads to it; since the hour is

coming, when we shall awake, and arise, after the divine similitude; when we shall be like God, for we shall see him as he is, and by seeing him shall be changed into the same image; and then shall every desire be satisfied with the fulness of joy, with the exceeding abundance of unutterable glory.

## PSALM XVIII.

*Third Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, as we are informed by the sacred history, 2 Sam. xxii. 1. was composed and sung by David, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul. It contains, ver. 1—3. an address of thanks to Jehovah: 4—6. a relation of sufferings undergone, and prayers made for assistance; 7—15. a magnificent description of the divine interposition in favour of the sufferer, and 16—19. of the deliverance wrought for him, 20—24. in consideration of his righteousness, 25—28. according to the tenor of God's equitable proceedings; 29—36. to Jehovah is ascribed the glory of the victory, which, 37—42. is represented as every way complete, by the destruction of all opponents, and, 43—45. the submission of the heathen; for these events, 46—50. God is blessed and praised. As the sublimity of the figures used in this Psalm, and the consent of ancient commentators, even Jewish as well as Christian, but above all, the citations made from it in the New Testament, do evince, that the kingdom of Messiah is here pointed at, under that of David; an application is therefore made of the whole, in the ensuing comment, to the sufferings, resurrection, righteousness, and conquests of Christ, to the destruction of the Jews, and conversion of the Gentiles. In a word, the Psalm, it is apprehended, should now be considered as a glorious epinikion, or triumphal hymn, to be sung by the church, risen and victorious in Christ her Head.

“ 1. I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.”

Let us suppose king Messiah, like his illustrious progenitor of old, seated in peace and triumph upon the throne designed and prepared for him. From thence let us imagine him taking a retrospect view of the sufferings he had undergone, the battles he had fought, and the victories he had gained. With this idea duly impressed upon our minds, we shall be able, in some measure, to conceive the force of the words, “אֲדַהֲמֶךָ, with all the yearnings of affection, I will love thee, O Jehovah, my strength, through my union with whom, I have finished my work, and am now exalted to praise thee, in the name of a redeemed world.” Whenever we sing this Psalm, let us think we are singing it in conjunction with our Saviour, newly risen from the dead; a consideration which surely will incite us to do it with becoming gratitude and devotion.

“2. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”

In other words, explanatory of the figures here made use of, Through Jehovah it is, that I have stood immoveable amidst a sea of temptations and afflictions; he has supported me under my troubles, and delivered me out of them; his protection has secured me, his power has broken and scattered mine enemies; and by his mercy and truth am I now set up on high above them all. How lovely these strains, in the mouth of the church militant! How glorious will they be, when sung by the church triumphant! It is observable, that the words, “in



whom I trust," or, as the original has it, "I will trust in him," are referred to, in the margin of our English Bible, as quoted from this verse by St. Paul, Heb. ii. 13. If it be so, the reader, by turning to the place, may furnish himself with a demonstration, that in the xviii. as well as in the xvi. Psalm, David speaks in the person of Christ.

"3. I will, *or*, did, call upon the LORD, *who is* worthy to be praised; so shall I be, *or*, so was I, saved from mine enemies."

As the Psalm so evidently throughout is a thanksgiving for past deliverances, the verbs in this verse seem to require the same rendering which is given to them below, at ver. 6. Jehovah is to be "called upon," both in adversity and in prosperity; in the former with a voice of prayer, in the latter with that of praise. "Is any afflicted?" saith St. James, v. 13. "Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms."

"4. The sorrows, *or*, cords, of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men, *or*, Belial, made me afraid. 5. The sorrows, *or*, cords of hell, *or*, the grave, compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me."

St. Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, says, when speaking of Christ—"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it:" Acts ii. 24. "Now the Hebrew word *הבל*," as Dr. Hammond well observes on that place, "signifies two things, a *cord* or *band*, and a *pang*, espe-

cially of women in travail: hence the LXX meeting with the word, Psalm xviii. where it certainly signifies *χορνια*, *cords* or *bands*, have yet rendered it *ωδινες*, *pangs*; and from their example here, St. Luke hath used *τας ωδινας θανατου*, the *pains* or *pangs* of death; when both the addition of the word *λυσας*, *loosing*, and *κρατεισθαι*, being *holden fast*, do show the sense is *bands*, or *cords*." From the passage in the Acts, with this learned and judicious remark upon it, we obtain not only the true rendering of the phrase "הבלי מות, cords, or bands of death," but also something more than an intimation that, in the verse of our Psalm now before us, David speaks of Christ, that the "cords of death," those "bands" due to our sins, "compassed him about," and the "floods of Belial," the powers of darkness and ungodliness, like an overwhelming torrent breaking forth from the bottomless pit, "made him afraid," in the day of his agony, when the apprehensions of the bitter cup cast his soul into unutterable amazement, and he beheld himself environed by those "snares" which had captivated and detained all the children of Adam. David, surrounded by Saul and his blood-thirsty attendants, was a lively emblem of the suffering Jesus, and therefore the same description is applicable to both; as the words of the second Psalm, in like manner, celebrate the inauguration of the son of Jesse, and that of the Son of God.

"6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears."

David was in distress; David called upon Jehovah, the God of Israel, who dwelt between the Cherubim in the holy place; and by him the prayer of David was heard. Much greater was the distress of Christ, who likewise, as St. Paul speaks, "in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard;" Heb. v. 7. his voice ascended to the eternal temple, his powerful cry pierced the ears of the Father everlasting, and brought salvation from heaven at the time appointed. The church also is distressed upon the earth, she crieth, her cries are heard, and will be answered in the day of God.

"7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth."

At this verse the prophet begins to describe the manifestation of divine power in favour of the Righteous Sufferer. The imagery employed is borrowed from Mount Sinai, and those circumstances which attended the delivery of the law from thence. When a monarch is angry, and prepares for war, his whole kingdom is instantly in commotion. Universal nature is here represented as feeling the effects of its sovereign's displeasure, and all the visible elements are disordered. The earth shakes from its foundations, and all its rocks and mountains tremble before the majesty of their great Creator, when he ariseth in judgment. This was really the case at the resurrection of our Lord from the dead: when, as the Evangelist informs us, "there was a great earth-

quake," and the grave owned its inability any longer to detain the blessed body, which had been committed, for a season, to its custody. And what happened at the resurrection of Jesus, should remind us of what shall happen, when the earth shall tremble, and the dead shall be raised, at the last day.

“ 8. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it; *or*, fire out of his mouth devoured, with burning coals from before him.”

The farther effects of God's indignation are represented by those of fire, which is the most terrible of the created elements, burning and consuming all before it, scorching the ground, and causing the mountains to smoke. Under this appearance God descended on the top of Sinai: thus he visited the cities of the plain; and thus he is to come at the end of time. Whenever therefore he is described as showing forth his power and vengeance for the salvation of his chosen, and the discomfiture of his enemies, a “devouring fire” is the emblem made choice of, to convey proper ideas of such his manifestations. And from hence we may conceive the heat of his wrath against the adversaries of man's salvation, when, by raising his Son Jesus from the dead, he blasted their schemes, and withered all their strength.

“ 9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet. 10. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly on the wings of the wind. 11. He made darkness his

secret place; his pavilion round about him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies."

Storms and tempests in the element of air are instruments of the divine displeasure, and are therefore selected as figures of it. When God descends from above, the clouds of heaven compose an awful and gloomy tabernacle, in the midst of which he is supposed to reside: the reins of whirlwinds are in his hand, and he directs their impetuous course through the world; the whole artillery of the aerial regions is at his command, to be by him employed against his enemies, in the day of battle and war.

" 12. At the brightness *that was* before him, his thick clouds passed; hail-stones and coals of fire. 13. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. 14. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them."

The discharge of the celestial artillery upon the adverse powers is here magnificently described. Terrible it was to them, as when lightnings and thunders, hail-stones and balls of fire, making their way through the dark clouds which contain them, strike terror and dismay into the hearts of men. Such is the "voice," and such are the "arrows," of the Lord Almighty, wherewith he "discomfite" all who oppose the execution of his counsels, and obstruct the salvation of his chosen. Every display and description of this sort, and indeed every thunder-storm which we behold, should remind us of that

exhibition of power and vengeance, which is hereafter to accompany the general resurrection.

“ 15. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.”

As the former part of the Psalmist's description was taken from the appearance on Mount Sinai, so this latter part seems evidently to allude to what passed at the Red Sea, when by the breath of God the waters were divided, the depths were discovered, and Israel was conducted in safety through them. By that event was prefigured the salvation of the church universal, through the death and resurrection of Christ, who descended into the lower parts of the earth, and from thence re-ascended to light and life. The 14th chapter of Exodus, which relates the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, is therefore appointed as one of the proper lessons on Easter-day. And thus we obtain the ideas intended to be conveyed in this sublime but difficult verse, together with their application to the grand deliverance of the true David, in the day of God's power. Indeed it is not easy to accommodate to any part of the history of the son of Jesse those awful, majestic, and stupendous images, which are made use of throughout this whole description of the divine manifestation, from verse 7. But, however this be, most certainly every part of so solemn a scene of terrors forbids us to doubt but that a “ greater than David is here;” since creation scarce affords colours brighter and stronger than those here employed, wherewith to

paint the appearance of Jehovah at the day of final redemption.

“ 16. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many, *or*, the great waters. 17. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.”

For this purpose did God in so wonderful a manner display his power and glory, that he might deliver the sufferer out of his troubles. This deliverance is first expressed metaphorically, by “drawing him out of the great waters,” and then plainly “he delivered me from my strong enemy,” &c. The “great waters,” in ver. 16. are the same with “the floods of the ungodly,” in verse 4. By these was Messiah, like David, oppressed and overwhelmed for a time; but, like David, he arose at length superior to them all. The “strong enemy” was obliged to give way to a “stronger than he, who overcame him, and took from him his armour in which he trusted, and divided the spoil.” Luke xi. 22.

“ 18. They prevented me in the day of my calamity; but the LORD was my stay. 19. He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.”

The divine mercy is celebrated again and again through this sacred hymn, in a variety of expressions. Innumerable foes “prevented,” that is, surrounded, enclosed Christ on all sides, “in the day of his calamity,” when the powers of earth and hell set themselves in array against him; but “Jehovah was his stay;” on him he reposed an unshaken confidence;

Jehovah therefore supported his steps, and led him on to victory and triumph; from the narrow confines of the grave, he translated him to unbounded empire, because he was the son of his love, in whom he delighted.

“ 20. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 21. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity, or, from iniquities. 24. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eye-sight.”

Commentators have been much perplexed to account for these unlimited claims to righteousness made by David, and that, long after the matter of Uriah, and towards the close of life. Certain indeed it is, that the expressions, considered as David's, must be confined either to his steadfast adherence to the true worship, in opposition to idolatry, or to his innocency with regard to some particular crimes falsely alleged against him by his adversaries. But if the Psalm be prophetic, and sung by the victorious monarch in the person of king Messiah: then do the verses now before us no less exactly than beautifully delineate that all-perfect righteousness wrought by the Redeemer, in consequence of which, he obtained deliverance for himself and his people. For “ His” righteousness' sake, Jehovah was well pleased, and



rewarded with everlasting felicity the unspotted purity of his works: "He" performed an unsinning obedience to every part of the law, and swerved not from its line in a single instance: the rule was ever in his eye, and no temptation could induce him to deviate from its direction; like the light, he passed through all things undefiled, and his garments were white as the lily; therefore a glorious kingdom was given unto him, for as much as in him the piercing eye of heaven could discover no blemish at all.

"25. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; 26. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward: *Heb.* with the perverse thou wilt wrestle, *or*, strive."

The reason is here assigned why God "recompensed Messiah according to the cleanness of his hands," namely, because he is just, in rendering to every one according to his works. "He who is merciful" to his brethren, shall obtain the divine mercy; he who is "upright" in his dealings with others, will have justice done him by the great Judge, against his iniquitous oppressors; he who is "pure" from deceit and hypocrisy in the service of his God, shall experience in himself a faithful and exact performance of the promises which God hath made to such; but the man that is "froward," perverse, and rebellious, must expect to grapple with an arm which will either humble or destroy. See Lev. xxvi. 3, 4, &c. 23, 24, &c. 1 Kings viii. 32. Prov. iii. 34.

“ 27. For thou wilt save the afflicted, *or*, lowly, people; but wilt bring down high looks.”

“ God resisteth the proud,” saith an apostle, “ and giveth grace unto the humble:” James iv. 6. And, indeed, what is the covenant of grace, but a covenant to humble pride, and to exalt humility; what was it but the humility of Christ, that subdued the pride of Satan; and on what does the salvation of every man depend, but on the issue of the contest between these two principles in his heart?

“ 28. For thou wilt, *or*, dost, light my candle, *or*, lamp: the LORD my GOD will, *or*, does, enlighten my darkness.”

An instance of God’s favour towards the lowly and afflicted, was the salvation vouchsafed to the suffering Jesus, who, like David, after much tribulation and persecution, under which he sunk for a time, even so low as to the grave itself, was exalted to glory and honour. This change of condition is set forth by that of a “ lamp,” from a state of extinction to one of illumination, darkness being a well-known emblem of sorrow and death, as light is the established symbol of life and joy. Remarkable are the words of the Chaldee paraphrast upon this verse, cited by Dr. Hammond—“ Because thou shalt enlighten the lamp of Israel, which is put out in the captivity, for thou art the author of the light of Israel; the Lord my God shall lead me out of darkness into light, and shall make me see the consolation of the age which shall come to the just.”

“ 29. For by thee I have run through, *or*, broken, a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.”

Through the power of his divinity, the Captain of our salvation vanquished the host of darkness, and escaped from the sepulchre, notwithstanding all their precautions to confine him there. Vain is every effort, by whomsoever it is made, against the counsels of omnipotence. And let us reflect, for our comfort, that they who could not prevent the resurrection of Christ, cannot detain the soul of a Christian in sin, or his body in the grave.

“ 30. *As for* God, his way *is* perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.”

The “way” of God is in the course of his proceedings with men, and its “perfection” consists in the equity of those proceedings; the promises made in “the word of Jehovah” to his servants, are “tried” in times of affliction and persecution, as gold in the fire, and found pure from any dross of deceit, or fallibility: he is ever a “shield” to protect “those who trust in him,” during their stay here, until he becomes their “exceeding great reward” hereafter. All this he has been to the Head, in order that he may be all this to the members, of the church.

“ 31. For who *is* God, save the LORD? Or who *is* a rock, save our God?”

“Jehovah” alone is the “God,” or covenanted Saviour, of his people; he is the only “rock,” on

which they may securely build their hope of heaven. Vain were the idols of the ancient world, Baal and Jupiter; as vain are those of modern times, Pleasure, Honour, and Profit. They cannot bestow content, or make their votaries happy below; much less can they deliver from death, or open the everlasting doors above.

“ 32. *It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.*”

In this and the following verses are enumerated the gifts of God to the spiritual warrior, whereby he is armed and prepared for the battle, after the example of his victorious leader. God invests him with “strength,” or what the apostle calls “the spirit of might in the inner man,” as the loins of a soldier are braced by the military girdle; whence that of St. Paul, “having your loins girt about with truth.” He removes every thing that may impede his progress, until he has accomplished his warfare, and finished his course in righteousness, which seems to be what is meant by “making his way perfect.”

“ 33. *He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet, and setteth me upon my high places.*”

He endueth the affections, which are the feet of the soul, with vigour and agility, to run the way of his commandments, to surmount every obstacle, and, with an activity like that of the swift hart, or the bounding roe, to conquer the steep ascent of the everlasting hills, and gain the summit of the heavenly mountain. St. Paul tells us how the feet must be shod, for this purpose, namely, “with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.”

“ 34. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.”

He communicates a wisdom and a power which nothing can withstand, instructing and enabling the combatant to overcome in the conflict, to seize and render useless the weapons of the adversary. St. Paul puts into the Christian warrior's hand, “ the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

“ 35. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness, *or*, thy afflictions, have made me great.”

The salvation of God is a defence against all temptations, to such as believe in it; whence St. Paul styles this piece of armour, the shield of Faith, “ wherewith,” says he, “ ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil.” The “ right hand” of God must support and sustain us at all times; and the wholesome discipline of the Christian camp, the chastisements and corrections of our heavenly Father, must train us up to true greatness, and prepare us for the kingdom of heaven. The soldiers, like their great Leader, must be “ made perfect through sufferings.”

“ 36. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that, *or*, and, my feet did not slip.”

In other words, God had opened a free course for him to victory and triumph, and had also endued him with strength to run that course; thus removing the two mischievous effects of sin, which not only

precluded the way to heaven, but deprived us of the ability to travel in it.

“ 37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38. I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.”

If we suppose David in his conquests to have prefigured victorious Messiah, then have we, in these and the subsequent verses, a sublime description of that vengeance which Jesus, after his resurrection and ascension, inflicted on his hardened and impenitent enemies. His wrath “pursued” and “overtook” them, in the day of visitation; nor did it return, till, like a devouring fire, it had “consumed” the prey. The Jews were cast down, “not able to rise,” or lift up themselves as a people, being crushed under the feet of the once-despised and insulted Nazarene. Let us reflect upon the impotence of our spiritual adversaries, when Jesus declares war against them; and let us beseech him to conquer them in us, as he has conquered them for us.

“ 39. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle; thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. 40. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.”

With the almighty power of the Godhead was Jesus invested, by which all enemies were subdued unto him: the stiff “necks” of his crucifiers were bowed under him, and utter destruction became the

portion of those who hated him, and had “sent after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.” So gird us thy soldiers and servants, O Lord Jesus, to the battle, and subdue under us, by the power of thy grace, those that rise up against us, whether they be our own corrupt desires, or the malicious spirits of darkness; so give us, like another Joshua, the “*necks*” of these our enemies, that we may destroy them that hate, and would destroy us.

“41. They cried, but *there was* none to save them; *even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not.”

Never was there a more just and lively portrait of the lamentable and desperate state of the Jews, when their calamities came upon them. “They cried, but—none to save!” They had rejected him who alone could save, and who was now about to destroy them. They cried to Jehovah, and thought themselves still his favourite nation; but Jehovah and Jesus were one; so that after putting the latter from them, they could not retain the former on their side. “He answered them not!” It was not too late to knock, when the door was shut; too late to cry for mercy, when it was the time of justice. Let us knock, while yet the door may be opened; and not begin to pray, when prayer shall be no longer heard.

“42. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.”

The nature of that judgment which was executed upon the Jews, cannot be more accurately delineated,

than by the two images here made use of. They were broken in pieces, and dispersed over the face of the earth, by the breath of God's displeasure, like "dust before the wind; and as dirt in the streets, they were cast out," to be trodden under foot by all nations. O that every nation would so consider, as to avoid their crime and their punishment!

"43. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people, *and* thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people *whom* I have not known shall serve me."

If David was delivered from the strivings of the people; if the adjacent heathen nations were added to his kingdom, and a "people, whom he had not known, served him;" how much more was this the case of the Son of David, when he was "delivered," by his resurrection, from the power of all his enemies; when he was made "head of the heathen," of whom, after their conversion, his church was, and to this day is, composed; and when, instead of the rejected Jews, a people, to whom before he had not been known, became his servants?

"44. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. 45. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places."

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me;" hereby is intimated the readiness with which the Gentiles should flow into the church, upon the preaching of the gospel to them, when the Jews, after having so long and so often heard it, had nailed



Christ to the cross, and driven the apostles out from among them. “The strangers shall submit themselves unto me;” the nations who were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise,” either cordially submitted to the sceptre of Christ, or at least dissembled their hostility, and yielded a feigned submission (for so the word *כחש* sometimes signifies:) “the strangers shall fade away;” that is, such of them as set themselves against me, shall find their strength blasted and withered as a leaf in autumn, and shall fall at the sound of my name and my victories; “they shall be afraid out of their close places;” or rather “they shall come trembling from their strong holds,” as places not able to protect them, and therefore they will sue for peace. Such seems to be the import of these two verses, which therefore denote the conquest of Messiah to have been every way complete. And accordingly, in the remaining part of the Psalm, the church, through Christ her Head, blesseth Jehovah for the same.

“46. The LORD liveth, and blessed *be* my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 47. *It is* God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me. 48. He delivereth me from mine enemies; yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.”

In other words, “And now, the Lord God omnipotent liveth and reigneth, for ever blessed and exalted, as the God of salvation: by whom I am avenged of those who persecuted me, and am ad-

vanced to empire; my enemies are fallen, and my throne is established." Thus we learn to trust in Jehovah without fear, when our enemies are victorious, and to glorify him without reserve, when we are so.

"49. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name."

Remarkable is the manner in which St. Paul cites this verse, Rom. xv. 9. The context runs thus:—"Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God, for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause will I confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." This verse is by the Apostle produced as a proof, that the Gentiles were one day to glorify God, for the mercy vouchsafed them by Jesus Christ. But, according to the letter of the passage, King David only says, that he will give "thanks unto God among the heathen," on account of his own deliverance, and exaltation to the throne of Israel; for upon that occasion we know that he composed and sung the Psalm. This citation brought by St. Paul, cannot therefore be to the purpose for which it is brought, unless the Psalm have a double sense; unless God be glorified in it for the victory and inthronization of Christ, as well as for those of David; and this cannot be, unless the same words, which literally celebrate the one, do likewise prophetically celebrate the other; unless David be a figure of Christ, and speak in his per-

son, and in that of his body, the church. While this Psalm is used as a Christian hymn, in the Gentile Christian church, David still continues, as he foresaw he should do, "to give thanks unto Jehovah, to glorify God among the Gentiles," for the mercies of redemption, and to "sing praises unto his name."\*

"50. Great deliverance giveth he to his King; and showeth mercy to his Anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore."

"Great deliverance giveth he unto his King;" to king David, in saving him from Saul, and his other temporal enemies, and seating him on the earthly throne of Israel; to King Messiah, in rescuing him from death and the grave, and exalting him to an heavenly throne, as Head of the church: "and showeth mercy to his Anointed;" to him who was anointed outwardly, and in a figure, with oil; and to him who was anointed inwardly, and in truth, with the Holy Ghost and with power: "to David, and to his seed for evermore;" to the literal David, and to his royal progeny, of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came; and to Christ himself, the spiritual David, the beloved of God, with all those who, through faith, become his children, the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life.

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\* "This verse is applied in Rom. xv. 9. to the calling of the Gentiles unto the faith of Christ, and praise unto God *therefore*. By which we are taught, that of *Christ* and *his* kingdom, this Psalm is chiefly intended." Ainsworth.

## PSALM XIX.

*Fourth Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—In the former part of this beautiful Psalm, ver.

1—6. the heavens are represented as the instructors of mankind; the subject, the universality, and the manner of their instructions are pointed out; the glory, beauty, and powerful effects of the solar light are described. The latter part of the Psalm, 7—14. contains an encomium on the word of God, in which its properties are enumerated; and a prayer of the Psalmist for pardoning and restraining grace, and for the acceptance of these and all other his devotions and meditations. From a citation which St. Paul hath made of the 4th verse, it appears, that, in the exposition, we are to raise our thoughts from things natural to things spiritual; we are to contemplate the publication of the Gospel, the manifestation of the Light of Life, the Sun of Righteousness, and the efficacy of evangelical doctrine. In this view the ancients have considered the Psalm, and the church hath therefore appointed it to be read on Christmas-day.

“ 1. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.”

Under the name of “heaven,” or “the heavens,” is comprehended that fluid mixture of light and air, which is every where diffused about us; and to the influence of which, are owing all the beauty and fruitfulness of the earth, all vegetable and animal life, and the various kinds of motion throughout the system of nature. By their manifold and beneficial operations, therefore, as well as by their beauty and magnificence, “the heavens declare the glory of God;” they point Him out to us, who, in Scripture language, is styled “the glory of God;”

by whom themselves and all other things were made, and are upholden; and who is the author of every grace and blessing to the sons of men: “the firmament,” or expansion of the celestial elements, wherever it extends, “showeth his handy-work,” not only as the Creator, but likewise as the Redeemer, of the world. And thus do the heavens afford inexhaustible matter for contemplation and devotion, to the Philosopher and to the Christian.

“2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.”

The labours of these our instructors know no intermission, but they continue incessantly to lecture us in the science of divine wisdom. There is one glory of the sun, which shines forth by day; and there are other glories of the moon and of the stars, which become visible by night. And because day and night interchangeably divide the world between them, they are therefore represented as transmitting in succession, each to other, the task enjoined them, like the two parts of a choir, chanting forth alternately the praises of God. How does inanimate nature reproach us with our indolence and indevotion!

“3. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.*”

Our translators, by the words inserted in a different character, have declared the sense of this passage to be, that there is no nation or language, whither the instruction diffused by the heavens doth not reach. But as the same thought is so fully expressed

in the next verse, "Their sound is gone out," &c. it seems most advisable to adhere to the original, which runs literally thus: "No speech, no words, their voice is not heard:" that is, although the heavens are thus appointed to teach, yet it is not by articulate sounds that they do it; they are not endowed, like man, with the faculty of speech; but they address themselves to the mind of the intelligent beholder in another way, and that, when understood, a no less forcible way, the way of picture or representation. So manifold is the wisdom of God; so various are the ways by which he communicates it to men.

"4. Their line is gone out throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

The instruction which the heavens disperse abroad, is universal as their substance, which extends itself in "lines" or rays, "over all the earth;" by this means their "words," or rather, their "significant actions"\* and operations, are every where present even "to the ends of the world;" and thereby they preach to all nations the power and wisdom, the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord. The apostles' commission was the same with that of the heavens; and St. Paul, Rom. x. 18. has applied the natural images of this verse to the manifestation of the Light of Life, by the sermons of those who were sent forth for that purpose. He is speaking of those Jews who had not obeyed the Gospel. "But I

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\* מלידום—The verb מלל (whence מלי words,) is used for expressing the meaning by *signs*. It has this sense Prov. vi. 13. מרלל ברנלל, speaking *with his foot*.

say," argues he, "have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." As if he had said, They must have heard, since the apostles were commanded not to turn unto the Gentiles, till they had published their glad tidings throughout Judea; but the knowledge of him is now become universal, and all flesh has seen the glory of the Lord; the Light Divine, like that in the heavens, has visited the whole world, as the prophet David foretold, in Psalm xix. The apostle cannot be supposed to have made use of this Scripture in a sense of accommodation only, because he cites it among other texts which he produces merely as prophecies. And if such be its meaning, if the heavens thus declare the glory of God, and this is the great lesson they are incessantly teaching; what other language do they speak than that their Lord is the representative of ours, the bright ruler in the natural world of the more glorious one in the spiritual, their sun of the "Sun of Righteousness?" But of this the following verses will lead us to speak more particularly.

"5. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race."

In the centre of the heavens there is a tent pitched by the Creator, for the residence of that most glorious of inanimate substances, the solar light; from thence it issues with the beauty of a bridegroom, and the vigour of a champion, to run its course, and perform its operations. A tabernacle, in like manner, was prepared for him, who saith of himself, "I am

the light of the world:" John viii. 12. And as the light of the sun goes out in the morning with inconceivable activity, new and youthful in itself, and communicating life and gaiety to all things around it, like a bridegroom, in the marriage garment, from his chamber to his nuptials; so, at his incarnation, did the Light Divine, the promised bridegroom, visit his church, being clad himself, and clothing her, with that robe of righteousness which is styled, in holy Scripture, the marriage garment; and the joy which his presence administered, was like the benefits of it, universal. And as the material light is always ready to run its heavenly race, daily issuing forth with renewed vigour, like an invincible champion, still fresh to labour; so likewise did he rejoice to run his glorious race; he excelled in strength, and his works were great and marvellous; he triumphed over the powers of darkness; he shed abroad on all sides his bright beams upon his church; he became her deliverer, her protector, and support; and showed himself able in every respect, to accomplish for her the mighty task he had undertaken. What a marvellous instrument of the Most High is the sun at his rising, considered in this view!

“ 6. His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

The light diffused on every side from its fountain, extendeth to the extremities of heaven, filling the whole circle of creation, penetrating even to the inmost substances of grosser bodies, and acting in and through all other matter, as the general cause of life and motion. Thus unbounded and efficacious, was



the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, when he sent out his word, enlightening and enlivening all things by the glory of his grace. His celestial rays, like those of the sun, took their circuit round the earth; they went forth out of Judea into all parts of the habitable world, and there was no corner of it so remote as to be without the reach of their penetrating and healing power. "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it:" Ps. lxxviii. 11. It was the express declaration of our Saviour himself, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come:" Matt. xxiv. 14. And St. Paul affirms, that the Gospel was "come unto all the world, and had been preached to every creature under heaven:" Col. i. 6, and 23. The prophet, therefore, having thus foretold the mission of the apostles, and the success of their ministry, proceeds, in the next place, to describe their "doctrine;" so that what follows is a fine encomium upon the gospel, written with all the simplicity peculiar to the sacred language, and in a strain far surpassing the utmost efforts of human eloquence.

"7. The law, *or*, doctrine, of the LORD *is* perfect, converting, *or*, restoring the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple."

The word of God, in this and the following verses, has several most valuable properties ascribed to it. It is perfectly well adapted, in every particular, to "convert," to restore, to bring back "the soul" from error to truth, from sin to righteousness, from

sickness to health, from death to life; as it convinces of sin, it holds forth a Saviour; it is a means of grace, and a rule of conduct. It giveth wisdom, and by wisdom stability, to those who might otherwise, through ignorance and weakness, be easily deceived and led astray; "it is sure," certain and infallible in its directions and informations, "making wise the simple."

"8. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

To those who study the righteousness of God therein communicated to man, it becometh a never-failing source of consolation and holy joy; the conscience of the reader is cleansed by the blood, and rectified by the Spirit of Christ; and such a conscience is a continual feast: "the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart." The divine word resembleth the light in its brightness and purity, by which are unveiled and manifested to the eyes of the understanding, the wonderful works and dispensations of God, the state of man, the nature of sin, the way of salvation, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell: "the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

"9. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether."

"The fear of the LORD," which restrains from transgressing that law by which it is bred in the heart, is in its effect a preservative of mental purity,

and, in the duration both of its effect and its reward, eternal: it “endureth for ever.” “The judgments of the LORD are” not, like those of men, oftentimes wrong and unjust, but all his determinations in his word are “truth and righteousness united” in perfection.

“10. More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb.”

What wonder is it, that this converting, instructing, exhilarating, enlightening, eternal, true, and righteous word, should be declared preferable to the riches of eastern kings, and sweeter to the soul of the pious believer, than the sweetest thing we know of is to the bodily taste? How ready we are to acknowledge all this! Yet, the next hour, perhaps, we part with the true riches to obtain the earthly mammon, and barter away the joys of the spirit for the gratifications of sense! Lord, give us affections towards thy word in some measure proportioned to its excellence; for we can never love too much what we can never admire enough.

“11. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; *and* in keeping them *there is* great reward.”

The Psalmist here bears his own testimony to the character above given of the divine word; as if he had said, The several parts of this perfect law, hereafter to be published to the whole race of mankind, have been all along my great instructors, and the only source of all the knowledge to which thy servant hath attained; and I am fully assured, that the

blessed fruit of them, when they are duly observed, and have their proper effect, is exceeding glorious, even eternal life.

“ 12. Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.”

The perfection and spirituality of God’s law render it almost impossible for a fallen son of Adam even to know all the innumerable instances of his transgressing it. Add to which, that false principles and inveterate prejudices make us regard many things as innocent, and some things as laudable, which, in the eye of heaven, are far otherwise. Self-examination is a duty which few practise as they ought to do; and he who practises it best, will always have reason to conclude his particular confessions with this general petition, “ Cleanse thou me from secret faults?”

“ 13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*, let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

In the preceding verse, David had implored God’s pardoning grace, to cleanse him from the secret sins of ignorance and infirmity: in this he begs his restraining grace, to keep him back from presumptuous sins, or sins committed knowingly, deliberately, and with a high hand, against the convictions and the remonstrances of conscience: he prays that such sins might not “ have dominion over him,” or that he might not, by contracting evil habits, become the slave of an imperious lust, which might at length

lead him on to “the great transgression,” to rebellion, and final apostacy from God; for he who would be innocent from the “great transgression,” must beware of indulging himself in any.

“14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my Redeemer.”

The prophet, having before solicited the justification of his person through grace, concludes with a petition for the acceptance of all his offerings, and more especially of these his meditations, at the hands of that Blessed One, whom he addresses as the author of all good, and the deliverer from all evil; as the “strength” and the “Redeemer” of his people.\*

## PSALM XX.

ARGUMENT.—1—4. The church prayeth for the prosperity of King Messiah, going forth to the battle, as her champion and deliverer; for his acceptance by the Father, and for the accomplishment of his will. 5, 6, 7. She declareth her full assurance of faith, and her resolution to trust in him alone, and not in the arm of flesh. 8. She foreseeth the fall of her enemies, and her own exaltation; and, 9. concludeth with a prayer to the God of her strength.

“1. The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.”

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\* If the reader shall have received any pleasure from perusing the comment on the foregoing Psalm, especially the first part of it, he is to be informed, that he stands indebted, on that account,

This may be considered as the address of a people to their king, when he goeth forth to the battle against their enemies. But it is to be regarded, in a more general and useful view, as the address of the church to Christ her king, in “the day of his trouble.” She prayeth for the happy accomplishment of his warfare, through “the name of the God of Jacob,” dwelling in him. And his warfare, though accomplished in his own person, still remaineth to be accomplished in his people, until the last enemy shall be destroyed, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. It is still “the day of trouble;” still “the name of the God of Jacob” must “defend” the body of Christ.

“2. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Sion.”

All help and strength, in the time of danger and sorrow, must be obtained by prayer from the heavenly Sion which is in the Jerusalem above, and from the eternal temple thereon constructed. By this “help and strength,” the Captain of our salvation conquered, and the church, with all her sons, must conquer through the same.

“3. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice.”

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to a Discourse entitled, ‘Christ the Light of the World,’ published in the year 1750, by the late Rev. Mr. George Watson, for many years the dear companion and kind director of the author’s studies; in attending to whose agreeable and instructive conversation, he has often passed whole days together, and shall always have reason to number them among the best spent days of his life; whose death he can never think of without lamenting it afresh; and to whose memory he embraces, with pleasure, this opportunity to pay the tribute of a grateful heart.

As Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up, not only prayers and tears, but, at length, his own most precious body and blood, the church here prays, that the great propitiatory sacrifice may be had in everlasting remembrance before God, and the merits of it be continually pleaded in arrest of judgment, and accepted for herself and her children.

“ 4. Grant thee, according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.”

The desire of Christ's heart, and the counsel of his will, was, that he might die for our sins, and rise again for our justification; that the Gospel might be preached, the Gentiles called, the Jews converted, the dead raised, and the elect glorified. That this his “ desire might be granted,” and this his “ counsel be fulfilled,” the church of old prayed, and the church now prayeth, for the accomplishment of that which yet remains to be accomplished.

“ 5. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.”

The joy of the church is in the salvation of Christ; and the joy of every individual is in the application of that salvation to himself, and all around him. In the name of Jesus, and under the banner of the cross, the armies of the faithful undertake and carry on all their enterprises against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The prospect of the glorious fruits of Christ's victory caused the church to redouble her prayers, that he might be heard in his “ petitions” for mankind, and might see of the travail of his soul,

“ 6. Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven, with the saving strength of his right hand.”

The assurance of the ancient church was built on the prophecies going before concerning the salvation of Messiah. Our assurance is strengthened by the actual performance of so great a part of the counsel of God. We know that the LORD has “saved his Anointed;” that his Anointed saveth all who believe and obey him, from their sins; and therefore, we doubt not, but that, by “the strength of his right hand,” or by the excellency of his power, he will finally save them from death, and rescue them from the grave.

“ 7. Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”

This should be the resolution of every Christian king and people, in the day of battle. And, in the spiritual war, in which we are all engaged, the first and necessary step to victory is, to renounce all confidence in the wisdom and strength of nature and the world; and to remember, that we can do nothing, but in the name, by the merits, through the power, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ, our LORD and our God.

“ 8. They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen and stand upright.”

This was eminently the case, when the pride and power of Jewish infidelity and Pagan idolatry fell



before the victorious sermons and lives of the humble believers in Jesus: this is the case in every conflict with our spiritual enemies, when we engage them in the name, the spirit, and the power of Christ; and this will be the case at the last day, when the world, with the prince of it, shall be “brought down, and fall; but we, risen” from the dead, through the resurrection of our Lord, shall “stand upright” in the courts of heaven, and sing the praises of him who getteth us all our victories.

“9. Save, LORD: let the King hear us when we call.”

Thus the Psalm concludes, as it began, with a general “Hosanna” of the church, praying for the prosperity and success of the then future Messiah, and for her own salvation in him, her king: who, from the grave and gate of death, was for this end, to be exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, that he might hear, and present to his Father, the prayers of his people, “when they call upon him.”

## PSALM XXI.

ARGUMENT.—This is one of the proper Psalms which the church hath appointed to be used on Ascension-day, and wherein, 1—6. she celebrates the victory of her Redeemer, and the glory consequent thereupon; she prophesies, 7. the stability of his kingdom, and, 8—12. the destruction of the enemies thereof; concluding with a prayer for his final triumph and exaltation; the celebration of which, with everlasting hallelujahs, will be her employment in heaven.

“1. The King shall joy in thy strength, O

LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice !”

The joy of Christ himself, after his victory, is in the strength and salvation of Jehovah, manifested thereby. Such ought to be the joy of his disciples, when God hath enabled them to vanquish their enemies, either temporal or spiritual; in which latter case, as they are called kings, and said to reign with Christ, so they are in duty bound to acknowledge that they reign by him: “He that glorieth,” whatever the occasion be, “let him glory in the LORD.”

“2. Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.”

The desire of Christ’s heart was his own resurrection and exaltation, for the benefit of his church; and now he ever liveth to make “request with his lips,” for the conversion and salvation of sinners. Such desires will be granted, and such requests will never be withholden. Let us be careful to frame ours, after that all-perfect model of divine love.

“3. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness; thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.”

The Son of God could not be more ready to ask for the blessings of the divine goodness, than the Father was to give them: and his disposition is the same towards all his adopted sons. Christ, as king and priest, weareth a crown of glory, represented by the purest and most resplendent of metals, gold. He is pleased to esteem his saints, excelling in dif-

ferent virtues, as the rubies, the sapphires, and the emeralds, which grace and adorn that crown. Who would not be ambitious of obtaining a place therein!

“4. He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest it him, *even* length of days for ever and ever.”

The life, asked by Christ, was not a continuance in this valley of tears, but that new and eternal life consequent upon a resurrection from the dead. For thus his petition was granted in “length of days for ever and ever.” “He died no more; death had no more dominion over him.” Whose disciples then are they that wish only to have their days prolonged upon the earth, forgetful of the life which is hid with Christ in God?

“5. His glory *is* great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.”

What tongue can express the “glory, honour, and majesty,” with which the King of righteousness and peace was invested, upon his ascension; when he took possession of the throne prepared for him, and received the homage of heaven and earth! The sacred imagery in St. John’s Revelation, sets them before our eyes in such a manner, that no one can read the description, whose heart will not burn within him, through impatient desire to behold them. See Rev. iv. vii. xix. xxi. xxii.

“6. For thou hast made him most blessed, *Heb.* set him to be blessings,\* for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.”

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\* “*Nam posuisti eum in secula benedicendum.*” Houbigant. Compare Gen. xii. 2. Bishop Lowth, in Merrick’s Annotations.

Christ, by his death and passion, having removed the curse, became the fountain of all blessings to his people, in time and eternity; being himself the blessing promised to Abraham, and the object of the patriarchal benedictions. The joy communicated to the humanity of our Lord, from the divine nature, shall be shed abroad on all his saints, when admitted to view the "countenance of God," in the face of Jesus Christ. Then they shall enter into "the joy of their Lord."

"7. For the king trusteth in the LORD, and, through the mercy of the Most High, he shall not be moved."

The throne of Christ, as a man, was erected and established, by his trust and confidence in the Father, during his humiliation and passion. Faith in God, therefore, is the way that leadeth to honour and stability. "Look at the generations of old, and see: did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded?" *Ecclus. ii. 10.*

"8. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee."

The same right hand of Jehovah is glorious in power to save his people, and to destroy his enemies; to convert the Gentiles, and to crush the Jews; to exalt the faithful to heaven, and cast down the unbelieving to hell: neither is there any treason against the King of heaven, which shall not be dragged forth into the light, made manifest, judged, and condemned. Let thy hand, O Lord, be upon our sins, to destroy them; but upon us, to save us.

“ 9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.”

“ The time of God’s anger” often begins in this life, especially towards the close of it, when an evil conscience within, like flame confined in an “oven,” torments the sinner, as a prelude to punishments future and unknown, which the “wrath” of God is preparing to inflict on the incorrigible and impenitent. Let us so meditate on this sad scene, that we may have no part in it.

“ 10. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.”

A day is coming, when all the “fruits” of sin, brought forth by sinners, in their words, their writings, and their actions, shall be “destroyed;” yea, the tree itself, which had produced them, shall be rooted up, and cast into the fire. The “seed” and posterity of the wicked, if they continue in the way of their forefathers, will be punished like them. Let parents consider, that upon their principles and practices may depend the salvation or destruction of multitudes after them. The case of the Jews, daily before their eyes, should make them tremble.

“ 11. For they intended evil against thee; they imagined a mischievous device, *which* they are not able to perform.”

Vengeance came upon the Jews to the uttermost,

because of their intended malice against Christ. They, like Joseph's brethren, "thought evil against him;" but "they were not able to perform it;" for "God meant it unto good, to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive:" Gen. 1. 20. So let all the designs of ungodly men against thy church, O Lord, through thy power of bringing good out of evil, turn to her advantage: and let all men be convinced, that no weapon formed against thee can prosper.

"12. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, *or*, thou shalt set them as a butt, *when* thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings against the face of them."

The judgments of God are called his "arrows," being sharp, swift, sure, and deadly. What a dreadful situation, to be set as a mark, and "butt," at which these arrows are directed! View Jerusalem encompassed by the Roman armies without, and torn to pieces by the animosity of desperate and bloody factions within. No farther commentary is requisite upon this verse. "Tremble, and repent," is the inference to be drawn by every Christian community under heaven, in which appear the symptoms of degeneracy and apostacy.

"13. Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength; *so* will we sing, and praise thy power."

The church concludes with a joyful acclamation to her Redeemer, wishing for his "exaltation in his own strength," as God, who was to be abased in much weakness, as man. We still continue to wish

and pray for his exaltation over sin, in the hearts of his people by grace, and finally over death, in their bodies, by his glorious power at the resurrection. The triumph over sin we sing in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, upon earth; that over death, we shall praise with everlasting hallelujahs, in heaven.

## PSALM XXII.

*Fourth Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, which the church hath appointed to be used on Good Friday, as our Lord uttered the first verse of it when hanging on the cross, consisteth of two parts. The former, 1—12. treateth of the passion; the latter, 22—31. celebrateth the resurrection of Jesus, with its effects. 1, 2. He complaineth of being forsaken; 3—6. acknowledgeth the holiness of the Father, and pleadeth the former deliverances of the church; 6—8. describeth his humiliation, with the taunts and reproaches of the Jews; 9—11. expresseth his faith, and prayeth for help; 12—18. particularizeth his sufferings; 19—21. repeateth his supplications; 22—25. declareth his resolution to praise the Father for his deliverance, and exhorteth his church to do the same; 26—31. prophesieth the conversion of the Gentile world to the faith and worship of the true God.

“1. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*”

Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, when hanging on the cross, complained in these words, that he was deprived, for a time, of the divine presence and comforting influence, while he suffered for our sins. If the Master thus underwent the trial of a

spiritual desertion, why doth the disciple think it strange, unless the light of heaven shine continually upon his tabernacle? Let us comfort ourselves, in such circumstances, with the thought, that we are thereby conformed to the image of our dying Lord, that sun which set in a cloud, to arise without one.

“ 2. O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent.”

Even our Lord himself, as man, prayed, “ that if it were possible, the cup might pass from him ;” but God had ordained otherwise, for his own glory, and for man’s salvation. “ Day and night,” in prosperity and adversity, living and dying, let us not be “ silent,” but cry for deliverance; always remembering to add, as Christ did, “ Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” Nor let any man be impatient for the return of his prayers, since every petition preferred even by the Son of God himself was not granted.

“ 3. But thou *art* holy, O *thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”\*

Whatever befalleth the members of the church, the Head thereof here teacheth them to confess the justice and holiness of God in all his proceedings; and to acknowledge, that whether he exalteth or humbleth his people, he is to be praised and glorified by them.

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\* Or, perhaps, as Bishop Lowth renders it: “ Thou that inhabitest רחלורה ישראל, the irradiations, the glory of Israel.” See Merrick’s Annotations on the Psalms, p. 43.



“ 4. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.”

“ Trust” in God is the way to “ deliverance,” and the former instances of the divine favour are so many arguments why we should hope for the same; but it may not always be vouchsafed, when we expect it. The patriarchs and Israelites of old were often saved from their enemies: the holy Jesus is left to languish and expire under the malice of his. God knows what is proper for him to do, and for us to suffer; we know neither. This consideration is an anchor for the afflicted soul, sure and steadfast.

“ 5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.”

No argument is of more force with God, than that which is founded upon an appeal to his darling attribute of mercy, and to the manifestation of it formerly made to persons in distress; for which reason, it is here repeated and dwelt upon. They who would obtain grace to help, in time of need, must “ cry” as well as “ trust.” The “ prayer of faith” is mighty with God, and (if we may use the expression) overcometh the Omnipotent.

“ 6. But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people.”

He who spareth all other men, spared not his own Son; he spared not him, that he might spare them. The Redeemer of the world scrupled not to compare himself, in his state of humiliation, to the lowest reptile which his own hand had formed, a “ worm,”

humble, silent, innocent, overlooked, oppressed, and trodden under foot. Let the sight of this reptile teach us humility.

“7. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*, 8. He trusted on the LORD, *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”

This was literally fulfilled, when Messiah hung upon the cross, and the priests and elders used the very words that had been put into their mouths, by the spirit of prophecy, so long before. Matt. xxvii. 41—43. “The chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him.” O the wisdom and foreknowledge of God! the infatuation and blindness of man! The same are too often the sentiments of those who live in times, when the church and her righteous cause, with their advocates, are under the cloud of persecution, and seem to sink beneath the displeasure of the powers of the world. But such do not believe, or do not consider, that in the Christian economy, death is followed by a resurrection, when it will appear, that God forsaketh not them that are his, but they are preserved for ever.

“9. But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, *when I was* upon my mother’s breasts. 10. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother’s belly.”

This was eminently the case of Christ, who was the Son of God in a sense in which no other man ever was. But in him we are all children of God by adoption; we are all in the hands of a gracious Providence from the womb; and into those hands must we commend ourselves, when about to depart hence. To whom else, then, should we have recourse, for support and consolation, in the day of calamity and sorrow?

“ 11. Be not far from me, for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help.”

From the foregoing considerations, namely, from the holiness of God, ver. 3. from the salvation vouchsafed to the people of old time, ver. 4, 5. from the low estate to which Messiah was reduced, ver. 6, 7, 8. and from the watchful care of the Father over him, since his miraculous birth, ver. 9, 10. from all these considerations, he enforceth his petition for help, during his unparalleled sufferings, when “ all forsook him, and fled.” Let us treasure up these things in our hearts, against the hour when “ trouble shall be near, and there shall be none to help;” when all shall forsake us, but God, our conscience, and our prayers.

“ 12. Many bulls have compassed me; strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round. 13. They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion.”

From the 11th verse to the 19th, the sufferings of the holy Jesus are described, in terms partly figurative, and partly literal. A lamb, in the midst of

wild “bulls and lions,” is a very lively representation of his meekness and innocence, and of the noise and and fury of his implacable enemies. “Bashan” was a fertile country, Numb. xxxii. 4. and the cattle there fed, were fat and “strong.” Deut. xxxii. 14. Like them, the Jews, in that good land, “waxed fat and kicked,” grew proud and rebelled; “forsook God that made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation.” Let both communities and individuals, when blessed with peace, plenty, and prosperity in the world, take sometimes into consideration this flagrant instance of their being abused; with the final consequence of such abuse.

“14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones, are out of joint, *or*, sundered: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

For our sakes, Christ yielded himself, like “water,” without resistance, to the violence of his enemies; suffering his “bones,” in which consisteth the strength of the frame, to be distended and dislocated upon the cross; while, by reason of the fire from above, to the burning heat of which this paschal Lamb was exposed, his heart dissolved and melted away. The intenseness of his passion drying up all the fluids, brought on a thirst, tormenting beyond expression; and, at last, laid him low in the grave. Never, blessed Lord, was love like unto thy love! Never was sorrow like unto thy sorrow! Thy spouse and body mystical, the church, is often, in a degree, con-

formed unto thee; and as thou wert, so is she in this world.

“16. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”

Our Lord, who compared himself above, ver. 12. to a lamb in the midst of bulls and lions, here setteth himself forth again under the image of a hart, or hind, roused early in the morning of his mortal life, hunted and chased all the day, and in the evening pulled down to the ground, by those who “compassed” and “enclosed” him, thirsting and clamouring for his blood, crying, “Away with him, away with him! crucify him, crucify him!” And the next step was, the “piercing his hands and his feet,” by nailing them to the cross. How often, O thou Preserver of men, in thy church, thy ministers, and thy word, art thou thus compassed, and thus pierced!

“17. I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.”

The skin and flesh were distended, by the posture of the body on the cross, that the bones, as through a thin veil, became visible, and might be counted;\* and the holy Jesus, forsaken and stripped, naked and bleeding, was a spectacle to heaven and earth.

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\* “Qui macilenti sunt, sic habent ossa prominentia, ut facile omnia possint tactu secerni et numerari. David, quatenus hæc ei conveniunt, dicere hoc potuit de se fuga et molestiis emaciato. Sed Christus aptius ita loqui poterat, quod magis emaciatus esset, et corpore nudo atque in cruce distento, magis adpaterent ossa.” Le Clerc, cited by Bishop Lowth, in Merrick’s Annotations.

Look unto him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the world!

“ 18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

“ The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat; now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and, for my vesture they did cast lots.” John xix. 23, 24.

“ 19. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my Strength, haste thee to help me.”

The circumstance of the passion being thus related, Christ resumes the prayer, with which the Psalm begins, and which is repeated, ver. 10, 11. The adversary had emptied his quiver, and spent all the venom of his malice; Messiah therefore prayeth for a manifestation of the power and favour of heaven on his side, in a joyful and glorious resurrection. And to a resurrection from the dead every man will find it necessary to look forward, for comfort.

“ 20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling\* from the power of the dog. 21. Save me from

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\* Heb. יְדִירִי *my united one*. “ May it relate to any thing more than נֶפֶשׁ? the human nature united with the Divinity in the person of Christ? Quære.” Bishop Lowth, in Merrick’s Annotations.

the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me, *or*, and hear thou me from the horns of the unicorns."

The wrath of God was the "sword," which took vengeance on all men in their representative; it was the "flaming sword," which kept men out of Paradise; the sword to which it was said, at the time of the passion—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:" Zech. xiii. 7. Matt. xxvi. 31. The ravening fury of the "dog," the "lion," and the "unicorn," or the "oryx," a fierce and untameable creature of the stag kind, is made use of to describe the rage of the devil and his instruments, whether spiritual or corporeal. From all these Christ supplicates the Father for deliverance. How great need have we to supplicate for the same, through him!

"22. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee!"

The former part of the Psalm we have seen to be prophetic of the passion. The strain now changes to an epinikion, or hymn of triumph, in the mouth of the Redeemer, celebrating his victory, and its happy consequences. This verse is cited by the apostle, Heb. ii. 11. "Both he that sanctified, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren," &c. And accordingly, when the deliverance, so long wished, and so earnestly prayed for, was accomplish-

ed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, he “declared the name of God,” by his apostles, to all his “brethren;” and caused the church to resound with incessant praises and hallelujahs; all which are here represented as proceeding from the body, by and through him who is the head of that body.

“23. \* Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.”

If Christ arose from the dead, to declare salvation to his brethren, and to glorify God for the same, how diligent ought we to be in doing the former; how delighted, in the performance of the latter! Messiah first addressed himself to his ancient people, “the seed of Jacob,” to whom the Gospel was first preached. How long, O Lord, holy and true, shall thy once highly-favoured nation continue deaf to this gracious call of thine! “All ye seed of Jacob glorify him; and fear him all ye seed of Israel.”

“24. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.”

The great subjects of praise and thanksgiving, in the church, are the sufferings of the lowly and

\* Bishop Lowth is of opinion, that this verse and the following are the “song” of praise, which, in the verse preceding, the speaker says, he will utter “in the congregation.” The introduction of it, as his Lordship justly observes, gives a variety to the whole, and is highly poetical. Merrick’s Annotations.



afflicted Jesus, and the acceptance of those sufferings by the Father, as a propitiation for the sins of the world; which acceptance was testified by raising him from the dead; inasmuch as the discharge of the surety proved the payment of the debt. The poor and afflicted brethren of Christ may take comfort from this verse; for if they suffer in his spirit, they will be raised in his glory.

“ 25. My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.”

The vow of Christ was, to build and consecrate to Jehovah a spiritual temple, in which the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise should be continually offered. This vow he performed, after his resurrection, by the hands of his apostles; and still continueth to perform, by those of his ministers, carrying on the work of edification in “the great congregation” of the Gentile Christian Church. The vows of Christ cannot fail of being performed. Happy are they whom he vouchsafeth to use, as his instruments, in the performance of them.

“ 26. The meek shall eat and be sanctified: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.”

A spiritual banquet is prepared in the church for the meek and lowly of heart; the bread of life and the wine of salvation are set forth in the word and sacraments; and they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be “satisfied” therewith: they, “who seek” the Lord Jesus in his ordinances, ever

find reason to “praise him;” while, nourished by these noble and heavenly viands, they live the life, and work the works of grace, proceeding still forward to glory: when their “heart shall live for ever,” in heaven.

“27. All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.”

The great truths of man’s creation and fall, with the promise of a Redeemer to come, were “forgotten” by the nations, after their apostacy from the true God, and the one true religion; but were, as we may say, recalled to their “remembrance,” by the sermons of the apostles, and the writings of Moses and the prophets, translated, and spread among them. By these they were converted to the faith, and now compose the holy church universal throughout the world; being the glorious proofs and fruits of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

“28. For the kingdom *is* the LORD’S; and he *is* the governor among the nations.”

There is good reason why the nations should worship Christ, and throw away their idols; since in his hands, not in theirs, is the government of the world. Upon his ascension he was crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords; he ruleth in the church by his Spirit; and blessed are the hearts that are his willing subjects in the day of his power.

“29. All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat

and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul."

It was said above, ver. 26. "the meek," the poor, and lowly, "shall eat and be satisfied." It is here foretold, that the "fat ones of the earth," the great, the opulent, the flourishing, the nobles and princes of the world, should be called in to partake of the feast, and to "worship" God. Rich, as well as poor, are invited;\* and the hour is coming, when all the race of Adam, as many as sleep in the "dust" of the earth, unable to raise themselves from thence, quickened and called forth by the voice of the Son of man, must "bow" the knee to king Messiah.

"30. A seed shall serve him: it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation."

The apostle informeth us, Rom ix. 8. that "the children of the promise are counted for the seed;" that is, the converts to be made, among the nations,

\* They are "invited," but they do not so often accept the invitation. And it must be owned, that דשני אדע, are generally mentioned in an unfavourable sense. Bishop Lowth is therefore rather inclined to construe the words, as Mr. Fenwick does; all who are "fattened," that is, "fed" and "sustained by the earth." The expression then intimates the universality of the Gospel, which, the apostle says, "was preached to every creature;" a phrase of similar import. All who would partake the benefits of Christ's passion, must worship him as a Saviour, before they are called upon to adore him as a Judge. The bishop thinks, likewise, that the 29th verse should end with the words, "bow before him; that the next words in the original should be read, as almost all the ancient versions seem to have read them, לו דית, ונפש, and rendered—"But my soul shall live—My seed shall serve him," &c.

by the preaching of the Gospel, according to the promise to Abraham; these were to constitute the church and family of Christ, the "generation" of the faithful; these were to take the place, and enjoy the privileges of the Jews, cut off because of their unbelief. Lord, enable us to serve thee all our lives, with a service acceptable to thee in Christ Jesus; that at the resurrection of the just, we may be numbered in the generation of thy children.

"31. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*."

The promised and expected race shall spring forth at the time appointed, and proclaim the "righteousness," which is of God by faith, to ages and generations yet unborn: who, hearing of that great work, which the Lord shall have wrought, for the salvation of men, will thereby be led to glorify him in the church, for the same, to the end of time.

Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise!  
 Exalt thy tow'ring head, and lift thy eyes.  
 See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;  
 See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,  
 In crowding ranks, on ev'ry side arise,  
 Demanding life, impatient for the skies.  
 See barb'rous nations at thy gates attend,  
 Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend.

MESSIAH.

### PSALM XXIII.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, the "sheep of God's pasture" address themselves to their great and good Shepherd, declar-

ing, 1. their acquiescence and confidence in him ; 2. his diligence in feeding them with the food of eternal life ; 3. his watchful care in bringing them back from the ways of error, and conducting them in the path of truth ; 4. his power in saving them from death ; 5. his loving kindness in vouchsafing his spiritual comforts, during their pilgrimage in an enemy's country ; and, 6. they express their hope and trust, that a continuation of that loving kindness, will enable them to pass through the vanities and vexations of time, to the blissful glories of eternity.

“ 1. The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”

In these words, which one cannot utter without feeling the happiness they were intended to describe, the believer is taught to express his absolute acquiescence and complacency, in the guardian care of the great Pastor of the universe, the Redeemer and Preserver of men. With joy he reflects, that he hath a “ Shepherd ;” and that that Shepherd is Jehovah, one possessed of all the qualities requisite to constitute the pastoral character in the highest perfection. For where shall we ever find such unexampled diligence, such inexpressible tenderness, such exquisite skill, such all-subduing might, and such unwearied patience ? Why should they fear, who have such a friend ? How can they “ want,” who have such a “ Shepherd ?” Behold us, O Lord Jesus, in ourselves hungry, and thirsty, and feeble, and diseased, and defenceless, and lost. O feed us, and cherish us, and heal us, and defend us, and bear with us, and restore us !

“ 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters.”

The loveliest image afforded by the natural world, is here represented to the imagination; that of a flock, feeding in verdant meadows, and reposing, in quietness, by the rivers of water, running gently through them. It is selected, to convey an idea of the provision made for the souls, as well as bodies of men, by His goodness, who "openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. By me," saith the Redeemer, "if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture:" John x. 9. And what saith the Spirit of peace and comfort? "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely:" Rev. xxii. 17. Every flock that we see, should remind us of our necessities: and every pasture should excite us to praise that love by which they are so bountifully supplied.

"3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

To "restore," or bring back, those that had "gone astray," that is, in other words, to "call sinners to repentance," was the employment of Him who in the parable of the "lost sheep," representeth himself as executing that part of the pastoral office. By the same kind hand, when "restored," they are thenceforth led in "the path of righteousness;" in the way of holy obedience. Obstructions are removed; they are strengthened, to walk and run in the path of God's commandments; while, to invite and allure them, a crown of glory appears, held forth at the end of it. All this is now done, for, in, by, and through, that "name," beside which,

there is none other under heaven given unto man, whereby he may be saved.

“4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

The sheep here express their confidence in the power of their Shepherd, as sufficient to defend them against the last and most formidable enemy, death himself. To apprehend the scenery in this verse, we must conceive the church militant, and the church triumphant, as two mountains, between which lieth the “valley of the shadow of death,” necessary to be passed by those who would go from one to the other. Over all that region of dreariness and desolation, extendeth the empire of the king of terrors: and the believer alone “feareth no evil,” in his passage through it; because he is conducted by “that great Shepherd of the sheep, whom God brought again from the dead:” Heb. xiii. 20. and who can therefore show us the path of life, through the vale of death. In all our dangers and distresses, but chiefly in our last and greatest need, let “thy rod,” the sceptre of thy kingdom, O Lord, protect us, and thy pastoral “staff” guide and support our steps; till, through the dreaded valley, we pass to the heavenly mountain, on which St. John saw “the Lamb standing, with a great multitude, redeemed from the earth.” Rev. xiv. 1.

“5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

Another set of images, borrowed from a feast, is introduced, to give us ideas of those cordials and comforts prepared to cheer and invigorate the fainting soul, while, surrounded by "enemies," it is accomplishing its pilgrimage through life; during which time, its sorrows and afflictions are alleviated and sweetened by the joys and consolations of the Holy One; by the feast of a good conscience; by the bread of life, the "oil" of gladness, and the "cup" of salvation, still full, and "running over."

"6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

Experience of "goodness and mercy," already so often vouchsafed, begets an assurance of their being continued to the end; for nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, if we do not separate ourselves from it. Thus will the Lord, our Saviour, provide for us on earth, and conduct us to heaven; where we shall dwell to "length of days," even the days of eternity, "one fold under one Shepherd:" a fold into which no enemy enters, and from which no friend departs: where we shall rest from all our labours, and see a period to all our sorrows; where the voice of praise and thanksgiving is heard continually; where all the faithful, from Adam to his last-born son, shall meet together, to behold the face of Jesus, and to be blessed with the vision of the Almighty; where "we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat. But the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of waters." Rev. vii. 16, 17.



## PSALM XXIV.

*Fifth Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—The plan of this Psalm, according to the letter of it, is beautifully delineated by Bishop Lowth, in his 27th lecture. The Ark of God is supposed to be moving, in a grand and solemn procession of the whole Israelitish nation, towards the place of its future residence, on mount Sion: see 1 Chron. xv. On ascending the mountain, the Psalm is sung, declaring, 1, 2. the sovereignty of Jehovah over all the earth; describing, 3—6. what the character ought to be of that people whom he had more peculiarly selected, to serve him in the house where his Glory was to dwell, and of which, 7—10. it was now about to take possession. All this is by us to be applied to the Christian church, and the ascension of our Lord into heaven; for which reason the Psalm is one of those appointed to be used on Ascension-day.

“1. The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

The God of Israel was Lord of the whole earth, by right of creation. The same Divine Person who created the world, hath since, in Christ, redeemed it; and it is his again, by that right also. But the church Christian is his, in a more peculiar manner, as the church of Israel formerly was. We are doubly bound to adore and to obey him. “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves:” Psalm c. 2. and “we are not our own, being bought with a price:” 1 Cor. vi. 20. The inference is, “Let us glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are,” every way, “God’s.”

“2. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.”

The waters which, at the creation, and again at the deluge, overspread all things, being, by the power of God, driven down into the great deep, and there confined, the earth was, in a wonderful manner, constructed and established, as a circular arch, upon or over them. Let us often meditate on this noble subject of contemplation and devotion; that we may learn whither we are to have recourse, when in danger of being overwhelmed by sins or sorrows.

“3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? and who shall stand in his holy place?”

The connexion seems to be this: if the Almighty Creator and Lord of all the earth has chosen us to be his peculiar people, to serve and worship him in his temple, upon the holy hill of Sion, whither the sacred symbol of his presence is now ascending, what manner of persons ought we to be? The reasoning is exactly the same, as Bishop Lowth observes, with that of Moses, in Deut. x. 14—16. “Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord’s thy God; the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them; and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.” The argument applies, with additional force, to ourselves, as Christians. We compose a far more numerous and magnificent procession than that of the Israelites, when the church universal, with her spiritual services, attends our Lord, as it were, upon his ascension, in heart and mind ascend-

ing with him into the holy places not made with hands.

“4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul into vanity, *or*, placed his trust in vain idols, *or*, in the creature, nor sworn deceitfully. 5. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

No man can ascend into heaven through his own righteousness, but he who came down from heaven, and performed a perfect sinless obedience to the will of God. Sinners of old were purified, through faith in him that was to come, by typical offerings and ablutions, before they approached the sanctuary. We have been cleansed from our sins, and renewed unto holiness, by the blood of Christ, and the washing of the Holy Ghost. Thus we become his people; thus we “receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation.”

“6. This *is* the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob, *or*, O God of Jacob.”

Such ought the people to be who seek the presence of God, and approach to worship him in the sanctuary; who celebrate the ascension of their Redeemer, and hope, one day, to follow him into those happy mansions, which he is gone before to prepare for them.

“7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory

shall come in. 8. *Who is this King of Glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.* 9, 10. *The chorus is repeated.*

We must now form to ourselves an idea of the Lord of Glory, after his resurrection from the dead, making his entry into the eternal temple in heaven, as of old, by the symbol of his presence, he took possession of that figurative and temporary structure which once stood upon the hill of Sion. We are to conceive him gradually rising, from mount Olivet, into the air, taking the clouds for his chariot, and ascending up on high; while some of the angels, like the Levites in procession, attendant on the triumphant Messiah in the day of his power, demand that those everlasting gates and doors hitherto shut and barred against the race of Adam, should be thrown open, for his admission into the realms of bliss. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.” On hearing this voice of jubilee and exultation from the earth, the abode of misery and sorrow, the rest of the angels, astonished at the thought of a man claiming a right of entrance into their happy regions, ask from within, like the Levites in the temple, “Who is this King of Glory?” To which question the attendant angels answer, in a strain of joy and triumph—and let the church of the redeemed answer with them—“The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle:” the Lord Jesus, victorious over sin, death, and hell. Therefore we say, and with holy transport we repeat it, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift

up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." And if any ask, "Who is the King of Glory?" to heaven and earth we proclaim aloud—"The LORD of Hosts," all-conquering Messiah, Head over every creature, the Leader of the armies of Jehovah, "He is the King of Glory." Even so, Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High! Amen. Hallelujah.

## PSALM XXV.

ARGUMENT.—It is much the same, whether we suppose the church, or any single member thereof, to be speaking throughout this Psalm, and praying, 1—3. for help and protection against spiritual enemies; 4, 5. for knowledge and direction in the way of godliness; pleading for this purpose, 6, 7. God's mercies of old; 8. the perfections of his nature; 9, 10. enumerating the qualifications requisite for scholars in the divine school; 11. upon the strength of these arguments, enforcing the petition for mercy; 12—14. describing the blessedness of the man who feareth the Lord; 15—21. preferring divers petitions; and, 22. closing the whole with one for the final redemption of the Israel of God.

"1. Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.  
2. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed; let not mine enemies triumph over me."

Cares and pleasures are the weights which press the soul down to the earth, and fasten her thereto; and it is the spirit of prayer, which must enable her to throw off these weights, to break these cords, and to "lift up" herself to heaven. He who "trusteth" in any thing, but in God, will one day be "ashamed" and confounded, and give his spiritual "enemies" cause "to triumph over him."

“ 3. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without a cause, *or*, vainly, rashly.”

God, as a father and a master, will never suffer his children and servants to want his favour and protection; nor will he permit malicious rebels to enjoy it. Honour will, in the end, be the portion of the former, and shame the inheritance of the latter.

“ 4. Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. 5. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”

We are travellers to heaven, who, through temptation, are often drawn aside, and lose our way. The way is the law of God; and, to keep that law, is to walk in the way. God only can put us in the way, and preserve and forward us therein; for which purpose, we must continue instant in prayer to “ the God of our salvation,” that he would “ teach” us to do his will; that so we may not be ashamed and confounded.

“ 6. Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old.”

The soul, when hard beset with sins and sorrows, is apt to think that God hath forsaken and forgotten her. In this case, she cannot more effectually prevail upon him, or comfort herself, than by recollecting, and, as it were, reminding him of former mercies; since, however the dispositions and affections of men may alter, God is always the same.

“ 7. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness’ sake, O LORD.”

When God remembers his mercy, he forgets our sins; and when he forgets our sins, he remembers his mercy; for what else is his mercy, but the forgiveness, the blotting-out, the non-imputation of sin? Who that has lived long in the world, can survey the time past of his life, without breaking forth into this petition, adding, to “ the sins of his youth,” the many transgressions of his riper years?

“ 8. Good and upright is the LORD; therefore will he teach sinners in the way.”

Another argument for hope and trust in God, is drawn from his nature. He hates sin, and loves righteousness; he sent his Son to suffer for the one, and his Spirit to produce the other; and he cannot but be faithful and just to his own gracious promises, which all centre in the salvation of sinners by pardon and grace, through Him who is “ the way, the truth, and the life.”

“ 9. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.”

Pride and anger have no place in the school of Christ. The Master himself is “ meek and lowly of heart;” much more, surely, ought the scholars to be so. He who hath no sense of his ignorance, can have no desire or capability of knowledge, human or divine.

“ 10. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.”

The law of God is the way by which he cometh to us, as well as that by which we go to him; and all the different dispensations of that law, here styled “ the paths of the Lord,” are composed of “ mercy and truth;” mercy promising, and truth performing, meet together in Christ, who is “ the end of the law to every one that believeth;” to such as “ keep his covenant and his testimonies.”

“ 11. For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.”

The pardon of sin is to be asked, and obtained, through that gracious “ name,” in which “ mercy and truth are met together;” and so “ great” is our sin, that pardon can be had only through that name.

“ 12. What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.”

The blessings consequent upon “ the fear of the Lord” are such as will fully justify the earnestness and fervour of the foregoing petitions for pardon and grace. “ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” He who hath it, will “ choose” the right way, and will be “ taught” to go therein.

“ 13. His soul shall dwell at ease, *Heb.* lodge in goodness; and his seed shall inherit the earth.”

It is a privilege of “ the man who feareth the Lord,” that, not only in this present life, all things



work together for his “good,” but his soul, after having persevered in righteousness, shall take up its abode in the mansions of felicity. His “seed” likewise shall be blessed in the same manner, with such a portion of the temporal promise made to Abraham as God seeth best for them, and certainly with an abundant share in the spiritual inheritance, the new earth, wherein dwell righteousness, joy, and glory. “Blessed are the meek,” the seed of Christ, “for they shall inherit the earth.” Matt. v. 5.

“14. The secret, *Heb.* fixed counsel, *or*, design, of the LORD, *is* with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant, *Heb.* and his covenant, to make them know it.”

The greatest happiness of man in this world is, to know the fixed and determinate counsels of God concerning the human race, and to understand the covenant of redemption. This likewise is the reward of “the fear of the Lord,” which humbles the soul, and prepares it for divine illumination, causing it to place all its comfort in meditation on the wonders of heavenly love. “All things which I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you,” saith our Lord to his disciples: John xv. 15.

“15. Mine eyes *are* ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.”

Encouraged to hope for the blessings above-mentioned, the lowly suppliant still continues to fix the eyes of his understanding on their proper object, God his Saviour, beholding his glory, attending to his will, and expecting his mercy. An unfortunate

dove, whose feet are taken in the snare of the fowler, is a fine emblem of the soul, entangled in the cares or pleasures of the world; from which she desires, through the power of grace, to fly away, and to be at rest, with her glorified Redeemer.

“ 16. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I *am* desolate and afflicted.”

They who are ever looking unto the Lord will be heard, when they beseech him to turn his face, and to look upon them. When the soul, forsaking and forsaken by all earthly supports and comforts, finds herself in a state of desolation, and is experimentally convinced of her being, not in a paradise of delights, but in a vale of misery, then her visitation and deliverance are at hand.

“ 17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.”

As life is prolonged, troubles are generally enlarged,\* till, at length, they take up what room there is in the heart. The last scene of the tragedy is the most calamitous. So it was in the life of our dear Master. And every man will sooner or later perceive, that God alone can “bring him out of his distresses.”

“ 18. Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins.”

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\* Bishop Lowth, with some slight alteration of the text, thinks the rendering should be,

Coarctationes cordis mei dilata;  
Et ex angustiis meis educ me.

See Merrick's Annotations.

Affliction and pain, whether of mind or body, are the fruits of sin; and the pardon of sin is the first step towards the removal of sorrow. The latter is sent to beget in us a due sense of the former, in order to a deliverance from both. In the new earth “dwelleth righteousness;” and, for that reason, “there is no more sorrow, pain, nor crying.” 2 Pet. iii. 13. Rev. xxi. 4.

“19. Consider mine enemies, for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.”

As the evils we suffer are great, so the enemies we have to encounter are many. Their name is “legion:” and to their envy, hatred, and malice, there are no bounds. How unequal the combat, unless thou, O God, goest forth with us by thy grace, “conquering and to conquer!”

“20. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I have put my trust in thee.”

Preservation from sin, and deliverance from death, are two great gifts of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For the latter clause, see ver. 2.

“21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.”

How many wishes do our hearts send forth after riches, honours, and pleasures! how few after “integrity and uprightness!” yet these can “preserve” us, and those cannot. Absolute integrity and uprightness are the prerogatives of the King of righteousness: and it is his grace which makes us such as his mercy will accept. On him therefore let us ‘wait.’

“ 22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.”

In the common salvation all have an interest; and for that reason, all should pray for it. The earthly David petitioned for Israel; the heavenly David ever continueth to intercede for the church; and every Christian ought to become a suppliant for his brethren, still looking and longing for that glorious day, when, by a joyful resurrection unto life eternal, God shall indeed “redeem Israel out of all his troubles.”

## PSALM XXVI.

ARGUMENT.—The party speaking in this Psalm, whether we suppose it to be the typical, or the true David, the church, or any member thereof, lying under the false accusations of calumny, 1, 2, 3. appealeth to God in behalf of injured innocence; 4, 5. disclaimeth all connection with wicked men; 6, 7, 8. declareth a fixed resolution to adhere to the worship of God in the church; 9, 10. prayeth to be delivered from the ungodly; 11. again protesteth integrity, and, 12. determineth to praise the Lord.

“ 1. Judge me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity; I have trusted also in the LORD; *therefore* I shall not slide.”

We have here an appeal to God, in behalf of injured and calumniated innocence. This was the case of David, with regard to the accusations of Saul; of Christ, with regard to those of the Jews; and it is often the case of the church, and of good

men in the world; for whose use this Psalm seems peculiarly calculated.

“ 2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.”

A trial of this sort might be desired by David, and may be desired by men, like him, conscious of their integrity, as to the particular crimes charged upon them by the malice of their enemies. Christ alone could ask such a trial at large, as being equally free from every kind and degree of sin; and certain of receiving additional lustre from the increasing heat of the furnace.

“ 3. For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.”

They who study, in order to copy, the “loving-kindness” and the “truth” of God, may have confidence towards him, whose “truth” will not suffer him to be false to the promises, which his “loving-kindness” prompted him to make.

“ 4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. 5. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers; and will not sit with the wicked.”

David, driven by Saul into a land of aliens, yet preserved himself from the contagion of idolatry. And happy the Christian who can say, that, during the time of his banishment and pilgrimage, he hath escaped the pollutions that are in the world, namely, vanity and hypocrisy, evil practices, and wicked prin-

ciples. Christ alone, like his emblem the light, passed through all things undefiled.

“ 6. I will wash mine hands in my innocency : so will I compass thine altar, O LORD; 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.”

Instead of consorting with the heathen, David comforts himself with the future prospect of restoration to Jerusalem: of attending the service of God in the tabernacle; of performing the legal ablutions, in token of innocency thereby signified; and of singing before the holy altar, psalms of praise for his deliverance. The believing soul, in like manner, may find perpetual consolation, while she looks forward, toward her return home, from her exile in the world, to the Jerusalem above; her access to the fountain of life and purity; her employment of serving God in the eternal temple; and chanting forth, with angels and archangels, the new songs of the celestial Sion, for so great salvation.

“ 8. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth, *Heb.* the place of the tabernacle of thy glory.”

With what ardent affection the banished prophet sighs for the beauty of holiness in the church! the most amiable object on earth, because the nearest resemblance of heaven, where is the true “habitation of God’s house, and the place of the tabernacle of his glory;” since of the heavenly Jerusalem, St. John tells us, that the “Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple.” Rev. xxi. 22.

“ 9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: 10. In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.”

In consideration of his integrity and piety, David beseeches God not to deliver him over into the hands of his unjust and bloody enemies, nor to reckon him in their number. Let our lot, O Lord, be among thy children here, that it may be among them hereafter.

“ 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.”

The Christian's resolution, like that of the prophet, must be, to hold fast his “integrity” in the midst of his enemies, and not follow a multitude to do evil; as knowing, that the day of final “redemption and mercy” will come.

“ 12. My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the LORD.”

The law of God is that “even place,” that plain and direct path, in which the affections, which are the “feet” of the soul, must be immoveably fixed, so that nothing may induce her to swerve from the stability of her purpose, to the right hand, or to the left. David, upon his return to his country, “blessed the Lord in the congregation” of Israel, by singing psalms of praise and thanksgiving; and, by the constant use of those very psalms, the Lord is daily “blessed” in all Christian “congregations” throughout the world; yea, and he shall be so blessed to the end of time.

## PSALM XXVII.

*Fifth Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm containeth, 1—3. a declaration of trust and confidence in Jehovah, amidst the dangers and tumults of war; 4. a longing desire of restoration to the city and house of God; 5, 6. a triumphant assurance of final victory and exultation; 7—12. earnest prayer for support and protection; 13. a profession of faith, and its mighty power and comfort in affliction; 14. an exhortation to patience.

“ 1. The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

God is our “light,” as he showeth us the state we are in, and the enemies we have to encounter; he is our “strength,” as he enableth us, by his grace, to cope with, and overcome them; and he is our “salvation,” as the author and finisher of our deliverance from sin, death, and Satan. All this he was to the blessed person whom David represented; and all this he will be to his faithful servants. “If God,” therefore, “be for us, who can be against us?” Rom. viii. 31.

“ 2. When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me, to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.”

The past time is often used, in the prophetic language, to intimate the certainty of the future. Faith sees the foe already vanquished, and the prey snatched from the jaws of the devouring lion.



“ 3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will I be confident.*”

What avails it, that the “ host” of darkness is in arms, and the world taking the field against us, when the LORD is our light, and heaven our ally?

“ 4. One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”

The victories of David ended in his restoration to Jerusalem, and the service of God: the victories of Christ terminated in his triumphant return to a better Jerusalem; and this ought to be the “ one thing desired” by the Christian, that, after his conquest over the body of sin, he may pass the unnumbered days of eternity in the courts of heaven, contemplating the beauty and glory of his Redeemer.

“ 5. For in the time of trouble, he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.”

The protection and consolation experienced by believers of the church militant, give them a taste of the loving-kindness of the Lord, and make them impatiently desirous of quenching their thirst at the fountain of divine pleasures, after they shall

have been exalted upon the rock of ages, from whence that fountain flows.

“ 6. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.”

These words, as they are supposed to be spoken by David, by Christ, or by the church, express their respective assurances, through faith, of final victory over their several enemies, with their determined resolution of singing hallelujahs to Jehovah, for the same.

“ 7. Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.”

From the assurances of faith, it is always good to descend to the humiliation of prayer to God, who alone can grant unto us that one thing which we desire, and long after, while in the land of our captivity, and house of our pilgrimage. See ver. 4.

“ 8. *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.”

The voice of God, throughout the Scriptures, exhorteth the believer to turn away from the delusive appearances of the creature, and to seek after Him who is “altogether lovely,” until he behold “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” To this voice the believer answers, like a well-tuned instrument to the master’s touch, declaring his resolution so to do.

“ 9. Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger : thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation !”

The suppliant, having determined to seek the face of God, here prayeth, that he would permit himself to be found, and to be seen; and that he would not, by “ hiding his face,” cause the light of knowledge to become darkness, and the fire of charity to go out. The church dreadeth nothing so much as an eclipse of the “ Sun of Righteousness.”

“ 10. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.”

A time will come, when the dearest earthly friends and relations can no longer be of any assistance to us.\* The case of the church and of the soul is oftentimes compared to that of a poor, helpless, exposed orphan. Where worldly comforts end, heavenly ones begin. See Isaiah xlix. 15. Matt. xxiii. 37. John ix. 35.

“ 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.”

The child of God, learning to walk in the law of his heavenly Father, prayeth to be directed and strengthened from above, that the enemy may neither pervert his steps, nor triumph in his fall.

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\* As there seems to be some difficulty in supposing the Psalmist's parents to have “ deserted” him, they might perhaps be said to have “ forsaken” him (as Muis conjectures,) that is, to have left him behind them, as being dead. Merrick.

“ 12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.”

David had his enemies, and false accusers; Christ also had his: and every child of God hath need to petition for deliverance from the great enemy of his salvation, the grand accuser of the brethren, who is ever breathing out malice and cruelty against the body and members of Christ.

“ 13. *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”

“ Faith” in the comfortable promises of God is the only sovereign cordial for a “ fainting” spirit. Earth is the land of the dying; we must extend our prospect into heaven, which is the land of the “ living,” where the faithful shall “ see,” and experience evermore “ the goodness of the LORD.”

“ 14. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”

The person speaking concludes with an apostrophe to his own soul, resulting from the confidence in God, expressed verse 1. from the desire and the hope of heaven, 4—13. and from the manifold pledges of the divine love already received in this life, 14. the proper inference from all which considerations is this; that we should patiently “ wait on the Lord,” till the few and evil days of our pilgrimage pass away, and we arrive at the mansions prepared for us, in the house of our heavenly Fa-

ther; till our warfare be accomplished, and terminate in the peace of God; till the storms and tempests of wintry time shall give place to the unclouded calm, and the ever-blooming pleasures, of eternal spring.

## PSALM XXVIII.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm, like the 22d, and many others, consisteth of two parts. For, 1—5. the true David appeareth in his state of humiliation and suffering; he prayeth for deliverance, and prophesieth the destruction of his enemies. 6—9. He singeth a sweet, though short hymn of triumph, and intercedeth for his church and people.

“ 1. Unto thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock; be not silent to me: lest, *if* thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.”

The true David here maketh supplication, “with strong crying,” to the Father, that he may not be suffered to continue, like other men, under the dominion of the “grave.” The Christian prayeth, in the same words, to be delivered from the “pit” of corruption; and mightily should he “cry” to Jehovah, the “rock” of his salvation, until his prayer be heard and answered.

“ 2. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.”

Christ frequently interceded for his people, with his “hands lifted up” toward “heaven,” in fervent prayer: and—“I will,” saith the apostle, “that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands:”

1 Tim. ii. 8. Shall our Redeemer pray for us, and shall we not pray for ourselves?

“3. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.”

Christ, who alone is without sin, petitioneth that he may not be oppressed by sinners; he who is truth and love, prayeth to be preserved from the “false and malicious.” Let us pray to be made like him; and, like him, to be delivered from evil, especially from the evil of a “lying and slandering” tongue.

“4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert. 5. Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.”

In these verses, as indeed in most of the imprecatory passages, the imperative and the future are used promiscuously; “Give them—render them—he shall destroy them.” If, therefore, the verbs, in all such passages, were uniformly rendered in the future, every objection against the Scripture imprecations would vanish at once, and they would appear clearly to be what they are, namely, prophecies of the divine judgments, which have been since executed against the Jews, and which will be executed against all the enemies of Jehovah and his Christ, whom neither the “works” of creation, nor those of redemption, can lead to repentance.

“ 6. Blessed *be* the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7. The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”

The scene now changes from the humiliation and sufferings, to the glory and triumph of Christ, our Head, who, through the power of the divinity, having overcome his enemies, may be supposed, at his resurrection from the dead, to have sung this strain; a strain which they who have been delivered from sin and sorrow, will best understand by using it.

“ 8. The LORD *is* their strength, and he *is* the saving strength of his Anointed, *or*, Christ.”

He who saved and exalted the Head, will also save and exalt the members; or, as St. Paul expresseth it, “ if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you: he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit, that dwelleth in you:” Rom. viii. 11. And for the accomplishment of this glorious salvation, the salvation of his church, the Redeemer intercedeth in the remaining verse of this Psalm.

“ 9. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.”

Save us, O Lord Jesus, from our sins; bless us, O thou Son of Abraham, with the blessing of righteousness; feed us, O thou good Shepherd of the sheep; and lift us up for ever from the dust, O thou, who art the resurrection, and the life!

## PSALM XXIX.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, the prophet, 1, 2. calleth the kings of the earth to give glory to Jehovah, and to the Voice, or Word, of his power; the effects of which in the world and in the church, are most magnificently described; the same things being true of thunder and lightning in the former, and of the word of God in the latter; as each of them is styled, the “Voice of the Lord;” and both, 3, 4. are mighty in operation; both, 5. rend, and, 6, 7. shake, and 8. pierce, and melt, and, 9. make manifest. The Psalm concludes with, 10. an acknowledgment of the extent and glory of God’s kingdom, and, 11. a promise of victory and peace through him.

“1. Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”

The prophet addresseth himself to the “mighty” ones of the earth, exhorting them to “give” God the “glory,” and to submit themselves to the kingdom of Messiah, to honour that holy “name,” by which they must be saved; to bow before his altars, “by whom kings reign;” and to cast down their crowns at the foot of the eternal throne.

“3. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the GOD of glory thundereth; the LORD is upon many waters.”

The reason why the mighty are exhorted to serve Jehovah is, because of his wondrous works in the world, and in the church. By the “voice,” or, “word,” of God, the “waters” were driven down



into the deep, and forbidden to overflow the earth any more; by the voice of God, the tumultuous and raging nations subsided, and the church was immovably fixed upon the rock of her salvation; and by the Gospel of the "God of glory," all those effects were produced in the hearts of men, which are wrought upon terrestrial substances, by its well known and most significant emblem in the material heavens.

"4. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty."

Of the power and majesty of God's voice, when he speaketh from heaven in thunder, few hearts are insensible; of the power and majesty of his voice, when he spoke from heaven by his apostles, those "sons of" the spiritual "thunder," the world was once fully sensible. O may the evangelical "Bonanerges" so cause the glorious sound of the Gospel to be heard, under the whole heaven, that the world may again be made sensible thereof; before that voice of the Son of Man, which hath so often called sinners to repentance, shall call them to judgment!

"5. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Libanon."

The force of lightning is known to rend in pieces the tallest and strongest trees in a moment; nor is the word of God less effectual in bringing down the loftiest pride, and rending the hardest heart of man, by the Spirit which accompanieth it. Thus was the persecuting Saul humbled and converted by a "light" and a "voice" from "heaven;" so that in-

stead of "breathing out threatenings and slaughters," he asks, like a meek and dutiful child, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 1, 6.

"6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn."

Thunder not only demolisheth the cedars, but "shaketh the mountains" on which they grow. Thus by the Gospel, "every mountain and hill was shaken, and made low; every high thing, which exalted itself against the knowledge of Christ, was cast down, and brought into subjection:" Isa. xl. 4. 2 Cor. x. 5.

"7. The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire."

By the power of God, the "flames of fire" are "divided" and sent abroad from the clouds upon the earth, in the terrible form of lightnings, that sharp and glittering sword of the Almighty, which no substance can withstand. The same power of God goeth forth by his word, "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," penetrating, melting, enlightening, and inflaming the hearts of men: Acts ii. 3. Heb. iv. 12.

"8. The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh."

The wilderness of Kadesh was a part of that wilderness through which the Israelites passed in their way to Canaan: see Num. xiii. 26. Thunder shaketh those wide-extended deserts, as well as Lebanon

and Sirion, mountains of Judea. The Gospel was first preached in Palestine; but from thence it went forth into the Gentile world, that dry, barren, and desolate "wilderness." The wilderness is yet once again to be shaken by "the voice of God," and to be removed for ever, that paradise may succeed in its place.

"9. The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, *or*, the oaks to tremble,\* and discovereth the forests; and in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory."

Storms of thunder and lightning, attended often with whirlwinds, strip the trees of their leaves and bark, and disclose the recesses of forests. It is by the "word of God," that the hidden "things of darkness are manifested," and the "counsels of all hearts revealed:" for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do:" 1 Cor. iv. 5. Heb. iv. 13. For these his marvellous works, in the natural and spiritual world, God is daily "glorified" in the "church."

"10. The LORD sitteth upon the flood: yea, the LORD sitteth a King for ever."

The Lord Jesus sitteth on his throne, having all

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\* So Bishop Lowth renders the clause in his Lectures. Aristotle, Plutarch, and Pliny, as cited by Mr. Merrick, mention the case of abortion being sometimes caused among cattle by thunder. Whatever terrifies to any degree, may certainly produce such an effect. But the Bishop's interpretation is, in every respect, the most eligible. The evident connexion with the words that follow, "discovereth the forests," forbids us to doubt of its being right.

power in the dispensations of nature and of grace; by which, as he checketh at pleasure the rage of the most boisterous elements in the former, so, with the same ease, he controlleth the fury of the enemy and oppressor in the latter; saying, with equal authority in both cases, PEACE! BE STILL!

“ 11. The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.”

From Jehovah, whose power and majesty have been with so much sublimity displayed in this whole Psalm, we are to expect, through faith and prayer, “strength” to overcome our enemies, whether ghostly or bodily; and also the blessing of “peace,” which must be the fruit of victory. Thou, O Christ, art the “Mighty God,” and, therefore, thou art the “Prince of Peace.” Isa. ix. 6.

## PSALM XXX.

*Sixth Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, or devout hymn, composed probably by David, on his revisiting the sanctuary, after a joyful recovery from some dangerous sickness, he, 1—3. returneth thanks for that event; and, 4. calleth the church to do so likewise, 5. drawing a comparison between temporary sufferings and eternal rewards. 6, 7. He describeth his former prosperity succeeded by affliction, with, 8—10. the supplications poured forth to the Almighty, in the day of his distress; and then returneth again, 11. to celebrate his deliverance, and, 12. to glorify God for the same. The Psalm is finely adapted to the case of the true David, and of Christians, his disciples and followers.

“ 1. I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast

lifted me up, *Heb.* drawn me out, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.”

These words, if originally composed and uttered by king David, on occasion of some temporal mercy, apply, in a far more emphatical and beautiful manner, to the case of Messiah, suffering and rising again, as well as to that of his church and people, following him, both in his sufferings and resurrection; when we shall all lift up our voices, and sing together—“ I will magnify thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up! and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me !”

“ 2. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.”

Deliverance is to be attained by “ prayer;” for so David, and so the Son of David, obtained it; the former was “ healed,” at his restoration to health and strength; the latter at the resurrection: the soul is healed at its repentance and conversion; and the body will hereafter be repaired, beautified, and glorified, from the ruins of the grave.

“ 3. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul, *or*, animal frame, from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.”

The resurrection of David was a figurative one; that of Christ was a real one, as that of his saints will be; so that the Psalm is more strictly applicable to the true, than it ever could have been to the typical David. The latter clause may be rendered—“ Thou hast quickened me from among them that go down

to the pit;" which rendering is most agreeable to the former part of the verse—"Thou hast brought up my frame from the grave."

"4. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, *or*, of his Holy One."

The church of the redeemed is called upon to glorify the name of God, for his remembrance of "the King of Saints," and for the accomplishment of the promise in raising him from the dead.

"5. For his anger *endureth but* a moment; in his favour *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning."

This is a most beautiful and affecting image of the sufferings and exaltation of Christ; of the sorrows and joys of a penitent; of the miseries of time, and the glories of eternity; of the night of death, and the morning of the resurrection.

"6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled."

David, after his success against Goliath, and Christ, upon his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, were hailed by the acclamations and hosannas of the people, as the Christian may sometimes meet with the applauses of the world, and be led to think himself established in prosperity. But other troubles awaited David; and the blessed Jesus was nailed to the cross. Let not the disciple expect to be above

his master; nor, in the season of life and joy, neglect to prepare for the approaching days of sorrow and darkness.

“ 8. I cried unto thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made my supplication. 9. What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? 10. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.”

These are some of “the strong cryings and supplications,” which the true David poured forth, while under the cloud of his passion; and which are to be poured forth by us, when conformed to his image, in suffering affliction. The argument here used, is a very powerful one, namely, the necessity of a resurrection from the grave, that man may be saved, and God glorified. The dead cannot praise, or serve God. They must live again for this purpose; and for this purpose it is, that we should desire to live, whether it be in the present world, or that which is to come.

“ 11. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.”

This might be true of David, delivered from his calamity; it was true of Christ, arising from the tomb, to die no more; it is true of the penitent, exchanging his sackcloth for the garments of salvation; and it will be verified in us all, at the last day, when we shall put off the dishonours of the grave, to shine in glory everlasting.

“ 12. To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent: O LORD my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever.”

The end of Christ's resurrection, of the salvation of the souls of the faithful, and the resurrection of their bodies, is one and the same, namely, the glory of God, who is the author of every kind of deliverance; whose praise should, therefore, be resounded by the grateful tongues of the redeemed, from generation to generation; as the tongue then becometh the “glory” of man, when it is employed in setting forth the glory of God.

## PSALM XXXI.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, ver. 5th of which was pronounced by our Lord, when expiring on the cross, we hear the true David, like his representative of old, 1—6. supplicating for deliverance; 7, 8. rejoicing in the divine favour and assistance; 9—13. describing his afflicted and forlorn state; 14—18. returning again to his prayers; 19—22. celebrating the mercies of God to the children of Adam; and, 23, 24. exhorting his saints to courage and perseverance, under their troubles in the world.

“ 1. In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.”

God is faithful and just, to save those who, in time of trouble, renouncing all dependence on themselves and the creature, “put their trust” only in his mercy. His honour is engaged by his promise, not to let such be “ashamed” of their confidence.



“ 2. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.”

The Christian, like his blessed Master, is “ besieged ” by many and powerful enemies, insomuch that, notwithstanding all human precautions, “ unless Jehovah keep the city, the watchmen waketh in vain.” Who, in such circumstances, would not pray for “ speedy ” deliverance?

“ 3. For thou *art* my rock and my fortress: therefore, for thy name’s sake, lead me and guide me.”

God will be the “ rock ” and “ fortress ” of those who esteem him as such; and, after having been so, through all the dangers and difficulties of life, he will “ lead ” and “ guide ” them to the realms of peace and rest, for the sake of that “ name ” which implieth salvation.

“ 4. Pull me out of that net which they have laid privily for me: for thou *art* my strength.”

As David prayed for an escape from the secret conspiracies that were entered into against him, so did Christ pray for deliverance from the snares of death; and so doth the Christian pray to be extricated from the toils both of sin and death.

“ 5. Into thine hand I commend my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, thou God of truth.”

David, in his distresses, might, by these words, express his resignation of himself and his affairs into

the hands of God; but it is certain, that Christ actually did expire upon the cross, with the former part of this verse in his mouth: Luke xxiii. 46. Nor is there any impropriety in the application of the latter part to him; since, as man, the surety and representative of our nature, he was "redeemed" from the power of the enemy, by "the God of truth" accomplishing his promises.

"6. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD."

They may hope for redemption, who so "trust in God," as to trust in nothing beside him; for all else is "vanity," and will deceive.

"7. I will be glad, and rejoice in thy mercy; for thou hast considered my trouble; and hast known my soul in adversities: 8. And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; thou hast set my feet in a large room."

The considerations that make the soul "cheerful" in the hour of affliction, are, that God is merciful; that as he is not ignorant, so neither is he unmindful of our troubles; that he is a friend, who "knows" us in our adversity, no less than in prosperity; that he hath not subjected us to the necessity of being overcome by our spiritual enemies; but hath, "with the temptation, made a way for us to escape."

"9. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul, *or*, animal frame, and my belly."

Upon the strength of the foregoing considera-

tions, supplication is here made for deliverance from troubles, which wasted the eyes with weeping, and exhausted the strength and vigour of the frame. Such were the troubles of David, and, more emphatically, those of Christ; and sickness and sorrow will one day teach us all to use the same expressions.

“ 10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.”

Do we not, in these words, hear the voice of the “ man of sorrows,” suffering not indeed for his own “ iniquity,” but for ours, of which he frequently, in the Psalms, speaks as if it were his own? If sin was punished in the innocent Lamb of God, let us not expect that it should be unpunished in us, unless we repent: and let our punishment never fail to remind us of our guilt.

“ 11. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance; they that did see me without, fled from me.”

These particulars were never more applicable to David, than they were to the Son of David, when his acquaintance, at beholding him reviled by his enemies, were terrified from attending him, and when “ all the disciples forsook him, and fled.” The same things are often too true of the faith and the church. They are true likewise of every man when he suffers the dishonours of the last enemy, death; when he is “ a fear” to his dearest friends, and they are obliged to forsake him.

“ 12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind; I am like a broken vessel.”

This was literally the case of Christ, when laid in the sepulchre, and esteemed no longer the object of hope by his friends, or of fear by his enemies. That he should be so “forgotten,” while dead, is less wonderful, than that this should have happened since his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven.

“ 13. For I have heard the slander of many: fear *was* on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.”

The slander of Shimei, and the counsel of Ahithophel against king David, direct us to the slanders of the Jews, and the counsels of Judas and the Sanhedrim against the beloved Son of God, who, in his church, will be persecuted in like manner, by the ungodly, to the world’s end.

“ 14. But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God. 15. My times *are* in thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies’ sake.”

In all our afflictions, after the example of the typical and of the true David, we are to have recourse to the prayer of faith; we are to consider that Jehovah is our God and Saviour; that the times and the seasons of prosperity and adversity, of life and death, are in his hand; and therefore on him

we are to wait, till the day of mercy shall dawn, and the shadows fly away.

“ 17. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon thee; let the wicked be ashamed, *and* let them be silent in the grave. 18. Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.”

Ahithophel, for his treason against David, and Judas, for his treachery against Christ, felt the force of this prophetic imprecation, or prediction, which will also, one day, take its full effect, in the confusion of all impenitent calumniators and traitors.

“ 19. O how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men !”

Peace of conscience, the comforts of the Spirit, and the hope of future glory, will teach the soul, even in the darkest night of affliction, to break forth into this exulting strain of gratitude and praise, for the blessings experienced by those who confess their Saviour before men.

“ 20. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride, *Heb.* conspiracies, of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.”

In times of contention and persecution, there is a refuge for the faithful in “ the tabernacle of David,” which is the mystical body of Christ, inhabited by

the presence of God. In this sacred "pavilion," they enjoy the pleasures of contemplation and devotion, regardless of the distant tumult and confusion of the world.

"21. Blessed *be* the LORD; for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city."

The man Christ, and the church with him, like David of old, here rejoice in the protection and saving power of God, in the same manner as in Isa. xxvi. 1. "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

"22. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee."

Whoever shall consider the troubles of the beloved Son of God, bereaved for a season of the light of heaven, only that it might afterwards arise upon him with the greater lustre, will be taught never to faint under the chastisement of the Lord; since the darkness of the night argues the approaching dawn of the day.

"23. O love the LORD, all ye his saints; *for* the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. 24. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD."

The exhortation is raised from the consideration of the deliverance of Christ, with the destruction of his enemies; which ought to strengthen and comfort the hearts of believers, under all their afflictions here

below; that so, after having suffered courageously with their Master, they may triumphantly enter into his joy and glory.

## PSALM XXXII.

*Sixth Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, which is the second of those styled penitential, David, as a model of true repentance, 1, 2. extolleth the blessedness of those whose sins are forgiven them; 3, 4. describeth the torment endured by him, before he confessed his sin; and, 5. the goodness of God in pardoning it, when confessed; 6. he foretelleth that others, after his example, should obtain the like mercy; 7. declareth his hope and confidence in his God; who, 8. is introduced, promising wisdom and grace to the penitent; 9, 10. sinners are warned against obstinacy; and, 11. the righteous exhorted to rejoice in God their Saviour.

“ 1. Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* 2. Blessed *is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*”

As the sick man is eloquent in the praise of health, so the sinner beginneth this his confession of sin with an encomium on righteousness, longing earnestly to be made a partaker of the evangelical “blessedness;” to be delivered from the guilt and the power of sin; to be pardoned and sanctified through faith which is in Christ Jesus. See Rom. iv. 6.

“ 3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.”

In opposition to the blessedness above-mentioned,

the penitent now proceeds to declare his own wretched state, occasioned by his "keeping silence," or not confessing his sin, which therefore rankled and festered inwardly, occasioning torment inexpressible. The disorders of the mind, as well as those of the body, should be communicated to persons skilful in assuaging and removing them. Many might thereby be saved from the horrible crime of self-murder, which is generally committed in agonies of solitary remorse and despair.

"4. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

Outward calamities, and inward pangs of conscience, are the strokes of God's hand, designed to humble the sinner, and lead him to confession; and in the infliction of these, such severity is sometimes necessary, that the patient is brought to death's door, before a turn can be given to the disease; but the pain of a blow upon an ulcerated part, however exquisite, is well compensated for, if, by promoting a discharge, it effect a cure.

"5. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

What is this but the Gospel itself—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins:" 1 John i. 9. And thus it happened, in one case, to David, who had no sooner confessed his sin to the prophet Nathan, but an answer of peace



was instantly vouchsafed—"The LORD hath put away thy sin:" 2 Sam. xii. 13. Were angels to descend from heaven, to comfort the dejected spirit of a sinner, they could say nothing more effectual for the purpose, than what is said in this verse of our Psalm. But practice will be the best comment upon it.

"6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."

Encouraged, by this example and declaration of David, to hope for mercy, on confession of sin, it is here foretold, that humble penitents shall be led to make their prayer unto God in the acceptable time, and in the day of salvation, while he "may be found;" that so they may be forgiven, and preserved from great and overwhelming calamities; from the fears of death, and the terrors of judgment.

"7. Thou *art* my hiding place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

The penitent, happily returned to the house of his heavenly Father, now esteemeth himself safe under his protection; and resteth in full assurance that all his sorrows shall one day be turned into joy, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

"8. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

The Redeemer is here introduced, returning an answer to the penitent's declarations of his humility and faith; promising "instruction" in that wisdom which every man wants who continues in sin, together with the direction of the Spirit in the way of righteousness, and the superintendence of his watchful care. Man cannot prevent evils, because he cannot foresee them. "Next therefore to the protecting power of God's Wing, is the securing prospect of his Eye," saith Dr. South.

"9. Be ye not as the horse, *or*, as the mule, *which* have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with a bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."

The person speaking in the former verse, or the prophet himself, exhorts sinners to repent, at the invitation and encouragement afforded them; and not to continue, like brutes, fierce, obstinate, and senseless, until, like them, they must be tamed and managed by force, and the severity of discipline.

"10. Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about."

They who are not to be reformed by gentler methods, must learn righteousness under the rod of affliction, in the school of the cross: and happy are they, if their "sorrows" may so turn to their advantage. But happier are those who, led by the goodness of God to repentance and faith, enjoy the light and protection of "mercy."

"11. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye

righteous: and shout for joy, all *ye that are upright in heart.*”\*

In the beginning of the Psalm, the penitent, smitten with a sense of his wretchedness on account of his sins, extolleth the blessedness of the righteous! he now again doth the same, through a joyful sense of his pardon, and restoration to that happy state. Let us “rejoice,” O Lord Jesus; but let us rejoice “in thee,” and in thy salvation; so shall we rejoice indeed!

### PSALM XXXIII.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, the prophet, 1—3. exhorteth the faithful to a spiritual and holy joy in their God, whom they are to praise, 4, 5. for his truth, righteousness, and mercy; 6—9. for his power, displayed in the works of creation; 10—19. for the wisdom of his providence, and the care he hath of his people. 20, 21. The righteous, in answer to the exhortation, declare their joy and confidence in God their Saviour, and 22. prefer a petition for his manifestation.

“1. Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous, *for* praise is comely for the upright.”

God, and not the world, is the fountain of “joy;” which sinners talk of, but the righteous only possess.

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\* Bishop Lowth is of opinion, this verse should be the first of the ensuing Psalm, the repetition being in the very style and manner of the Hebrews, and the words repeated and varied with the greatest art and elegance. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye “righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright. See Merrick’s Annotations.

“ Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice:” Philipp. iv. 4.

“ 2. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with psaltery, *and* an instrument of ten strings.”

Music, both vocal and instrumental, is of eminent use in setting forth the praises of God; but there is no instrument like the rational soul, and no melody like that of well-tuned affections. When this music accompanies the other, the sacred harmony of the church is complete.

“ 3. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.”

“ Old things are passed away,” and the ideas of a Christian are to be transferred from the old world, and the old dispensation, to the “ new;” since under the Gospel, “ all things are become new;” and all men ought to become so: Rev. xxi. 1, 5. Abilities of every kind are never so well employed, as in the service of him who giveth them.

“ 4. For the word of the LORD *is* right: and all his works *are done* in truth.”

God is to be praised for his word, and his works; for his rectitude in the one, and his truth in the other; for his faithfulness in accomplishing by the latter, what his goodness had promised in the former. The sense will be the same, if we suppose that by the “ word of the Lord” is meant the personal Word, or Son of God, all whose “ works” wrought for the salvation of men, are done in truth, as witnessed by the law and the prophets.

“ 5. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness, *Heb.* mercy, of the LORD.”

“ Justice” is an attribute inseparable from God; and what deserves the praises of man, as it excites the admiration of angels, is, that without sacrificing this formidable attribute, he hath contrived to fill and overflow the earth with his “ mercy.”

“ 6. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath, *or*, spirit, of his mouth.”

It is true, that the world was created by the “ word,” or *fiat* of God, which may be here described, after the manner of men, as formed by “ the breath of his mouth.” It is also true, that by the instrumentality of the eternal Word, and the eternal Spirit, the old heavens and earth were made; as also the new heavens and earth, which shall succeed them. Glory is due from man to God, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

“ 7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.”

The next instance of divine power and goodness, for which we are here excited to be thankful, is that of laying up the waters, which originally covered the face of the earth, in the great deep beneath. And let us reflect, that, by the same divine power and goodness, a deluge of wickedness and violence is prevented from overwhelming the faith and the church.

“ 8. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him: 9. For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast.”

He who made all things, who preserves all things, and can in a moment destroy all things, is the proper object of our “fear,” and that we fear him so little is a most convincing proof of the corruption and blindness of our hearts.

“ 10. The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”

The wisdom of God’s providence is not less worthy of adoration than the power of his might. By this wisdom, the “counsels” of states and empires are either directed to the accomplishment of the great counsel of heaven; or, if they attempt to thwart it, are blasted and “brought to nothing.” History will force all, who read it with this view, to acknowledge thus much. And with this view, indeed, it should always be read.

“ 12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”

The foregoing considerations of the righteousness, truth, mercy, power, and wisdom, of Jehovah, naturally suggest a reflection on the “blessedness” of the church, in whose cause all those attributes are,

by the covenant of grace, engaged and exercised. But who now esteems this blessedness as it deserves?

“ 13. The LORD looketh from heaven: he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14. From the place of his habitation, he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.”

How great must be the advantage of living in his favour, and under his protection, who, from the watch tower of his eternal throne, beholdeth, directeth, and controlleth at pleasure, not only the actions and the words, but the very thoughts and imaginations of all the inhabitants of the earth! For, this being the case, it is most certain, that

“ 16. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.”

All the power in the world is less than nothing, if brought into the field against that of God; so that the fate of every battle will depend upon the side which He shall please to take, who is equally able to confound the many and the mighty, and to give victory to the weak and the few. The same is true of that spiritual warfare in which we are all engaged.

“ 18. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope in his mercy; 19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”

The ever-waking eye of Providence, which looketh on all, looketh with favour and loving-kindness on such as “fear” God without despondency, and “hope” in him without presumption; their bodies are often wonderfully preserved in times of danger and want; but, what is of far greater consequence, their souls are saved from spiritual and everlasting death, and nourished, in the wilderness, with the bread of heaven.

“20. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. 21. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.”

In answer to the foregoing exhortation, the “righteous” are here introduced, declaring their fixed resolution to persevere in faith and patience, “waiting” for the coming of their Lord and Saviour, in whom they “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” by reason of that humble and holy confidence which they have in him.

“22. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.”

The “hope” of the church was always in Messiah. Of old she prayed for the “mercy” of his first advent; now she expecteth his second. Grant us, O Lord, hope, of which we may never be disappointed.



## PSALM XXXIV.

ARGUMENT.—The prophet, escaped out of the hands of his enemies, uttereth a song of praise, in words which the Christian now employeth to celebrate the far greater deliverance of his Saviour, and himself by him, from the power of more formidable adversaries. 1—7. He calleth his brethren to rejoice with him, and to magnify God for the favour and protection vouchsafed to his servant, in a time of danger; 8—10. he exhorteth others to taste and experience the goodness of Jehovah to such as fear him; and for that purpose, 11—14. instructeth them in the nature and effects of divine fear; after which, 15—22. he sweetly descanteth on the certainty of redemption from all the tribulations endured by the faithful in this mortal life.

“ 1. I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.”

The Christian, delivered from many perils, yet continually liable to more, finds cause, at all seasons, and in all situations, to bless God. “ In all things he gives thanks, and rejoices even in tribulation,” which cannot deprive him of the true ground of all joy, the salvation of Christ.

“ 2. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.”

The glory of every action is to be ascribed to God, whose interpositions, in behalf of his people of old time, afford consolation and joy to the humble and afflicted. But chiefly are the members of the church bound to give thanks for the resurrection and triumph of Christ, their head. “ The humble” can never “ hear” of this, without being “ glad.”

“ 3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.”

The Christian, not only himself magnifies God, but exhorts others to do likewise; and longs for that day to come, when all nations and languages, laying aside their contentions and animosities, their prejudices and their errors, their unbelief, their heresies, and their schisms, shall make their sound to be heard as one, in magnifying and exalting their great Redeemer's name.

“ 4. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

The ground of this rejoicing, to the typical David, might be his deliverance from his enemies; to the true David, it was his rescue from the power of darkness; to the believing soul, it is her salvation from sin; and to the body, it will be redemption from the grave. Then the Lord will deliver us “from all our fears;” and this he will do, if we “seek” him, in his Scriptures, and in his ordinances.

“ 5. They looked upon him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.”

Faith is the eye, sin the blindness, and Christ the light of the soul. The blindness must be removed, and the eye must be directed to the light, which will then illuminate the whole man, and guide him in the way of salvation. He who thus looketh unto the Sun of Righteousness, for light and direction, shall never be confounded.

“6. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

David, when he escaped from his enemies, might be “poor” and destitute. But He was emphatically “the poor man,” who became so for our sakes; who not only possessed nothing, but desired nothing in this world. He “cried, and Jehovah heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles,” as he will hear and deliver the “poor in spirit,” who pray unto him. For,

“7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”

The divine protection and salvation, vouchsafed to the faithful, is here signified, whether we suppose that by “the angel of Jehovah,” is meant the presence of Christ in the church militant, as of old in the camp of Israel; or the ministration of created spirits to the heirs of salvation, as in the case of Elisha: 2 Kings vi. 17. Let the consideration of these invisible guardians, who are also spectators of our actions, at once restrain us from evil, and incite us to good.

“8. O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.”

David saw and tasted the goodness of Jehovah, when delivered from his adversaries; the Son of David, when raised from the dead. Both invite us, by “trusting” in God, to behold and experience, in our own persons, the mercies and consolations of heaven.

“9. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him. 10. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.”

He who seeketh the Lord shall find him; and he who hath found Him, can want nothing. Faith, hope, charity, temperance, purity, patience, and contentment, are the true riches; and the lack of them, the poverty to be most dreaded; since to a Christian, persecution, loss, sickness, nay, death itself, is gain. In the mean time, God is never wanting to provide for his servants what he seeth needful and best, in matters temporal; while tyrants and oppressors, who are, in the world, what “lions” are in a forest, are often, by the just judgment of heaven, reduced to want that which they have ravished from others.

“11. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”

They who, by contemplating the advantages described above, which attend the fear of the Lord, are become desirous of obtaining that fear, must hearken to their heavenly Father, who by his prophet “speaketh unto them as unto children,” offering to teach them the good and right way.

“12. What man *is he that* desireth life, and loveth *many* days, that he may see good?”

Every Christian professeth to “desire,” not only an animal, but a spiritual “life;” to love, not an old age in time, but an eternal duration; that he may “see those good things” which God hath prepared,

not upon earth, but in heaven, for them that love him. Let us observe, therefore, upon what terms such blessings are offered.

“ 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.”

The tongue is an instrument of much good, or much evil. Life and death are in its power; he that keepeth it, keepeth his soul; and he who offendeth not therewith is a perfect man; it is an unruly member, and the first work of the fear of God must be to bridle it, that no profane, unclean, slanderous, deceitful, or idle words, proceed out of the mouth. And as the heart is to the tongue, what the fountain is to the stream, that first must be purified.

“ 14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”

Not the tongue only, but the whole man is to be corrected and regulated by the fear of God, operating unto repentance from dead works, and, through faith, unto obedience of life. And he who hath thus obtained peace with God, must ever remember to follow peace with men, reconciling his brethren, if at variance; himself, if it be possible, being at variance with no one.

“ 15. The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry. 16. The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

The righteous may be afflicted, like David, and like a greater than David; and their oppressors may

for a time, be triumphant; but, in the end, the former will be delivered and exalted; the latter will either cease to be remembered, or they will be remembered with infamy.

“ 17. *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*”

This great and comforting truth is attested by the history of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Babylon, &c. of Jonah from the whale; of the three children from the flames, &c. wrought at the supplications of the respective parties in distress: but above all, by the salvation of the world, through the intercession of Jesus Christ. The death of martyrs is their deliverance; and the greatest of all deliverances.

“ 18. *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*”

We are apt to overlook men, in proportion as they are humbled beneath us; God regards them in that proportion. Vessels of honour are made of that clay, which is “broken” into the smallest parts.

“ 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*”

Afflictions all must suffer; but those of the righteous end in victory and glory. What soldier would not cheerfully undergo the hardships of a campaign upon this condition? “In the world,” saith the Captain of our salvation, “ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world:” John xvi. 33.

“20. He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.”

It is God who preserveth to man the strength of his body, which lieth in the bones; and that vigour of his spirit, which consisteth in firm and well-established principles of faith and holiness. The bones of the true Paschal Lamb continued whole during the passion; and those of the saints shall be raised whole at the last day, when the mystical body of Christ shall come out of its sufferings, no less perfect and entire, than did the natural.

“21. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.”

The evil of punishment springs from the evil of sin; and no sin works such “desolation” as a malicious “hatred” and persecution of the true sons and servants of God. Whoso doubts the truth of this, let him only survey and consider attentively the desolation of the once highly favoured nation, for their enmity against the King of righteousness, and his faithful subjects.

“22. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.”

The frequent prosperity of the wicked, and the troubles of the righteous in this world, strike powerfully upon the sense, and are, for that reason, too apt to efface from our minds the notices given us by faith, of that future inversion of circumstances which is to take place after death. To renew, therefore,

the impression of such an interesting truth, the redemption of the afflicted righteous is so often insisted on in the course of this Psalm. Enable us, O Lord, to “walk by faith, and not by sight,” until we come to thy heavenly kingdom; where, with all thy saints, made perfect through sufferings, we shall “bless and magnify thee at all times,” and thy “praise will continually be in our mouth,” for evermore.

## PSALM XXXV.

*Seventh Day.—Morning Prayer.*

**ARGUMENT.**—The prophet, in this Psalm, as in the 22d, which it resembles, personating Messiah, in his state of humiliation and suffering, 1—3. beseecheth Jehovah to interpose in his behalf; 4—8. predicteth the confusion of his enemies, and 9, 10. his own triumph; 11—16. describeth the malice of his persecutors against him, and his love towards them; 17—25. repeateth his supplications for deliverance, and enlargeth upon the cruel insults he met with: 26. he again foretelleth the destruction of the adversary, and, 27, 28. the exultation of the faithful.

“1. Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.”

David, in his afflictions; Christ, in his passion; the church, under persecution; and the Christian, in the hour of temptation, supplicate the Almighty to appear in their behalf, and to vindicate their cause.

“2. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3. Draw out also the spear, and



stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation."

Jehovah is here described, as a "man of war," going forth to the battle against the enemies of Messiah and his church: the protection afforded by his mercy, is figured by the shield of the warrior, covering his body from the darts of the enemy; and the vengeance of his uplifted arm, is represented by the offensive weapons used among men, such as the spear and the sword. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If he speaketh salvation, who shall threaten destruction? see Deut. xxxii. 41. Wisdom v. 20.

"4. Let them be confounded, *or*, they shall be confounded, and put to shame, that seek after my soul: let them be, *or*, they shall be, turned back and brought to confusion, that devise my hurt."

The consequence of the Omnipotent appearing in arms against his adversaries, is here foretold. And the prediction has long since been verified in the "confusion" of Saul, and of the Jews, as it will be finally fulfilled in that of Satan, and all his adherents, at the last day; for the manifestation of which day the church now waiteth, in faith and patience.

"5. Let them be, *or*, they shall be, as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD, *or*, the angel of the LORD shall, chase *them*."

The Jews, separated from the church and people of Christ, become useless and unprofitable to any good work, possessing only the empty ceremonies and

husks of their religion, and by the breath of the divine displeasure dispersed over the face of the earth, afford a striking comment on this verse, and as striking an admonition to every opposer of the holy Jesus. See Psalm i. 4.

“ 6. Let their way, *or*, their way shall, be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD, *or*, the angel of the LORD shall, persecute them.”

A traveller, benighted in a bad road, is an expressive emblem of a sinner walking in his slippery and dangerous ways of temptation, without knowledge to direct his steps, to show him the danger, or to extricate him from it; while an enemy is in pursuit of him, whom he can neither resist nor avoid. Deliver us, O Lord, from all blindness, but, above all, from that which is judicial !

“ 7. For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit, *which* without cause they have digged for my soul. 8. Let destruction, *or*, destruction shall, come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid, *or*, his net that he hath hid shall catch himself: into that very destruction let him, *or*, he shall, fall.”

The causeless persecution raised against David by Saul, and against our Lord by the Jews, reverted, through the righteous judgment of God, on the heads of the persecutors. The innocent birds escaped; and they who set the toils, were themselves taken therein. Saul lost the kingdom which he thought to have secured, and his life also; and the Jews who crucified Christ, lest “ the Romans should

take away their place and nation," had their place and nation taken away by those Romans, for that very reason. In these histories, all impenitent persecutors of the faith, the church, and the servants of God, may read their doom.

" 9. And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. 10. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?"

These verses, as they describe the joy which the soul and body of Christ were to experience after the resurrection, so shall they one day be sung by the mystical body of the Lord, when delivered from the power of the spoiler, and raised entire from the dust. In the mean time, they may express our gratitude for any temporal preservation from enemies, from sad casualties, and dangerous temptations.

" 11. False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge, *Heb.* asked me, *things* that I knew not. 12. They rewarded me evil for good, *to* the spoiling of my soul."

This was never more literally true of David, than it was of the holy Jesus, when, standing before Pontius Pilate, he received no other return from the Jews, for all the gracious words which he had spoken, and all the merciful works which he had done among them, than that of being slandered and put to death.

“ 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled, *or*, afflicted, my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.”

If David prayed, fasting in sackcloth, for Saul and his associates, the Son of David, to heal the souls of men, put on the veil of mortal flesh, and appeared in the form and habit of a penitent, fasting forty days and forty nights, making continual intercession for transgressors, and grieving to think that any men, by their obstinacy, should deprive themselves of the benefits thereof.

“ 14. I behaved myself, *Ileb.* I walked, as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother; I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother, *or*, as a mother that mourneth.”

He who so passionately lamented the natural death of Saul, doubtless bewailed greatly his spiritual death of sin; and he who took a comprehensive view of the sins and sorrows of Jerusalem, wept over that wretched city, with the tender affection of a “friend,” a “brother,” and a “mother”—“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!”

“ 15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: *yea*, the abjects, *or*, smiters, gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not; they did tear *me*, and ceased not.”

When the blessed Jesus was suffering for the sins

of men, he was insulted by those men for whose sins he suffered. He gave, not only his reputation to the revilers, but also his back to the “smitters,” though not conscious of the crimes for which they pretended to punish him.

“16. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, *or*, among the profligates the makers of mock, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.”

However this might be true in the case of David, it certainly had a literal accomplishment in the scoffs and taunts of the chief priests, and others, when Christ was hanging on the cross—“Ah, thou that destroyest the temple,” &c. “He trusted in God,” &c. “Let him come down from the cross,” &c. &c. &c. Nay, one of the thieves, crucified with him, “cast the same in his teeth.” Whosoever considers these things, will not be surprised at the expostulation in the following verse:

“17. LORD, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.”

Christ prayeth, like David of old, for the manifestation of the promised mercy: for the deliverance of the nature which he had assumed, and which he delighted in. Who does not behold, in him, surrounded by his enraged and implacable enemies, a second Daniel, praying in the den of “lions.”

“18. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people, *or*, the strong people.”

This verse is exactly parallel to Psalm xxii. 25. wherein, after an enumeration of his sufferings, our Lord predicteth the praise and glory that should accrue to God in the church, after his resurrection, from the preaching of the apostles; which passage see, and compare; as also, Isaiah xxv. 3. and Rev. vii. 9.

“ 19. Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: *neither* let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.”

The prophet, in the person of Christ, returneth again to make supplication, that an end may be put to the insults, the scoffs, and the sneers of the reprobate. O come that day, when they shall cease for evermore!

“ 20. For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land. 21. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, *and* said, Aha, aha! our eye hath seen *it*.”

David would have lived “quietly” under the government of Saul: our Lord did not aim at temporal sovereignty over the Jews; nor did the primitive Christians desire to intermeddle with the politics of the world; yet all were betrayed, mocked, and persecuted, as rebels and usurpers, and the pests of society.

“ 22. *This* thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me. 23. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God, and my Lord. 24. Judge me,

O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.”

God “seeth” and knoweth all things; yet he permitteth those who love him best, to be often and long afflicted and oppressed, seeming as one at a “distance,” or “silent,” or “asleep,” that is, regardless of what passes. At such times, we are not to remit, but to double our diligence in prayer, reiterating our cries—“LORD save us! we perish!” Then will he “awake and arise, and rebuke the winds and the seas, and there shall be a calm.”

“25. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.”

Messiah prayeth for an end of his sufferings; that the enemies of mankind might not triumph in his destruction; that death might not finally “swallow him up,” but be itself “swallowed up in victory.” The church daily maketh the same request.

“26. Let them, *or*, they shall, be ashamed and brought to confusion together, that rejoice at mine hurt: let them, *or*, they shall, be clothed with shame and dishonour, that magnify *themselves* against me.”

The accomplishment of this prediction, by the resurrection of Jesus, and the destruction of Jerusalem, is well known. There are two events to come parallel to those two which are past, viz. the resurrection of the faithful, and the destruction of the world; when all who, like the Jews, have “rejoiced in the hurt” of Messiah, and have “magnified them-

selves against him," will, like the Jews, be covered with everlasting "confusion."

"27. Let them, *or*, they shall, shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them, *or*, they shall, say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. 28. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, *and* of thy praise, all the day long."

As the preceding verse foretold the sorrow of the enemies, so these two describe the joy of the friends to Messiah, upon his victory and exaltation, which have been, and shall continue to be, celebrated by the church in these divine hymns, indited by the Holy Spirit for that purpose, until the songs of time shall end in the hallelujahs of eternity.

## PSALM XXXVI.

ARGUMENT.—In the first four verses of this Psalm, the prophet describeth the principles, the actions, the conversation, and the imaginations of his wicked persecutors; and from thence raising his thoughts to heaven, 5—9. celebrateth the mercy and loving-kindness of Jehovah; for a continuation of which to himself and the church, he fervently prayeth, 10, 11; and 12. foreseeth the downfall of the ungodly.

"1. The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes."

If the present reading in the original be the true one, the meaning must be this—The transgressions



of a bad man show plainly, in the apprehension of a good one, that the former is destitute of a true fear of God. Bishop Lowth, by a slight alteration or two in the text, renders it to this effect—"The wicked man, according to the wickedness in his heart, saith, There is no fear of God before mine eyes."\* The great truth which the prophet here declareth himself to be convinced of, is, that all wickedness proceedeth from the absence of "the fear of God," in the person who committeth it: that fear being a principle which, while it is predominant in the man, will restrain him from transgression. Our laws suppose as much, when, in the form of indicting a criminal, they attribute the commission of the offence to his "not having the fear of God before his eyes."

"2. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful; *or*, when his sin is ready to be found out, and to be hated."

He who hath lost "the fear of God," is first led into sin, and then detained in it; because, having forgotten the great witness and judge of his actions, he vainly thinks his crimes may be concealed, or disguised, till a discovery breaks the charm, and disperses the delusion. The last day will show strange instances of this folly.

"3. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he hath left off to be wise, *and* to do good; *or*, to understand, that he may do good."

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\* See Merrick's Annotations.

If the fear of God be not in the heart, "iniquity and deceit" will be under the tongue; and then, an apostacy from wisdom and goodness, or the wisdom of goodness, which is the only true wisdom, cannot be far off.

"4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way *that is not good*; he abhorreth not evil."

From the actions and the words of him who hath not the fear of God before his eyes, the prophet goeth back to the thoughts and imaginations of his heart, which, even in retirement and solitude, are busily employed upon evil, as those of the righteous are, at those seasons, upon God and goodness. A man may know the state of his mind, in some measure, from his morning and evening thoughts "upon his bed." He who doth not give diligence to "set himself in a good way," will soon be set in one that is not good; and he who doth not "abhor" sin, will, ere long, delight in it.

"5. Thy mercy, O LORD, *is in the heavens*; and thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds, or, skies. 6. Thy righteousness *is like the great mountains*; thy judgments *are a great deep*."

From the wickedness of the world, in which we live, we must lift up our eyes, for help and comfort, to the mercy and truth of God, boundless, pure, and beneficial, as the heavens over our heads; to his righteousness, fixed and permanent as the everlasting hills; and to his judgments, stupendous and unfathomable as the waters of the great deep. Truth

will engage mercy to accomplish the promised salvation of the elect; and righteousness will employ judgment in executing upon the reprobate the vengeance that is due.

“7. O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent *is* thy loving-kindness, O GOD! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”

The good providence of God extendeth over all creatures, nourishing and preserving them, as well as man, for whose use they were made. We can never enough value and extol the “loving-kindness” of him, whose overshadowing “wings” protect and cherish us on earth, in order to bear us from thence to heaven. See Matt. xxiii. 37. Deut. xxxii. 11.

“8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.”

In heaven alone the thirst of an immortal soul after happiness can be satisfied. There the streams of Eden will flow again. They who drink of them shall forget their earthly poverty, and remember the miseries of the world no more. Some drops from the celestial cup are sufficient, for a time, to make us forget our sorrows, even while we are in the midst of them. What then may we not expect from full draughts of those pleasures which are at thy right hand, O Lord, for evermore?

“9. For with thee *is* the fountain of life; in thy light we shall see light.”

The rivers before-mentioned flow from a "fountain" which fetcheth not supplies from without, but whose spring is within itself, and therefore can never be exhausted. The "water of life" proceeds from "the throne of God and the Lamb:" Rev. xxii. 1. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:" John xvii. 3. God, like the sun, cannot be seen, but by the light which himself emits.

"10. O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart."

The prophet, groaning under the oppression of the wicked, who are described in the first part of the Psalm, prayeth for a continuation of the mercies of God, which he has celebrated in the second part. Give us, O God, the knowledge of thee, and make us upright in heart, that thy loving-kindness and thy righteousness may be our portion for ever.

"11. Let not the foot of pride come against me; and let not the hand of the wicked remove me."

The Christian has reason enough to join with the prophet in this petition, whether we suppose it to deprecate destruction from proud men and sinners without us, or from pride and sin within us.

"12. There are the works of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise."

Faith calleth things that be not, as though they were; it carries us forward to the end of time; it shows us the Lord, sitting on his throne of judg-

ment: the righteous caught up to meet him in the air, the world in flames under his feet; and the empire of sin fallen to rise no more.

## PSALM XXXVII.

*Seventh Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—From the beginning to the end of this Psalm, the Holy Spirit, by the prophet, administereth advice and consolation to the church and people of the Lord, oppressed and afflicted in the world, by prosperous and triumphant wickedness. Faith and patience are, therefore, recommended, upon the double consideration of that sure reward which awaiteth the righteous, and that certain punishment which shall be inflicted on the wicked. These two events are set before us in a variety of expressions, and under many lively and affecting images. As the Psalm is rather a collection of divine aphorisms on the same subject, than a continued and connected discourse, it admitteth of nothing farther in the way of argument.

“1. Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.”

The Holy Spirit here prescribeth a remedy to a very common, and no less dangerous disorder of the mind, namely, a distrust of God's providence, occasioned by frequently beholding the prosperity of the wicked, in this present world. He who alloweth himself time to consider, how soon the fairest spring must give place to a burning summer, a blighting autumn, and a killing winter, will no longer envy, but pity, the fading verdure of the grass, and the

still more transient glories of the flowers of the field. Herbs and plants are medicinal in more senses than one.\*

“ 3. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed: *or*, dwell in the land, and feed on truth, *or*, faithfulness.”

The consideration of the speedy and tragical end of sinners, affordeth a powerful argument for perseverance in faith and holiness; for continuing in the church, and making our abode in the pastures of truth; until, in the strength of that sacred viand, we come to the heavenly land of promise, and dwell therein for ever.

“ 4. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

He who delighteth in the creature, hath not always “ the desires of his heart” granted, nor is it fit that he should have them; but he who delighteth in God will desire what he delighteth in, and obtain what he desireth.

“ 5. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring *it* to pass. 6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.”

Malice and calumny may, for a time, overshadow the splendour of a holy character; but the sun will

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\* See an elegant and beautiful discourse on “ the lilies of the field,” published among the Sermons of the late learned, ingenious, and worthy Dr. Tottie.

come forth, and the clouds will fly away. This was most eminently true of the blessed Jesus, at his resurrection, and will be verified in his saints, at the last day. The history of Susannah affordeth a remarkable instance of it in this life. "Her heart trusted in the Lord, and he brought forth her righteousness as the light; insomuch that all the assembly cried out with a loud voice, and praised God, who saveth them that trust in him." Verse 35, 60.

"7. Rest in, *or*, be silent to, the LORD, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself, because of him who prospereth in the way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

If the spotless Lamb of God was dumb, before those who were divesting him of his honours, and robbing him of his life, "silent" resignation cannot but become one, who suffers for his sins. Israel was commanded to "stand still, and see the salvation of God;" but the people gazed upon the pomp and power of Pharaoh, who was in pursuit of them, till their faith failed, and they began to murmur and despond. How often is this our case, before we perceive it!

"8. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9. For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth."

At the day of judgment, when "evil-doers shall be cut off" by the flaming sword of eternal vengeance, and when the saints of the Most High shall

“inherit the new earth,” the latter will have no emotions of anger or envy against the former. Let them so meditate on that day, as to make it present to their minds, and they will have no such emotions now.

“10. For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall* not *be*: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall* not *be*.”

The whole duration of the world itself is but “a little while” in the sight of him, whose hope is full of immortality. But the calamities and deaths of princes; the tragical fate of empires, swept with the besom of destruction; the overthrow of cities, whose dimensions, towers, and palaces, once astonished the earth, but whose “place” is now no where to be found by the most curious and diligent inquirer; and the desolations of the chosen city, Jerusalem; all these are even now sufficient to draw forth the tear of commiseration, and to extinguish the kindling spark of envy in every considerate mind.

“11. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

The “meek” are they who bear their own adversities, and the prosperity of their enemies without envy, anger, or complaint. For these there is a possession in the kingdom and city of “the Prince of Peace,” which “the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give them at that day.” “Blessed are the meek,” saith the Lord and judge himself, “for they shall inherit the earth:” Matt. v. 5. “In the mean time, they, and they only, possess the present earth,



as they go towards the kingdom of heaven, by being humble, and cheerful, and content, with what their good God has allotted them. They have no turbulent, repining, vexatious thoughts that they deserve better; nor are vexed when they see others possessed of more honour, or more riches, than their wise God has allotted for their share. But they possess what they have with a meek and contented quietness; such a quietness as makes their very dreams pleasing, both to God and themselves." Walton's Complete Angler, p. 295.

“ 12. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13. The LORD shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming.”

The original enmity between the Wicked One and the Just One, will always subsist between the wicked and the just. The rage of the former against the latter is compared to that of mad dogs, or wild beasts; but a day is coming when all that rage must be turned and employed against themselves. God, who knoweth this, contemneth their vain efforts; and Christians who know it, and are under the protection of God, should do the same.

“ 14. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, *and* to slay such as be of upright conversation, *or*, upright of way. 15. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bow shall be broken.”

The tongue is a “ sword,” and a “ bow,” which

shooteth its arrows, even bitter words, against the humble and upright Jesus, and his disciples. But these are not the only weapons that have been drawn against them. How the malice of the Jews returned upon their own heads, no one is ignorant: though few lay it to heart, and consider them as set forth for an example.

“16. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. 17. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.”

A little, with the blessing of God upon it, is better than a great deal, with the encumbrance of his curse. His blessing can multiply a mite into a talent, but his curse will shrink a talent to a mite. By him “the arms of the wicked are broken,” and by him “the righteous are upholden;” so that the great question is, whether He be with us, or against us; and the great misfortune is, that this question is seldom asked.

“18. The LORD knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever. 19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”

The favour of God is, to them that obtain it, a better and an enduring substance, which, like the widow's barrel and cruse, wasted not in the evil days of famine, nor will fail in that evil day of eternal want, when the foolish virgins shall be calling in vain for oil, and the rich glutton as vainly imploring a drop of water to cool his tongue.”

“ 20. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.”

The destruction of the wicked is here again set before us, but under a different image, namely, that of a sacrifice. Senseless, as cattle, they are fatted for the altar, they wanton in their prosperity, and nourish their hearts against the day of slaughter. In the mean time, the Almighty is whetting that sword, which nothing can withstand; and those fires are kindling, which shall never be extinguished. See Isa. xxxiv. 6—10.

“ 21. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; but the righteous showeth mercy and giveth.”

The wicked man, like his leader, the “wicked one,” payeth not those whose money or abilities he hath occasion to borrow, and to employ in his service; whereas the disciple of Christ, in imitation of his Master, not only punctually observeth the rules of justice and equity, but thinketh it “more blessed to give than to receive.” In like manner, though both are indebted, for every thing, to the bounty of God, the latter maketh all the acknowledgments and returns in his power; while the former never thinketh of making any.

“ 22. For, *or*, therefore, *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.”

They who are like their merciful and gracious

Lord, and who, by their devotion and charity, bless him, are blessed of him; they who are like their cruel and iniquitous master, and who, by their ungodliness, injustice, and hard-heartedness, dishonour their Maker and Redeemer, are cursed of him. To the former, therefore, it will be said, at the last day, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom;" to the latter, "Go, ye cursed, into the fire."

"23. The steps of a *good* man are ordered, *Heb.* established, by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him* with his hand."

This was emphatically true of the man Christ, whose steps Jehovah established, and in whose way he delighted; who, "though he fell" by death, yet was raised again by his mighty hand and outstretched arm. It is true likewise of Christians, whom it should support and comfort, in all dangers and temptations. See, for a parallel, Psalm xci.

"25. I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. 26. *He* is ever merciful, and lendeth: and his seed *is* blessed."

So far is charity from impoverishing, that what is given away, like vapours emitted by the earth, returns in showers of blessings into the bosom of the person who gave it; and his offspring is not the worse, but infinitely the better for it. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Prov. xi. 25. The bread

which endureth, as well as that which perisheth, is his; and the blessings of time are crowned with those of eternity.

“ 27. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. 28. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever, but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.”

The justice and mercy of God, the rewards which await the righteous, and the punishments that will, sooner or later, be inflicted on the wicked, are subjects on which, whoever shall frequently meditate, “ will depart from evil, and do good.” “ Whatsoever thou takest in hand,” saith the wise son of Sirach, “ remember the END, and thou shalt never do amiss.” Ecclus. vii. 36.

“ 30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”

The word which is here, as in other places innumerable, translated “ the righteous,” is in the singular number, and might therefore be translated “ the Righteous One,” or, “ the Just One,” for it is often designed to point him out to us, who is emphatically so styled; whose “ mouth” always spake “ wisdom,” in whose “ heart was the law of God,” and whose “ steps” NEVER declined to evil. Lord put thy laws into our hearts, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth may speak; and as

the mouth speaks, the hands may act, and the feet may walk.

“ 32. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 33. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.”

The Jews “watched” that “Just One,” daily and hourly; they “sought to slay him,” and did so; but “Jehovah left him not in their hands,” but vindicated his innocence, by raising him from the dead. And the day is coming, when he who hath stood tamely at the bar of men, and hath suffered for truth and righteousness, shall be advanced to a throne among the saints and martyrs, to assist at the trial of his once insulting judges.

“ 34. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off thou shalt see *it*.”

The apostle, writing to the Hebrew converts, under affliction and persecution, thus expresseth the sentiment contained in this verse: “Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.” Heb. x. 35.

“ 35. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree, *or*, a native tree, which has grown from the seed without transplantation, in the same spot. 36. Yet he

passed away, and lo, he *was* not ; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.”

The great Babylonian monarch had his own exaltation, and subsequent degradation, portrayed to him, in a vision, under this very image, which conveyeth to the mind a most striking and affecting idea of the rise and fall of men and empires, which have now no existence but in history. “ I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all : the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven. He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit ; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches : ” Dan. iv. 10, 11, &c. See the prophet’s exposition, 20, 21, &c. and what is said above, on ver. 10. of this Psalm.

“ 37. Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright : for the end of *that man is peace*. 38. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together : the end of the wicked shall be cut off.”

After taking a view of those short-lived honours, which the world setteth upon the heads of its most

favoured votaries, let us turn our eyes to “the perfect and upright One;” let us behold the permanent greatness and the unfading glory of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God; whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and whose fruit is the fruit of “peace.”

“39. But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD: *he is* their strength in the time of trouble. 40. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they put their trust in him.”

Of thee, O Lord Jesus, is our salvation: be thou our strength in this mortal life, which is a time of trouble; help us against our spiritual enemies, and deliver us from them; deliver us from the wicked one, and from all evil; and save us from the guilt and punishment thereof, because we put our trust in thee, and thee alone.

## PSALM XXXVIII.

*Eighth Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, which is the third of those styled Penitential, the sinner, ver. 1. prayeth to be chastened only, and not destroyed; 2—10. describeth the state of his soul under various images, chiefly borrowed from bodily diseases and pains; 11, 12. complaineth of his friends forsaking, and his enemies persecuting him; but 13—15. continueth patient and resigned, committing his cause to God, whom, 16—22. he beseecheth to help him, on his confession and repentance. As our Lord took upon him the guilt, and suffered the punishment, of sin; as there are some passages in the latter part of the Psalm, literally predictive of his passion, and so understood



by the best ancient expositors; and as the sinner should be led by his own sorrows to reflect on those of his Redeemer; the meditations of the reader are, therefore, under each particular, directed, by the ensuing comment, into that channel.

“ 1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.”

The petition here preferred, as in the sixth Psalm, is, that Jehovah would not condemn as a judge, but chasten as a father, for the amendment and preservation of the offender. The same prayer, which we sinners make for ourselves, Christ, who bore our sins, once made for us.

“ 2. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.”

The “arrows” and the “hand” of God, are his judgments on sin; those internal pangs and terrors which pierce the soul, and those external afflictions and calamities which sink and weigh down the spirits. The holy Jesus, at the time of his passion, received these arrows, and sustained this weight, for the sins of the whole world.

“ 3. *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest, or, peace, or, health, in my bones, because of my sin.*”

The expressions in this verse are applicable to the disorders and diseases which sin hath introduced both into the soul and into the body, as the terms “health,” and “sickness,” are in Scripture no less frequently employed to describe the state of the former, than that of the latter. If a single sinner thus complaineth of his grief and pain, what must have been the

agony and passion of him who suffered for all, mercifully and lovingly submitting to be “made sin for us?”

“4. For mine iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”

Sins and sorrows are here, as in many other places, represented under the image of mighty waters rolling incessantly over the head of the person sunk into them, and by their accumulated weight depressing him, so that he can no more rise above them. Let us meditate on that deep and tempestuous ocean, into which we were the means of plunging the innocent Jesus.

“5. My wounds stink, *and* are corrupt, through my foolishness.”

Sin is the wound of the soul, which must be washed with the tears of repentance, cleansed by the blood of Christ, and healed by the Spirit of the Holy One. It requires great care and attention, until the cure be completed. Otherwise, mortification and death ensue, as in the case of outward wounds, if neglected, or ill managed. See Isa. i. 6. Luke x. 34. All the sores and pains of the body mystical are lamented by him who is the head of that body, and who felt the sad effects of these corruptions of our nature, in the day of his sufferings.

“6. I am troubled, *Heb.* writhed, *or*, distorted, I am bowed down greatly: I go mourning all the day long.”

As the body by pain, so the soul by guilt, is “dis-

torted" from its original uprightness; it is bowed "down" to the earth, through shame and fear, being no longer able to look up towards heaven, with its accustomed holy confidence; and, instead of rejoicing in a good conscience, and the hope of glory, sorrow is its portion, and grief its familiar acquaintance. And what wonder, that we should be humbled and afflicted for our own sins, when the Son of God was so humbled and afflicted for sins not his own!

"7. For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease*, or, inflammation; and *there is* no soundness in my flesh."

The "disease," or, "inflammation," complained of in these metaphorical terms, seems to be the dis-temperature of our fallen nature, whereby it cometh to pass, that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit;" it is that "other law in our members, warring against the law in our minds, bringing us into captivity to the law of sin," and forcing every son of Adam to cry out—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Happy is it for us, that we are enabled to go on with the apostle, and to "thank God," that we are delivered "through Jesus Christ our Lord," on whom were laid the iniquities of us all."

"8. I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart."

The vigour of a man is broken in pieces, and wasted away, by pain, and the disquietude from thence arising, which cause piercing cries, and loud lamen-

tations. When sin in the soul is felt like sickness in the body, it will produce effects in some degree similar. Let us reflect on the sufferings, the cries, and the tears, of our Redeemer.

“ 9. LORD, all my desire *is* before thee ; and my groaning is not hid from thee.”

The “ desires” and “ groans” of the penitent are known to God, and marked down in his book ; and there is no small comfort in thinking and acknowledging that they are so ; but much more comfort is there in the remembrance of those inconceivable “ desires,” and those unutterable “ groanings,” which the holy Jesus poured forth for us in the days of his flesh, and which prevail for the acceptance of our own.

“ 10. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me ; as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.”

In bodily sickness, there are three symptoms of approaching dissolution ; and the soul is in great extremity, when the three corresponding symptoms appear upon her ; namely, when she hath neither resolution to will, power to perform, nor knowledge to discern the things that belong unto her health and peace.

“ 11. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, *or*, plague, *or*, affliction ; and my kinsmen, *or*, my neighbours, stand afar off.”

A body afflicted with a noisome distemper, and a soul troubled on account of sin, find but few friends,

who have charity enough to stay with, and to minister to them. Let us not be surprised, or offended, at this, when we see the righteous Jesus, at his passion, destitute and forsaken by all; as it is written, “Then all the disciples forsook him and fled:” Matt. xxvi. 56.—“and all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.” Luke xxiii. 49.

“12. They also that seek after my life, lay snares *for me*; and they that seek my hurt, speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. 13. But I, as a deaf *man*, heard not; and *I was* as a dumb man, *that* openeth not his mouth. 14. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs, *or*, altercations.”

These verses describe and recommend to our imitation the behaviour of David, and of a greater than David, when under persecution; the former from Absalom, Ahithophel, Shimei, &c. the latter from the chief priests and elders, Judas, and the Jews.

“15. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope, *or*, thee do I wait for: thou wilt hear, *or*, answer, O LORD my God.”

This verse assigns the reason why the ill usage which we receive at the hands of men, should be borne with patience and resignation; namely, because, as it is not without the permission, so neither will it be without the notice, of the Almighty, who will one day take the matter into his own hands. Christ, saith St. Peter, “who did no sin, neither

was guile found in his mouth, yet when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:" 1 Pet. ii. 22.

" 16. For I said, *Hear me*, lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against me."

As the glory of God may be said, in some measure, to depend on the behaviour and fate of his servants; on that account, besides the stings of conscience, temporal punishments, and the danger of eternal torments, good men should ever have before their eyes the dishonour which is brought on the name of God, and the stop which is put to the progress of his Gospel, by the fall of any eminently righteous and holy person into sin.

" 17. For I *am* ready to halt, and my sorrow *is* continually before me. 18. For I will declare mine iniquity: I will be sorry for my sin."

The surest way to have our weakness strengthened, and our sin forgiven, is to acknowledge and confess both; and this we need not be ashamed to do, when we consider, that he, who is the Lord strong and mighty, took our infirmities; and the King of Righteousness bare our sins, in his own body, on the tree.

" 19. But mine enemies *are* lively, *and* they are strong, and they that hate me wrongfully, are multiplied. 20. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow *the thing that good is*."

These words, joined with the preceding, are applicable to the distress of David, and the prosperity of his adversaries; to the sufferings of Christ, and the triumph of the Jews; to the afflictions of the church, and the gaiety of the world; to the weakness of faith, and the strength of nature. The result of all is this, that salvation cometh of God only, and is to be implored in the following words, which conclude the Psalm:

“ 21. Forsake me not, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me. 22. Make haste to help me, O LORD God of my salvation.”

### PSALM XXXIX.

ARGUMENT.—The prophet, in a state of distress and persecution determineth, 1—3. to be watchful and silent, as our blessed Lord also was, before his enemies. 4. He prayeth for a due sense of the shortness of human life; and after meditating, 5, 6. on that subject, fixeth all his faith and hope in God, 7. whom he entreateth, but with submission to his will, 8—10. for the remission of sin, and alleviation of misery. 11. From a view of the human body wearing away by sickness, he breaketh out, 12, 13. into a most fervent and affectionate prayer, which ought to be continually in the mouth of the Christian, upon earth.—This Psalm is, with the utmost propriety, appointed by the church to be used at the burial of the dead, as a funeral is indeed the best comment upon it.

“ 1. I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.”

The Psalm begins abruptly with the result of a meditation on the narrow, slippery, and dangerous

paths of life; and more especially on the extreme difficulty of restraining the tongue, amidst the continual temptations and provocations of the adversary. In these circumstances, “watchfulness” and “silence” are resolved on, as the only means of security. Let us behold the Lamb of God, as our great pattern and example herein.

“2. I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, *even* from good; and my sorrow was stirred.”

There is a time to keep silence, because there are men who will not hear; there are tempers, savage and sensual as those of swine, before whom evangelical pearls, or the treasures of heavenly wisdom, are not to be cast. This consideration stirreth up fresh grief and trouble, in a pious and charitable heart. How much more must it have done so, in the soul of him who lived and died only for the salvation of sinners!

“3. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue.”

The fire of divine Charity, thus prevented from diffusing itself, for the illumination and warmth of those around it, and, like other fire, rendered more intense by its confinement, presently ascended, in the flame of devotion, towards heaven; while it continued to be fed, and preserved in brightness and vigour, by meditation on the goodness of God, and the ingratitude of man; the transient miseries of time, and the durable glories of eternity.

“4. LORD, make me to know mine end, and the



measure of my days, what it *is*; *that* I may know how frail I *am*."

Wearied with the contradiction of sinners, and sickening at the prospect of so much wretchedness in the valley of weeping, the soul looks forward to her departure from hence, praying for such a sense of the shortness of human life, as may enable her to bear the sorrows of this world, and excite her to prepare for the joys of a better. "O faithless and perverse generation," saith even the meek and patient Jesus himself, "how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" Matt. xvii. 17.

"5. Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an hand-breadth, and mine age *is* as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state, *Heb.* settled, *is* altogether vanity."

The age of man, or that of the world, is but a "span" in dimension, a moment in duration; nay, it is less than both; it is "nothing," if compared with the unmeasurable extent, and the unnumbered days, of eternity: every hour, from that of our birth, brings us so much nearer to our death: nor can we continue, for a second of time, in one stay. "Behold," then, O Lord, the "vanity," of man; and be so merciful unto him, as to open his eyes, that he may behold it himself!

"6. Surely, every man walketh in a vain show, *or*, in a shadowy image; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

This world is, to the other, as a “shadow” to the substance; nay, temporal life, health, riches, honours, and pleasures, can hardly be called shadows of those which are eternal, in point of resemblance; though, for their illusive, and fleeting nature, they are shadows indeed. “The mortal state of man is compounded of light and darkness; seeming to be something, when really it is nothing; always altering, and ending on a sudden; nearest to disappearing, when at full length; sure to continue no longer than while the sun is above the horizon; but liable to vanish, at the interposition of a cloud; and when it is gone, leaving no track behind it.” The fate of riches heaped up by misers, with unutterable care and anxiety, may convince us, how “vainly” men are “disquieted!”

“7. And now, LORD, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.”

The soul, that hath a true sense of the vanity of the creature, will at once fix her thoughts and affections on the Creator. A celebrated writer, describing a man of the world on his death-bed, hath expressed this sentiment with wonderful sublimity and elegance—“Whoever would know how much piety and virtue surpass all external goods, might here have seen them weighed against each other, where all that gives motion to the active, and elevation to the eminent; all that sparkles in the eye of hope, and pants in the bosom of suspicion; at once became dust in the balance, without weight, and without regard. Riches, authority, and praise, lose all their influence, when they are considered as riches, which

to-morrow shall be bestowed upon another; authority, which shall this night expire for ever; and praise, which however merited, or however sincere, shall, after a few moments, be heard no more.”\*

“ 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish.”

Affliction hath then had its proper effect, when the sufferer is thereby convinced of sin, and therefore prayeth for a removal of the latter, as the only way to be delivered from the former. The “reproaches” of the foolish make no inconsiderable article in the account of a Christian’s sufferings; and our Lord frequently complaineth of them, in the Psalms, as one of the bitter ingredients in his own cup.

“ 9. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst *it*.”

Whatever materials compose the rod of affliction, and from whatsoever quarter the stroke cometh, let us remember, that the rod is grasped, and the stroke is inflicted, by the hand of our heavenly Father. To revenge ourselves on the instrument is folly; to murmur against the agent, is something worse.

“ 10. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.”

The Christian, who knows from whence his troubles proceed, knows where to apply for relief; and having first “petitioned” for remission of sin, ver. 8.

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\* Rambler, Vol. II. No. 54.

he then humbly supplicates for a mitigation of his sorrow. “Father,” saith the beloved Son of God, “if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.” Luke xxii. 42.

“11. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty, *or*, all that is delightful, *or*, desirable in him, to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity.”

The body of a man is as a “garment” to the soul: in this garment sin hath lodged a “moth,” which, by degrees, fretteth and weareth away, first, the beauty, then the strength, and finally, the texture of its parts. Whoever has watched the progress of a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, nay, the slow and silent devastations of time alone, in the human frame, will need no farther illustration of this just and affecting similitude; but will discern at once, the propriety of the reflection, which follows upon it—“Surely every man is vanity!”

“12. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.”

Meditation should terminate in devotion; and meditation on human vanity and misery, if indulged as it deserves to be, certainly will do so; it will bring us to our “prayers,” our “cries,” and our “tears;” and teach us to address the throne of grace, as poor pilgrims in a strange land, who have here no abiding city, but are soon to strike our tents, and be gone

for ever. Such was David, though king of Israel; and such was the Son of David, in the body of his flesh, though Lord of all things: both were “strangers and sojourners, as all their fathers,” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were before them, and as all their children have been, and shall be, after them, upon the earth.

“13. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.”

Most fervently and affectionately, therefore, ought the Christian pilgrim to pray, that God would spare his life, and respite the awful sentence, until all that hath been decayed, through the frailty of nature, be renewed by the power of grace; that his perfect reconciliation with the Almighty may be accomplished, and his plenary pardon sealed in heaven, before he taketh his last farewell of the world, and ceaseth to have an existence in these regions of vanity and sorrow.

## PSALM XL.

ARGUMENT.—It is plain, from ver. 6—8. of this Psalm, compared with Heb. x. 5. that the prophet is speaking in the character of Christ, who 1—5. celebrateth the deliverance wrought for his mystical body, the church, by his resurrection from the grave, effecting that of his members from the guilt and dominion of sin; for the abolition of which he declareth, 6—8. the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and mentioneth his own inclination to do the will of his Father, and, 9, 10. to preach righteousness to the world. 11—13. He representeth himself as praying, while under his sufferings, for his own and his people's salvation; he foretelleth, 14, 15. the confusion

and desolation of his enemies, and, 16. the joy and thankfulness of his disciples and servants; for the speedy accomplishment of which, 17. he preferreth a petition.

“ 1. I waited patiently for the LORD, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.”

In this verse we hear the voice of the meek Lamb of God, who, though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow, “waited patiently,” till the time appointed by the Father came, when that sorrow should be turned into joy. Let not his disciples expect to “inherit the promises,” otherwise than “through faith and patience.” Four thousand years, the church, under the patriarchs, the law, and the prophets, waited for the first advent of Messiah; and seventeen hundred years the church, under the Gospel, hath waited for the second. Jehovah, who inclined himself to the prayers of the former, will also hear the cries of the latter.

“ 2. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, *Heb.* a pit of confused, tumultuous noise, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings.”

The sufferings from which our Redeemer was delivered, are here described under the image of a dark subterraneous cavern, from which there was no emerging, and where roaring cataracts of water broke in upon him, overwhelming him on every side; till, as it is expressed in the 18th Psalm, “God sent from above, and took him, and drew him out of many waters.” Let us celebrate the deliverance of Christ, as a pledge and earnest of our own rescue from the troubles and temptations of life; from the

power of death and the grave; from the “horrible pit, and the miry clay;” when we shall be exalted on “the rock” of our salvation, and our “goings” shall be “established” for ever.

“3. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our GOD: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”

Every new deliverance requires “a new song.” Christians sing their wonderful redemption, from sin and death, in these holy hymns, which God, by his Spirit hath put into their mouths, and which, by their application to matters evangelical, are become “new” songs, setting forth the praise and glory of God, through Jesus Christ. And who can hear the church singing the victory and triumph of her mighty and merciful Saviour, without being incited to “fear,” and “to believe?”

“4. Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.”

He who is sensible how much God hath done, and how little the world can do for him, will earnestly and heartily pronounce the blessedness of the man who relies upon the real power and goodness of the former, instead of suffering himself to be deceived by the empty parade, and fallacious promises, of the latter.

“5. Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward; they cannot be reckoned up

in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak of *them*, they are more than can be numbered.”

The counsels and works of the ever-blessed Trinity, planned and executed for the benefit of man, in his creation and perservation, his redemption and sanctification, in order to his resurrection and glorification, through Christ, already risen and glorified, are subjects which can never be exhausted, by the intellectual powers of men or angels; but will, to both afford matter of incessant meditation, and endless praise. Yet, how little do we meditate on them: how seldom, and how coldly, do we praise God for them!

“ 6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. 7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is* written of me. 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law *is* within my heart.”

These words, as the apostle informeth us, Heb. x. 5. are spoken by Christ, in his own person. In them he proclaims the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices to take away sin, and the divine disapprobation of such sacrifices, when relied on for that purpose. He sets forth his own readiness to do, and to suffer, the will of the Father, implied in the Psalm by the words—“ Mine ears hast thou opened;” but more plainly expressed in the apostle’s citation, by the paraphrase, “ A body hast thou prepared me.”\*

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\* For the expression, “ Mine ears hast thou opened,” seems equivalent to—“ Thou hast made me obedient.” Thus, Isa. l. 5.



He refers to the predictions concerning Messiah, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which is here styled—"The volume, or, roll of the book." He declares the pleasure he had in doing the Father's will, or in accomplishing the law; which had taken possession of all his powers and faculties; having been admitted by the understanding, retained in the memory, and rendered operative in the will. "I

"The Lord God hath opened mine ears, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters," &c. The LXX, perhaps, meant to interpret this symbolical expression, when they rendered it by *σωμα καταηρητισω μοι*, "Thou has prepared," or, "fitted my body," that is, to be "obedient," and to "do thy will." See Dr. Jackson, Vol. II. p. 882. This seems to be the best sense of the present reading, and is well expressed by Mr. Merrick, in his poetical version:

Nor sacrifice thy love can win,  
Nor offerings from the stain of sin  
Obnoxious man shall clear;  
Thy hand my mortal frame prepares,  
(Thy hand, whose signature it bears,)  
And opes my willing ear.

Mr. Pierce, of Exeter, proposed a conjectural alteration of the word *אָרְנִים*, "ears," into the two words, *אָן נֶרֶה*, "then a body," &c. in which case, a learned friend suggests, *בְּרִית*, must likewise be altered to *בְּלִית*, "hast thou prepared, or finished." Bishop Lowth wishes to adopt Mr. Pierce's emendation, in order to render the original conformable to St. Paul's citation from the LXX. And I must confess, if the apostle's argument turned on the word *σωμα*, such an emendation might seem necessary. It is true, *σωμα Χριστου* occurs in the succeeding verse; but I think it not essential to the argument, which seems to stand clear and full, whatever be the meaning of *σωμα καταηρητισω μοι*—"When he said, Sacrifice, &c. thou wouldest not—then he said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." The author of the anonymous notes in Mr. Merrick's Annotations, I find, is of this opinion. "It is not certain that the apostle argues from the word *σωμα* at all. He quotes the translation of the LXX. as he found it in his copy; lays a stress on what is in the Hebrew, but none on the rest; either knowing it not to be there, or being restrained, by the Spirit of God, from making use of it." See Appendix to Mr. Merrick's Annotations, p. 294.

delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.”

“ 9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. 10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”

As the preceding verses described the priestly office of our Lord, in the execution of which he offered himself, and his all-perfect obedience, for us; so, in the passage now before us, he declares himself to have acted up to the prophetic part of his character, by “preaching” the doctrines of truth, righteousness, and salvation, to the people, without concealing aught through negligence, fear, or favour. Happy the minister of Christ, who, on his death-bed, is able to say the same!

“ 11. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy loving-kindness and thy truth always preserve me.”

The beloved Son of God here prayeth for the continuation of that mercy, and the accomplishment of those gracious promises, to his body, the church, which made the subjects of his heavenly discourses, in the days of his flesh. Such ought to be the subjects of our discourses, and of our prayers.

“ 12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so

that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me.”

If these words, as well as the foregoing, are supposed to be spoken by our Lord, (and indeed there doth not appear to be any change of person,) they must be uttered by him, considering himself (for so the primitive writers suppose him in the Psalms frequently to consider himself) as still suffering in his body mystical, the church; and lamenting, as head, both the transgressions and the afflictions of the members, accomplishing their warfare in the world. Thus much, at least, we know, that, after his ascension, when the members were persecuted on earth, the head complained from heaven, as sensible of the pain, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” Some critics think the word עוֹנִי, in the text, may be translated, “my punishment.” But the author of the anonymous notes, mentioned below, observes, that all “punishments, properly speaking, pre-suppose sin; and especially when they are represented, as here, to overtake and seize a person. Therefore, to understand this of Christ, it must be interpreted of imputed sins, or punishments for them.” Merri-  
rick’s Annotations, p. 295.

“13. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.”

This short but forcible prayer for help and deliverance, in God’s good time, and according to his good pleasure, continues, and must continue, to be the prayer of the church, and of all her children, until the day of final redemption.

“ 14. Let them, *or*, they shall, be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them, *or*, they shall, be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil. 15. Let them, *or*, they shall, be desolate for a reward of their shame, that say unto me, Aha, aha!”

The shame, confusion, and desolation to be brought on the Jews by the resurrection, exaltation, and power of him whose blood they thirsted after, and whom they mocked and insulted when in his last agonies on the cross, are here foretold; and the prophecy hath been punctually fulfilled. But a more horrible confusion and desolation awaiteth them, and all other impenitent sinners, at the future revelation of the righteous judgment of God; when vengeance must destroy those whom mercy cannot reclaim. And, to this ultimate issue of things, the church directeth her views.

“ 16. Let all those that seek thee, *or*, all those that seek thee shall, rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation, *or*, such as love thy salvation shall, say continually, The LORD be magnified.”

As the last verses predicted the calamities which should befall the enemies of Messiah, this describeth the unfeigned joy and gladness, springing up in the hearts of such as love the salvation of Jesus, and evermore magnify his holy name in the church, for the blessings of redemption, “ eating their meat,” as the first Christians are said to have done, “ with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.” Acts ii. 46.

“ 17. But I *am* poor and needy; *yet* the LORD thinketh upon me: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.”

The church, like her Redeemer, is often poor and afflicted in this world, but Jehovah thinketh upon her, and is solicitous for her support; she is weak and defenceless, but Jehovah is her help and her deliverer. With such a Father and such a Friend, poverty becometh rich, and weakness itself is strong. In the mean time, let us remember, that he who once came in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty. “ Make no tarrying, O our God; but come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Rev. xxii. 20.

## PSALM XLI.

*Eighth Day.—Evening Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—The application made of the 9th verse of this Psalm, John xiii. 18. showeth, that the prophet is speaking in the person of Messiah. 1—3. He declareth the blessedness of the man that considereth the poor; 4. he prayeth for mercy and favour; 5—9. describeth the behaviour of his adversaries, and of one person in particular; 10. petitioneth for deliverance; 11, 12. rejoiceth in hope; and, 13. breaketh out into thanksgiving.

“ 1. Blessed *is* he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble: *Heb.* in the day of evil.”

As Christ considered us, in our state of poverty, so ought we most attentively to consider him, in his;

to consider what he suffered in his own person; to discern him suffering in his poor afflicted members; and to extend to them the mercy which he extended to us. He, who was "blessed" of Jehovah, and "delivered in the evil day," by a glorious resurrection, will "bless" and "deliver" in like manner, such as, for his sake, love and relieve their brethren.

"2. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive, *or*, revive him; *and* he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies."

The compassionate and charitable disciple of the holy Jesus is often wonderfully "preserved," and rendered prosperous, even in this world; but his greatest comfort is, that, like his Master, he shall one day be "revived," to inherit the "blessing," in a better country, where no "enemy" can approach, or hurt, or molest him.

"3. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

An exemption from sorrow and sickness is not promised to the children of God; but strength and comfort are given unto them, from above, to support and carry them through their trials; and they who, in the days of their health, have, by their alms, given rest to the bodies, or, by their counsels, restored peace to the consciences, of others, shall have the bed of pain made easy under them, by the hand of their heavenly Father.

“4. I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.”

Every son of Adam may, and ought, in these words, to acknowledge his sin, and to entreat for mercy and grace, to heal the disorders of his nature. If we suppose Messiah ever to have uttered this verse in his devotions, as we know he applied the 9th verse to his own case, it is obvious, that he must be understood to confess the sins, not of his own righteous person, but of the nature he had assumed, in order to cleanse and purify it by his sufferings. See above, Psalm xl. 12.

“5. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?”

Here we may undoubtedly consider the poor and lowly Jesus, in the day of his humiliation, when he was daily and hourly calumniated by his adversaries; when, restless and impatient at beholding him still alive, they said—“What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him. Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him:” John xi. 47. xii. 19. and when, grown more furious and clamorous, they cried, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him.” How many, with the same bitterness of spirit, “speak evil” continually of his doctrines, his church, his ordinances, and his ministers; in effect saying, “When shall he die, and his name perish?”

“6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh

vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; *when* he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*."

Thus the enemies of Christ "sent out spies, who should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor:" Luke xx. 20. Thus Judas sat down at the last supper, all the while meditating the destruction of his Master; till at length, rising from table, and going abroad, he put his design in execution: and thus the mystical body of Christ frequently suffers, as his natural body once did, by means of hypocrites and traitors.

"7. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8. An evil disease, *say they, Heb.* a word, *or,* matter of Belial, *namely, the crime charged upon him,* cleaveth fast unto him: and *now* that he lieth, he shall rise up no more."

The whispers of the Pharisees, the counsels of the Sanhedrim, and their taunts and scoffs at the blessed Jesus, when on the cross, "numbered with the transgressors," nor ever expected to "arise" again from the dead, are here most significantly and plainly pointed out. The same weapons are frequently employed against the servants of Christ; but let them not be, on that account, discouraged from following their Master.

"9. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up *his* heel against me."



“ I speak not of you all,” saith our Lord to his disciples; “ I know whom I have chosen: but, that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lift up his heel against me:” John xiii. 18. The sufferings of the church, like those of her Redeemer, generally begin at home; her open enemies can do her no harm, and her pretended friends have delivered her into their hands: and, unnatural as it may seem, they, who have waxed fat upon her bounty, are sometimes the first to “ lift up the heel” against her.

“ 10. But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them, *or*, and I shall requite them.”

The holy Jesus here maketh his prayer unto the Father, for the accomplishment of the promised resurrection, and foretelleth the righteous judgment that would be executed on his enemies, after their rejection of the gracious offers made them, by the apostles, in his name, notwithstanding all that they had said and done against him. Then the kingdom of God was taken from them, and their house was left unto them desolate. The hour is coming, when the church shall arise to glory, and all her enemies shall be confounded.

“ 11. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. 12. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.”

The Christian, like his Master, must expect sorrow and tribulation, but he is not thereby deprived

of the “favour” of heaven; his spiritual enemies, whatever trouble they may give him, yet do not “triumph” over him; he is preserved in his “integrity,” and his reward will be the “vision” of God. For the exaltation, therefore, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all believers, in, by, and through him,

“13. Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.”

## PSALM XLII.

ARGUMENT.—David, by Absalom’s rebellion, driven from Jerusalem, to the country beyond Jordan, is there supposed to have indited this Psalm; which, as it is applicable to the case of our Lord, in his state of sojourning and suffering on earth for our sins; as also, that of the church, under persecution, or that of any member thereof, when deprived of the opportunities of public worship; so doth it, in the most beautiful and pathetic strains, describe the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, of hope and despondency, which succeed each other in the mind of the Christian pilgrim, while, exiled from the Jerusalem above, he suffereth affliction and tribulation in this valley of tears. The last is the application chiefly made in the comment, as it is the most general and useful one; the others naturally offer themselves, being coincident with, or subordinate to it.

“1. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”

The thirst which the “hart” experienceth, when chased, in sultry weather, over the dusty plains, is here set before us, as a representation of that ardent desire after the waters of eternal comfort, which the temptations, the cares, and the troubles of the world, produce in the believing soul. Happy they who

feel this desire, and fly to the well of life, that it may be satisfied. “Blessed are they that thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Matt. v. 6.

“2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”

Whoever considers what it is to “appear before God;” to behold the glorious face of Jesus; to contemplate a beauty which never fadeth; to be enriched by a beneficence which can never be exhausted, and blessed in a love unmerited and infinite; will find abundant reason to say, again and again, “My soul thirsteth after God;” why is the time of my banishment prolonged? when shall the days of my pilgrimage have an end? “when shall I come and appear before God?”

“3. My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?”

So long as the soul finds herself absent from him whom she loveth, sorrow is still her portion, as well in the day of worldly prosperity, as in the night of adversity. And this sorrow is greatly aggravated by the taunts of the enemy; who, because the promise is delayed, and she suffereth affliction in the mean season, ridiculeth and insulteth her faith and hope, as vain and groundless; intimating, that God hath forsaken her, and tempting her to renounce her principles.

“4. When I remember these *things*, I pour out

my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holiday."

As the royal prophet, when driven from Jerusalem by Absalom, was melted into tears at the comparison of his destitute and forlorn situation with his former glory and happiness, when, upon some joyous festival, with all his subjects about him, he had attended the service of the tabernacle, in the city of God; so the Christian pilgrim cannot but bewail his exile from the heavenly Jerusalem, out of which sin hath driven him, and doomed him to wander, for a while, in the vale of misery. Led, by repentance and faith, to look back to the place from whence he is fallen, he sighs after the unspeakable joys of the celestial Zion; longing to keep a festival, and celebrate a jubilee in heaven; to join in the songs of angels, and bear a part in the music of hallelujahs.

"5. Why art thou cast, *or*, bowed, down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him *for* the help, *or*, salvation, of his countenance."

The holy mourner now expostulates with his soul, for suffering herself to sink into a kind of despondency, on account of her afflictions, and the insolent triumph of the adversary; and, as a sovereign cordial for melancholy, prescribes "faith" in God, which will show the morning of salvation dawning, after the night of calamity shall have run its course, a night which cannot be long, and may be very short.

When the sun arises, we cannot be without light; when God turns his countenance towards us, we cannot be without "salvation."

"6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar, *or*, the little hill."

The soul, although exhorted, in the last verse, to "put her trust in God," yet, considering her own infirmity, still continueth to be dejected: the prophet, therefore, confesseth as much; and maketh his complaint to God, from whom alone he expecteth comfort: and whom he did not forget, while, far from the sanctuary, he wandered up and down in the country beyond Jordan, whither he had fled from the face of Absalom. This world is, to us, that "country beyond Jordan;" Lord, make us to "remember" thee, under all the afflictions and tribulations we meet with therein, until, restored to thy Jerusalem, we shall praise thee in heaven, for the mercies experienced upon earth.

"7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me."

The prophet describeth the troubles which successively came upon him, by the vengeance of heaven, from above, "raising up evil against him, out of his own house" and kingdom, from beneath, according to the prediction of Nathan: 2 Sam. xii. 11. The ideas seem to be borrowed from the general de-

luge, or from a storm at sea, when, at the “sound” of descending “water-spouts,” or torrents of rain, the depths are stirred up, and put into horrible commotion; the clouds above calling, as it were, to the waters below, and one wave encouraging and exciting another to join their forces, and overwhelm the despairing sufferer.\* The whole compass of creation affordeth not, perhaps, a more just and striking image of the nature and number of those calamities which sin hath brought upon the children of Adam.†

“8. Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.”

The gloomy prospect begins again to brighten, by a ray of hope shooting through it; and the prophet returneth to his rest and confidence in the mercy of God, determining, not only to give him thanks in the day of prosperity, but, as Paul and Silas afterwards did, to sing his praises at midnight, in adversity and affliction.

“9. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast

\* Thus, as the learned Merrick observes, one river, in Homer, “calls upon another,” to assist in overwhelming the Grecian hero. And, in Æschylus, the fire and sea are said to “swear together,” and to give each other their “pledge of confederacy,” against the Grecian army.

† Since this was written, I find the author of “Observations on divers Passages of Scripture” agreeing entirely with me in the notion, that David is here describing those water-spouts, and storms at sea, which were common on the Jewish coast, as we learn from Dr. Shaw. Observations, p. 324. 1st edition. So Mr. Merrick likewise, in his Annotations.

thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 10. *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"*

He ventureth, notwithstanding, meekly and humbly, upon the strength of the promises, to expostulate with him, who was the "rock" of his salvation, as to his seeming destitution, while continually oppressed and insulted by the cutting reproaches of the adversary. See above, verse 3. These might be thought to render it in some sort necessary, for God to arise, and vindicate his own honour, by the protection and deliverance of his servant. The Psalmist concludes with that exhortation to his soul, to trust in God, and to wait for his salvation, which makes the mournful chorus of this beautiful Psalm:

"11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, *who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*" See above, *verse 5.*

## PSALM XLIII.

ARGUMENT.—This Psalm seemeth to be a continuation of the former, written by David in the same circumstances, on the same subject, and closing with the same chorus.

"1. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly, *or*, unmerciful, nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man."

David, in the same situation as before, appealeth to God, against a people who had driven their sovereign from his capital, to wander like a fugitive and vagabond in the remotest parts of his dominions; against the hypocrisy of Absalom, and the villany of Ahithophel. The Son of David may be supposed to make the same appeal against the same nation, for their far more cruel, treacherous, and iniquitous usage of him, their king and their God. And the words suit the circumstances of an oppressed church, or an injured prince, of all who suffer for truth and righteousness' sake, or who groan under the tyranny of their spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

“2. For thou *art* the God of my strength; why dost thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? [See above, Psalm xlii. 9.] 3. O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.”

The chief desire of the Christian, analogous to that of the prophet in distress, is to be saved from sin, as well as sorrow; to be instructed in the way of righteousness, by the “light” of heavenly wisdom, shining in the face of Jesus Christ; to see the accomplishment of the promises, in him who is the “truth;” and to be “led,” by this light and this truth from the land of his pilgrimage, to the “holy hill,” and the mansions of the just, in the new Jerusalem.

“4. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto



God my exceeding joy, *or*, the gladness of my joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.”

The royal prophet, upon his restoration to his throne, was to sacrifice on the altar of his God, with the voice of thanksgiving, and to celebrate his mighty Deliverer, in a new song, upon the melodious harp. The Christian, in like manner, foresees a day coming, when sorrow and sighing shall be no more; when he and his brethren are to be “made kings and priests;” when they are to reign with their Redeemer for ever; and upon their golden harps, tuned to a unison with those of angels, to sing his everlasting praises in the courts of the heavenly temple. Therefore,

“ 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.” *See above, Psalm xlii. 5.*

## PSALM XLIV.

*Ninth Day.—Morning Prayer.*

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm we hear the voice of the church, under persecution, 1—3. recounting the mercies of God vouchsafed to his servants of old time; 4—8. declaring her confidence, that she shall experience the same in her present distress, and shall at length overcome, through the power of her Redeemer; for that, notwithstanding her seeming desertion and manifold sufferings, 9—16. there is still a faithful

remnant, 17—22. of those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, and who cease not, 23—26. to cry unto God for mercy and deliverance.

“ 1. We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what* works thou didst in their days, in the times of old.”

The works wrought of old, by the arm of Jehovah, for the salvation of his people, are recorded by the Spirit in the Scriptures of truth, that “through patience and comfort of those Scriptures,” as the apostle expresses it, the church and people of God, whensoever oppressed and afflicted, in any age or country, “may have hope,” that the same God will exert the same power in their behalf. And great is the light, great is the consolation, which the sacred history, when thus applied, will always afford to the troubled mind.

“ 2. *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; *how* thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.”

If the dispossession of the Canaanites, and the establishment of the house of Jacob in their land, furnished the distressed church of Israel with sufficient ground for confidence; how much force hath the argument since received, by the accomplishment of what was then typified; by the victories of the true Joshua, or Jesus; by the fall of Paganism, and the plantation of the Christian faith in its stead!

“ 3. For they got not the land in possession by

their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.”

As it sufficiently appears, that the settlement of Israel in the promised land was the work of God, from the miraculous fall of Jericho; from the prolongation of the day, at the word of Joshua; from the slaughter of the enemy by hailstones from heaven, &c. &c. so was it the first thing which an Israelite was in duty bound to acknowledge, if he hoped for more mercies at the hand of God. The Christian, in like manner, begins and ends all his prayers with an humble and thankful acknowledgment of the free mercy of God in Jesus Christ; confessing, that he “got not” his title to salvation, nor should enter into the possession of it, by “his own” power or merit, but by “the right hand and the arm of his Redeemer, and the light of his countenance, because he had a favour unto him.”

“ 4. Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.”

In these words, the church sums up her argument: as if she had said, O thou, who, going forth before thy people, hast so often and so wonderfully wrought salvation of old time, I still acknowledge thee as my King, able and willing to save: O manifest yet again thy power, yet again let me experience thy mercy. Behold all things are at thy command; all events are at thy disposal. O gracious Saviour,

let all work together for good to her whom thou lovest.

“ 5. Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.”

The people of God, however persecuted by the power of the world, here declare, that their faith faileth not; that the adversary cannot take from them their holy confidence in God, through whom, and in whose saving name, whenever he shall think fit to hear their prayers, and to appear in their cause, they doubt not of obtaining a final victory, and celebrating a glorious triumph, over all their enemies, terrestrial and infernal. Such should be the hope of every afflicted soul.

“ 6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever.”

In spiritual, as well as temporal warfare, the appointed means are to be used, but not “ trusted in;” man is to fight, but God giveth the victory; and to him must be ascribed the praise, and the power, and the glory; that, as it is written, “ He who glorieth, may glory in the Lord.” And thus the Christian church daily singeth, after the example of her blessed and holy representative, “ My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.”

“ 9. But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.”

The church having declared her confidence, founded on the former mercies of God vouchsafed unto her, proceedeth now to describe her pitiable state under persecution, when the protection of the Almighty seemed, for a season, to be withdrawn, so that she was no longer able to stand before her enemies.

“ 10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves.”

The first consequence of a victory, gained by the enemies over the friends of the church, is rapine and sacrilege; the invasion of her patrimony, and the plunder of her revenues; allured by the prospect of which, robbery hath sometimes entered into the sanctuary, under the mask of reformation.

“ 11. Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.”

The second calamity which is permitted to fall on the church, in the day of adversity, is, that her people are doomed to sudden and cruel deaths by sanguinary edicts. A third calamity is that of their being driven, in times of persecution, from their native country, to wander among strangers and aliens, or among those in whose communion it is judged unlawful to join.

“ 12. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.”

A fourth misery incidental to the people of God, when under persecution, is, that he permits them to be held cheap and vile, and to be sold into slavery by their enemies, for little or nothing: a situation far more to be dreaded than the sword of the executioner.

“ 13. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. 14. Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen; a shaking of the head among the people. 15. My confusion *is* continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, 16. For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.”

The fifth and last bitter fruit of persecution is, that thereby the name, and truth, and church, and people of God, are exposed to the insolent and blasphemous scoffs and jeers of infidels; nor is there any circumstance to a pious soul more grievous and afflictive than this.

“ 17. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. 18. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; 19. Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.”

It is certain that God is provoked, by the sins of a church, to let loose the fury of the oppressor upon

her. This is acknowledged by Daniel in his prayer, ch. ix.—by the three children in the furnace, Song, ver. 5, 6.—by the Maccabean martyrs, suffering under Antiochus, 2 Macc. vii. 18. and by Cyprian, and others, in the primitive times. It is not less certain, that no mere man can say, he is free from transgression. The verses now under consideration, are not, therefore, spoken by the whole church, but by the faithful remnant; nor do they imply an exemption from all sin, but a steadfast perseverance in the profession of God's true religion, from which it is the aim of persecution to seduce, or to force them. The malice of the tormentors is here compared to the venom of "serpents:" and the state of a suffering church, to the gloom of "death" itself. Happy the soul, that, in the extremity of affliction, can, with humble confidence, thus make her appeal to God, as having held fast her integrity against all the efforts made to wrest it from her, and not having suffered the blasts of adverse fortune, by wearing out patience, to part her from the anchor of faith.

"20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; 21. Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart."

The consideration, that <sup>is</sup> "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things:" 1 John iii. 20. ought to be strongly impressed on our minds at all times; but more particularly, when we are tempted by the world (as, one way or other, we all frequently

are) to deny our Master, either by word or deed; and when we have occasion to call heaven to witness our uprightness, under such temptation.

“ 22. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.”

The sufferings of the martyrs were a sufficient proof that they had not yielded to the temptations of the enemy. St. Paul, Rom. viii. 36. cites this verse as predictive of the persecutions then beginning to be raised against the Christians. All may apply it to themselves, who are in circumstances of the same nature; and persecution is generally consistent with itself, contriving, by some means or other, to be rid of those who stand in its way. It is a storm, before which all must either bend, or be broken.

“ 23. Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? Arise, cast us not off for ever. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?”

There is a time when the triumphs of the adversary, and the afflictions of the church, tempt men to think, that the eye of providence is closed, or turned away, and that the Almighty hath ceased to remember their sad estate. But the truth is, that God only giveth his people an opportunity of feeling their own insufficiency; and waiteth till, by fervent and importunate prayer, they solicit his help. For so the holy Jesus slept, while the ship was covered with the waves; until, awakened by the cries of his dis-



ciples, he arose to their assistance, and spoke the tempest into a perfect calm.

“ 25. For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth unto the earth.”

They who are not brought into this state of humiliation by outward sufferings, should bring themselves into it by inward mortification and self-denial, by contrition and abasement, if they would put up such prayers, as the Majesty of heaven will deign to accept, and answer; if they would repeat with our church, in the spirit of the Litany, the concluding verse of this Psalm—

“ 26. Arise for our help, and redeem us, for thy mercies' sake.”

## PSALM XLV.

ARGUMENT.—In this Psalm, which is one of those appointed to be used on Christmas-day, the prophet, after, 1. proposing his subject, proceeds to celebrate King Messiah, 2. for his spiritual beauty and eloquence; 3, 4, 5. his power and victories; 6. his throne and sceptre; 7. his righteousness and inauguration; 8. his royal robes and glorious palace. 9. The church is introduced as his spouse; her appearance and dress are described; 10, 11, 12. it is foretold, that the nations shall bring their offerings to her; 13, 14, 15. her attire, her presentation to Christ, with her attendant train, and the universal joy and gladness occasioned by the solemnization of the nuptials, are set forth. 16. The prophet predicteth the fruits of this divine union; and, 17. the use that should be made of his sacred epithalamium by the faithful, from generation to generation.

“ 1. My heart is inditing, *Heb.* boileth, *or,* bubbleth up, a good matter, *or,* the good word: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King; my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.”

“ The Spirit of the Lord,” saith David elsewhere, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. “ spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” In like manner, we are to conceive the prophet here to be full of the divine Spirit, which inspired him with “ the good word,” or the glad tidings of salvation. The sacred fire, inclosed in his heart, expanded itself within, till at length it brake forth with impetuosity, to enlighten and to revive mankind with this glorious prediction “ touching the King,” Messiah; and this was uttered by his tongue, under the guidance of the Spirit, as, in writing, the pen is directed by the hand that holds it.

“ 2. Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.”

After a short introduction, the prophet stays not to enter regularly upon the subject, in the formal way of narration; but, as if he saw the Divine Person, whom he was about to celebrate, standing before him, he breaks out in extatic admiration of the second Adam, so different from all the descendants of the first! compounded of a soul fair above all created spirits, and a body pure and perfect, and now brighter than the meridian sun; being invested with the unutterable effulgence of the Divine Nature. Next to the spiritual beauty of Messiah, the prophet

is astonished (as those who heard him speak, in the days of his flesh, afterwards were) at “the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth,” Luke iv. 22. through the “grace poured into his lips.” Such honey and milk were under his tongue, so delightful and salutary was his doctrine, that even his enemies found themselves obliged to confess, “never man spake like this man:” John vii. 46. His word instructed the ignorant, resolved the doubtful, comforted the mourners, reclaimed the wicked, silenced his adversaries, healed diseases, controlled the elements, and raised the dead. Therefore hath the Father loved, and exalted, and blessed him, for evermore.

“3. Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.”

The prophet, having described the beauty and the eloquence of the King, proceedeth now to set forth his power, and to arm him, as a warrior for the battle. The “sword” of Messiah is his Word, which, in the language of St. Paul, is said to be “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;” and is represented by St. John, as “a sharp two-edged sword,” coming out of the “mouth” of Christ: Heb. iv. 12. Rev. i. 16. With this weapon he prevailed, and thereby made his “glory and majesty” to be known throughout the world.

“4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because, *or*, for the sake, of truth, and meekness, *and*

righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible, *or*, wonderful things.”\*

Messiah is in these words magnificently described, as making his progress among the nations, seated in his triumphal chariot, adorned with all the regal virtues, achieving the most astonishing victories, and, by the irresistible might of his power, subduing idolatry and iniquity to the faith and temper of the Gospel.

“ 5. Thine arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; *whereby* the people fall under thee.”

The prophet goes on to represent Messiah as a warrior, completely armed, and skilful in the use of every weapon. Thus a prince is portrayed, Rev. vi. 2. “ I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” The conquests of Messiah are either those of his word over sin, or those of his arm over the persecuting powers.

“ 6. Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.”

The battle being fought, and the victory gained,

\* “ The sense, perhaps, may be this: Thy right hand, by its promptness to encounter danger, shall bring thee acquainted with terrible things: thy right hand shall know its office; by habitual exercise, shall render thee expert in war, and lead thee on from conquest to conquest.” Merrick.

we are called to the consideration of the “ throne” and “ sceptre” of King Messiah, whom the prophet addresseth as God. His throne is distinguished from the thrones of this world, by its endless duration; his sceptre, from the sceptres of earthly potentates, by the unerring rectitude of its administration.

“ 7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

The sermons, the example, and, above all, the death of Christ, for the expiation of sin, demonstrated his love of righteousness, and hatred of wickedness; and, “ because he humbled himself, and became obedient even to the death of the cross, therefore God highly exalted him:” Phil. ii. 8, 9. and he was “ anointed” to the kingdom “ with the Holy Ghost and with power” immeasurable; to the intent that he might bestow, in due proportion, the gifts of heaven on those whom he is not ashamed to call “ friends” and “ brethren.” And these gifts he did bestow on them, by the emission of the Spirit, soon after his ascension and inauguration. See the application of these last two verses to Christ, Heb. i. 8, 9.

“ 8. All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces,\* whereby they have made thee glad.”

From the throne, the sceptre, and the inaugura-

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\* That is, palaces adorned, or inlaid, with ivory; as “ Ebur atria vestit;” Lucan x. 119. Merrick.

tion, the prophet passes on to the robes and palaces of the King of glory, declaring, that as the perfumed garments of an earthly prince scatter through all the royal apartments a grateful fragrance, so, from the glorious vestments of our High Priest and King, is diffused the sweet savour of his heavenly graces, filling those happy regions of joy and gladness, where he keeps his residence above, and, by the communication of the Spirit, refreshing the faithful on earth with their odours.

“ 9. Kings’ daughters *were* among thy honourable women, *or*, the splendour of thy train; upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.”

Such being the divine beauty, and heavenly glory, of the blessed Person, whose nuptials the prophet is now proceeding to describe, it is no wonder that, upon hearing of his fame, innumerable converts, forsaking the vanities even of courts and kingdoms, should follow him, ambitious to have the honour of composing his train; which in reality was the case, upon the publication of the Gospel. And, lo, at “the right hand” of the King, followed by this magnificent procession, appears the church, the spouse of the Lamb, arrayed in the garments of righteousness and salvation, fitly compared, for their inestimable value, and radiant brightness, to the “gold of Ophir.”

“ 10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; 11. So shall the King greatly

desire thy beauty; for he is thy LORD, and worship thou him."

This seemeth to be the voice of God, addressing the church to the following effect—O thou, whom I have begotten unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and whom I have called out of the world, to become "the Lamb's wife," hearken diligently to my voice, consider attentively what I say, and be obedient to my direction; thou art now entering into a new state; let old things pass away: regard no more thy connections with earth; but let the love, and, if possible, the very memory, of thy former condition, be obliterated from thy mind; let all things belonging to the flesh die in thee: then shalt thou be truly acceptable and dear in his sight, who, having purchased and betrothed thee to himself, justly claims thy whole heart, thy undivided love, and thy unlimited service and adoration.

"12. And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift; *even* the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour."

The accession of the Gentiles, with their offerings and donations, to the church, is here predicted under the name of "Tyre," a city in the neighbourhood of Palestine, formerly the glory of the nations, and mart of the world. See Isa. lx. and Rev. xxi.

"13. The King's daughter *is* all glorious within: her clothing *is* of wrought gold."

The church, in different respects, is sometimes called the spouse, sometimes the sister, and often, as here, the “daughter,” of the heavenly King; the connection formed between them, uniting in itself every relation, and every affection. Her beauty, so greatly desired and delighted in by Messiah, is spiritual; it is the beauty of holiness; and her clothing is “the righteousness of saints:” 1 Pet. iii. 3. Rev. xix. 8.

“14. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work, *or*, embroidery: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.”

The different graces of the faithful, all wrought in them by the same Spirit, compose that divine “embroidery” which adorns the wedding-garment of the church, who is therein presented to the King, attended by her bride-maids, after the nuptial manner. These are either the single churches, or holy souls, that accede to, and accompany the spouse; unless we suppose, as some do, that the bride is the Israelitish church, and then the attendants will represent the Gentiles.

“15. With gladness and rejoicing *shall they be* brought: they shall enter into the King’s palace.”

The solemnization of this marriage between Christ and the church, produceth a jubilee upon earth, and causeth the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem to resound with hallelujahs. For this the angels tune their golden harps, while prophets, apostles, martyrs,



and saints, fill up the universal chorus of “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

“16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.”

In this verse the prophet foretelleth the fruit that should spring from the glorious nuptials which he hath been celebrating. He assureth the spouse, that instead of her earthly kindred, whether Jewish or Pagan, which she was to leave for Christ, should arise an illustrious and royal progeny of believers, out of whom were to be chosen Christian kings to govern the world, and Christian bishops to preside in the church. The expression “whom thou mayest make princes,” may answer to that in the Revelation, chap. i. ver. 6. “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” So Mr. Merrick thinks, who beautifully turns the passage, in this poetical version, as follows—

No more the Patriarchs of thy line  
 In time's long records chief shall shine ;  
 Thy greater Sons, to empire born,  
 Its future annals shall adorn.  
 Thy power derived to them display,  
 And stretch through earth their boundless sway.

“17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.”

By inditing this divine marriage-song, appointed

to be sung in the congregations of the faithful, from age to age, the Psalmist hath been, as he foresaw he should be, the blessed means of celebrating his Redeemer's name, and inciting the nations of the world to do likewise; nor will he cease to be so, while the 45th Psalm continues to be sung in the church upon earth; that is, while there remaineth a church upon earth to sing it. And we, who now do sing it, are witnesses of these things.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.







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