

MONOGRAPHS *and* EXPOSITIONS

OF

SELECTED PSALMS

HOW TO BECOME A TRUE CHRISTIAN

AND

ZION—AN ALLEGORY

REV. FREDERICK LARUE KING

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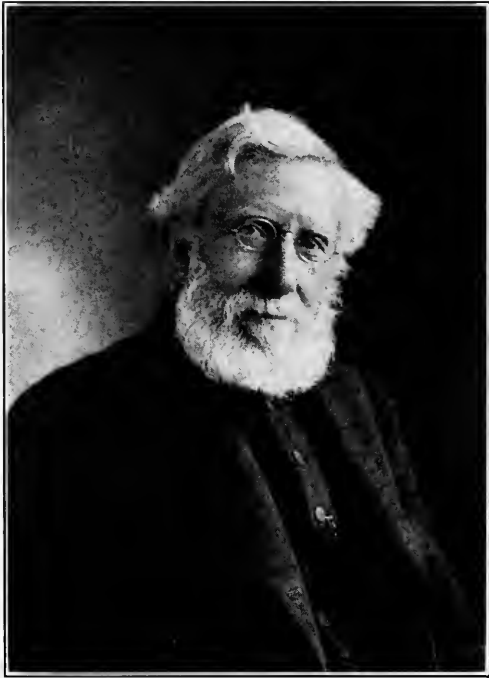




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Rev. Frederick LaRue King





# Exposition of Selected Psalms . . . .

By the late

Rev. Frederick La Rue King

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## INTRODUCTION

In which is given a  
Biographical Sketch of the author, by his brother, and a  
number of interesting Monographs, written by him-  
self, and all fully substantiating the claim  
that he was singularly well equipped  
to write a commentary on the  
Psalter.

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## Foreword.

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We would be thankful and happy if our readers could assure us that we were successful in the effort to blend into the unity of a mosaic painting, the Biographical Sketch of Rev. Frederick La Rue King, the many interesting monographs by Mr. King, and the commentary on Selected Psalms, with a true logical connection between all these parts constituting one book. This was a difficult thing to accomplish, but God's grace was equal to the task we trust. Those interested in my brother's work, may regret that he did not give to the Christian public a complete analysis of the Psalter. Such are not aware that for forty or more years he labored on the Psalms, but, that owing to chronic illness, his labor of love was intermittent. Therefore it was, that in several places we were forced to supplement his work with additions of our own, and for this we offer the apology of necessity.

Our friends will notice, that from the title page, this book is only printed, and not published, by the Pennypacker Bros., of Asbury Park, N. J. This affords us an opportunity to say several things.

(1) We have had printed only the small edition of six hundred copies. Of these as many as 450 or 500 copies are already disposed of, leaving only one hundred and fifty copies for sale to those who may wish to purchase them.

If the demand for extra copies should warrant it, another edition will be printed.

(2) If any responsible party should desire permission to publish this entire book or any portion of it, even if no more than a single monograph, he is invited to correspond

## Selected Psalms and Monographs

with the collator and editor of this volume, whose address will be the Rev. Albert B. King, care M., W. & C. Pennypacker, Asbury Park, N. J., U. S. A.

### MONOGRAPHS.

Which prove that the late Rev. Frederick La Rue King was endowed with exceptionally great ability for the difficult work of expounding the Davidic Psalms.

The work is difficult, simply because it is difficult to find a man who can fully sympathize with David's utterances.

Because of this, many commentators who lived in the past, and have said many true and good words about the Psalms, have, as a rule, failed to penetrate to the core of things. One of the last generation of expositors, speaks for many of his brethren as truly as for himself, when at the end of his comment on the Psalter, he exclaims, in substance, as he throws aside his pen, "There, I have made a finish, and what have I done more than my predecessors, in adding to the shelves of libraries, another commentary of doubtful value?"

Turning from these, we venture to attempt to exhibit to our readers the proof that the Rev. Frederick La Rue King was endowed with exceptionally great ability for the work of expounding the Davidic Psalms.

### PROOF FROM HIS MONOGRAPHS.

I. David was, from early childhood to the close of life, pre-eminent in a trustful, enthusiastic worship of God, and delight in His presence.

This was eminently true of Mr. King, as shown in the

(A) Biographical Sketch of Rev. Frederick LaRue King, by his brother; and also in the

(B) Sermon on Election.

## Rev. Frederick La Rue King

II. David had a poetical and musical nature. So had Mr. King. The proof of this is seen in

- (A) The Sistine Madonna.
- (B) Lying Awake All Night.
- (C) Sonnet.
- (D) Dies Irae.
- (E) Paraphrase of Psalm XIX.

III. Intuitional elements of David's intellectual activity are equally conspicuous in Mr. King's writings.

- (A) Letter. Imprecatory Psalms. How to justify them.
- (B) Letter. Trusting where we cannot see.
- (C) Christian Science.
- (D) Sub-Conscious Christianity.
- (E) Infant Baptism.
- (F) What mean ye by this service, rendered in coming to the Lord's Supper?

Comments on Selected Psalms 19, 22, 36, 51, 101, 116, 120, 119.

ALBERT B. KING.

# THE HISTORY OF THE

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# Biographical Sketch

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## Rev. Frederick La Rue King

Frederick La Rue King was born in Morristown, New Jersey, January 2nd, 1823. A brief outline of his life would inform us that Mr. King's ancestors for many generations, and on both his father's and mother's side, were consecrated children of God, and as to nationality were English Puritans, French Huguenots, and Dutch Calvinists,—that this mingled blood of the martyrs, whilst transmitting moral qualities and forces, was supplemented and controlled by the renewing, converting and sanctifying grace of God's Spirit, causing his body, in the tender years of childhood to become a temple of God," so that he could say, "I have always loved God,"—that for seventy-six years, beginning with the child of seven, he suffered a "thousand deaths" from asthma, complicated in later years with bronchitis, heart trouble and other organic diseases, which justifies us in speaking of his life as being lived in a furnace,—of varying heat, it is true, but whose fires were never quite extinguished,—that, notwithstanding the fact of being so heavily handicapped in the race of life, Mr. King was enabled to graduate with credit from Princeton University in 1844, and while pursuing his theological studies, taught Latin, History and Rhetoric in that University, so that to this day surviving students of the classes he taught speak of him in terms of honor and grateful love. But work as a teacher, as truly as work as a student, was chiefly preparatory to that of Pastor and Preacher, for which his heart yearned.

In 1855 he began his Gospel Ministry, and labored with success at Hudson City, Wyoming Valley and Stony Point, a ministry which was continued and highly prized by

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his adult church membership, and especially by the children, until asthma blocked the wheels of his activity. Notwithstanding the brevity of these pastorates, these same children, now adults, assure me of the great profit he was to their souls, and that even now his influence is by no means a spent force.

The complication of pulmonary diseases, heart trouble, and other "thorns in the flesh" drove him from place to place for relief, but the relief was never more than temporary. Eventually all these physical enemies took on chronic forms, which were so persistent, that no longer could he enter a pulpit.

Then came a new departure in the unceasing search for health and new ways of serving God. Thus it came about that he and his true-hearted and self-sacrificing sister went to Europe; and there they lived for twenty years, until his good angel in the flesh was "Caught up to Heaven" to receive her reward, and her saddened brother returned to the United States. But before his return, and for many years our beloved brother joyfully discovered and used in Europe opportunities for Christian service. In churches located in the various countries of Europe by American and British Protestants he acted as Elder and Trustee. Also his influence as an Evangelical Christian made itself felt among the guests in those hotels which sheltered him. But of all agencies he employed to witness to the preciousness of Christ as our Jesus, letter writing was the most efficient. Lack of space must exclude all but a few inadequate samples, of the many letters he wrote.

Dear——

I am glad you are reading "The Secret of a Happy Life," by Mrs. Smith. You ask what I think of the chapter on the Divine Union. I must own that it leaves much to be desired in the way of exposition, but I think she holds the right view. She says, page 222, "No one can be in Christ who is not Christ-like." That looks as if she thought that to be



"in Christ" and to be "Christ-like" were one and the same. On page 221 she says that "even the weakest and most failing believer in Christ" may have the Divine Union,—or in other words, the vital relation may have been established by regeneration while not, as yet, vital possession has been secured by sanctification. She sums up the matter well on page 223. "Oneness with Christ means being made partakers of His nature," "as well as of his life, for nature and life are of course one." That means that nature is bound to result in a living that is in accordance with itself. Wonderful truth! It cost me years of study and brooding to make myself master of it, and now that I am master of it, I find that that does not make me one with Christ. No, I must feel after Him and find Him. I must take Him as he is offered. I must act out the life of Christ in order to get the life of Christ in me. Paradox, but yet how true.

Dear——

This morning I was very much struck with the words (Eph. 2: 3rd and 4th) "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, "hath quickened us, etc." The fact of God's loving us when we were dead in sins, impressed me as it had not done before. We are bound to be saved, we can not help ourselves, the King wills it, and who can gainsay Him? Who can get from under the blue sky? God's love is like that mighty dome which we cannot get away from. Trench expresses this idea somewhere very beautifully. What a thought! Imprisoned in God's love, adamant bolts and bars around us; we cannot break one, nor can any one break in to pluck us out. Who shall measure His words, when He speaks of such things?—Captives of love—a hopeless captivity—we are never to be ransomed. We must make up our minds to an eternity of joy.

Not by toil and hard climbing do we attain to the eternal home. The City which has the foundations descends

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to us out of Heaven. And if any one should ask me when I am a dweller in that place,—‘Why are you here?’ I can say, because I am my Father’s son. I have inherited it. I am fully authorized to say that (John 1:12.)

The Highest looked down, and behold, we were “the captives of the Mighty and the prey of the Terrible.” “If I will, who can resist?” said the King, and at the word our shackles fell away. We did not deliver ourselves. The blessed One said, “I came down from heaven to do the will of my Father in heaven.” We had no toil. Do the trees toil when the soft spring air breathes upon them and their leaves start forth?

“And I grew restless as I heard,  
Restless and buoyant as a bird  
Down vast aerial currents sailing—  
Yielding and bowing I knew not whither,  
But feeling resistance unavailing.”

It was easy for me, but for Him, the Blessed One, it was hard, hard, hard,—“By Thine agony and Bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion.”

When will the time come that I so long for, when we, who perforce stand so much aloof from His sorrow, will at last understand it. Oh! will we not shout “Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood! We will then have the tongue of angels, and be able to speak of these things.

The following was found in a corner of my brother’s trunk after his decease. It now sees the light for the first time. It is a specimen of his graceful multum-in-parvo style. The title we furnished ourselves.

CHRISTIAN LIVING, DYING;

CHRISTIAN DYING, LIVING.

Lord, I desire to die, in order that I may live; I desire to live in order that I may die. Thou commandest me to live, and to bring forth the works of life, and I cannot unless Thou

quickenest me. Thou commandest me to die, and I cannot shake off this body of sin and corruption. Slay the old man within me this day. Take away this my life, which is death, and bring me that death which is life. I cast myself upon Thee. I am willing to be what Thou wilt. Work this great change within me, and within those who are near and dear to me, and Thine shall be the glory.

In tracing the biography of any good man the most important question asked is this—"What was the outcome of all the training and grace received, as respects character and deed?"

We once called our brother's attention to the fact of his well-nigh universal popularity. Whilst he could not deny it, he expressed his astonishment that any one could find in him anything to admire and love. And as he said this, his face expressed child-like wonder, innocence, and absence of all self-conscious egotism. I told him, with a smile, that probably I had discovered the secret of his popularity. Shall I not make you, my reader, to share in my knowledge? He was popular (as I told him) because he gave with sympathetic generosity that very thing most needed by the recipient. His sympathy was so sincere, so deep, so painfully intense at times, that frequently we withheld from his ears the recital of our own little losses, sorrows and soul testings, that we might not add sorrow to his sorrow.

But many drank large draughts at the ever-flowing spring of his compassionate love,—not realizing that often his distress for them exceeded their distress for themselves.

To sympathy for distress, he added that which is peculiarly acceptable to the wretched, confidence in the truthfulness of their narratives. His capacity to trust people sometimes amazed those better acquainted with the dark side of human nature. He has been heard to say, "The man who wants me most is the man to whom I give myself the quickest."

Was he not often deceived by the selfish and ungrateful?

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Not often,—yet sometimes he may have been imposed upon. But more frequently his pride-debasing humility sank him below the level of men whom he knew to be unworthy in character yet needing relief; and so, because he received freely of the things he did not deserve, he freely gave in turn to his undeserving brethren.

To love others as he loved himself, he regarded as only second to the great duty and privilege of loving the Supreme Father with “all his soul, with all his mind, with all his heart, and with all his strength.” But I heard him once say, reproaching himself, “How difficult it is to love some people.” And yet he seemed to love all with either approval or pity.

To the gifts of loving sympathy and truthfulness, he was known to friends as possessing a well-balanced endowment of all the intellectual and moral faculties.

He was many sided. He was not largely developed as a mathematician, and yet a problem which could not be solved by other teachers yielded its secret to his patient investigation.

His were the characteristics of a great scholar. His mind was gifted with continuity of thought and power to absorb himself in the subject pursued, excluding the irrelevant. When only a boy it was often necessary to shake him by the shoulder to awaken him from the scenes depicted in the book he was reading.

His memory was so retentive that without committing to memory he could repeat the long poems of Sir Walter Scott and Milton's *Paradise Lost* from simply reading them over. He could repeat long articles and hymns from reading them but once. His great memory stored his mind with abundance of knowledge when but a boy. Yet he was not a sponge or an echo; but better a living tree, self-rooted, and fruit-bearing.

One afternoon, returning from school, the town Postmaster stood at his door, and said, “Frederick, read for me the address upon this letter.” And when Frederick de-

clared his inability to do so, surprise was expressed, and he was told, "Why, they all told me you knew everything."

The studious boy was father to the greater adult scholar. His friends did not stop to analyze the elements of the loving admiration with which they regarded him, but his learning and thought had weight with them. So did his morals and religion. His brother says, that from boyhood up he never heard him say a vile, wicked word.

Doubtless he was kept from flagrant sin through dwelling in the holy presence of his Creator-Father, with whom he communed all the day long. This would explain the fact that one of his friends remarked that his was the "Whitest soul she was ever acquainted with." This may also explain his wonderful personal influence upon all who approached him. His frail body was a temple of the Holy spirit, so that in a limited sense there went out from this living sanctuary, as from our blessed Lord, healing virtue to those who came in touch with him.

At the beginning of his ministry there lived within the bounds of his congregation a woman who was a Spiritist, beset by demons seeking to lead her into perdition. When sick Mr. King visited her, and the woman was heard to say that his visits neutralized the evil influence of the Spirits. Such an influence emanated from him all through his life—and, when in October, 1905, he was slowly passing from earth to heaven, a gentleman passing through an oppressively bitter experience declared that he was unmistakably strengthened by the dying minister's sympathetic spirit.

But what towered above all other characteristics and experiences of his life was a loving, trustful submission to God's righteous Fatherly will,—Whether He willed sickness or health, ease or pain, weakness or strength, restrictions or abundance, joy or sorrow. The sin of sins in his eyes, was rebellion against the Father's merciful and wise will. An extract from a letter written to me after his death illustrates this abiding love and trust in God.

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“One little incident is so characteristic of the nearness of Mr. King’s life to the Christ life that I cannot refrain from mentioning it. He had been suffering more than usual, had slept but little for many nights. I went in to say ‘Good morning,’ and found him struggling for breath. Without realizing that I was speaking my thought aloud, I said,—‘Oh, it is too hard, too cruel.’ A look of pain greater than that caused by the physical suffering passed over the dear face, and as soon as the difficult breathing would permit, came these words,—‘Never say or think that again, dear; it hurts me more than all the pain. I am better now, and it is all right; our Father knows what each of His children needs.’ ”

He had many friends who regarded him as a great saint, and their hearts would say to us, “Mark this Perfect man,” and a Roman Catholic of great learning and social eminence in the Old Church, was heard to call him “a saint.”

Nevertheless, we regard it as the crowning excellence of his character, that he was profoundly humble and free from the injurious vice of proud or vain-glorious egotistical self-consciousness. To intelligent friends, especially to those confessing to the infirmities of ordinary mortals, this was the charm of all that was charming in the character of the man we are portraying.

He compared himself not with other men, deprived by circumstances of his talents; but measured himself, as we all should, by the stature of the One perfect man,—and cried, as we should confess,—“Unclean, unclean. God be merciful to me the sinner.”

The following quotation from a letter to an old friend shows how his eager spirit was imprisoned to the very end.

“Dear——

Until the end bear fruit in old age, be lowly. Pray constantly the prayer of the Publican. And neglect not communion with God day by day. Praise Him, thank Him,

and live with Him. As for me, I am full of thanksgiving, and yet have the great trial of seeing to my hand plenty of work that I am prepared to do, and would delight to do, and which I cannot touch with one of my fingers. I dare not even conduct the weekly meeting for prayer. I have thought something of going to Meadville and consulting Dr. Dewey. I would adopt any regimen that promised to remove this that destroys my life. However, I "despise not the chastisement of the Lord," and will not faint though I am "rebuked of Him." It has not separated me from His love, and shall not."

But through all his trials his soul was fed with the manna of heaven.

The sacred Scriptures were his constant delight. The active and passive obedience of Christ as his substitute was precious in his eyes, but while he appreciated the glorious deeds of Christ in connection with his first coming, that did not obscure for him the glory of the second coming of Jesus the Messiah to reign with his saints. In accordance with Peter's exhortation he was "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God," and according to the promise looking for a "new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Writing to us of his decease, a mutual friend pays this tribute to his memory:

"Yesterday, the day following the tidings, was 'All Saints Day,' and he was much in my thoughts, as you cannot doubt. I shall always love to dwell upon his virtues; his uncommon gifts, and culture, his lofty character, his high-toned piety, his courtesy and gentleness, the unfailing cheerfulness with which he bore his sufferings, and the charm which attached all to him."

The mortal remains of this dear brother and friend were conveyed to the family burial plot in Morristown, New Jersey.

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Upon the enduring granite are inscribed these words:

Rev. Frederick La Rue King.

Jan. 2, 1823—Oct. 18, 1905.

“Fallen asleep in Christ.”

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

“I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

In closing this Biographical Sketch, we call attention to the fact, that owing to chronic illness his life may be characterized as being “in deaths often,” yet it was not until he reached the ripe age of eighty-three that his soul was gently released from the tabernacle of clay, the fetters of disease struck off; and he who had been so often compelled to serve by standing and waiting, was ushered into the unhindered and untiring activities of the Heavenly life in the presence of his Lord.

The permission was asked, and granted, by the Rev. A. F. Schaufler, D.D., President of the New York City Mission and Tract Society, to print his private letter to me upon the reception of the sketch of my brother's life, and which was dated April 24th, 1909, and is as follows:

“I received your little biography of your Godly brother. The picture of him is most life-like, indeed, far more so than most half tones are. The story of his life touched my heart and reminded me of my intercourse with him in St. Moritz years ago. You certainly have not overstated the Christlikeness of his character. He was one of the Godliest men that it has been my privilege to meet, and I shall, of course, be glad that I saw him and had the privilege of spiritual converse with so sweet a character.”



## God's Electing Love.

“For he saith to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’”—Rom. ix; 15.

Here is a statement of what is called the doctrine of election—a doctrine perhaps more misused than any other revealed in the Word of God. Misused in a variety of ways, but especially in one that is a most strange perversion of its real nature and intent. It was given in order that we might be filled with peace and joy and a sense of freedom and liberty; but as it is used, its practical effect is to fetter our very souls. It was given that we might once for all see the gates of Heaven set wide open and the whole multitude of mankind at liberty to enter. It is so misused that we are too apt to conceive those gates as shut and locked with a stern keeper who, though myriads apply for admission, opens the gate only for one here and there.

This is wrong, and I wish to show that the sovereignty of God in salvation does not contract its scope but enlarges it far beyond our highest conceptions and desires. And until you feel that this is the case, you have not really understood the doctrine of election.

To merely believe that it is true is not enough, you must be glad that it is true, you must be able to use it for your peace and comfort and joy, or else you are totally ignorant of it. You must not tolerate it merely as you would tolerate a disagreeable guest whom you cannot send away; you must warmly welcome and dearly love it. Suppose one of the Esquimaux savages that Dr. Kane saw in the North, who live on flesh wholly, were presented with a loaf of bread. He would know its shape, its color, its smell, its size, its hardness, its weight; but what, after all, would he know about

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the loaf till he knew that it was good to eat? So believe me, brethren, we do not know anything about a doctrine until we know what that doctrine will do for us.

What reason would there be for God's revealing to us a particular class of truths if those truths were not to be of practical spiritual benefit to us? When we see a mother carrying food to her infant, we know that of all the kinds of food that she has, she selects that which it can enjoy and thrive by. And so when God reveals to us divine things in His Word, we may be sure that from all the infinite depths of knowledge. He has selected those truths by which we can profit; and if we do not enjoy and thrive by them, it is either because our hearts are not right, or else the doctrines are not understood.

"I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion." To the soul that is truly filial and confiding, this doctrine is really the Gospel itself, a wide and grand annunciation of God's mercy to a fallen world; than which no wider or grander could be made. Many methods might be taken to show this. I wish now to present an historical method. I wish to show what this doctrine did for the Church at the three great epochs when it was prominently announced. Three great men, one the greatest Apostle, one the greatest Church Father, one the greatest Protestant theologian, announced this as a most blessed and precious truth.

My inquiry now is: Why was this truth good news to Paul, and to those for whom he labored? to Augustine and the Church of the fourth century? and to John Calvin and the Church of the sixteenth century?

The inquiry will then come with some force, Why should it not be precious and blessed to us of the present time?

First then, Paul not only here, but elsewhere throughout this epistle, tells us that God of His own free and sovereign will chooses whom he will save. This is no mere abstract philosophical-theological speculation; it is a practical truth

and one which sent a thrill of joy through the hearts of those to whom he preached.

At the beginning of this epistle you will find that it is addressed "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God." Circumcised or uncircumcised, it made no difference, for all were now called. The old economy might be likened to a tree. For ages had it been putting forth its leaves, for ages had it been blossoming, and now Paul was plucking the ripe fruit from the branches and giving it to the uncircumcision. He was inviting the Gentile, without becoming any the less a Gentile to enter into all the rich results, the priceless blessings of the old dispensation. Oh! how the hard-hearted Jews gnashed their teeth at the sight! It is almost impossible for us to conceive the horror and rage that filled them when they saw one of their nation taking the lead in promulgating such traitorous views. At Jerusalem, merely upon Paul's saying that Christ, when he saw Him the second time in the Temple, commissioned him to go and preach to the Gentiles, the multitude of Jews were transported with frenzy, threw dust into the air and cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

The truth is that the Jews thought that all the blessings of the covenant with God were as exclusively theirs as any of you regard any piece of property as exclusively yours. They held that the Gentiles could share in these blessings only by becoming one of themselves, by being circumcised and keeping the whole ceremonial law.

As to themselves, they felt perfectly confident. They were Abraham's children, God's covenant was made with Abraham and his seed, and therefore they were perfectly safe. And in all this the sacred Scriptures seemed to bear them out. Paul, in the third chapter of Galatians, says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." That would go to show that if one were a child of Abraham he would certainly inherit the promises. And see the latter part of the verse, "He saith not seeds as of many (that is of many

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racés or families), but as of one, and to thy seed." This would seem to exclude the Gentiles, for it distinctly asserted that only the race of Abraham could inherit the promises. Now then, in this state were the Jews confidently expecting their own salvation because of their natural descent, and proudly excluding the Gentiles because of their natural descent. They felt assured that God had bound himself by a promise He could not break, to save them all and to deny salvation to the Gentiles. They thought that God existed but for them, that His infinite mercies were to be exhibited only towards them, and the illimitable resources of His power, goodness and love were to be exerted only in their behalf.

It was to thwart and crush such a sentiment as this that Paul announces the great doctrine of the text that God's will is not bound at all, that He is not obliged to save every Jew or to deny salvation to any Gentile; that no Jew should feel secure, that no Gentile should despair. That no matter what He had promised to Abraham, He was still free to save whom He pleased. "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy."

Suppose in a certain village there were a number of orphans, and a good man had promised to take care of them all; and had built a house with pleasant grounds and every comfort, where he lived with them. Now, suppose that through the pailings of the fence a little ragged boy from another village should wistfully peep and beg of the children who were playing within that he might be admitted, too; and they should say to him, "Away with you! This is for us. The owner has bound himself to keep it for us alone." This would illustrate the position of the Jew and the Gentile. The Jew thought that he possessed all, that the Gentile had nothing. Now, suppose the owner of the house had overheard what was said and should turn to those who had repulsed the poor little stranger with these words: "I am not bound to keep this place exclusively for you. I can admit whom I please. I will even place this little ragged boy

amongst you and let him enjoy all that you enjoy." There we have an illustration of the doctrine of election. Another illustration is the parable of the laborers. Those who came at the eleventh hour received as much as those who had borne the burden and heat of the day. And when the rest murmured, the employer of all said, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? I said that, I would give a penny for the work of a day, but that does not prevent me from giving a penny for the work of an hour or for no work at all." There again is the doctrine of election, which is this, that the loving will of God knows no restrictions, and is in no respect hampered in its exercise. This was the doctrine that like a mighty battering ram assailed the high walls that the Jew had erected around the city of God. It smote them till they rocked to their foundations, till they fell flat and laid the city open on all sides, and then from beside "That fount that flowed fast by the oracle of God," arose the cry of invitation to all the nations of the earth, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "And the Spirit and the Bride say come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

Is there not reason enough why Paul should love this doctrine and make it prominent in his teachings?

Three hundred years had rolled away since Paul preached and wrote. The Church had been occupied with many things. She had selected and separated from all other writings the inspired books of the New Testament. She had settled the doctrines with regard to the person of the Saviour, and now she began to study herself. The nature of the remedy which God had provided had hitherto occupied her, now she began to examine the disease. The Church of God at that time was like some of us who, after hearing a great many instructions, and getting a great deal of fancied knowledge, suddenly have our attention arrested and our gaze turned upon ourselves, and the evil of our hearts.

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The fourth century was an age when men were convinced of sin, perhaps more than at any time in the history of the human race.

At this time men everywhere are exerting their faculties to the utmost to make transit from place to place speedy—to have the means of sending intelligence in an instant all over the world, to make machines of great power able to produce the most complicated manufactures. Men are striving for power, everywhere. Now imagine a time when the civilized world with an eagerness and an enthusiasm not unlike that which we see nowadays in material things was striving, not after power, but to get rid of sin. The busy brain was at work inventing then as now, but not inventing contrivances to develop power but contrivances to wipe away sin from the heart of man. Time would fail were I only to indicate even in the briefest way the schemes and institutions, some of them vaster than anything that we have at the present day, which occupied the attention and made busy the lives of men, and which had for their sole object the purification of men from sin.

Added to this was a general feeling of desertion by God. The Goths and Vandals were then commencing their attacks upon the Roman Empire, and when Rome itself was taken Christian people began to despair. God seemed to be pursuing them for their sins to their utter destruction; the world seemed coming to an end. Now almost always when such an intense feeling pervades the people of a time, this feeling finds its representative in one man who goes through all the conflict that the age is going through, only in an intenser form and who sometimes is permitted to discover and administer a remedy to the disease of the time.

So was it now. Augustine of Carthage had been a great sinner, and if there was ever a man who had sounded the depths of sin in his heart, he was that man. And no one that ever lived strove more earnestly to purify himself from every taint of sin.

The most plausible system of the age, the Manichean system, he tried faithfully for years. Vain effort. It was all of no avail.

He saw clearly that there was nothing in him that could be pleasing to God, and years of struggle had taught him that sin was something too mighty to be battled with; that human nature was forever held fast in its serpent coils; that it reached deep into and tainted the inmost nature of man. Unholy, guilty, helpless, in the power of sin; he was in the presence of Him who pronounced death against the sinner. What was it that drew Augustine out of this horrible pit and miry clay and made him a deliverer to thousands on thousands of his day; and the stay and support of the Church through the night of ages, till the dawn of the Reformation? It was the doctrine of the text, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy." It was a mercy founded on the arbitrary will of God that was just suited to Augustine's case. No other mercy could be conceived of when once the soul had conceived of sin. Augustine felt that he needed a mercy that looked for nothing in the sinner; and he found it. And it was through him that the Western Church, before any other church, came to a consciousness of the utterly ruined estate of man by sin, and to the knowledge of the sovereignty of God in salvation. Woe be to us if God is not sovereign in salvation, for He has declared, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and woe be to us if Satan's true accusations can bind God to the punishment of the guilty wretch. But it is not so. Just as the doctrine of election in the time of Paul established the freedom of God to save even a Gentile, so in the time of Augustine the doctrine of election established the freedom of God to save even a sinner. And through the long night of time that followed it was the writings of Augustine that showed to a darkened church that righteousness and peace had kissed each other, and that God could be just and yet the Justifier of him who had broken his holy law.

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And needful was it that God should have such a witness, for as twelve hundred years rolled away, a spiritual tyranny settled down upon the Church more terrible than before or since has afflicted men. A hierarchy, from the Pope upon his throne down through cardinals, archbishops, bishops, even to the parish priest, held the spiritual destinies of men in its iron grasp.

It opened, and no man could shut; it shut, and no man could open. Its decisions were decisions for eternity. The court of heaven registered its every act, and from it there was no appeal. Having granted it the privileges that what it bound on earth should be bound in Heaven, and what it loosed on earth should be loosed in Heaven, God had put into its hand the eternal destinies of men. The wretch upon whom its cold malignity was directed had nothing to hope for in this world or the next. Whoever questioned its purity, doubted its dogmas, or defied its power, had not only supple kings for his executioners, but all the dread powers of the upper spaces, when the culprit should escape thither.

Why was it that the reformers of the seventeenth century; why did a Luther and a Calvin again take up and proclaim anew the doctrine of Paul and Augustine? It was because it dashed the scepter out of the hand of the Pope, and the crozier out of the grasp of the bishop, and declared once more the spiritual liberties of mankind. "Priest, prelate, pope," the emancipated serf could exclaim, "You cannot tie up God by any engagement so that he shall not have perfect freedom in salvation."

"Notwithstanding all the powers He has granted to His church, after all, salvation is as He wills, not as you will. Excommunicate if you please; I can appeal and He will hear and issue the appeal. God says, though Rome curses, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' The doctrine of election is the very charter of our liberties. If God is sovereign, then man is free.



\*Modern history establishes the truthfulness of this claim. Sections or denominations of the universal Christian Church, in the form of their church government, lean more or less towards the Republican, as their Creeds, or Confessions of Faith, affirm or deny God's sovereignty.

And, as we might expect, in those countries where are found Christians living under a Church government yielding liberty of conscience, and in numbers sufficient to influence the government of the State, as in free America, there do we find state and federal governments more or less Republican, as their population absorb or reject the universal sovereignty of our Creator-Father.

Yes; beyond a question, the doctrine of election is the very charter of our liberties. If God is sovereign, then man is free.

Election is a free salvation, not the bondage imposed by a tyrant; and as such is the foundation and cornerstone of our trust, peace, hope, liberty and joy.

The Bible declares that the grace of election which saves the helpless sinner is proved to have reached him with its friendly arm of Almighty power, since he through faith draws down upon himself the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" unto justification, and the grace of the Holy Spirit by whom he is sanctified unto obedience.

Listen to the Apostle Peter (Petros—Stone) whose evangelical words are a (petra) rock on which we can rest our wearied souls. I Peter, 1:2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

A building may be so heavy as to crush its foundation. God's electing love towards hell-deserving sinners is a foundation rock (petra).

Let us test this foundation by placing upon it the heaviest, because the saddest, truth of all the Holy Scriptures. What is this but the preterition (passing by), or reprobation (rejection) of stubborn, God-defying sinners?

\*From this point to the end of the sermon, the writing is done by Mr. King's brother. A. B. K.

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Fact 1. Let us weigh this in the scales of God's justice and mercy. At one end of the scales is the cup in which is placed reprobation. At the other end we place with confession of sin and self-abhorrence the fact that we all deserve the endless fire and undying worm of hell. Many of God's elect realize it in this world, and all others of the race will realize it in the world of spirits.

The sense of guilt with most of God's saints is weighty enough to counterbalance the awful depression created by preterition, or the passing by of those who resist God's Spirit too long. Some saints have even been willing to be damned if thus God may be more perfectly justified and glorified.

But there are tens of thousands living in Christendom who are true saints, but not so heroic as these, and therefore require other weighty facts cast into the opposite scale.

Fact 2. God takes no delight in the eternal death of any sinner. Ezekiel 18: 31, 32: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

Fact 3. God's will and Christ's sacrificial pity are the two arms of love thrown around the reprobate, but he breaks away from the shielding pressure, and madly prefers to perish than give up his idol sins.

II Peter, 3: 9: "The Lord\*\*\*is not willing (wishing) that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

I Tim., 2:4: "Who (God our Saviour) will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

I Tim., 4:10: "Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those who believe."

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Heb. 2:9: "That He by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

It is easy to believe that as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, so He must weep over all of the race eternally lost, for did He not suffer unto death that there might be accumulated merit to cancel the guilt of all men? He suffered and died for the lost.

It is Jesus who says to the majority of the race, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

Why does not the Omnipotent Saviour force rebellious sinners to receive repentance unto life? Because this would destroy their free agency and moral accountability. "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Fact 4. It is in harmony with man's freedom of will that God elects him to eternal life, for the Bible plainly asserts that those, and only those who believe gospel truth and are being sanctified by the Spirit are elected or chosen. II. Thess. 2:13 "God hath from the beginning chosen (elected) you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

So, if you are trusting in Jesus, who is the truth, and yielding your life to the control of the Holy Spirit, you are beyond a doubt one of the elect. Is that hard and repulsive? Does it not strengthen and exhilarate your soul?

Fact 5. But do not both our Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul plainly assert the fact that certain members of our race are reprobated? Yes,—but of whom is it asserted,—for this makes all the difference practically between its truth and falsehood. If told to the earnest, penitent seeker of salvation through faith in Christ, as if by possibility he could be passed by and reprobated by the decree of his Heavenly Father, that would be a monstrous, cruel falsehood.

Therefore, listen as if all the strength and acuteness of your soul resolved itself into a gigantic ear, into which I was pouring these words.

Paul, in Romans 8:33, speaking to persecuted Christian believers, comforts them by the words, "Who shall lay

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anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God (the righteous Judge) who justifieth" you.

But the same Paul, in the next chapter, when speaking to rebellious opposers of God's sovereignty, intimates that they are in character similar to stubborn, hard-hearted Pharaoh; and so in compassion to them who are guilty of proud, stubborn wilfulness, He seeks to humble them, that they may seek mercy at their Creator's hands.

Roman 9: 20-22. "Nay, but O man, who art thou that replieth (disputeth) against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why has thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"

"What if God, willing (purposing) to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction?"

Thus Paul seeks to awaken these Pharaoh-like rebels to a sense of guilt and danger, in a merciful effort to save them from God's wrath. A surgeon once told me he saved a man who was on the border land of death from Creeping Paralysis. He used a desperate remedy for a desperate case. Into the flesh, fast becoming insensible, he plunged long, large pins, and continued this heroic treatment until finally reaction set in, and the patient was saved, as by a miracle.

There are but few instances where New Testament teachers are obliged to resort to such heroic treatment in efforts to save proud, sneering rebels, fast slipping down into the abyss of Gehenna. The life of our Lord furnishes two instances.

Jesus came to Nazareth, His early home, and in the Synagogue preached the sweetest of gospel sermons from Isaiah 61:1, "And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Then yielding to a temptation of the Devil, they began to sneer and belittle him.

What can Jesus do for them now? Their (possible) Saviour, still seeking their salvation, plunged into their souls the thorny truth of "The day of vengeance of our God." (See Isaiah 61:2.) Yes, Jesus plunges a thorn into the proud flesh of His fellow townsmen, in declaring preterition; for it is indicated by Jehovah's action in sending Elijah to only one widow for the supply of her needs, and passing by many other widows, just as needy probably. Then Jesus plunged another thorn of preterition into the flesh of His audience,—in calling attention to the fact that, although, there were many lepers in Israel, Elisha was sent to only Naaman, the Syrian, with healing power, and the others were not selected for the blessing. This inflamed His audience to a murderous rage, and they made the attempt to kill Him.

Both the sweet of the gospel and the bitter of God's decree failed to do good to these sinners against light.

Once more, in John 6:37, Jesus gave a message to the quarrelsome, unbelieving Jews, which implied reprobation in the words, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," and in the last clause of the same verse He gives this cheering encouragement to honest, yet timid seekers of Himself,—“And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

What could give greater assurance that all those who come to Jesus in faith are, each and all, God's elect?

And what can I, and what can you, who "fear God" and tremble at His word," desire, ask for, or possess more precious than this, the assurance of Jesus Himself, that we who have fled for refuge to His outstretched arms ARE God's elect, who can "never come into condemnation," but "are passed from death unto life?"

But in the narrative of this same chapter, John 6:64, we find Jesus discovered who "believed not and who should betray Him." And so as a last effort of well-nigh hopeless mercy we see Him thrust the thorn of reprobation again into their wicked and angry souls, saying (verse 65) "There-

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fore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were (be) given unto him of my Father." Oh, the sad words of the next verse (66), "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

The compassionate physician of souls was, in appearance, defeated in His severe, yet loving efforts to restore healthy normal action to these wicked souls paralyzed by self-will, unbelief, love of sin, and hatred of that righteousness, personified and exhibited in the words and works of Jesus.

We have now ascertained that sadly heavy preterition or reprobation is made light as an angel's wing by the five other weighty truths which we have furnished as a counter-balance.

Our souls are stirred with joy when we read our Saviour's words recorded in John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life."

And this joy should be made boundless and endless by accepting the fact that those thus "passing from death unto life" are beyond a doubt of the number of God's elect.

And all this love, all this grace, and all this free, full salvation is true, notwithstanding all the past, all the present and all the future of our imperfect lives on earth.

Election saves us from the iron grasp of our three destructive enemies. Our fleshly nature defiantly says to God,—"I hate you. I love my sins, and reject Thy Son, who saves His people from their sins. I do not wish to be saved from my sins." This is a mighty will, but the Almighty will of our sovereign Father says, "I will have mercy," and the Flesh is throttled, if not killed; yea, we have a new self.

The World defiantly says, "I am the friend of mighty Satan, and am saturated with the deceitful wickedness of the Devil and Hell, and I attack the weak sinner, and press him close on every side, and he cannot escape from me." This is a mightier will, but the Almighty will of our sovereign Father

says,—“I will have mercy,” and the World is paralyzed, and relaxes its hold.

The Devil, “that Old Serpent,” is coiled about the sinner in his increasing indulgence of sinful habits. The Serpent hisses, “I am the actual sovereign of this world. The great God has given it to me. As the buzzard and vulture have a legal right to the offal and vile wastes of the earth, so have I a legal right to you, a part of the moral refuse of the world. You are mine, and cannot escape.” Satan’s will is still more powerful, but the Almighty will of our Sovereign Father utters the decrees of election,—“I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy,” and the Old Serpent uncoils himself, and retreats to the bottomless pit. Hallelujah!

God’s Almighty grace in election conquers the enemies of His people. The Lord God, Omnipotent in His love, reigneth, and the fiat of that love reaches with controlling force both the terrified ears of our deadly enemies and our delighted ears; and we drink in with increasing thirst those words of Salvation,—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

## The Sistine Madonna.

This picture appears to have been painted, not to be set up as an idol in a church, or to be an article of virtue in the galleries of the rich, but to be used merely as a banner in church processions. Intended thus to be borne along amid a throng of bowing worshippers as part of a pomp, and not to be contemplated; the monks who ordered it wished in all probability simply a splendid Madonna, and were indifferent to the details. This may be the reason why Raphael, for once free from the dictation of patrons, or the petty details of mere material beauty, was enabled to pour forth freely his powers, and set forth the situation of Mary as mother of the Lord, in dramatic completeness.

Raphael's Madonnas are generally abstract, for the most part representing simply motherhood. The Sistine Madonna is the true Mother of the Lord, painted as at some moment of her transcendent experience. This is indicated by the curtain flung back, as if, on the instant revealing not only Mary to us, but to Mary something that has been before her. We may well imagine that it represents the highest and grandest moment of Mary's spiritual experience. What was this moment? There is in the portico of the old Portinari Hospital at Florence,—Santa Maria Nuova,—a fresco representing the Conception, in which Mary, bathed in the light of an approaching glory, and surrounded with angelic creatures full of frolic joy, is shown as averted and bending—perfectly passive in the presence of what was coming upon her. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." And doubtless this was her frame of mind at the beginning of her strange and mysterious office. For there was much to endure. But there came a time when, if only for an instant, simple endurance gave



place to something spontaneous, and the acceptance of her position as Mother of the Lord partook of the nature of an act. This seems to have been the case at her visit to Elizabeth, when, beginning to realize who it was to whom she was to give birth; she burst forth into joyous song, exulting that God through her child-bearing was about to deliver her people. If, however, we should choose the point of time, most likely to be associated with such an exalted spiritual experience, we would take the instant, when, at the Presentation in the Temple, she received again her child from the arms of Simeon. Then, (if only for an instant), we might well believe the narrow appropriating love of the mother would vanish in the presence of the grand prospect before her little one, and she would feel like the Mother of the Race,—a new Eve,—through him she bore in her arms as she presented him before God in His Temple. One is inclined to think that this very occasion was in the mind of Raphael, for, at the corner of the picture, at the right of the spectator, is a little glimpse of a building, which can be hardly any other than the temple. Certainly such a spiritual experience is depicted. It might well be entitled,—The Presentation at the Temple, as seen from its spiritual side. It is as if to Mary a sudden revelation had been made of the awful significance of her situation, transforming her passivity into an act, so that she who before had thought that something wondrous had happened to her, began to do a wondrous deed. Notice the position of the Madonna is not one of calm repose, she is not standing quietly on a cloud as if to receive worship. She is stepping rapidly forward. And this not with stateliness and majesty. There is no “*incedit regina*” about her manner. So desirous is Raphael of making this clear, that he has given a certain briskness and hurry to her movement,—her left foot is lifted and the corner of her robe brushed aside by the air, her scarf is also puffed out and blown backward. There is nothing here of the self-consciousness of a fine lady, so often seen in Raphael’s Ma-

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donnas. She is forgetful of self; she is on service. She is the simple, handsome maiden, once ready to endure God's will, now with her active powers raised to their highest, absorbed in her great work,—that of bringing the son to whom she has given birth into the very presence of the Eternal Glory—to the right hand of God. Behind her is the spiritual effulgence of which her act is but a manifestation. Above and around in the background are multitudes of cherubic faces with no sign of homage, but present to signify that that which had been brought to pass was the outcome of all the life and energy of the Unseen World, and bending as those who, (we are told), desire to look into this thing. For one of the most remarkable things about this picture is the total absence of Mariolatry. There is nothing pictured or suggested that tends to mar his honor whose name is above every name. At first sight this does not seem to be the case. But if more closely examined, the figures of St. Sixtus and Santa Barbara are seen not to be in attitudes of worship. The centre of interest to them, as well as to Mary, is something unpainted towards which Mary is rapidly moving. This is plainly indicated by the attitude of Santa Barbara, which, though full of respect, is so far from worship that she turns her face away, casting down her eyes at the same time, as if in the presence of something greater than Mary. The expression upon the face of Sixtus is simply one of ominous, wondering scrutiny, utterly averse from adoration; while at the same time he is motioning Mary forward. And she is indeed stepping,—one might say, hurrying forward,—towards what seems plainly shown by the upturned faces of the cherubs at the bottom of the picture, who are leaning upon what appears to be a threshold, down to which the Saint and Pope has abased his tiara, and who are gazing forward and upward with such rapt and glowing countenances that we almost see in them as in a mirror the glory of Him who sitteth on the throne of the Heavens, at whose portal they are. This is made still more clear by the expres-

sion and attitude of the child, who seems to be startled at the scene towards which he is being borne, and filled with dread at what lies before him. The eyes are large, liquid and lustrous, yet with a certain wildness in them. It may possibly be that Raphael here, as elsewhere, has attempted to represent the Divine in the Christ-Child by giving the expression an elfish, puckish character. But it harmonizes wonderfully well with his attitude, which is that of one shrinking back a little. He clings to the arm of his mother with such force that the muscles rise on the upper part of his arm. Whatever there may be in the elfish conventionality that sometimes marks Raphael's style, there is, nevertheless, dread in those eyes. And why should there not be? He who walked this earth, God as well as man, was man as well as God, and felt dread more than once at the prospect of the trials awaiting him, long before that transcendent hour of awe and anguish in the Garden. Why should not He, whom to conceive at all we must conceive as one who, as far as what we call knowledge goes, knew nothing, but whose insight and intuition were infinite? Why should not He be conceived as startled, seeing before him that glory ineffable, which he is to enter and become part of, with perhaps a consciousness of all that lay between,—the great battle and the great victory. He is looking at it with human eyes, meeting it with a human heart, and the Divinity there only enables the human to feel all the more deeply.

The graver and the pencil have hitherto toiled in vain to reproduce the expression of Mary's face which Raphael has made our possession forever. Only lately has the photograph succeeded in giving a distant likeness of what the copyist make, either a stony emptiness or a dreamy vacancy of revery, eulogized by some as a divine calm, etc. I see nothing divine about it. To me it is the most human of human things. The expression of Mary's face, which seems to baffle copyists, is a perfect expression of her Magnificat at the house of Elizabeth. There is nothing strange or unearthly about it. It is possible to catch just such an expression of

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an ordinary, person in ordinary circumstances. I imagine such an one who from a very lowly condition, which she has accepted without a thought of repining, is suddenly lifted up to the loftiest dignity, and keeping still her lowliness of heart,—making no more claim for anything as of right hers than when she was without a thought beyond her lowly lot. Now, imagine that this lofty position is one of loftiest service,—a service for all times and all peoples, which the latest ages will appreciate more fully than the present,—a service so closely connected with her person that she will never be forgotten, a toilless, delightful service; for the straight gate of anxiety and dread having been passed, she finds herself veiled from all shame by honorable marriage, and the submission of a handmaid changed into a mother's kindling joy. All this cannot, of course, be read in her countenance, but was most certainly in her heart, and is necessary to be remembered in judging of her expression.

Her position and office is very high,—it is no less than what it is represented by Raphael,—she is bringing the son to whom she has given birth to the right hand of God. And yet she appears manifestly thinking herself nothing. Hers is human nature, but human nature at its acme, at once lofty and lowly, supremely active and utterly dependent. It is pictured faith. The gentle being whom Raphael depicts is doing that which she feels she is not worthy to do, which it is not possible for her to do, the height indeed of whose significance she but dimly comprehends. Yet forward she steps out upon the void, her trusting feet laying the ponderous beams that support her over the abyss as she approaches the Eternal throne. Unabashed, unbold, or with the boldness that says, “when I am weak, then am I strong,” she advances bearing the ground of her confidence in her arms. That which she supports, supports her, that which she brings, brings her. She is at peace, in repose, on the peak of things.

Lofty, Lowly, Mighty one, I bow no knee to thee, for such as thou art is ever one that is born of the Spirit.

## Lying Awake all Night.

1

Thou has cooled my chamber well,  
And about my tired eye  
Wove thy wonder-working spell;  
Made the world invisible,  
Stooping softly from on high.

2

Thou wouldst soothe the listening ear;  
Thou wouldst lull to slumbers light,—  
With the wind's soft whisper near,  
With the sounds of waters clear,  
Lovely, gentle, tender Night.

3

Vain! Thou canst not give relief  
To my tired and aching head;  
To my thoughts that will not cease,  
Even thou canst not say peace,  
Nurse-like hovering round my bed.

4

Grand is every morning sun,  
Life and light, I know they bless;  
Yet I would when day is done,  
And the weary goal is won,  
Taste the sweets of nothingness.

5

Blissful draught! Ah, now I know  
Sweet t'will be to close life's stage.  
Who would be amidst this throe,  
Midst this trampling to and fro,—  
Broad awake from age to age.

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6

When the long dark night is near,  
    To the end life's day has worn,—  
Lying down without a fear;  
    On my couch with happy cheer,  
I shall slumber 'till the morn.

## Sonnet.

Under the shadow of great thoughts I lie.  
Vast arms lift up around a shield of green,  
Blunted are noontide's golden arrows keen,  
The waste glares far and wide against the sky.  
But here around me not a thing may die.  
Here is cool grass, and shyest flowers are seen.  
Yet life's fair fortress hath not always been.  
This mighty trunk and these huge beams on high  
Were tender shoots once struggling hard for life  
Ages on ages. Hark! me thinks the breeze  
That surges through with long past sounds is rife,  
Tocsins and trappings, anthems, litanies,  
The forum's murmur, shock of deadly strife,  
All the long travail that hath wrought our peace.

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One of his early efforts in literature was the following translation of Thomas Celano's hymn from the latin:

### Dies Irae.

I

Day of wrath that awful day  
Shall the world in ashes lay,  
So all ancient prophets say.

II

What a trembling will there be,  
When the Judge on earth they see  
Making strictest scrutiny.

III

Trumpet sending dreadful sound  
Through the regions underground  
Summons all the throne around.

IV

Death and Nature stand in dread,  
When arise the millions dead  
At the Judge's bar to plead.

V

In the record shall be sought  
Every deed and word and thought,  
And a world to Judgement brought.

VI

When the Judge sits shall be seen  
All the hidden deeds of men,  
Naught shall go unpunished then.



VII

What shall wretched I then say?  
Whom secure to aid my plea,  
When the Just scarce saved be?

VIII

Judge of Judgment just the fount,  
O, remit the great amount,  
Ere the day of strict account.

IX

Think Lord 'twas for me astray  
Thou didst tread life's weary way,  
Let me not be lost that day.

X

Sitting tired Thou still hast sought,  
On the Cross my pardon bought,  
Shall such labor be for naught?

XI

Thou who Mary hast forgiven,  
To the robber openest Heaven,  
Hope to even me hast given.

XII

Though I pray unworthily  
Set, I pray Thee graciously.  
Me from fires eternal free.

XIII

With the sheep a place I pray,  
Keep me from the goats away,  
At Thine own right hand to stay.

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### XIV

I accept the sinners place  
Guilty shame o'erspreads my face,  
Give Lord to the suppliant grace.

### XV

When the curs'd their shame confessing  
Eager flames are sore distressing,  
Call to me then with a blessing.

### XVI

Oh! that day of sad surprise  
When from ashes shall arise  
Guilty man to Judgment come!  
Keep me from the dreadful doom.

Mr. King, in view of the reckless indifference of the impenitent and ignorant, adds substantially these words, "In our days too little notice is taken of the solemn warnings of the wrath to come," given to the sinner in the Bible, and in the "Dies Irae."

## Paraphrase of Psalm 19.

1

In all the splendours of the skies  
His glory is displayed,  
Who lifted up the firmament,  
Who suns and stars hath made.

2

Day unto each succeeding day  
And night to night the same,  
In never ending praise repeat  
The wonders of His name.

3

No speech is heard nor any voice,  
But they to every eye  
In mighty visions spread above  
Unfold their prophecy.

4

Earth's farthest bound and every clime,  
They for their mission claim,  
In every land the rolling heavens  
Good news from God proclaim.

5

In them at dawn are set the fair  
Blue Curtains of the sun,  
A bridegroom bright, an athlete strong,  
Who joys his course to run.

6

From farthest East to farthest West  
He decks the earth with flowers,  
He plants the trees, He wafts the clouds,  
And waters all with showers.



13

Thy judgments true and righteous are,  
Naught hidden from Thine eye,  
The nations scourged, Thy saints chastised,  
Can make Thee no reply.

14

More precious they than finest gold,  
And more than honey sweet;  
For they deliver and enrich,  
And make for glory meet.

15

Thy servant also warning takes—  
He trembles and is still,  
And blessed they who give them heed  
And in them seek Thy will.

16

Who knows his errors? Cleanse Thou me  
From secret faults within,  
And hold me back by Thy right arm  
From all presumptuous sin.

17

Then from guilt's burden I'll be free,  
Restrained and cleansed with blood,  
And looking on Thy handiwork  
Again Thou'lt say, "'tis good."

18

My words and thoughts shall in Thy sight  
Be fairer than the skies,  
And Thy Creation New begin  
In ruined me to rise.

## A Letter.

### IMPRECATORY PSALMS—HOW TO JUSTIFY THEM

Part of the difficulty that assails the Bible reader, (in the imprecatory Psalms), it seems to me, would be removed if we would realize that the Psalms are poetry, and not prose. The power of poetry is in the details that make a picture for the mind. Now a simple curse might not seem so bad, while a detailed curse would appear horrible; and yet there might not be any moral difference between. Take what is perhaps the most striking instance in the Psalms: the verse about dashing infants against the stones, in Psalm 137. It has been held up as something diabolical, when it is nothing of the sort. When Alexandria was bombarded, the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a prayer to be used for the success of the British arms. No one that I know of made the least objection. Now you know what a bombardment is. It is sending shells into the works of the enemy. These shells are great pointed cylinders of iron three feet high or more. They are loaded with powder, so when they burst they rend everything around them to pieces. Now consider what that prayer for the success of the British arms really was. It desired that these shells might be sent where not only walls but their defenders would be torn in pieces. Everybody knows this, and yet nobody objected. But if the Archbishop had gone into detail, had asked that the shells might reach masses of men, that their limbs and their blood might be flung through the air, what an outburst of horror there would have been! And yet, is it goodness and kindness that revolts from such a prayer? No, it is only good taste and fine sensibility. Now we would make no objection if the Psalmist had said: "Daughter of Babylon, blessed be

he who shall destroy thee." But because the Psalmist lived at a time when every one's taste was coarse and their sensibilities blunt, and in order to make a vivid picture gave a detail which was almost invariable in the taking of cities, we are horrified—not wisely, I think.

I got light some years ago upon this subject. There was a "Ring" that dominated New York, and corruption and plunder and iniquity were on the throne. Then I learned that cursing might be consistent with love, and understood some of the curses of the imprecatory psalms. Indeed, LOVE is the most terrible thing in the world, as will yet be seen. Be sure of one thing: we wrestle not with flesh and blood, nor are the curses of the Psalms directed against flesh and blood, but against "principalities and powers and the realm of the darkness of this world."

## A Letter.

### TRUSTING WHERE WE CANNOT SEE

“Dear ——

“It is a real pleasure to attempt to clear up that matter which you called to my attention in your last letter. As I understand it, this seems to be your difficulty. You are anxious about something,—say the health of your brother. You pray that his health may improve. There is an improvement. You say to yourself, God has answered my prayer, He will restore my brother to health again. You pour out the treasures of your gratitude to your Heavenly Father. You thank Him for what He has done, and for what you can expect Him to do. Hope fills your heart, and praise; the future looks bright. And now there is a change; your brother falls back into his old state. The improvement was not a permanent improvement. It was not what you thought it. It was not what you thanked God for. You are not only disappointed, but the flow of grateful feeling is checked, it has no object upon which to expend itself. You are like a person who sees what appears to be a beautiful garden before him. He steps forward eagerly to find it is only a picture painted on a wall.

You are tempted to say, “How can I know but I have often thanked God for what had as little reality as this? Perhaps you will ask yourself, “How can I ever thank God heartily, after this, since I am just as likely to be mistaken as I am now?”

It would be very unfortunate for such a feeling to become the settled tendency of the soul, for thanksgiving and praise are not only delightful to man and pleasing to God, but also one of the best ways by which we can serve God: since we thus bear witness to His existence and providence and





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hand." God's mercy and love never sleep. He is always about some good for us. Well may we cry with the Psalmist, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me. O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them they are more in number than the sand." Ps. 139: 17, 18.

And these thoughts, precious as they are, as being the expression of a Father's watchful love, are more precious because they are an organized whole, parts of a far-reaching plan to secure His glory and (which is the same thing) our highest good. Not in this world or with human wisdom can we understand that plan. For as the Psalmist says,— "How great are Thy works, O Lord, and Thy thoughts are very deep," Ps. 92:5. And yet, those who do not know, who are anxious, worried or in doubt, are considered blameworthy and contemptible by the Psalmist, for he goes on to say,— "A brutish man knoweth not, neither does a fool understand this," v. 6th,—that is, understand that what is so trying in appearance is really for the best, and should awaken very different feelings. And for this he is visited with contemptuous reprobation. Not because he failed to discover that this apparent evil was a real good, since it must have been beyond the ken of man,—but because, knowing that all things and events were in the hands of God, and knowing His covenant relation to His people, and His many promises, he would not trust Him, but showed that he doubted His faithfulness, by the disturbance of his peace when trouble came. He was blameworthy—because he lacked faith—faith, and not insight is the source of the Christian's joy and praise.

And now we get near the solution of this whole matter. We are called upon to thank and praise God, not some times, when we have received some notable proof of His goodness, but "at all times,"—"I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall be continually in my mouth." Ps. 34:1. It is not merely in good times. Not merely when corn and wine increase, but when there is neither corn nor

wine, and famine threatens, then when God's people have only Him they find that He is better than all. This was the experience of Habakkuk, when he said,—“For though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

(Hab. 3:17, 18.) It is of course very delightful when the earth is full of the evidences of God's goodness, when grain covers the fields and fruit the boughs. But these good things have their evil in them, they tend to turn our thoughts from the Giver to the gift; and that is a great loss, for God is greater and better than all He gives.

“Better is the root  
 Than the shoot,  
 Better is the tree  
 Than its fruit,  
 Better is the hand  
 Than all the hand can hold,  
 Better far is faith than blessings manifold.”

And sometimes it is necessary to take away the gift that we may have the Giver. It was because the face of Nature was blasted that Habakkuk turned more intensely to God, and found that it was true, that “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

I was once in a boat on the glassy surface of a lake. The water was such a perfect mirror that I had but to look down, to see the sky and all that was there. Just so at favored times even our lives, usually so chequered, seem to show forth only God's kindness and love. We know well how soon and sadly this scene may shift. Quickly as a breeze may steal over the surface of a lake, turning its glassy surface into ripples and obliterating the beautiful visions of

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the sky, so quickly can a change come into the happiest life, and fill it with darkness and sorrow. But there is a remedy. When the surface of the water fails to give us the image of the sky, we have only to look up to see the sky itself: and no matter how hopeless and terrible the circumstances in which the Christian is placed, he can have perfect peace by looking away to, and trusting implicitly in, the Almighty One who is at the same time all wise and all loving. Well is that peace called in Phil. 4:6, an incomprehensible peace. It is measureless and fathomless as God is.

# Christian Science and its Fallacies.

What a careful Study of Mrs. Eddy's Cult Leads One  
to Accept and Reject

The whole world is, I believe, ready and eager to hear and tell some "new thing." And yet complete redemption was granted 1,800 years ago. We need no "new thing," but only that the old should be fully developed. I cannot lay claim to much knowledge of Christian Science. I attended one of their services and read some of their tracts, something of Mrs. Eddy's book, and more in a later book of hers, which proposed to make things more clear. Alas! I left off more ignorant than I was before.

I have talked with some of the adherents, but without much satisfaction. Indeed I found them sometimes more ignorant of their own tenets than I was myself. For instance, I was talking with a young man, a sort of connection of mine, who claimed to have been perfectly cured of asthma by "Christian Science." I know enough about asthma to know what that meant. I have been cured many times in that way myself. I saw, too, in a moment, by the account he gave of his diet, feeling now that he could eat anything at any time and in any quantity, that the asthma would soon be back and worse than before. I tried to remonstrate with him, but no! he had been delivered from the asthma utterly and forever, and could indulge himself as he pleased. I then asked him to what he attributed his cure. He said "to faith in God." "Then," I said, "you have not been cured by Christian Science, for that does not admit any faith in God. They place dependence upon God, but it is the same kind of

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dependence that we place upon the attraction of gravitation. I am perfectly certain about that natural law and so the Christian Scientists are logically certain as to the action of God. They hold that the existence of disease is logically absurd if there is on the throne of the Universe a God of infinite power and goodness. Disease is therefore simply an illusion. You impose upon yourself when you think that you have asthma. It cannot be because God reigns. All you have to do is to cease imposing upon yourself, to cast away your delusion, to say to yourself this is God's world and not the Devil's, and you will at once be well. There is no need of faith, the only thing is to recognize the fact. The fact is health, disease is the lie, and we have to give it the lie to be delivered from it. We premise that God is on the throne of the Universe, and that He is a God of infinite power and goodness, therefore there can be no such evil thing as disease. I grant the plausibility of the conclusion, but, unfortunately the facts are against it. If I take hot porridge into my mouth, I will be burned even if God is on the throne, and yet to be burned is an evil."

This I said to my young friend, upon whom I fear I did not make much impression. He left me, determined, I think, to eat hot beefsteaks and Welsh rarebit at 10 o'clock at night, assured that no harm could come of it because this is God's world and not the Devil's. This will give you an idea of what my view on the matter is, but I will say something further.

Let us look for a moment at the logic upon which all this Christian Science depends. I must own it is plausible. If God is a God of infinite goodness as well as power, there can be neither disease or sin. Certainly the conclusion seems at first sight to follow inevitably from the premises. But there is a flaw. Let us take the matter of sin, and let us put aside the consideration that if there is no sin that our Saviour's mission to the earth was unnecessary, His teachings untrue and His passion bootless; that the denial of sin is the denial of a

Christianity, which is nothing but a mode of deliverance from sin and its consequences. No, let us look simply at the undoubted facts of the case. What is more manifest to our consciousness than that we ourselves have done wrong, and what is more obtrusive upon our notice than the wrong doing of others? There is the fact, and all the logic of the world cannot argue it away, and there is a good reason why sin should be in this world. God is infinitely good and mighty, and there could be no more perfect manifestation of His goodness and almighty power than the creation of a free human being. Only a free being can be good or happy. But to be free implies the power to sin. This being—man, whom God has made, is not an automaton; if he were, God could not accuse or threaten him as He does everywhere in the Scriptures, nor could we accuse and threaten our fellow men as we do in the ordinary affairs of life. All the nobility of his position and the grandeur of his character would at once be destroyed, if he could not be thus accused and threatened.

Of course the ultimate persistence of sin is incompatible with the rule of an infinitely good and powerful God, and so the Scriptures reveal that, in the end, sin and the sinner will be utterly destroyed. God does not justify His ways to all men at every point of time. In the long course of His dealings with humanity there are many things that give occasion to undutiful questioning and complaining. It is only at the end of all things that His justification will be written in light on the skies. And meanwhile those that are wise and love Him can see and gladly own that the possibility of a man's goodness and happiness is bound up with his possibility to sin. So that we may boldly say that, practically, without sin there would be no holiness or happiness, since there would be no freedom. The conclusion then that we would draw from the infinitude of God's power and goodness would be just the opposite of that drawn by the Christian Scientists. We should conclude that in making man He would not make

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him an automaton without power to be holy or happy, but with all the possibilities of sinning that are in freedom.

Now let us look at the assertion of Christian Science that there is no disease. As to that we might argue, and could not be gainsaid, that if a man can oppose himself to God's moral order and become part of the moral chaos, he can oppose himself to God's physical order and become part of the physical chaos, of which disease is a representative in this life; but we can afford to waive this evidence since, logic or no logic, disease is a fact. Certainly, if we accept the evidence of our senses, we must believe in the existence of disease. We feel acute pains, we lose our strength, we have various forms of distress in various parts of the body, the functions of the body are badly performed, or not at all, we become blind, deaf, the sense of feeling leaves us, we become unable to move our limbs. Now, this is said to be all delusion. We are persuaded that it is so, and we are affected. We may be persuaded that it is not so, and then we are delivered. But infants suffer also, and how can they be deluded, how can they have prepossessions? Animals also suffer; we often notice this in our domestic animals. How can this be due to any prepossessions or delusions. Here, for instance, is a poor little canary bird in the house with me, it can suffer from asthma like a human being. We see with what difficulty it breathes, we can notice its dolorous, afflicted discouraged condition. I fill its cage with the smoke that relieves me, and the effect is as manifest as upon myself. The harsh sound of its breathing ceases, and it is evidently more at ease; an air of alertness comes over it, it begins to preen its feathers, then to chirp, and feebly attempt a song. Whence comes this? The idea of delusion or illusion is preposterous.

Then again if we examine the bodies of those who have succumbed under their sufferings we see organs overgrown or wasted, distorted or displaced, ossified, or tissues changed in various ways. One glance at the interior of a deceased



patient, as revealed by the scalpel, shows to one who knows how a healthy organization looks, that the seat of disease is not in the notions of the mind, but in the state of the body. And what is to be said of death or immediate corruption? Is that an illusion or delusion? And now remember that, of all our knowledge, that conveyed to us by the senses is the surest, and that there is nothing to contradict this knowledge but a very uncertain logical deduction.

But why should the Christian Scientists limit the exercise of their logic to disease and sin? There are other forms of evil besides disease and sin, and just as illogical if we believe in an almighty and all good deity. How about the rattlesnake and its venom? If it bites you, can you throw off the effect, and call it nothing? There also are poisonous plants; shall we dare their effects? The lightning strikes, and there are its dreaded effects; also the ravages of insects (as locusts) that cause famines. Is not malaria a real thing? Shall we defy it in the name of logic and settle in the marshes, or mount to the heights and breathe pure air?

The practical conclusion of common sense is this: there is an order of nature, and if we go counter to that order it crushes us. They who live in accordance with nature are, as a rule, free from disease. Many of the painful disorders that we are subject to are manifestly for the purpose of guiding us and keeping us in the true way of accordance with the laws of nature. There may be beneficence in disease. Pain has been called a faithful sentinel of the body, and if we heed that sentinel we shall usually go on our way unharmed. We may safely say that all ill that happens to us, leaving out the direct influence of the evil spiritual world arises from our going counter to nature, or else arises from the wilderness of nature not yet subdued to order, which of themselves are counter to our well being and doubtless are used by evil beings to harm us.

If we should use the logic of Christian Scientists, we should say that any world created by an infinitely perfect,

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powerful and beneficent being would be absolutely perfect. But this is not the case. In flat contradiction to Scientist logic the earth was created at first very imperfect, and it took ages, perhaps millions of years, to shape it to be a proper residence for man. And so the fauna and flora of the earth were at first but rudimentary, and were gradually brought to what they now are. In this world that He has created and finished God works yet in this gradual way. Fruits are meant for our use; yet they are not at first made in such a form that we can use them. An apple is at first a minute organism without any flavor, it takes months for it to be perfected and suitable for us. How would it do for a father to say to his children in the early spring, "God has given us the apple. It is a pleasant, wholesome fruit, eat therefore freely, this is God's world, not the Devil's." The little boys would readily obey with results. When the doctor was called to their wailing, he would not ask, "What is this delusion that fills your mind?" but, "What have you been eating?" When a person has taken carbolic acid, there is need of a stomach pump, not logic.

But why should the Christian Scientists limit themselves at all? All forms of evil are equally consistent with the existence of an all wise, all powerful and all loving God. Evil municipal government or the "Unspeakable Turk" must be as much a delusion as disease, and as amenable to "treatment." What a way to settle the coal strikes and labor troubles generally!

One is tempted to abandon the attempt to deal with Christian Science, it appears so nonsensical and irrational, but there are considerations that give one pause. It is a power. And the very fact that it is a power, that such multitudes are swept away by it, and that it has such a wide acceptance, claims a sober investigation at our hands. All great movements are respectable, and when they tend to disturb the quietude of Conservatism, Conservatism should not ask itself, "How can I crush it," but first of all, "Does this exist

through any fault of mine?" Oh, if the church of the Ninth Century, when Mohammedanism arose, had only looked at home and recognized in its dreaded enemy mainly an anti-Christian revolt against the idolatry of Christians, the rapacity of Christian ministers of Justice, the aristocratic organization of Christian society and the tyranny of the Christian tax gatherer! Oh, if the church could only have reformed itself! But no! It could only shriek and call on God to help it conserve by the sword, without the aid of His presence. This doomed Christian society. They could but fight and fall and waste away until the Lord himself instituted a thorough going reform by the irruption of the Northern Barbarians and the introduction of new blood.

Now one of the most striking phenomena exhibited by society at the present time is the multiplication of its diseases and their remedies; the development of the medical faculty, and then the utter failure to heal. There is the prevention, indeed, that is a growing success, but of healing there is hardly anything. I was told by a very learned and skilful physician that in spite of the vast accessions of knowledge doctors could not cure any better than they could fifty years ago. Nay, is not all this therapeutics a great disease of itself? Has it not induced a morbid self-consciousness, a noticing of symptoms, and a running to remedies for immediate relief, which is only causing the evil to wax towards a catastrophe? Remedies can no more make health than you can make a fruitful tree by tying fruit to its branches. Health is from within, it is the outcome of the whole man, and so in old English "well" is "whole." Only when there is truth in our inward part can our outward part be a manifestation of the Creator's wisdom, and harmony be introduced into the human frame.

We now seek "unto physicians" and "not unto the Lord." We go to the physicians to enable us to live apart from the Lord in the indulgence of our desires and appetites. If the Lord was made dominant in our lives many of the

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causes of disease would be eliminated at once. Our lives would be simpler, purer, full of delightful occupation, love would spring up, and happiness would become the very atmosphere that mankind breathes. Tell me not that society would be re-constituted before this could be. Of course it would. The health of the individual depends on the health of society. The true sanitarium is that city which John saw coming down out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of God. There we will not imagine that the exercise of faith implies the disuse of means, for the use of means will become the exercise of faith. Now all this sounds vague, and it is impossible for me to work out the details of this view, but is it not evident at once that the diseases of individuals are largely the outcome of the disease of society, and that only when the whole man is healed, can he be said to be really whole, and the whole man cannot be healed till society is made whole.

What is the use of the skilful physician, by his treatment relieving the over-worn nerves of a man of business, if he must return to his exacting employment, immediately to begin destroying himself again in order to maintain or advance the social position of his wife and children, who are likewise destroying themselves in their social struggles which yield them not one atom of joy? If society were only rightly constituted, and that may not be except through a whole life in every individual, then there would be no strife, no fretting, no anxiety, no waste, no excess, no want. The absence of these and such as these would well-nigh abolish disease.

The lowering of the death rate in New York by the simple cleaning of the streets is a distant foretaste of this; what will be the result when every faculty of man is in constant, perfect and happy exercise! This is the true way. There lacks not a false way, a short cut to health, a very short cut. Mankind is restless in the throes of its morbid introversions and speculations upon disease. It sees the failure of physicians, the vanity of remedies, and craves de-

liverance from all this coil of burden and misery. Mrs. Eddy has boldly pointed out the way. She is a path finder indeed! She found that the more minute the remedy was, the more happy the result on the patient, so she tried nothing, and found that still more effective. It was not hard after that to conclude that nothing at all cured, because nothing at all was the matter; and that there might not lack philosophical confirmation of this it was put in the form of a syllogism.

An all good, all powerful God would not permit the existence of disease or sin.

“God is all good and almighty.

Wherefore disease and sin are non-existent.”

It is easy to see how attractive this would be to the multitude who find it possible to believe. They could drop the burden of taking care of themselves, drop the burden of keeping up face to face rapport with God, drop the burden of the anxiety and doubt, that has hitherto accompanied their effort to depend on his free will, and sink down in utter dependence upon a God whose action is as certain as the attraction of gravitation—changeless, uniform, omnipresent. Not the living, loving God whom it was their privilege all along to trust. No, this system is but one manifestation of the wide revolt against Him that is going on at the present day. Much of the proof that Christian Scientists claim as perfectly convincing often shows only that nature has great creative powers.

I have a woman now in my mind who was a confirmed valetudinarian. Always occupied with herself, always noticing her symptoms, always taking remedies, she was always out of sorts and complaining. She adopted Mrs. Eddy's views, threw physic to the dogs, and put on health as one would put on a coat. Of course, the result was perfectly natural, and any wise physician could have foretold it. She has besides for occupation the interest of a new movement and the study of what she can call a “science.” That is all that I can see in Christian Science, pure and genuine, but as I

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sat in their congregation and listened to their readings from Mrs. Eddy's book, their strange transmogrification of Scripture, their queer hymns and strange addresses to "Our Father and Mother God" I could not help thinking, that in spite of their theories, many of them were really seeking the God of Healing when the Church had left Him for physicians, and I could not but hope that very jealousy would rouse the Church to seek to her God for healing and health as she never has before.

True, the Church does pray for healing and earnestly, too. A true child of God has no choice. He ought to, he must pray whenever he is anxious or fears or strongly desires. It is not a mere matter of impulse and inclination. It is thus he serves God. It is thus that he honors Him and proclaims His governance of the world. But he prays (for so he is taught) as a child to a father; and he claims that ministry not only of His Father's infinite love and power, but of His infinite wisdom as well. He feels that he is little and ignorant, and knows not what is best for himself, nor whether it fits in well with God's great and loving plan for the world; and so he does not insist on his view of the matter, but delights, not only to bring his desires to God, assured of His keenest sympathy, but delights also to surrender those desires to the Almighty Disposer assured of His infinite wisdom and beneficent plan. The desire of desires is with him that God's will may be done. And, therefore, after the example of our Lord in His agony, he says, "Not my will but Thine be done." He knows that insistence upon his own will, tends to separate him from the Lord, and he knows that what he desires may be no real good but a real evil.

The first born of a lady I knew was, in his infancy, brought very near death. The unchastened spirit of the mother could not endure the possibility of his loss. She determined that he should not die, went to her room, resolved to insist with the Lord upon the life of her child till she felt sure that her petition was granted. Well, the child's life was

spared, and he grew up to be her curse—wicked, undutiful and cruel. He made her life one constant agony by his behavior and she regarded it all as a punishment for her unhallowed prayer. A prayer, take notice, of unbounded confidence, but without an atom of faith.

And now this unhallowed prayer is made by the Christian Scientists the very principle of God's action. He cannot He must not, if He be good and Almighty, allow anything to come upon us that is unpleasant or painful. Christians cannot accept this for it amounts to our taking upon ourselves (as far as wishes go) the government of the Universe; and that would be as ridiculous and more disastrous than to allow a child to dictate to its elders how he should deal with it. No! Christians do not believe in a God who is practically a principle at the base of the universe, whose action can be certainly predicted, but in a God, who is free and wise and loving, who is the Governor of the Universe, and who does everything "after the counsel of His will." To them His ways may be at times obscure, clouds and darkness may surround Him, but in the center of the darkness, they know are enthroned Justice and Judgment and Love as well as Almighty Power. When Christians pray, then they delight to surrender their desires to Him, since He knows best. Beautiful is it when a faithful soul, desiring greatly, urges greatly its desire upon God, but loving Him better than its desires chooses its Heavenly Father's will rather than its own, not merely resigning itself to that will, but accepting it as the sum and substance of its desires, so that though there be momentary loss and pain, in the end there will be perfect satisfaction.

Well, if Christian Science were true I cannot but own that there would be a certain apparent gain, but the loss would be terrible. There is something better than health, the society of One who seeks us, especially when we are in trouble or sorrow or pain. We cannot turn our face towards Him without His turning His face towards us. One mo-

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ment's assurance of His love outweighs all trials whatsoever they may be. But if the doctrine of Christian Science is true, all this is impossible. We cannot love the attraction of gravitation, nor can the attraction of gravitation love us, thoroughly as it is to be depended upon. Nor can we love a God whose acts are the inevitable outcome of Himself without any regard to us or for us, nor can He love us. The greatest of all possessions, the Great Companion, is gone. And in order to have Him go we have been obliged to deny the sight of our eyes, the hearing of our ears, the very common sense that lifts us above the brutes.

There is a better way to take when we look into the face of terrible sorrow and pain, the way taken by Him who suffered physically more than any of us could suffer, and whose mental sufferings were incalculable and even inconceivable by us. It is the way for us all. "If it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." That was the way that led him to the right hand of the throne of God, and it is the way we must tread if we would share His throne. This is a warfare that we are engaged in, and we must fight to the death, the reward is sure. We should not seek trials, but if they come we may with the Apostle James count it all joy. They that are tried most are apt to have most wide intercourse with their Lord.

"And what would you say," asked one of a poor beggar, "if the Lord should send you to Hell? Would you still say that all was for the best?"

"Yes," said the beggar, "for, by the arms of my faith and the arms of His love, I am united with Him so that we can never be separated. If he sent me to Hell, to Hell he would go with me, and there I would rather be than in Heaven without Him."



## Spencer's Theory of Religion.

Religion is one thing, and an account of its inception and growth another. An account of the inception and growth of consciousness cannot account for consciousness any more than a description of the monkey accounts for the monkey. So a natural history of religion does not account for religion. Mr. Spencer does not seem to take in this. Philosophy is something quite different from religion. Philosophy develops abstract ideas of God. Religion side by side with it develops concrete and often superstitious ideas of God.

Spencer finds facts, but he does not find the order of the facts; that he invents. A quite different aspect is given to the facts of religion if we assume an order of degradation or improvement. Then also when he finds his order, it may not be the universal order. E.g., side by side in the mind of the same person at the same time may decay an old religion and arise a new one. Brahmanism did not arise after the decay of the Vedic religion. It arose in the minds of those in whom the Vedic religion was decaying. It was formed through that decay. We can trace this in our own experience, for our religion never remains the same even for a day. If we grow not into the knowledge of the true God, we are ever turning Him into a false God. As the sense of dependence on a living Christ fades away, dependence upon a church, a succession, increases. As spiritual worship dies, the Mass arises. Even the covering used to hide a dirty fur coat becomes a surplice and a fetich. If there is a universal order, is it one of degradation.

Spencer must account for the degradation of religion. Philosophy may have an influence on religion, but that is not

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the development of religion. Spencer, too, does not take account of mythology, which imports into religion as facts ideas that have not been rationally developed.

## Sub-Conscious Christianity.

1. The Lord's Supper is symbolical of that vital union between Christ and the believer which is the essential condition and direct source of salvation.

2. This union is not moral or intellectual or social at all. It is not rapport with the Lord, though issuing in rapport. It is entirely independent of and beneath the consciousness, though issuing in consciousness.

3. This union is so independent of consciousness, or the use of the truth, that it may take place at birth, or in infancy at the moment of baptism, or at any moment without baptism; in an adult, at a moment when he is occupied with the truth, or when he is thinking of something else; at the moment of his trusting in Christ or before any conscious act of trust.

4. It is formed by an act of God, and is therefore His deed and irresistible; and yet it interferes not with freedom, any more than the traits we derive from our parents interfere with our freedom. God in this change works out from not on us.

5. It is a new birth by the Holy Spirit whereby we become brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. But though it is wrought by the Holy Spirit it is not a mere change of our spirit, any more that what was wrought in the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit was a mere change in her spirit. That resulted in bringing into the world a human being of a new type and the new birth in the case of any man results in bringing into the world one more human being of that new type.

7. This is effected by implanting in us the whole glorified life of the God-Man, uniting us to Him in such a way that when we are perfectly redeemed we shall owe all

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we call ourselves to Him; just as we now owe all that we call ourselves in the Natural State to our parents. The life of the child and of father or brother and brother is however numerically two, the life of the believer and Christ is numerically one. Just as is the life of my right and left hand. Also, it must be noted that Christ does not dwell personally in us as the Holy Spirit does, although our life is one and the same with Him.

8. This union with Christ results, when the glorified state is reached, in our becoming exactly like Christ; as truly divine as He is, only in dependence upon Him, with our whole being pulsing in harmony with the Holy Spirit the divine soul of our souls, with every human grace of the Lord reproduced in us in perfection and completeness of power, yet all these graces our own in spontaneity; standing in the same relation to the Father as He does, occupying the same position towards the universe beneath that He does, reigning on His throne and raying forth His glory not through reflection but through possession—all these powers and endowments inherently our own and not the result of continuous conscious rapport with the Lord, yet nevertheless in utter dependence on and abiding in Him. But in this life we only partially attain. Grand as is the result of the new birth it is called a "seal" and an "earnest" merely. And yet as a beginning it has a rounded completeness. Thus it is that the work of grace is spoken of often as if it were perfect. Believers, because they are believers, are said to have died, to have been made alive, to have risen, to be incapable of sin, to be not guilty. The infant possesses, potentially and in germ, all that the grown man possesses and so the babe in Christ possesses potentially and in germ all that Christ is, since he is one with Christ—and the believer by living more and more from the redeemed core of his being, may make his own the impulses and tendencies of Christ's being and, according to his faith, may with greater and greater truth say "for me to live is Christ."

9. But that the vital relation established at the moment of regeneration may become vital possession there are required acts of creative power. For the gift of grace in regeneration is not a germ that needs only the fostering Word to increase and develop it; it must also be added to by the same power that first wrought it. This truth is set forth in the endlessly repeated Supper of the Lord.

10. Which not merely exhibits to the mind the Word of Truth but affords us the best of all opportunities to receive that which it signifies, viz: the communion (or partaking) of the theanthropic life of the Son of God.

11. Which we may in the Lord's Supper not pray for but claim and seize as our own by virtue of a grant now 1800 years old.

## Infant Baptism.

Christianity was intended to arouse and secure two principles in the Christian,—dependence and independence. The gospel proclaims that salvation is a gracious gift which no working, striving or running on our part will ever enable us to attain; while at the same time not only urging us to activity, but assuring us that, unless we work and strive and run, we will surely fail. In the preaching of the Word these two principles are united and co-ordinate.

In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, though the gift of grace is made more prominent and manifest, we are, nevertheless, called upon to act, to take and eat, to put forth the hand of faith. And he has not been fully taught, who does not know that at this ordinance, as everywhere in our Christian course, we are like the man with the withered hand: we receive the gift of grace through the doing of an act that without that gift of grace we could never do. In the baptism of adults although the gift of grace is still prominent and manifest, something is required of the applicant. He must have sufficient knowledge, and he must make an open confession of Christ. Even in the case of infant baptism, where a little creature is brought to the rite who has no choice in the matter, who can not do anything at all, who can not hear the gospel message, who can neither repent nor believe, even here there is something more than a shadow of free will and activity in the recipient of the rite carefully preserved either by the requirement of believing parents who engage to see that he does all that the gospel message requires him to do, or of sponsors who, in his name, promise to repent and believe. Nothing can be more clear than the recognition of the fact that baptism, unless there is faith and obedience, is an empty and meaningless thing. St. Paul, in demanding good works of Christians, does not say that the gift of grace should

be followed by the works of faith, he rather insists upon the absurdity of any other supposition. Baptism is no magical rite, and the God who gives the grace either before baptism, or at baptism, or after baptism, may allow the seed of grace to lie dormant till a far off time which He foresees, when it will waken at the gospel message, or may delay to implant it till such a time. Who can say to Him, "what doest Thou, or why doest Thou not?" We come now to the warrant for Infant Baptism.

It must be owned that the command to baptize only implies the previous preaching of the gospel as well as previous faith and repentance. What right, then, have we to baptize those who can not hear, believe or repent? The sufficient argument is that there is no command against it. The onus probandi lies upon those who deny it. The circumstances of the case create an overwhelming presumption in its favor. The Christian Church was not created as the world was, out of nothing by the simple will of God. As Eve was formed from the body of Adam, so was it formed out of the church of the old covenant.

For a long time it was regarded merely as a society within the Jewish Church. It required manifest and mighty signs to convince the people of God that it was more than this, and finally there was needed the heroic remedy of the destruction of the Holy City itself and the sweeping away of the old economy. Our Lord said very little about this matter, evidently choosing to leave the transformation of the Jewish Church into the Christian in the hands of His apostles acting in their inspired freedom. But there is a passage which may well be regarded as a pivotal point in the history of redemption. In Luke 18:15 we are told that babes were brought to our Lord that they might be touched by Him, and that upon the disciples discouraging this, Jesus called the little ones to Him and said, "forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Now, then, it is not for one moment to be supposed that the disciples behaved inhumanly

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in their opposition. If these infants had been diseased we can not doubt that they would gladly have themselves brought them to the Saviour's arms. But regarding as they did Christ's following as simply a society or sect within the Jewish church, they could not imagine what babes had to do with it, and hence their opposition to what they probably considered as an useless, troubling of their teacher. Our Lord's significant act and more significant words are as much as to say, "those who are mine are something other than a sect or party, they are a church because they are a race. And though infants can not be members of a sect, they can be members of a race as well as adults. Nicodemus seemed to have the same low idea of the Christian movement when he hailed Christ as "a teacher sent from God," for our Lord at once announced to him that to the kingdom of God which He proclaimed no amount of instruction would admit, that a man must be born—must be newborn, to become a member of the new race. It was no new thing that a church should also be a race. The Jewish church was such and even infants simply because of their natural birth received the sign of church membership. And then consider the part played by race throughout the history of redemption. It is little more than a string of genealogies, and all this is dwelt upon as being of the highest moment to an event that outrages our modern sense of propriety. The unfortunate man who was incapacitated from continuing the race could not be counted a member of the church. It would have required a specific statement on the part of our Lord to dispossess His followers of the pre-possession that the church was a race. But we see it was confirmed, only care was taken to show that it was a new race that was begun on earth. This our Lord clearly sets forth when he says to Nicodemus, "except a man be born of water and the Spirit he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven," clearly showing that it is a spiritual change superinduced on our natural life by the volition of the Spirit upon application; no one can fail to see the allusion to the ordinance of baptism.



So then we see that the church is a new race formed out of the natural by the operation of the Spirit upon the asking of the church. If this be so, then, infants or adults, all enter the kingdom of God the selfsame way; "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And why then should not an infant be brought to baptism? Why should the church not ask for its new birth in the new race? Even if there were no foregoing and well nigh irresistible presumption in its favor, the very love with which the beloved of God yearn over their infants and long for their salvation justifies their bringing them to baptism. What more warrant do they need than the love that God has planted in their hearts and his word, "open thy mouth and I will fill it." Our Saviour said, "ask and ye shall receive," and what should they ask for if not for this? Am I not right in saying that the sufficient argument for the baptism of infants is that there is no command against it? For infant baptism is nothing but the prayer of faith in symbol that God would make the little one whom we love a member of the new race which the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, has begun in this world. To Him we come. This is no compelling rite as some would teach. We may use the rite most accurately, but unless He will to give, it will be as vain and empty as when Gehazi laid the rod upon the face of the child, "but there was neither voice or hearing." But who that remembers the fullness of the Saviour's promise, and remembers His love for those who love Him, will not be impelled to something more than hope that they who have been baptized with water have also been baptized by the Holy Spirit; and will not feel that though we may not assert that the little one has become a new creature, we may assume it, and in sign of our faith may give it a new name—the Christian name? The difference between the words "assume" and "assert" involves the whole difference between faith and science.

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Assertion implies certainty; faith implies assurance. As mental exercises these are entirely different from each other and are occupied with entirely different objects. Science is occupied with things, faith with persons. No man has a right to assert unless he is absolutely certain, and we can be absolutely certain of things alone. The moment we deal with persons we come into the region of free will, and nobody can be absolutely certain how a free being will act, though he may be perfectly sure that he will act in a certain way; e.g., no one can be certain that any one who loves him to-day will love him to-morrow, while at the same time he may be perfectly sure of it. No one can be certain that he will be able the next moment to put his hand to his head, and yet life would be impossible if he could not be sure of that and other like things. Now, when I come to God for anything, I can not be certain that that thing will be obtained, because He may see fit to withhold it; and every true prayer implies this. But it is my right and duty to go away feeling that my prayer will be answered. I can not be certain of possessing the thing, but I can be sure of possessing God. My prayer is not simply a petition that God would give me a certain specified thing, but it is as well the expression of a desire that God's will may be done. The prayer of faith does not insist.

Now infant baptism is a petition to God through symbol, that He at the time that the infant is presented to Him would regenerate it. The principle that our Lord lays down with reference to petitions is this, that, when we ask anything we should believe that we have it, and then we will receive—not perhaps the exact thing asked for, but what is essentially the same. We can not be certain of the eternal salvation of any one person, that we must leave in the hands of God, and in His hands alone there is comfort in leaving it. It must be as He wills, and His infinite will is rooted in infinite love. Now, when we consider how broad were the boundaries of the ancient church, including infants, and

when we remember that our Saviour has assured us that even infants are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven—the “Church of the First Born,” when we remember how He has always honored the family, and realize that the very tenderness with which father and mother hang over a little one, is in very truth the tenderness of the Lord Himself, since it is one of the manifestations of His Character in whose image we are made, and when we consider what power an infant’s appeal to his parents has by reason of that implanted tenderness; and recall the fact that we are permitted to call God Our Father, what bounds shall be set to the confident expectations of parents when they ask something so near their hearts as the salvation of their child? Shall they not believe that the power that child has with them is the measure of the power they have with God? And though they can not assert that at this or that moment God has wrought the mighty work of the new creation upon their child, may they not assume—take for granted, that He to whose arms they bring their little one will receive it and never let it go? Are they not warranted henceforth to treat their child as already one of the family of God?

## Lord's Supper.

(The following monograph may not emphasize sufficiently, according to the judgment of some readers, the pictorial analogical, and teaching power of the Lord's Supper. Yet it is hoped that the majority will agree in saying that my brother has called attention to the most important meaning of the Sacrament, a meaning often overlooked by teachers of Christian doctrine.—A. B. K.)

What Mean Ye by this Service, rendered in coming to the Lord's Table?

1st. What is this service? Our Lord in instituting it said, "Take, eat;" "Drink ye all of it." St. Paul in 1st Cor. 11:20 describes it as eating the Lord's Supper, and again in verse 26, "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup." In Acts it is described as a breaking of bread. That, of course, can mean only an eating of bread. It may then be described as eating and drinking in obedience to the Lord's command. The Lord's Supper begins and ends with the act of eating and drinking. It is evident then that the contemplation of the bread and wine as placed on the table, or as broken or poured out, or meditations on these, or upon what is signified by these, is not what the Lord has commanded, but to eat and drink.

2nd. The next question is, who perform this service? The answer follows directly from what has been said above. The act of eating and drinking is the act of the congregation; they perform the whole of the rite; the part of the minister is no essential portion of the rite. The arranging of the bread and wine, the breaking and pouring forth, are no more part of the Lord's Supper than the buying and bringing of the bread and wine. These acts merely prepare the way for the act of eating and drinking, which is the true supper of the Lord. Even the blessing is no essential part of the rite, but was used by our Saviour because it was the invariable

accompaniment of every Jewish meal, only to mark more clearly that it was simply a meal; and is used by us after His example.

3rd. If then, brethern, this service you are engaged in, is simply and solely an act of eating and drinking performed by you, the question is in order, what is the significance of it? What mean ye by this service? You mean of course to obey a command of the Lord, but surely something more than that. Our Lord enjoined not only the act but the intention with which we should perform it. He said "Do this in remembrance of me." This must be taken in connection with His words, "Take, eat, this is my body," and of the cup, "drink ye, this is my blood." It is clear that the remembrance is specialized. It is the remembrance of His death, and we also see that it is a remembrance that His death was the means of furnishing for the supply of our necessities something that is symbolized by sustenance for our bodies.

In Luke the body (i. e., as broken) is said to be "given for you" and the blood to be "poured out for you." We are obliged to connect this with what our Lord says, John 6:51: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The remembrance is further specialized by this. It is a calling to mind that His flesh eaten is not only life, but gives eternal life. Giving and eating of his flesh is the fulfillment of the purpose for which he came into the world, and so we see in Matt. 26:28, this eating and drinking is connected directly with the remission of sins. Also in Luke 22:20, the blood is called "the blood of the new testament." What this new covenant is, is plain from Heb. 10:16, it is the knitting of the law into the very texture of the soul. This eating and drinking is the gaining a new principle of life for the believer (John 6:51). As Paul says (Gal.2:20) "I have been crucified with Christ, and yet I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And St. Paul says, (1st Cor. 11:26) the eating and drinking proclaims the death of the Lord.

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Certainly not the mere fact of His death, but also the effect. It proclaims the gospel, that the Lord's death is the life of the church.

This must be so if we call to mind what was shown clearly at first, that this rite is not a symbolic exhibition, but a symbolic partaking. The symbol is the partaking of bread and wine; the thing signified is the partaking of Christ's flesh and blood, and we are guarded, in John 6, against a too literal interpretation of the words flesh and blood, by being assured that Christ's body in its entirety will be removed away to heaven, so that we cannot partake of it and by being assured that it would not profit us at all if we could partake of it. "The flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." And note that we are assured also by these latter words that all that is signified by the flesh and blood and life of the Son of God may be had apart from the rite itself, as well as in the use of it.

4th. Now, then we have the Lord's Supper described as an eating and drinking, to call to mind that we have through His death Christ made to us sustenance that is life-giving, and that will enable one to live forever, to give us which is the very purpose of His incarnation, through which we have remission of sins and have the law made part of the very constitution of our being, which is called the partaking of His flesh and blood.

Can we take a view of the rite that shall gather all these statements up and unite them in one? We can first consider what we are told as to the effect of the death of Christ on Christ Himself. In Heb. 3:10 we are told that He was made perfect through sufferings (also 5:9). This perfection is called by our Lord Himself, His being glorified (John 13:31) in other words the removal of every trace of his humiliation. For this reason He speaks of His death as a baptism, before it took place, and afterwards He says "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The representations of Scripture are something to this effect. The eternal Son resigned His position, emptied Himself, became a man, grew in knowledge and in power, till, through death,

every trace of humiliation being removed, He resumed His position in heaven at God's right hand, man still, but with the divine glory perfectly manifested (John 17:24). He then became the second Adam of a new race (1 Cor. 15:45) a life giving spirit. When did He assume the relation of a life-giving Spirit to His church? Apparently upon His exaltation and reception into glory. His description of His death as the dying of the seed in order that it might multiply itself shows this, the fact that the Holy Spirit could not be given until after His glorification shows this, and the giving of the Holy Spirit was the founding of the Christian church.

Now to this the rite corresponds. As the death of the sacrificial victim enabled it to furnish its flesh for food to the worshippers as well as its fat for an offering to God for sin, so Christ, through death, was able to make Himself a life-giving sustenance to the church. How this was, it is not necessary to inquire, the fact is distinctly asserted by Scripture. But Christ's blood, we are told in the institution of the Lord's Supper, was shed for the remission of sins. How can this eating and drinking symbolize the efficiency of Christ's death for the remission of sins? Why would it not be sufficient to simply exhibit the bread broken and the wine poured out to assure us that Christ died for us and to be the seal to us of its offer to us? Why should we eat and drink In other words: why should the partaking of Him as life-giving sustenance be symbolically set forth, if the work of Christ in remitting our sins were done apart from ourselves? But that is not the case; if it were, we would find it difficult to answer the questions of unbelievers. "How does the death of Christ show that God is dealing in strict justice while exercising the prerogative of mercy in remitting our sins?" But the Scripture states that we are united to Christ in such a way that His dying is our dying, and His living our living, just as the death of a plant involves the death of every branch that lives in it. (Rom. 6:5 and Gal. 2:20) Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ." The eating and the drinking is the sign that we partake of that death. We eat and drink in order to make the act of faith by which we partake in that death.

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Now the only way for us to partake in Christ's death is to be united to Him in life. When Christ died on the cross all the members of His body died with Him, and when He rose all the members of His body rose with Him. If we become members of Christ, then we die in Him and rise in Him as is shown, (Rom. 6:5.) Now in the supper of the Lord that life-union is symbolized. He gives us His flesh and blood. That the bread and wine are mere symbols, and that there is nothing put into them and conveyed by them to the believers is shown clearly by the Lord in the 6th of John where He teaches us that believing is eating. Why, then, is such a strange, and even horrible, symbol used as that of eating and drinking His flesh and blood? It is because nothing else would assure the church that it is not sufficient for us to love, obey, adore and to follow Christ; there must be a union with Him as real as that between the branches of a vine and the vine, or the members of a body with the body. The symbol of eating and drinking has been wrested into the "mass" and the statement that to believe is to eat has been wrested into making the sacrament of the Supper a mere symbolic preaching of the Word. But what is the word set forth? It is this. "By trust in Christ you may receive into yourselves the very life of Christ, and be actually united to Him. The essence of the act of appropriation is faith, not the use of the rite, though the rite is commanded. For the Lord knew how a physical act helps a mental exercise, and also that form of the rite, even its monstrous character, tended to assure the church that there was more to be received from Christ than spiritual culture. The essence of the act by which the woman with the issue of blood got healing was not touching the hem of our Saviour's garment, but the faith in Him. She found not healing in the hem, but the Saviour wrought on her because she touched the hem in faith. And so those who stretch forth their hands to the table of the Lord find not what they seek in the bread and wine or in the representations of the truth made by the bread and wine to their mind and heart, but in the virtue that goes out of the Lord because of their eating and drinking, not a virtue upon their mind and heart any more than the bread and wine acts upon the mind and heart,



but increased vitality upon that which lies below both mind and heart, the life. That virtue is His very life, that life which built up His flesh and blood, and which will build up His flesh and blood within us, making us His true blood kindred. It is thus that He becomes a life-giving spirit, the second Adam of those who believe in Him. We share the same life with Him, not as two brothers share the life of the same parents. His life and our life are one and the same, as the life of my right and left hands is one and the same. Having this life it is no wonder that it is said that we shall live forever. In Him, we can no more be holden of death than He could.

Now the life that we partake of is the glorified life of the Son of God, a life that has passed through the gates of death, and over which death has no power, which has paid all dues of mortality and has come forth as conqueror. Thus, partaking of Christ's life becomes partaking of His death. Thus it is that the Apostle says, that we are now at once dead and risen.

In receiving Christ into ourselves then, we of our own accord cast away as worthless all that the penalty due to sin could deprive us of. At the table of the Lord we perform a true sacrificial act upon ourselves by receiving into ourselves the life that slays the old Adamic life which was due to death. Such a sacrifice that slain and yet out of Christ, we must suffer the pains of eternal death; such a sacrifice that being slain and remaining in Christ, we but lose our old Adamic root of life and gain a new divine root, pay the penalty due to the violated law and yet live, while at the same time our substitute, Christ pays it. Thus it is that Christ's blood shed for the remission of sins brings to us remission of sins by our drinking in faith the wine of which it is a symbol. And thus it is that the cup that was drunk is the symbol of the new covenant (Heb. 8:10) and a means through faith in the appropriation of which we may have God's laws put into our minds and written on our hearts. We not only partake of Christ's immortality but are made like, by being made one with, Him. Just as the smallest branch of a vine possesses all the characteristics of the

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vine by being one with it. In this way only can our justification be justified, and in this way only can we set out hopefully to do what we are commanded to do. Vain would it be for the vine branch cut off and lying below to look up and try to bear fruit as do the branches above, but set back in the vine how easy would it be to follow the vine. And vain would it be for a man by believing in Christ and striving to do like Christ ever to succeed in being like Him. He must first be joined to Christ, and then all is easy.

From the words "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing"; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and life (John 6:63) it is often inferred that the whole meaning of the reception of Christ's body and blood is the meditation upon the truth, and the effect of that is limited to the mind and heart. That is a very singular view. Suppose a man has ignorantly taken poison, and I take him an antidote, and say to him. "You are dying, but here is an antidote, take it and you will live. Heed these words which I say, for they will give you life." Now those words would naturally enlighten the mind of the man and fill his heart with gladness and grateful feeling, but, if that were all, he would die, for in order to live he must, besides knowing of the remedy, take the antidote.

Now the words that our Lord spoke were words of command and called upon them to do something. There must not only be a thought, there must be also an act. A hungry beggar, if offered food, must not merely meditate on the kindness of the friend who offers it, he must eat it or he will starve. So must we in the act of eating, receive Christ into ourselves through faith. It is not denied, it is affirmed that this act of faith may be made away from the table, but take notice, the act at the table is commanded, and woe to those who deliberately neglect it. And the act away from the table is not a meditation, an emotion, a trusting of Him for forgiveness, a love or adoration. It is a spiritual act of a most real union with his flesh and blood harder to make than at the table. But there are those who say that in the Holy Supper Christ is in symbol set before us visibly in order that we may then and there rely upon His perfect sacrifice for us on

the cross by which our sins have been cancelled forever. But what is the meaning then of eating and drinking; what have they to do with our accepting Christ's sacrifice for us? It may be said to express and manifest our union to Christ in faith and love but why should He choose so extraordinary a way to express what He had often told them plainly, that they should love Him and trust Him? Why should He use so monstrous a form as "my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed," and again "He that eateth me shall live by me?" It could only have been because it could not well have been expressed in any other way. It must have been because He wished to tell us that the act of faith effected a union with His living, glorified person, in an analogous way as the act of eating bread and drinking wine unites those articles of food to the natural body. It behooves us, then, to come, and take, and eat and drink, not only that we may receive the forgiveness of our sins through the sacrifice set visibly in symbol forth to the eyes, but to receive His very life into ourselves—the necessary condition of that forgiveness.

## Psalm 19.

There is a remarkable resemblance and contrast between this Psalm and the one preceding. Both are, in effect, prophecies of the Great "restitution of all things;" but the XIX Psalm foretells it through the order of the Heavens, the XVIII through a sudden and violent interruption of that order. Two aspects of Redemption correspond to these; the one, the renovation of all things by moral, spiritual and creative influences; the other, the removal of obstacles to that renovation, involving awful destruction and stern rule. The former is set forth by the XIX, the latter by the XVIII Psalms.

### TITLE

The Glory of God in the Heavens  
prophecies God's Glory on the Earth.

This psalm may be thrown into two main divisions, each of which has a subordinate subdivision. The first main division, verses 1-6, may be entitled, "The Glory of God shown by the Heavens," the second, verses 7-14, "The Law, that is to bring about the exhibition of the Glory of God on the Earth." The first may be called "Realized Obedience," the second "Commanded Obedience"; again the first, "Redemption exhibited," the second, "Redemption prospective;" again, the first, "Redemption promised," the second, "Redemption begun." Connected with the first division is the subdivision consisting of verse 4, last clause, and verses 5 and 6, and forming a link between the two divisions; the sun being not only a part of the order and beauty of the Heavens, but like the Law promotive of order and beauty below. Connected with the second division is the subdivision verses 12-14, which belongs to the second, inas-

much as it continues the exhibition of the Law by its effects in an individual, and to the first, inasmuch as it is a realization prospective and in germ of the order and perfection prophesied by the Glory of the Heavens.

Verse 1. "The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the work of His hands (is) the firmament declaring."

Between "Heavens" and 'Firmament' there is much the same difference as between "sky" and 'skies.' They are both used interchangeably, yet the singular is more associated with the blue dome of the day-time, the plural with the starry spaces. Of the two branches of the parallelism therefore, the former refers rather to the night time and the other to the day. This suits the next verse. But yet the plural rules throughout the psalm, and every one will feel the propriety of the plural as applied to what is above us, if they will only meditate upon the manifold aspects it presents. The blue sky curtains us all around by day, but we have the sun and clouds and their changes. Then when—

the powers of the night,  
That range above the region of the wind,  
Deepening the courts of twilight, break them up,  
Through all the silent spaces of the worlds,

we have the multitudinous stars and the constant motion and change of the whole. These Heavens, the work of God, exhibit His character. Their grandeur is transcendent, their order and beauty is perfect; therefore it is an exhibition, as far as it goes, without a flaw. To be sure, the Heavens are unclean in God's sight, and we know that righteousness does not dwell in them; but, as far as we can see, indeed as far as science has fathomed, everything is self-sustaining and self-adjusting and perfect in every respect. No dark and terrible problems are set us by the starry skies. Since God made them, they show forth his power and wisdom and (since even the stars have their ministry for us) his beneficence. To fully appreciate how bold this statement is we

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must remember that the celestial bodies were worshipped by the nations around.

Verse 2. "Day to day shall pour out speech, and night to night shall utter knowledge."

There is some little doubt about the grammatical construction of this verse. It may mean "one day speaks to another day and one night to another night;" or "day added to day," "day after day and night after night utters speech to the inhabitants of the earth." Perhaps both senses may be taken. Not only does day after day and night after night take up and continue the witness to the glory of God, but each day's and night's witness adds something peculiarly its own to the witness of another; as if one day knew something that another did not know and told it to its successor. This verse then shows us that the witness to God's glory is full and continuous.

Verse 3. "There is no speech, and there are no words; not at all is their voice heard."

This can hardly be said in order to correct a misapprehension that might be formed as to the meaning of "uttereth speech." No one surely needs be told that the heavens do not talk. The meaning lies deeper than this. It means to intimate that the heavens do not bear witness to God's glory by any direct suggestion of notion, or notions, or doctrine. "Speech" and "language," like "word," is equivalent to "doctrine"—"view." The rolling Heavens suggest certain views of God to the pure mind; but it is by means of ideas, not notions. They appeal to the intuitions of truth, beauty and goodness that are in all. Far above all diversions of language and systems of belief lies a region in which all mankind are one. In that region of universal language the Heavens can speak to any one and show to him the glory of God.

Verse 4. "In all the earth has gone out their lives and in the end of the world (are) their words."

As one might describe a man's farm as the land he measures, so the prophets of the skies are said to extend their

measuring line over the whole earth, because it is to all the earth that they prophesy. Their preaching is not merely of that kind that it can appeal to any one, but it does actually reach all the families of man. What is it that the Heavens reveal to man? The Apostle Paul (Rom. 10:18) seems to intimate that they preach the Gospel to them. Hengstenberg thinks that the Apostle merely considers this verse as a prophecy of the universality of the proclamation of the Gospel which obtained in his day. His remark is fine: "The universality of God's manifestation of Himself in nature is a prophecy in fact of the universal proclamation of the Gospel. If the former is not accidental, if it is grounded in the Divine nature, so must the latter spring from the same Divine nature." Alexander says: "The same thing might have taught the Jews that their exclusive privileges were granted only for a time and as a means to a more glorious end." But this is only a part of the sense. It seems very evident that the Apostle refers to a past prophetic proclamation of the Gospel to the Jews in the 15th verse, and therefore in the 18th to a past prophetic proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles. The rolling Heavens certainly proclaimed the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator to all men (Rom. 1:20), and also that he is a God of order, beauty and wisdom, that he is God of all and ministers to all, and that therefore he ought to be trusted and hoped in by all the world. It was plainly enough shown to all the world that God's will was good toward them for them to have understood it if their hearts had not been turned away from him. The Heavens declare by the order and beauty to which he has brought them that he would bring about order and beauty upon earth. If this be the Gospel, and such the Apostle would seem to call it, then, though vague, yet, if met by a trust as vague and some dim reliance upon Him who appealed to man by the revelation of his beauty, power and wisdom, then (we are warranted in saying) the Gospel would be accepted and the acceptor received by that God who, like his son, quencheth not "the smoking flax."

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It is an interesting fact that the Heavens have come to be regarded in the course of time by the nations round about the Jews as the peculiar theatre of God's exhibition of Himself and the peculiar seat of His power. Jehovah is called in the state papers of the Persians kings, "The Great God of Heaven."

The last clause of this verse begins the transition to the second main division of the psalm. The sun—the most magnificent exhibitor of the glory of God from the Heavens is also an actor upon earth and promotes the exhibition of His glory there.

"In them"—that is, in the Heavens—"hath He set a tabernacle for the sun." This tabernacle is the blue sky, which bears a certain resemblance to a tent (Is. 4:22). In that tent the sun always appears and it is his fit dwelling, for it enhances his beauty and diffuses his light; it is pitched for him at the dawn, and is at night like a tent taken down.

Verse 5. "And he (is) as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; he rejoices as a mighty man to run a race."

The bridegroom should be at the acme of existence, full of vigor, life and beauty; the athlete ("strong man") is in the highest physical condition, full of eagerness to exert his force. These two comparisons set forth the wonder of the unwearied day, from year to year and from age to age the same, beginning each morning anew with the same vigor and freshness (amid so much that grows old and wears out) with which it shone upon the first man.

Verse 6. "From the end of the Heavens (is) his outgoing and his circuit even to the ends of them, and there is none (or nothing) hidden from his heat."

The sun shines upon the whole earth and everywhere produces the most astonishing effects. Almost all that makes this earth a fit dwelling for man is by means of the sun. Through him as essential condition is the vegetable world produced and distributed, the food and warmth necessary to the existence of animals furnished and their place assigned.



Also through him is the earth watered from Heaven and the rivers formed. All the power that is used by man is either directly or indirectly through the sun. Water-power, wind-power, tide-power, steam (heat) power and vital-power are due to him. All that in this present earth by its beauty and usefulness promises and prophesies a better and more glorious world is by means of the sun. Thus the sun may be said to effect in the sphere of nature the beginning of God's redemptive work.

Verse 7. "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple."

We now come to the praises of the Law. The connection with the preceding verses is plain. The Heavens exhibit God's glory, the Law is the means of making earth an exhibition of God's glory. The earth is a contrast to the celestial regions. The creation is unredeemed and man, the most wonderful of all God's works, fallen and in sin; but the Law, preparatory to the Gospel, is the means by which, not only in man's heart and life, God's glory will in the end be shown, but also the very Heavens and earth be transformed into the mirror of the Divine attributes in the time of the great adoption and restitution.

"The Law of the Lord"—the law as a whole, with especial reference to the ceremonial portion of it, in which were revealed the mercy and grace of God. This law was perfectly suited to the wants of the soul. The word "convert" in our version is better "restore," and many a Jew in the old time of the law has approached the altar weighed down with guilt and despondency, and then, the burden all removed, with a rejoicing heart has borne witness to the power of the law to restore the soul. Blessed were they above other peoples who could say, "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

"The testimony of the Lord" is the law as bearing witness to the holiness of God's character and against sin.

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The Moral Law—the ten commandments—is especially referred to under this title. The ark was called “the ark of the testimony” because it contained the tables of the law, and the tabernacle was called “The Tabernacle of the Testimony” because it contained the “Ark of the testimony.” This testimony is sure. The propriety of this epithet will be seen when we consider that the tempter exerts his craft especially for the purpose of making us unstable in our moral judgments and blurring the distinction between good and evil. We are also prone to be led away by the natural heart and the influence of others to call evil good and good evil. Now amid the moral judgments, varying with times and temptations, the influence of public opinion, amid the waverings of our own judgment through self-deception, in that where there is the least surety, the Law is sure. It is no weather-cock like conscience, obeying the least flaw of wind, but fixed as the eternal adamant and often contradicting our fancied spiritual judgments.

“Making wise the simple.” The “simple” are God’s children, who are sincere and earnest, but who need enlightenment because of the stress of temptation or the bewilderment of false reasons. Notice is to be taken that it is not said that the “testimony of the Lord” will give to the simple ones minutely specific precepts which they may follow blindly, but it is to make them “wise.” They are to enter into and appropriate the substance of the command. The specific precept is the means of introducing the simple and earnest obeyer to a broad principle that lies at the bottom of it. Thus in no narrow and slavish spirit, but as one who of himself re-enacts the command, he is enabled to resist the temptation of the Evil One. Only thus does the believer use the Law “lawfully” and arrive at the true dignity of obedience. It may be remarked in addition that the “testimony of the Lord” includes not only the ten commandments, but whatever of direct moral precept lies scattered through the Word,

as also the "Law of the Lord" whatever of hope, promise and grace is found in the whole extent of revelation.

Verse 8. "The statutes are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes."

"Statutes" is explained by Alexander and Hengstenberg to indicate the Law as that which appoints work to be done; "commandments" as rather that which directs actions. Statute is the Law of God as an imperative command considered as independent of any reasons given, as e.g., the command of Sabbath keeping on the 7th rather than on the 10th day. The charge to care for the stranger, to care for the poor, and indeed the whole round of duties to one's country expressly given or by implication in the Bible, would come under the head of "statute." Wherever our course of life or work is marked out by God's providence as interpreted by the principles of his law, there we have a statute. Hard and terrible are the works sometimes enjoined by God. The "statutes of the Lord" marked out to the Israelites in the extermination of the Canaanites. That was a statute which Abraham received when he was told to offer up Isaac. The heart does not always rejoice at the moment, but does sometimes afterwards, long afterwards. Still there is that which tends to lighten even dark and hard duties; they are right. While as a general fact the Lord's employ is a happy employ, the duties which he enjoins are such as of themselves naturally tend to promote joy in the heart. This is to be contrasted with the work of the world, which is laborious, joyless, and then cannot cheer us by a sense of its being right.

Under the head of "commandments" come whatever directly or indirectly tends to guide one's course of action. There are points to which man comes in the course of his life where he is perplexed with the question, "What is best?" The question is puzzling because the real point does not come out clearly. We are swayed secretly by motives that we would not approve of if we were aware of them. Here lies

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the power of Satan to deceive and engage a Christian in a course which will result in his temporal and eternal injury. Now just here, when he is doubting what to do, something in God's word, either directly unveiling the sinful or selfish motives that lie hid in his heart and inclining him to one course, or else directing something that he would not be able to do if he did take that course, suddenly indicates to him the path that God would have him take. Well is the commandment of the Lord called "pure" with reference to this, its office as guide. It is simple and single, and comes to a man who is confused by complexities of thought and feeling and afflicted with the saddest of sorrows—doubt, with a purifying and unifying power that directs him what to do, where to go, and enlightens his eyes. This last expression refers not so much to knowledge as to feeling, to the good cheer and careless ease of a mind relieved from the harrowing torture of doubt by feeling the guiding hand of God.

Verse 9. "The fear of Jehovah is clear, standing forever; the judgments are truth, they are righteous altogether."

"The fear of the Lord" is understood by most commentators as a title of the Law—the moral effect wrought by the Law put by metonymy for the Law itself. It may be so, but the trope would be a strained one, and there is no need of keeping up the exact form of the other verses. Lyric poetry should have great freedom. I should prefer therefore to interpret it in its plain, literal sense. And this sense has this advantage: it introduces a new office of the Law and Work of God. It not only shows the way of salvation and reveals what is morally right and wrong (verse 7), but prescribes one's duties and directs one's path (verse 8), and is the means of revealing one to us whose character is for us a higher and better law than any that can be written. A child who is well acquainted with its mother need not have given it by the mother a great number of specific directions to enable it to do what the mother would have it do. It will at once know what would please or displease its mother. So the

man who knows God—and we have that within us naturally that helps us to know Him—who is filled besides with awe and reverence and lives as in His presence, will have a law which furnishes not only the precept but the impulse to obedience. When a man lifts his eyes in love and reverence to a God whose character he understands, the pharisaism that would interpret the written law so as to make its commands as narrow as possible and obedience as little as possible, vanishes, and another spirit takes its place. He feels that he cannot be too pure and holy. He feels that all that God himself is, that he commands him to be. "Fear" as used with reference to God is not timidity, but is compounded of dread and love, and is tolerably well expressed by the word "reverence." It abides forever; that is, a Christian never comes to the time when he can trust to his own impulse and spiritual light. He is always to look up to God as a child to a father and King, in love, and yet with a sense of His authority and dread power. This is necessary to ensure his being kept clean, and it will be effectual. Perfect love will indeed cast out all fear from the soul. There may indeed be no consciousness that it fears, but until that which is perfect is come and our fellowship with God is made complete, there will be a need of that grim element of experience latent perhaps for most of the time, but still ready to reappear and assert itself when there is occasion—sacred fear.

Now, then, what is more calculated to fill one with the fear of the Lord than "the judgments of the Lord," His judicial inflictions. They fill with dread, not only because they are terrible, but also because they are just. Also in God's judgments is manifested His love to His people; as, for instance, in those on Pharaoh and the Midianites. So that they fill His people with that union of dread and love which is true "fear" and God's best praise.

These judgments are "true," i.e., according to the facts of the case. God knows all the facts and interprets them fairly, so that every mouth is stopped when he smites. These

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judgments are of two sorts. They are either for the chastisement of His people, or for the destruction of His enemies and theirs. God's people may, from what has happened to themselves or other Christians, or from what has befallen the ungodly, draw many a precept and monition. These precepts may be called "judgments," and indeed any precept of the law may be called a judgment in view of the awful sanctions with which it is enforced.

Verse 10. "(Judgments) more to be desired than gold and much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the dropping of the combs."

These judgments are to us precious and pleasant because they reveal to us God's will, than to know which nothing is more profitable to one who looks at his own interest, nor more pleasant to one who loves his Heavenly Father. Besides, they train the Christian for Glory, and, though "grievous" at first, yet "afterwards" they are so different. It is also true that through His Judgments God has endowed His people. The nations of Canaan were destroyed that Israel might enter into their possessions, and Israel was cast off that (Rom. X: 28-30) the Christian Church might inherit the promise to Abraham. Thus at one blow God sometimes delivers and enriches His people.

Verse 11. "Moreover, thy servant is enlightened by them; in keeping them there is much reward."

But there is something of dread and terror in these judgments over and above what is pleasant. If the godly man trembles at every word of God, how much more at His judgments. When they come upon others it is to him as if a trumpet blew to let him know that peril to himself was near. With no superciliousness does he "behold and see the reward of the wicked." He feels that there is that in him yet, notwithstanding all that grace has done for him, which may lead him into grievous sins involving grievous punishment. And so a blessed profit comes to him from translating every judgment on others into a precept addressed to ourselves. See

the words of the Doctor in Macbeth: "God forgive us all," which exhibits him in penitential sympathy with the distress of Lady Macbeth.

Verse 12. "Errors who shall understand? Clear thou me from hidden ones."

It is significant that the word in the preceding verse translated "warned" means primarily "enlightened." In Ez. 33-3, the duty of the watchmen is to "enlighten with his trumpet." To be "warned" we must not merely be impressed, we must be informed of that which we are ignorant of. Sin works so secretly in us that we are not aware of the true character of our actions. We forget to judge ourselves, or else we are partial judges. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and so a rude shock is sometimes needed to let us know where we are and whither we are going. But God's judgments effect this, and then when our "secret faults"—faults hidden even from ourselves—are made known to us, vain would be God's warnings and instructions and precepts if there were not a remedy found in expiation. And indeed, with all our use of the law and the judgments of God, we will never be able to fathom the depths of our sins. "If our hearts condemn us," we may be sure that He who is greater than our hearts sees much more in us that is faulty than we do ourselves. And to Him we must apply to cleanse us—that is, to acquit us judicially (for such is the meaning of the word). To Him must we go, confessing the sins that we are aware of, and bearing in ourselves those sins that are hidden even from ourselves, and say, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean."

Verse 13. "Also from presumptuous (ones) withhold thy servant; then shall I be perfect and clear from much transgression."

Two classes of sins were recognized in the Mosaic Law—sins of inadvertence, and deliberate, wilful sins, here called "presumptuous." The first could be pardoned, the second never, and so we see here, only for sins which we were not

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aware were sins, could pardon be implored. As to the other sins, the only petition is, "hold me back from them," as if that was the only hope. The dominion of presumptuous sins over one refers to the strong and seated impulses implied by them and developed by them; also that tyrannic consciousness of guilt that destroys peace and paralyzes all effort. "The great transgression"—exactly "great or much transgression." Yet perhaps the definite article expresses what was in the mind of the Spirit, a reference to that great sin under clear light, which even under the Dispensation of Grace cannot, as we are told, be forgiven.

Verse 14. "Then shall be for acceptance—or acceptable—the sayings of my mouth, and the thoughts of my heart before Thee, Jehovah, my rock and my redeemer."

"Let the words"—better, says Alexander, "Then shall the words." Most emphatically better when we consider the context. And yet how humiliating the sense is. It is then only as forgiven and restrained that we can be acceptable to God. Surely there is not much room here for pride or self complacency. We must say with Madame Guyon, "the all of God in the nothing of the creature." Only what God makes can He accept.

And here we are brought to a remarkable connection with the first verse. The Heavens declare the glory of God, and so do the words and thoughts of the renewed soul. God at the first pronounced good the works of creation, of which the Heavens is the splendid representative, and now here is said to accept the words and thoughts of a heart cleansed and restrained, which manifests the germ (Rom. X: 8-10) of that New Creation, which, beginning by transforming man morally and at last giving him a glorified body, ends by transforming this earth and changing the Heavens themselves into an infinitely grander witness to the Creator's glory than they now are; making "a New Heavens and a New Earth, in which dwelleth righteousness."



De Quincey, writing on the knocking on the gate in Macbeth, speaks of the great Shakespeare in the following terms:—

“O! mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but they are also like the phenomena of Nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers, like frost and snow, rain and dew, hailstorms and thunder, which are to be studied with entire submission of our faculties and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too little or too much, nothing useless or inert, but that the further we press in our discoveries the more we shall see proof of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident.”

Now if so much can be said of the writings of the great Shakespeare, what shall be said of Psalm XIX and its inspired author?

## Psalm 22.

(The following cannot pretend to be more than a general survey of the intent and meaning of the Psalm. The scholar may miss the usual comment on every clause of every verse, still it is something to analyze the character of David's emotion, as throwing light on the greater and more profound experience of "David's Greater Son," of which Psalm 22 is the prophecy.—A. B. K.)

This magnificent Psalm begins with an outcry to God from a soul in the extremity of distress and danger, extending from verse 1 to the second clause of verse 21.

Then follows a resolution to praise, and call to praise, because God has heard and answered the cry to Him, which we read in the verses reaching from the second clause of verse 21 to the end of verse 25. Then follows a statement of the prospect opened to believers by the deliverance, extending to all the world and to all time.

This is a true lyric utterance; but lyric utterance though impulsive, is not purely naive. There is something self-conscious about it. A moment's thought about it will show us that David was not possessed by the emotions expressed in the first portion of this psalm at the time he composed it.

It is evident that when he commenced to write, he was filled with deep gratitude, unbounded hope, and exaltic praise. The passage from verse first to the first clause of verse 21 records a past experience, and thus has a journalistic character, often to be met with in the Psalter.

A prose arrangement would commence with the second clause of verse 21. The fact of deliverance was a call to praise, because when the sufferer cried unto Him "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me," and so on down to the second clause of verse 21,—“He heard.” Then follows the rest of the psalm. By this arrangement the psalm would lose nothing of its significance, but much of its energy

and poetic beauty. There is no reason for doubting that this psalm was written by David, as its title imports, but it would be vain to attempt to ascertain what circumstances in David's experience gave rise to it. If we did it would not help us in the interpretation of the psalm. The circumstances that suggest a piece of poetry are like the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope to the beautiful figure that results. The poet recombines, makes great, exalts and transfigures, so that in the composition we find often no more than a trace of that which suggested the poetry. For example, little help is given towards understanding the song of the "Three Fishers" to know that Kingsley composed it in the deep depression and pain that fitted him, upon the Bishop of London forbidding him to preach in his diocese. Much more is this the case, when not only poetic feeling, but the inspiration of the Holy Spirit causes some painful trial of David to bring before his exalted imagination an other sufferer, an other scene, a greater conflict and a greater victory.

It needs no close examination of this psalm to see that David could not have been speaking of himself, when he superscribed this psalm "To the Chief of Musicians." In the first clause we have fully set forth the pain and peril that afflict the sufferer, together with the struggle of faith to keep fast hold of God, and to realize His presence, faithfulness and tender, enduring sympathy with all our needs.

In verse 1, there is not merely apprehension but actual loss. God has forsaken him but not utterly. The sufferer's state is not one of blank despair. He can yet prefer the mighty claim, "My God, my God." He can also ask, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" He has a good conscience. Many of us who suffer from God's absence have no reason for wondering. We know well that it is for good cause, and our own fault. All desertions are of this character. God stood aloof from Job, but it was not for Job's fault, and to many servants of God since the time of Job, their trials have not only been painful, but incomprehensible.

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What astonishes us in the case of Our Lord, is that He should wonder at what had come upon Him when He had looked forward to it so long with dread and shrinking. It adds to our impression of the exceeding awfulness of Christ's death, depth within depth,—that when He drew near to do that He came to earth to do, and of which He knew enough to be dismayed at the prospect, as He entered on the agony of Gethsemine, we are told “that He began to be greatly amazed.” Then the renewed astonishment of the cross, “Why hast Thou forsaken me.”

## Psalm 36.

To be a true creator God must defend and provide for all who put their trust in Him.

Verse 1. "Thus saith depravity to the wicked (one) in the midst of my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes." In the preceding psalm the wicked one was so powerful and threatening to the psalmist that he can but call upon God to crush him. In this psalm the sinner is contemplated with a kind of horror of surprise at his perilous audacity in sinning. The psalmist wishes to say that he notices with astonishment that continued impunity in transgression encourages the wicked man to feel that he is in no danger at all from God. The whole verse might be paraphrased thus: "See what transgression says to the sinner—there is no fear of God before his eyes." Or thus: "There is no fear of God before the eyes of the wicked one; this is what transgression says to him." As we would say of a demagogue, "he does not fear being brought to justice—that is what his political influence says to him."

Verse 2. "For it has flattered him in his own eyes in order that his iniquity may be made manifest and hated"—literally, "to the finding of his iniquity and to the hating." The words translated "the finding" and "the hating" are prepositions and the use of "to" before an infinitive to indicate a purpose is to be seen in the Song of Solomon 5:5, Gen. 1:14, Ex. 20:8, etc. The meaning is this—his self flattery causes him to act out his evil nature without restraint, and so to make it manifest and hateful in the eyes of God and man.

Verses 3 and 4. "The words of his mouth are falsehood and fraud, he has ceased to act wisely, to do well. He will meditate falsehood upon his bed, he will take his stand upon a way not good, evil he will not abjure." Each of these clauses sets forth a specification of the depth of depravity

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into which the man has fallen. His speech is treacherous, he has given up trying to compound for evil acts by good ones, he deliberately plans treachery and as deliberately sets about executing it, he makes not the slightest pretense of hating evil, he approves openly of evil. This last may be regarded as the climax of corruption, public approval of evil (see Rom. 1:32), and suggests the idea that by the word wicked is meant a wicked community with a wicked public opinion.

Verses 5 and 6. The psalmist now turns away to contemplate the all-embracing and good providence of God; not for the purpose of contrast (as Alexander), but to exhibit the amazing folly, as he had before shown the amazing corruption, of the sinner. "O Jehovah, thy loving-kindness is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness unto the clouds." The second clause is significant. The children of Israel in rainless Egypt were specially promised a land watered by the rain of heaven." Thy righteousness is like the mighty mountains; thy judgments are a great deep. Oh Jehovah, Thou wilt save man and beast." The images are all connected together—1st, the heavens; 2nd, their clouds; 3rd, the hills reaching the clouds, and enclosing and bounding and defending like the wall of a house, and 4th, the sea beneath, make, as it were, a complete envelopment of man and beast in which they always are. So is God above and beneath, and so the danger to the wicked must be imminent, notwithstanding he flatters himself. The parallelism seems to be used to draw special attention to the clouds as sources of water, the most valuable natural thing, and the supply of which is universally recognized as dependent upon God. The providential care of God seems to be shown in the details of the ministering of water to man. Clouds, the mountains that form and gather them, together with their slopes that move forward the water to man, the deep that receives all the streams and gives all back again, the shower, the river (v. 8), the fountain, and last of all the sun (v. 9), the motive power

of the whole, that turns the great water-wheel of Nature. The whole frame of Nature is considered as a combination for the purpose of ministering water to man, as, indeed, it is. And forceful is the conclusion that if God has made all nature an alembic for furnishing water to man and beast, He will surely take care of them in every other respect. The expression "great deep" will not correspond to anything but the mighty ocean, and makes the ocean one of God's ministering servants. The figure is intended to comprehend the whole realm of Nature, and there is a great beauty in likening God's judgments to the great deep, for God's judgments are logically the last result of His "loving-kindness," "His faithfulness," and His justice; and all events tend to God's judgments (or final settlements) as the rivers to the deep. And, if we might carry the figure farther, God's endings are always beginnings—His judgments are constructive, as from the deep returns the water in vapor. For to the poetic as well as the scientific mind the deep is but

"—an outlet of the sky  
Where waiting till the west wind blows  
The freighted clouds at anchor lie."

The water has been falling, ever falling, even as we are dying, ever dying, and now it finds its place of oblivion and death to be a place of glorious transformation and new life. Miss Newton, when writing to a lady whose brother was buried in the sea, says: "I can only think of him as buried in the infinite ocean of God's love."

"Thou wilt save man and beast." Here again, as in Ps. 33:6, the psalmist consoles himself from God's relation to him as creator. (Ecclesiastes 1:7.). The very perspective of the cloud region would teach them this truth. (I Kings 18:44) —"out of the sea." It would, however, be plain that the sea was the source of the rain clouds ever borne from it inland. This vast incomprehensible deep of the ocean thus is interpreted by the showers. So are God's judgments. How

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splendidly "man and beast" fits the great figure. It is a picture of the universe under the aspect presented in Palestine, for the sky and clouds are over all and the hills, counting the slopes, with lake or sea under all; and the whole ministers to man and beast. So, like the Syrophenician woman, David thinks that even if he has only the portion of a beast, he will experience God's truth and mercy.

Verse 7. "How precious thy loving-kindness, O God, therefore the sons of men may take refuge in the shadow of thy wings." Alexander translates above "mercy" instead of "loving-kindness;" but though it would yield a rich meaning, it has in it a distinct implication of ill-desert which does not seem necessarily a part of the Hebrew word. Besides, "loving-kindness" makes the parallelism more complete. The affection of God for His people is made something instinctive—a necessary part of His nature, like the animal affection (or *στοργή*) of the hen that gathers her chickens under her wings (see Matt. 23:37). And this is involved in the very name that all believers may call themselves. They are God's children, and have more than His promise to rely on, even His natural yearnings, expressed in the quaint language of the old time by the words "bowels of mercies." But if believers would endue themselves with the lofty views of this psalm, they must not merely rely upon God the Father in His person as abstracted from Nature, but upon Nature as God's ministering hand, and in all that is pleasing to the mind or refreshing to the body must recognize His presence and tenderness. I remember to have had a sense of this in nature, when once returning to my room tired and after absence, I lay down upon my bed in the afternoon of a summer's day with the light flung from the sparkling bay and the flashing corn leaves filling the room, and the green branches of cherry trees tapping against the window in the gentle breeze; it seemed as I was lying down in a father's arms. Such a feeling ought to be constant, for on this earth beauty and pleasure are the rule, deformity and pain the exception, and in the



shadow of God's wings we may always trust even when they are the wings of the wildest wind.

Verse 8. "They shall be drenched with the abundance of thy house; thou wilt give them to drink of the stream of thy pleasures," literally "the stream of thy Eden." The word translated "drenched" means literally "to drink largely;" it is used in the secondary sense "to be satisfied," as in our version, but generally means "to be bathed, flooded, or drenched," e.g., by tears. In Isaiah 55:10 and Psalm 65:10, it is used of rain, and one cannot resist the impression the figure sketched in vv. 5 and 6 in the mention of the clouds and the sea is carried out here in the shower, the stream and the fountain; and that the dwelling place of man and beast is God's house; shut in as it is by sky, clouds, hills and watery plain—a temple lifted up by God's glory, the sun. The drenching by rain does not minister directly to man's comfort as do the stream and the fountain; but, nevertheless, the indirect ministry is so associated in the Bible that it is very proper to be used as a simile, or even as a metaphor, "Thou shalt rain upon the abundance of thy house."

Verse 9. "For with Thee is the fountain of life"—the ever-flowing fountain; "in Thy light shall we see light." This verse not only continues the figure, but justifies it, and reveals its spiritual meaning. "Thou, O God, art to us as the streams and the sun to man and beast." That the sun is here alluded to is manifest. In the light of the sun, the psalmist says, we see the light that comes from every object in Nature, from the light that gleams from the snowy top of Hermon to the light that streams from the beautiful flowers. When we use the light of the sun we should say to ourselves, "the light," and treat the light by which we see as something divine, thus making the very act of seeing as well as drinking a laying hold of God. He who uses Nature thus will, in the end, go farther than the recognition of God as a bountiful and beneficent Creator; he will see in Nature more

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than the sun can show him, and the world of thought will be through the divine companionship a new world indeed. There is about this psalm an utter repose; God is very near, near as Nature. Nature is God's dwelling, God's hand, God's robe; not only the psalmist, but Nature, seems to live and move and have its being in God. And though the wicked enemy is as threatening and dangerous as he is described in the preceding psalm, the psalmist rests content and without anxiety.

Verse 10. Yet though David enlarges his confidence by a consideration of God's relation to him as Creator, still he does not rest in or presume on his right as a creature, but prays as a son. And in this he shows his profound piety. Jealous will God be of everything that renders unnecessary direct face to face intercourse as the very way in which we depend upon God. We should be careful not to depend upon God by means of anything in Nature unless we consider that both itself and our enjoyment of it are at God's will, and may vanish at His pleasure, and are preserved to us only by His wisdom and love. Many rest for their security in church relation, doctrine, experience, evidence, use of sacraments—anything but dependence on God's will. Yet all these yield no growth in spiritual life unless immediate and unceasing connection with God is maintained through His blessed Spirit by which otherwise dead forms are preserved full of spiritual vitality and fruitage. At the same time the parallelism between loving-kindness and righteousness must be noted. They who trust in God have a covenant claim upon His justice.

Verse 11. "Suffer not the foot of pride to come upon me, and let not the hand of the wicked ones expel me." There stands the wicked menacing an approach and assault. His pride is founded upon his impunity (v. 2). The psalmist asks that his "foot" may be kept off, that is, that he may not be suffered to come to him. The figure of Nature as God's house is carried out in the word "expel" or "drive out;" it renders absurd the attempt to drive out, while that very

poetic absurdity is an argument with God. Faith is a cry to God and implies some uncertainty, yet it ought to be repose and confidence. The folly of the wicked one (vv. 1-4) is apparent to the righteous fearer of God. Yet the folly of the righteous one is of the same sort as that of the wicked if he yields to the temptation to think that God careth not for him in love as much as He careth for the wicked in hate, though He bear long with him.

Verse 12. The repose of the psalm is hardly disturbed by the petition that the proud may not thrust him out of God's house, for quick as an echo comes the assurance that they have failed. "There are the doers of iniquity fallen, they are struck down and cannot rise." "There" where they were starting to come, while in security of spirit they "meditated falsehood," they are struck down. There is something in this that suggests the earthquake so common in Palestine. If God's house is loving-kindness above to the righteous, it is terror and destruction beneath to the wicked.

## Psalm 51.

Title.—To the Chief Musician, A Psalm by David, When Nathan the Prophet came unto him as he had come unto Bathsheba.

The dedication to the Chief Musician, making it the property and utterance of the whole church, permits us to give the largest significance to utterances of individual penitence and faith. The repetition "came unto," "had come unto," considered by some to be careless composition, is, according to Alexander, significant, suggesting "analogy, proportion and retaliation." This play upon words, not uncommon in the Psalms, is an argument for the authority of the title and authorship of David.

This psalm is a remarkable instance of the lyrical ebb and flow. Three times it seems to be brought to a complete and peaceful close, and three times (at verses 1, 9 and 14) does it begin again with agonizing petition, "blot out my transgression," "hide Thy face from my sins," "deliver me from blood guiltiness." These seem at first essentially the same, but the connection makes it evident that the first asks deliverance from corruption, the second from the wrath of God, and the third from guilt; and the psalm may be in consequence divided into three parts, which can be summed up thus:

Verses 1-8. Graciously remove the corruption which is not merely within me, but which is my nature, and let me find comfort.

Verses 9-13. Be not angry with me, make me stable and active in all goodness, and fill me with joy.

Verses 14-17. Make me not guilty and let me glorify Thee by praise.

The last two verses conclude the whole psalm and make plain its national and even universal significance.

Verse 1. "Be gracious to me, oh God, according to Thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of Thy compassions, blot out my transgressions." Conant has "greatness" instead of multitude;" Alexander "abundance," apparently attempting to unite the two meanings. But the word more properly and usually means multitude, and so translated yields a good sense. We have here the psalmist not only appealing to God's loving kindness, but comforting himself with the thought of the great number and variety of instances of its exercise in the past. God's people, though they may know that God is merciful, need to be impressed with the fact, and there is no better way than to consider the multitudes upon whom He has had mercy, and the innumerable sins of every kind and every degree of enormity that He has pardoned. And here it may be stated that throughout this whole psalm there is no petition for the remission of any earthly penalties. The prophet Nathan at the time that he came to him told him that the Lord had remitted all penalty except the death of the child of his sin. It is the spiritual penalty that now crushes him, the degradation, the alienation from God and the guilt. "Blot out my transgressions," take away my transgressions. This might mean forgiveness, justification or cleansing. That it means the last is plain from the next verse.

Verse 2. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Remove from me, he asks, the corruption in which transgressions take their rise. It might be thought that a soul convicted of sin would first think of and deprecate the wrath of God. But the fact is, the soul cannot have to the utmost a sense of the wrath of God without first being filled with that utter self-loathing that stops the mouth of all excuses and makes the man acknowledge that God's wrath is just. We might well suppose that the thought of his deep corruption would rush with overwhelming force upon the mind of David the moment his eyes were opened to his sin. A man so honored by God, not only as

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a deliverer of his people but as their instructor and exemplar, a man so morally superior to those around him, and whose blameless conduct hitherto would naturally tend to fill him with self-complacency and self-confidence—for a man like that to have such foul crimes as adultery and murder brought home to him and to be made to feel that they were the outcome of a corruption of nature that rendered him powerless to do right in the future, might well compel him in horror at the revelation of his character and terror at his helplessness, to cry out, "wash me," "cleanse me."

Verse 3. "For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me." Alexander thinks that his conviction of sin is urged as constituting a claim to pardon, because it is an indication of God's merciful intention, but this is hardly poetical. Such complex inferences could hardly find their way into an outburst of lyrical agony. "For" simply introduces the reason why he makes the supplication of the preceding verse. It is perfectly instinctive and lyrical. How natural would it be for a man to cry, "Help, for my house is on fire," or "Help, for I am sinking." This view is strengthened when we consider that the word translated "know" has often the force of knowing by the senses, experiencing, realizing. He does not simply recognize his transgressions; he feels what they are, and this very agonizing knowledge is not of the past but of the present. Their character is his character. "I know;" that is the same as saying, "I am tortured." "Wash me thoroughly," etc., for I am tortured by the knowledge of my sin, its spiritual effects. The "for" marks rather why he asks than why he should be heard; and, yet it is possible, since no feeling is simple and single, that there may be here a plea in palliation. "Whatever I am now, I at least do not insult thee by self-complacency." It certainly does constitute a palliation and a condition for forgiveness on the part of God. It is a strange proof of the deceitfulness of the human heart that David could have been deceived for one moment with reference to the character of his deed. Possibly he was

aware that he had done wrong, but excused and palliated his act, and now saw his sin in its full enormity. He may have gone so far as to justify himself; perhaps on the ground that Uriah was a Hittite, one of a race the Israelites were commanded to destroy. At any rate, whatever refuge of lies he had sought shelter in, it was swept away. The words of the verse literally are, "For my transgressions I will know, and my sin will be before me always." This future has something touching in it. It seems to draw a line of demarcation between the past, the honored past, and the future. As if he had said, "From this time I cannot be what I was. A degrading remembrance will cling to me. The feeling that I have is as permanent as my life." Is there not significance also in the emphatic use of the pronoun "I," when the form of the verb clearly indicates the person? I know, of myself. Very often our knowledge of our sins is not our own. We know it because we are told in God's Word that it is wrong. Or our acknowledgment is merely a submission to public opinion or a dread of consequences here or hereafter. "My transgressions I know." I know that they are transgressions, I know their enormity, I feel their full significance as bringing to view the corruption in which they have their origin. It is only when the individual sin is as a window through which we see the depth of corruption within, that there is true penitence.

The plural "transgressions" may be significant. The penitence may be doubted that is fascinated and completely occupied with a single wrong act. When conviction of one sin brings many other sins to light, then indeed the conviction is deep for a man begins to deal with more than an isolated error, even with the source of error. May not also the singular "sin" in the parallelism also be significant? The knowledge of our sins is not complete till our sins exhibit to us our sin, our sinfulness of heart.

Verse 4. "To thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done the evil in thy eyes, to the intent that thou mayest be just in thy speaking and be clear in thy judging."

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“The particle at the beginning denotes general relation,” as to “respecting.” . . . . “It does not therefore explicitly substitute God for man as the injured party.” (Alexander.) That it should be left thus vague is plain from the parallelism, “done this evil in thy sight,” which, whatever else it means, must refer to the view God takes of evil acts. There seems to be a double meaning in both branches of the parallelism. “To thee, thee only, I have sinned.” 1st, I have done against Thee alone and Thou alone didst and dost appreciate it. 2nd, It was not concealed from Thee and it was besides done in Thy very presence. It seems to be plainly intimated here that David’s crime was in a certain sense concealed. Indeed it could not have been concealed had it been regarded at court as a revolting crime. It was not divulged, it was not bruited, because there was a large tolerance of it. Uriah once out of the way, probably no great attempt was made to keep it hid. This fact, therefore, involves the people in David’s guilt and becomes proper in a ritual psalm. Uriah’s murder, the people of the capital, at least, would have been willing to condone. Indeed, people generally would not have been much displeased with an act that was so like the ways of heroic and despotic kings about them and whom they would be pleased to have David imitate. Strict living on David’s part would be a witness to God’s claims that would be a weight of bondage upon those of Israel, to whom there must have been much temptation in the licentious religion and manners of the nations about them. People then were not very different from what they are nowadays. It may also be said that these sins of David would be looked upon with complacency by nobles because it in some measure took the bridle off their necks. A despotic king makes despotic nobles; license on his part involves license on theirs. But it is perfectly manifest from the form “to Thee” that more is meant than that God alone appreciated the sin. The very reason why He alone appreciates it is because it is committed alone against Himself. David’s act



could be called by many bad names; it was a selfish, treacherous, cruel crime. It injured a valiant friend and loyal servant in the most dreadful way, and he tried to hide all by his murder. The deed was one of many sided evil. But there was one aspect of it under which it affected one alone. It was against the holy will of God. David could not practice against God as he could against Uriah the Hittite. One thing alone he was competent to do; he could do what God did not want to be done, what his holy nature revolted from; in other words, he could sin. He had sinned. Everything evil in his deed summed itself up into a focus in that. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." The expression of the preceding verse, "For my transgressions I know," finds its full significance here. This is what he knew about his transgressions, not merely that they were transgressions against God. There is more here than the feeling that he had broken God's law. He had struck at more than that, at God himself. Conviction of sin not only finds its bitterest pang but attains its true reality only when it arrives at this consciousness. It is only when the law assumes its true character as the expression, not only of the volition of God, but of His whole mind and heart. An enactment of the King of the Universe is one thing, but His will is quite another, for it is Himself. This is the view of transgression that swallows up every other and makes it so outrageous and incomprehensible in the case of one who bears God's image. This was the agonizing consciousness referred to in the preceding verse—"I know at last that my sin is against Thee alone." The clause does not mean, my act against Thee alone, but "my sin." David's act was against his fellow; no act can be conceived more so. No doubt David was troubled and remorseful when he thought of the injury to Uriah. But these merely personal feelings could have no place in a psalm dedicated to the "Chief Musician" and written to be used in the public worship of God. Only what would express the experience of all should be introduced into such a psalm. Our

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evil actions are very different in outside appearance, but they are alike in this, they are directed against all purity and holiness summed up in the person of God. And so this experience of David's could be made that of every worshipper. The terrible character of his wrong-doing revealed to David its inner character of opposition to God, and thus helps every one to discern the same in his own acts. "I have done," he says, "something that Thou alone canst appreciate, which is aimed at Thee alone." We may imagine him to utter the next words with a certain terrible surprise. "To the intent;" there was a purpose to be answered by it then. "My intent was to have pleasure; woefully has it failed; but I was serving the purpose of God even in giving way to my guilty passion." One of the most awful revelations at the last will be for sinners to find, not merely that they have failed, but that they have ministered to the success of that against which they were striving. These words, "to the intent" may merely indicate that it served the purpose mentioned in the last clause. It may mean the direct design of God and that full force we ought to give it. Perhaps we should go so far as to make David say that he sinned in order that God should not lie. We have then a two-fold meaning. The result and purpose was that God was just in judging, and the result and purpose was that God was shown to be just in judging. The last only will need to be pressed. How did the fact that he sinned against God alone show this? Of course David cannot be speaking of this single judgment of God on his crime. This is forbidden by the poetic and ritual character of the psalm; and indeed it is somewhat ridiculous to say, "I committed this sin in order that thou might accuse me of it." The fact that David's sin was committed against God alone would prevent a clearing of sin in man's sight until the last great judgment.

The last clause has two branches, speaking and judging, accusations and punishments, all God's accusations against man, all his punitive acts. His accusations and pun-

ishments so universal that they assert and imply the utter depravity of man. David in his own case infers it, and since this was to be used in public worship every child of God ought to infer it from the character of the sin which he confesses. That this inference is that he is utterly sinful is shown by the next verse. How could this be inferred simply from the fact that the sin was against God alone? It cannot be a logical inference, but a spiritual. Consider what the judgment of God in David's case was. It was simply that his sin was as bad as the one of the man in Nathan's parable. It was no objective statement on the part of God then that revealed to David his sinfulness. Nathan's visit was the mere occasion of the revelation. Conviction of sin such as David had depends upon a sight of God such as He is. The act of David was so heinous, when his advantages of endowment, instruction and responsibility as a prophet and representative of the Divine Ruler of Israel, that great emphasis may be placed upon the "I" of the sentence. The very royal and theocratic position of David and even his being sincerely inclined to serve God makes the sin more heinous. This is the force of "in Thy sight." "Against Thee have I"—such a one as David—"sinned." With everything present that ought to prevent sin, that it is which is a damning proof against human nature itself. The peculiar enormity of my sin only brands the whole race and justifies all that God has ever said against it and all that He has ever brought upon it of punishment. If a David can sin in this way, nobody can ever hold up his head. There is something more of force in this "to the intent" which is rather hard to express and yet which seems implied. This sin then served a purpose. It was not simply a wild, willful, irrational thing. There was a certain propriety about it. All natural things must manifest their nature. There is a propriety in the nettle and the thistle, for they are the outcome of the life of the plants from which they spring. It is proper that the rattlesnake should secrete poison; it is proper for the

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natural man to sin. The language of toleration is sometimes the most terrible of accusations. "To which also they were ordained." And as we tolerate the rolling of the swine in the sty, so we tolerate the evil words and evil acts of some men. They must show what rules and reigns in them. And when we go further and speak of these men as serving a purpose by their wickedness, we give a still stronger expression of the feeling that they live and move and have their being in sin. There is something about this way in which the psalmist speaks of his sin that makes it very strongly expressive of his utter helplessness in sin. The form of justifying himself effects a stronger—the very strongest—expression of this deep ground of his sin. I do serve a certain purpose in the economy of the Universe, and as each created thing must express the principle that its Creator endowed it with, so must I manifest my sin; it serves a useful purpose. It manifests my nature and thus does its proper office. It reveals human nature in me and involves my nation through their indifference to my sin, in that sin itself.

Verse 5. "Lo, in iniquity was I born, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

That the interpretation of the previous verse was correct is rendered probable by the fact that it makes a perfect connection with this. God's accusation is just. Human nature is utterly vile. But speaking out lyrically from his own consciousness, he makes the matter universal, by referring it to his very generation. Deeper and deeper goes the woe-ful song, and as at the attainment of a new and higher knowledge, as if it had come with something of a surprise to the mind, he cries, "Lo! in iniquity was I born." The stain is not merely very dark and very deep, but worse than all it comes from within. You cannot remove that from any being, that is constantly reproduced from the very principle of its existence. It is a dreadful thing when a man fully recognizes the fact that he is helpless in the power of his nature not only mighty in its impulses, but unto whose manifestation

the gaze cannot extend, and therefore upon which his will cannot operate. This is all the verse states. There is here no scientific statement of the doctrine of original sin. The experience is one however which goes to prove it. In this true and terrible moment he feels that sin is not something contracted, but is a perversion of his nature underlying the will. It seems impossible for David to express the corruption of his nature, as if fearful of being misunderstood to mean less than he did. It is remarkable that he should confess his nature to be so corrupt as logically to seem delivered from responsibility, and yet the next verse shows that he has not lost the least of his sense of responsibility.

Verse 6. "Lo! truth Thou hast desired in the hidden part; Thou wilt make me to know wisdom." Lo! again; wonder of wonders! Notwithstanding the difficulties under which I labour, I am not excused; my feelings, my acts, nay the very root of my life must be holy. In this verse the word "truth" and "wisdom" are used where we would expect purity and holiness. Why is this, if not to suggest that the evil of his nature is a perversion; that as a sinner he is untrue to the deeper meaning of his being, as well as not really adjusted to the truth of things. To desire truth in the inward parts is not to desire such tendencies in the man as shall prompt to truth-telling. Truth as used in the psalms corresponds with reality, and indeed some such meaning as this is required to correspond with "wisdom" in the parallelism. We can imagine David to say this with something of a gleam of hope. The cosmogonies of the East use strong terms like those of the fifth verse in speaking of the birth nature of human beings. But they are words of despair; this birth nature constitutes an insurmountable barrier. As the animal must remain what he is, as the eagle can never crawl nor the serpent fly, so the birth nature of a man cannot be transcended. That nature is according to the truth of things. "Bram" exacts nothing higher than their nature prompts to from all that come from him. But God exacts and therefore there is

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hope. Sin is not one pole and righteousness another. It does not fit into the system of things; it is a lie. In the inward parts there is a strife, for sin wars on the soul and that sinful soul wars against the universal whole. Truth can not mean "integrity" or "sincerity," for whether we translate in the latter part vaguely "inward" or secret "parts," or specifically "reins," the reference in either case must be to that which is below the consciousness. A still stronger argument is that it would destroy all connection with the previous verse, which must mean that what is beneath and before consciousness is sinful, and the sixth verse, to correspond to it, must mean that God demands truth in just that. The idea, then, of the first clause, is that God demands that the root of life shall be adjusted to the truth of things. This appalling demand has in it a gleam of hope. How terrible would it be if we had a God who was tolerant of evil. But this demand on the part of God is not for the sake of the actions that would result from the cleansing of the root of life; He wishes it for its own sake. He wishes to be adjusted to our inner selves in His own person. He desires, not results apart from Himself, but communion, and for that every impulse and unconscious manifestation must be pure and adjusted to Him. This shows the impossibility of serving God by effort on our part. Even if the consciousness was as far reaching and deep as our natures and the will potent to restrain evil acts and to force to good acts everywhere and at all times, God could not commune with that thing so tied up. The will and consciousness would in that case merely succeed in making a machine out of a man. And besides, what motive would such a creature have in so acting? It would be a worse hell than any that could be threatened.

Hope begins to shine in the latter clause. Out of the eater has come forth meat. The depths of the loss suggest the everlasting gain. The sway of sin is an irresistible nature before the conception of which the very foundations of morality seem about to vanish; but before pantheistic ease

can obtain, comes in the presence of an exacting God, the moral assumes its predominance in the universe, and the moral implies the possible, and here is hope. More than a prayer, the clause assumes that it shall be as God wills, and gladly and hopefully turns to the Great Father and cleanser, "Thou wilt."

"Wisdom" must be left vague. It does not mean divine illumination (Alexander); it does not mean conscious wisdom of any sort. This is shown by the paradoxical form of the statement. He is to be made to know wisdom in that part which is hidden; in other words, to know that which is concealed from him. The wisdom therefore which he is to be made to know is instinctive in all mental latency and intuition. Moving intelligently to the attainment of the aims of the soul, as the stars that "rive the dark by private rays," or as the plants which, reaching forth in the impulse of their life, gather their leaves and flowers out of the empty air, as the sculptor with his chisel, the painter with his brush, or the musician with his flying touch, "from no vain or shallow thought," but from the deepest movings of that in their mind that their thought cannot fathom, body forth forms of eternal beauty.

Verse 7. "Thou wilt purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; Thou wilt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

There is here not so much a petition as a confident putting upon God of the great work. The very strictness and greatness of the exaction in the preceding verse hints at a remedy. But in the symbolic rites of the Mosaic cult there is a clearer and more direct indication. The shame and impurity associated with the idea of death and leprosy would seem to imply that God exacted immortality and perfect health in the man, as well as perfect purity. The implication of blame with reference to death and disease is an implication of deliverance from these, that one may deliver himself. Perfect purity implies perfect health and immortality. How

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proper to use forms under which Grace asserts its farthest reaching powers (since death is the last enemy) to express the power of Grace over sin under its aspect of an irresistible nature. This verse is an illustration of the pebble-like form of the verses in the psalms. Though this is not a characteristic of the psalms alone, but of all lyric poetry. The song proceeds by leaps, as a true spire ought to rise in the air. Verse is not logically connected with verse, at least not with any directness. There is a continual and startling change just here in the psalm. Verse 4 is all on the moral plane, when suddenly in verse 5 the corrupt nature is described in terms that seem to destroy all responsibility; then instantly a change is made in verse 6 to (not purity) but the truth and wisdom that God exacts of that nature, and then in this verse, instead of appealing to those symbolic rites in which Grace under the old covenant gave the clearest comfort to the sinner, to the holocaust, to the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb, to the goat of the Day of Atonement chosen by lot to bear away the sins of the people, instead of referring to some symbolic rite which had directly to do with sin, he calls up one which had to do only with that which was but a symbol because it was a result of sin, death and disease. There seems to be a glance here at the wideness and far-reaching character of the remedy needed for the redemption of man, a remedy that respects the body of man as well as his moral relation to God and reaches even to the nature of things, a cosmic redemption. Birth iniquity (verse 4), of which truth and wisdom is exacted, is met by a symbolic promise of deliverance from the uncleanness of disease and death. If we consider it, it has great poetic force. A glance at a symbol that goes to the very root of body life and at the same time asserts its connection with sin is one calculated to reassure the sinner, even when he views himself as but a bubble on the mighty tide of his corrupt nature. From the fact that the word translated "purge" is a derivation of that meaning "to sin," Alexander infers that it denotes specifically purification



from the stain of sin. But it may be that the meanings "to sin" and "to purge" come from a root meaning "to take away from;" and, at any rate, the word is used for mere ritual purifications, as e. g., the cleansing of a house. The meaning here, therefore, is, thou wilt work upon me all that spiritual work denoted by the sprinkling. "Moll" notices how here the Mosaic standpoint is broken through. The hyssop is put into God's hands not the hands of the priest. The "foolishness" of symbolical cleansing points away to Him who alone can give efficacy to the rite.

"And I shall be clean;" not clean of course from ceremonial defilement, but clean in all impulse, down to the very germ of life. The mode of the cleansing, the very incongruity between aspersion with hyssop and a cleansing of the life of the soul, shows this cleansing to be the act of God and exhibits the profound view of God's power and His vital relation to His people that David was enabled to exercise. We appeared to have left the plane of morality and freedom in the description of sin irresistible; here we seem to leave the plane of morality and freedom in the description of the irresistible remedy. The deeper view of sin always results in this. He who of all the fathers, knew most about sin, spake most about irresistible grace. And here, David in this psalm, which more than any other part of Scripture, exhibits the power of sin, sets forth the power of God to deliver from it. In the agony of an almost unparalleled experience, he looks for release, not to any effort of his own, not to a long and persistent building up of the character in strength and purity, and growing thus gaining freedom, but from a work of God on him, presented, as far as poetry can present anything, as instantaneous. "Sprinkle and then at once I shall be clean." Not a moment intervenes between the falling of the blood and the cleansing. In the illustration of the Mosaic cult, the priest sprinkled and then the man washed himself. Here God does both, and the description "whiter than snow" seems to add a trait of positive goodness. At least it is so in the regenera-

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tion; the sinner is not only made clean but bright. The working of grace and the co-working of the man, discriminated in the rite by the sprinkling and the washing, are united under our Lord in that power that worketh mightily in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Verse 8. "Thou wilt make me to hear joy and gladness; the bones shall rejoice which Thou hast broken."

This "joy and gladness" Alexander understands as the joyful announcement of pardon by God, and this interpretation suits the parallelism, if that refers to God's wrath and His judicial condemnation of sin. But this can hardly be. David had already heard from Nathan, the prophet, the words, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Besides what a lowering of tone after the preceding verses which manifest such agony on account of inborn and dominating corruption, to have David waiting in fear and trembling the reversal of his condemnation on account of a sinful act. It would be also entirely out of character with the preceding context to make "the bones which Thou hast broken" refer to God's chastising judgment in the death of the child of sin, and the verse to express the expectation of having his heart cheered and delivered from the stress of his sorrow. This would be a lame and impotent conclusion to those awful descriptions of his corruption, a small result from that remedy which affects not only soul and body of the sinner, but whose application made the hills to tremble and touches universal nature at its core.

It would be more congruous to understand it as the joy and gladness of a soul rejoicing to be assured of deliverance from its corruption of nature. But in that case, this verse would make little advance upon the previous one. It would merely say that it would be joyful to know that one was purged from corruption, and again one feels the falling off that there would be.

Can we not begin with the result of the preceding verse and go on to a higher result, an effect of the thorough

cleansing work upon body and spirit. And here on this supposition the words are not just what we would expect. It is not, Thou wilt through the renovation of my nature fill me with joy and gladness springing up from within; but "Thou wilt make me to hear joy and gladness." The joy and gladness is outside, only the ear cannot hear it until it is unstopped by the healing of the nature. Chords that are in unison will both vibrate if only one is struck, but no matter how strong the sound from the neighboring chord, the string will be silent until it is tuned up to the same note, and then it will give forth the responsive sound. So the soul may be in gloom because it is out of unison with the basic note to which God's cosmos is attuned, but when once the nature is purged the deaf ear is unstopped, it catches something of that music in which the beams of the universe are laid, and receives into itself something of that Joy which is its life.

This psalm does not set forth the experience of a trembling culprit, who longs to escape a woe that really overhangs him, and from the doom of God. It is a forgiven sinner who, struggling with his corruptions, feels how joyous he will be when once at harmony with himself and God and Nature again. He is told of God's love and forgiveness, and he believes it, and yet, the remembrance of past acts, the dreadful regrets, the ever new sollicitation, the dread of falling again, the utter insecurity of the future, the jar on his whole nature, prevent him from taking comfort. He has not completely and lovingly turned to the Lord, and distrust and evil inclination are yet present. He does not yet realize the love of God that is poured out towards him, but does not reach him.

One of the means of renewal that God uses, is outward pressure. The bones of the unrenewed man were old through his roaring "his moisture is turned to the drought of summer." After David's first conviction and his relief from fear of punishment, a deeper conviction had to be wrought, in the end a thorough union with the Lord. This was partly

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the work of the sorrow brought upon him, and all that knowledge of self and the Lord, to which the soul comes only through pains like birth throes.

The profound knowledge of sin that David evinces, his deep loathing, and his great longing for deliverance, is the other side of terrible suffering. God presses sore upon the soul, manifesting His moral distance, and showing by the pain He inflicts that unison with Him is necessary to any comfort. The very inlet of light alone upon the soul would produce agony. God also exhibits His chastening wrath. Words cannot be used which will more strongly express this unrest, than the words used here. His bones are broken. Certainly a man with his bones broken as on a wheel is one of the most pitiable of objects that can be conceived. The rejoicing of the bones may well figure forth the restoration of comfort and simple ease. We can hardly go farther than that in the interpretation of the figure. And this portion of the psalm, though it ends cheerfully, does not rise higher than ease,—comfort. The voices of joy and gladness that he hears avail to fill him with comfort through and through.

This joy and gladness that he hears is then,—first; that sphere of music of the universe that has before been poured upon deaf ears,—his soul lifted up to that, it is enabled to perceive what was there before—to realize the infinite love of God, and His purposes of good to all His creatures, and that even in this fallen world; and the various ways in which He has already wrought, the mass of material for joy that exists even in this fallen world; and the various ways in which He assures us of further and higher joy. In this latter division might be placed what Peroune makes the whole meaning of this joy and gladness that he is to hear—the rejoicing at the public festivals. (We might even include Moll's very odd interpretation, which is equivalent to 'make me to hear my own voice in songs of gladness on account of forgiven sin.') But this joy and gladness may have a more positive meaning. God lifts His chastening hand away from the pardoned sinner.

speaks encouragingly to him, manifests Himself to him, communes with him in love, opens his ears by his Holy Spirit, and by providential mercies makes his path smooth and delightful. In the case of David, his hearing of joy and gladness culminated, and his bones broken by God's chastening hand, rejoiced indeed when Solomon was born and God called him his Beloved, and promised that he should sit upon the throne.

Verse 9. "Hide Thy face from my sins and all my iniquities blot out." Up to this point the theme has been root-vileness and the possibility of cleansing, now the lyric bird takes another flight (vv. 9-13), and the psalmist is occupied not so much with his attitude towards God as God's attitude towards him.

Both disease and remedy appear in this part of the psalm. But nothing can be added to the previous description of the sin, for it embraces the whole nature, and lies at its very core, while the remedy indicated embraces still more, reaching even to the redemption of the fallen creation of God. Both remedy and disease rise to the moral plane, and the theme is on the side of the disease, God's displeasure with the psalmist,—and on the side of the remedy, the possibility of establishing stable feelings of love, and service, and peace before God.

The first petition does not indicate any fear of consequences to himself! there is nothing of this anywhere in the psalm. For his nation and church he feared, as appears by the last two verses, but not for himself. He does not say, "Look away from me," as in Ps. 39th, 13th. It is the dread of remaining corrupt and under the displeasure of God that swallows up all else.

There is progress in this psalm, the first division carries over into the second something of the peace in which it ends. It is with a trust that cleansing has begun, but with remembrance of his past transgressions and a consciousness of the remaining evil of his soul, that he asks God to turn his

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face away from his sins, to neglect and ignore them,—think of him and feel towards him as if they were not. He does not ask, “Hide Thy face from me,” but “from my sins.” He wants God to look at him, but not at his sins. He who can make such a bold petition as this has already separated himself from his sins. And here we may recognize what has been gained through the positions acquired in the first part. For though there, self and sin, in the 5th verse, seem to be inseparably united, and yet we see in verse 7 the possibility of that separation. And in this verse we see that one who is thoroughly penetrated with a sense of his sinfulness, may, while beseeching (v. 7), “Cast me not away from Thy presence,” yet say, “Hide Thy face from my sins.” And here again comes in the precious consideration that this psalm is dedicated “to the Chief Musician.” It is to be used by the people of God in their worship, assigned to that office by the Holy Spirit, acting through the inspired David.

What they are told to ask, they could expect to receive. Many, doubtless, in the old time, blessed God that such a prayer had been given them by inspired authority, being able to use it for themselves only because David had used it for himself; and the very heinousness of the sin from which he asked God to turn His face, made it all the more useful, for who then could feel debarred from the use of this prayer? The people of God in all time may then take heart, even if their past acts seem to them enormous, and their present state very corrupt and degraded. God can be asked to overlook it all, and therefore they may be assured that He will. Let us be clear: There is not a petition in this verse for deliverance from punishment. There a soul delivered from punishment asks for full restoration to communion and favor of a dreadful Judge. He asks God to restore the lost joy of His salvation. He is willing that God should notice his sins, yet he stands before Him as many a one has stood before an injured friend,—pardoned, received, and yet thinking—Oh that the dreadful knowledge of what I have been,

of what I have done and said were not his. Oh that we might begin again with clear accounts. An earthly friend may seem, to forget as truly as forgive, but yet we cannot help interpreting looks, and tones and words in the light of our own degrading consciousness of ill—desert. But all sinners may be assured from this prayer that the Great God of Heaven and Earth forgives and forgets utterly. And this is the measure of our treatment of those among us, who wrong us and afterwards turn to us. It is amazing that such a prayer could be uttered by one who had not the light that we have—how it could be used as to its import in public worship by those who had not David's prophetic—impulse and intuition. It is hard enough for us to believe that such a thing can be, who have been assured by the cleansing presence of the Holy Spirit who unites us to the Lord. Faith, to be sure, does not always need a full explanation of the grounds on which it rests; nevertheless such an explanation is a precious thing, and a main object of our Lord's mission to earth was to give it to us. (See Roms. 3:25-26). Some account the mind instinctively demands the grounds upon which its faith rests, even if it goes but a little way towards solving the great mystery. And here, in this psalm, we seem to have what may be styled a movement towards a solution—a germinal solution—which has but to be expanded to be all the solution granted even to us. In the first verse we have the petition of the last very nearly "Blot out all my iniquities." The blotting out can be referred in the first verse to the overwhelming force of God's compassion. "In Thy tender mercy look upon my sins, and blot them out," that is let them not have their proper effect in awakening Thy wrath. Let them rather awaken Thy compassion." The blotting out of the transgressions depends upon His keeping them in His mind or His heart. In verse 9 the blotting out depends upon God's turning His face from the sin, and not regarding it at all. This is assured in the prayer "Blot out." God will be gracious, merciful and tender towards

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the sinner, as if he was no sinner, washing and blotting out. In verse 20 find an equivoque for a rational ground of faith. God will blot out iniquity by hiding His face from it, but will create in the sinner (verse 10) a pure heart.

Verse 10. "A pure heart create for me, Oh God, and a fixed spirit renew within me." This verse is a justification of the petitions in the preceding verse. God, King and Judge, can allow His feelings of compassion to carry away (verse 1.), and thus not regard (blot out) the transgressions of the sinner who turns to Him, because the very action of that compassion tends to cleanse the soul of all sin—it is in order to the purging with hyssop, and making thoroughly clean. Here in this verse God, the friend and master, can ignore wrong doing and faults of character which He removes. And this renewal of the character must take place.

The hiding of God's face from the sins of His servant implies the taking him into the fellowship of intercourse again, and this would be a shame if there were no real change in the heart of His erring servant. To stand in the presence of God (verse 11.) implies God's confidence in him, and a reality of intercourse, not a pretense of one. No more toleration would answer the purpose. We must feel that we bring something to God. The merest infant still has an independent emotional life of its own, and can bring something to the wisest and the strongest parent. So the loving willing heart of a human being can bring something to the Great God of Heaven and Earth.

If a new heart could only be created! And this is what is asked. The word is the one used to express the mightiest work of God's creative power (Gen. 1:1.), and yet how amazing the faith that could ask such a thing. We can understand somewhat how this thing can be, for we know that the Lord can dwell within us through the Holy Spirit, and we can be irresistably impelled in all freedom and spontaneity. But how David could desire this, and yet believe he would not become a mere machine, is inconceiv-



able. He could not of himself ask this. It is a petition that witnesses its own inspiration. It is to be noted that the petitions of this verse ask for something other than has been asked for before. A pure heart and a fixed spirit is something different from a cleansing of the very root of life. The former is an effect of the latter on the plane of the consciousness. The feelings are to be made pure. This could, of course, be effected, at least temporarily, without any of the vital work set forth in the first division.

One feeling can be made to cast out another. By providential arrangements emotional evil can be kept down, and the best emotions aroused. Great love for his wife will make a man pure in heart, so far as exercises go. A vast deal of our purity, and indeed of all for which we value ourselves, is of this kind. We are pure because God keeps us pure, and not because we are naturally pure. But the psalmist asks not to be kept, he wishes to have created for him a pure heart. It is strange how strong the expression is. In the former division the figures of washing and the symbol of sprinkling were used to set forth a far more radical remedy. The reason why the word create is used is not easy to see, except to assert God's sovereignty in the free emotional sphere which might more really be conceded in the vital sphere.

It might be thought superfluous to say, create in me pure emotions, when he had already asked that the inner part should be cleansed, that his life should be made true and wise.

Perhaps it would be the case if the body were all right and the earth were right, and the world of human beings around which would prevent the normal action of that which is within.

God's Spirit dwells within many a man whom prejudice and ignorance leads so far astray that there is love when there should be hate. Witness holy men who have been persecutors. There seems therefore a need that God should act upon as well as in us. All Christians should see

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this. They cannot depend upon their regeneration, and rest upon their oars, as a plant can, merely uttering forth the life that is within. (And indeed even in the case of the plant the solicitations of the sun are needed to draw it forth.) Christians are in great danger when they do this. They may have been sprinkled with hyssop and made clean. It may be said to them, "Ye know all things." "Ye cannot sin." (1st John). Yet they have but the germ, and must ask God to build that germ up into a perfect and glorious character. This seems to be the meaning of asking God to exert creative power in the region of the free and moral.

The regenerated soul may well tremble for its communion with God, the fellowship that it craves, if God could not disregard its sins and view it only in the Beloved; and well it might tremble in looking to the future, if it did not believe that He who was within working mightily was without working mightily, revealing through His truth, guiding and stimulating by His providences and acting directly on the soul. Thus the heart is made pure, that is, not merely is delivered from the licentious feelings that led him into the present troubles, but has given to it all that simplicity and elevation of feeling that adjusts the soul to what in this world of falsehood, deformity and change, is true and beautiful and eternal. This work of God is one never ending, still beginning, and is well set forth under the word, renew, which signifies not only the asking for the restoration of that which was lost, but may imply,—keep renewing; keep adjusting. For not by a fiat of creative power is the heart kept in purity, but by a constant act of reparation and correction.

Every word in this verse is precious, and should be weighed not so much to gather instruction as to enable the servant of God to utter them well. The man who has not known the force of lust on contemplation, who has not fallen into gross sin is likely to feel able to make his spirit fixed by his own strong resolve. But many know that one of the most fearful results of sin is the sense of instability that it leaves

behind in the penitent one. Apostacy seems so likely, the force of resolve so important.

Is one in such a case to act the virile, self-reliant part,—is he obliged to feel that he must, in the light of consciousness, rebuild his character, make his heart pure and his spirit fixed? No. This psalm is addressed to the Chief Musician, it is for the people of God to utter. We can not only say, “Work Thou in me,” but “lay Thy hand upon me.” To be weak is to be strong.

Even after the new will,—we are so free in the development of the gracious gift, and so terribly abuse our freedom that it is a comfort indeed that we are permitted to connect ourselves wholly to Him, to develop that which He has given to keep back evil feelings and induce good ones; and by constant acts of support, make the wavering spirit firm as a rock.

“Create.” “Make life a part of my nature, and not merely wash me.”

Verse 11. “Cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” This verse is remarkable as being the only one in which mention is made of any punishment that David dreads on account of his sin. It is remarkable also as being one of the three places in the Old Testament where the expression “Holy Spirit” occurs, the other two being in the 63rd chapter of Isaiah.

It is very clear from this petition that David regards himself as being still in the presence of the Lord and in possession of the Holy Spirit. In the preceding verse he asks for something that he has not; here he prays that that may not be taken away which he has. What then, is this possession of the Holy Spirit which he still may claim for himself, notwithstanding his sin and sinfulness? Alexander and others understood it in the New Testament sense, as those active moral influences that make for holiness. So that in verse 10 he prays that a pure heart may be created in him, and here he prays that the necessary means to this may not be taken away.

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Now, not to mention that this close distinction and discrimination seem unsuited to a passionate lyric like this, the word "create" (in verse 10.) would exclude this. The pure heart is asked for directly at the hands of God, unmediated by any attribute or person of the Godhead, and this is the way throughout the whole psalm, the washing from iniquity, verse 2, and the purging with hyssop, verse 7, is asked for of God without any reference to any mode or means of doing this. It will not do to import our clearer and more elaborate theological modes of thought and expression into the Old Testament, and especially the poetry of the Old Testament, and that, too, Lyric poetry.

Besides, a more weighty consideration is this. If in this place the Holy Spirit is referred to as the author of moral changes, it is the only place in the Old Testament.

There is one class of passages that show the Spirit's work in Nature, e. g., Gen. 1. 2.; Job 26: 13, and 33: 4; Psalm 104:30. Another class of passages refer to miraculous effects wrought by the spirit as on Samson, (Judges 14: 6, 15, 19), strengthening the muscles; upon Bezaleal, Ex. 31: 2-5, making him a skillful artificer; upon Saul throwing him into an ecstasy, (1st Sam. 9: 23-24), on David revealing to him the designs of the temple, (1st Chronicles 28: 12-19); upon prophets generally, enabling them to declare the will of God, and future events,—a notable example of which is Balaam's prophecy, (Numbers 24: 2),—and controlling their imagination, as in the case of visions of Ezekiel.

Prophetic powers did not imply always good moral character: and in all probability Balaam felt perfectly secure of his position as prophet, notwithstanding his sinfulness. But David feels however the incongruity between his prophetic position and his exceeding sinfulness. Retaining his sin and his corruption he feels he cannot retain his position of honour and usefulness, and that the answer to this petition, though not involved in the answers to the previous ones, is yet only made possible by them.

How fully this verse shadows forth the dispensation of the Spirit, whose great head was a Prophet in whom the spiritual endowment implied all holiness, and who gave the Spirit to His followers to be the power of a new moral life.

Presuming not upon his restoration to holiness, feeling that God, even then, might rightfully degrade him, he makes it a subject of supplication that he might be still allowed the spiritual leadership of his people. And well does such a petition befit this psalm, in which he does not pray to be delivered from many a punishment that he might well dread, but for restoration to purity and God's favor, for it is no selfish dread that fills his mind, but love for God's service and love of his fellow men. The real animus of this petition is shown in the 13th verse. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." This verse may well be made the utterance of the repentant Christian, who over and above any other punishment that he may have reason to apprehend; may well dread that, though forgiven, purged of sin, and taken into God's favor, he may lose forever influence, position, and opportunities for doing good that are now his priceless possession.

God's threat to his sinning servants, "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place," is not always unfulfilled. Let, however, one who has sinned even like David, repenting like David, like David take heart to pray and hope, since these words are put into his mouth, that he will not be cast aside like a broken and worthless tool; but, though bearing always an agonizing consciousness that belies the respect paid him by others, he can do something still for the cause he loves more than ever before.

Verse 12. "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and (with) a willing spirit uphold me."

The variety of the petitions of this psalm and its slow gradations and fine discrimination is something very wonderful.

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“Joy” has been spoken of before (verse 8th), but it is joy and gladness as heard. It is one thing for the heart to be attuned to gladness—to be responsive to the joy around, and quite another to be full of joy welling up from within. This is what the psalmist asks for here. “The joy of thy salvation” cannot mean the joy of being saved from punishment and sin, for it is a joy that he has had before, and that he asks to be restored. Neither is it probable that David had before gone through with any experience like this, of agonizing penitence and the deliverance into favor. “Salvation” does not refer to anything peculiar to David, but to the common state of welfare in which every true Israelite lived. “Salvation” properly means deliverance, rescue. The history of the chosen people was a history of rescues, and the consciousness of this caused them to call that deliverance, which we would call only well-being. Both the past and present situation of Israel induced in the pious Jew the feeling that any prosperity that they enjoyed was due solely to the protecting arm of God. And this feeling was supplemented by a large anticipation that made even a state of comparative ease and prosperity, miserable compared with that which they claimed and expected.

We may well suppose that David, who in his own person could count so many deliverances, and who stood at the threshold of a new national and religious movement, of which he was the light and the impulse,—must have had this feeling in the intensest degree. “The Joy of thy salvation” would then mean in the first instance the peace and comforts and cheerfulness of a true Israelite in the full enjoyment of the prosperity to which the Lord’s deliverance had brought the nation, and above all, acme of all deliverance, God’s favor towards himself, and cordial confidence on his part towards God.

He may before this have been hardly conscious of the blessedness of this state of innocence and prosperity, but now, looking back to it out of the midst of his guilt and sorrow, it well may appear to him a time of joy.

But, second,—there was a joy over and above this that David had in his time of innocence—the joy of happy, hopeful work for the future. David knew that his work was not merely for the present—“Thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come,”—with a career of magnificent conquest behind him, honored by his people as deliverer and prophet,—he was laying the foundations of a Kingdom which he was assured would be forever. It was the splendor of this far future glorifying every act of the present that made his work so joyous. This “Joy of thy salvation” it was that he so bitterly regretted and so eagerly craved to have restored. And this view immediately connects this verse with the preceding. There he asks that he may not, while forgiven the sin and retaining his office as King, lose the anointing of the Holy Spirit, that enabled him to be a spiritual leader to his nation.

Here he prays that,—over and above the return of lost peace and favor of God, and the innocent joys of the past,—may come back the old creative activity, and joyful energy in God’s service. The last clause of the verse is like the first. He prays,—and it is a wonderful prayer, different from anything taught by the heart of man. One would think that a penitent man like David after falling so dreadfully would be full of resolutions of future strictness, close watchfulness, and how natural for such an one to limit his appeal to God, to merely asking Him to aid by His Spirit in making him more strict. How natural that he should be disgusted with freedom because, living too carelessly he had fallen into sin. Yet David prays to be upheld through that very freedom, his spontaneous impulses. The very conception of such a restoration is amazing. This willing spirit upheld in its obedience more mightily by its impulses than it ever could be by the most rigid adherence to Law is akin to the “Joy of Thy salvation” of the preceding verse. It is a spirit drawn forth by God’s precepts being addressed to all its ablest and mightiest instincts. His work being the carry-

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ing out of patriotic feelings, love to his fellows, poetic impulses, and the farthest search of the constructive imagination. All penitent ones, in like circumstances, should exercise David's great faith. In the depth of their penitence they should hope and ask for, not half but whole restoration,—to pray for joy again, and because they know that this joy is strength, and that in full, free activity is safety. To wrap our holiness in a napkin may cause its loss. Man must seek besides his own improvement that of others. They who are restored from backsliding, and would keep themselves from falling again, had better forget all about themselves, and their spiritual ailments, in the love and active service of God, and their fellow men.

Indeed we may reasonably consider that David in asking God to keep him in his place of service, and uphold him in the energies and joy of that service, was not merely seeking a delight that he craved, but asking for that which in his heart he felt to be necessary to his being sustained in the right way. We may well imagine that he looked with horror upon the prospect of the loss of his exalted work, and its compelling attractions, as a loss of the very bulwark and defence of holiness.

Verse 13. "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners unto Thee shall return." In verse 11th we have the petition "Thrust me not from my high service." In verse 12th, "Restore to me the joy and zeal of service." And here we have the grandest and most joyful act of service we can render to God. Following verses 11th and 12th, it should not suggest an attempt by good works to increase self respect or evidences. But David must regard it as the brightest result of his own reconversion, that he should be the agent of the reconversion of others wandering from God. It is not a resolve but a joyous anticipation; not in the least seeking to make a return to God, a delight in saving men, and thus serving God, he might take some cheer in the fact that increased knowledge of sin



and God, would make him more useful; for the teacher has been to school. He can now teach the ways of God,—the blessed ways in which He would have His servants walk, and His ways of dealing with the repentant sinner. And these are one. God would have us walk in His footprints. God makes a way for us to walk by walking first, as a father leads his child through difficulties. We walk in His ways by voluntarily meeting Him in His ways—in the reception of His good providence and His great grace, with gratitude and love, and acting these feelings; and since we are made in His image, the life that ensues from union and communion with Him will be patterned upon His.

To experience properly God's dealings (ways) really implies all that is meant by walking in His ways. Even the Ten Commandments are just as much a witness of God's holiness—the ways in which He walks—as a rule for us.

The confidence with which He looks forward to great results may or may not be justified, His humble and affectionate monitions to those about Him may not have been effectual; but one thing is certain,—that to those who have had much forgiven them, is often granted great power to lead others back to the way of life. "Out of the eater comes forth meat." The temptation and the fall of some men is like a descent into a deep and dark mine, from which they emerge bringing with them the gold they have found there. Precious things are brought from distinct climes, and so they who have been shut up face to face with God in the throes of contrition and the rapture of pardon, come forth bearing to their fellows more precious gifts than if they had visited the far off gardens of the Hesperides and brought back its apples of gold.

Verse 14. "Free me from blood (oh) God, God of my salvation, (and) my tongue shall celebrate Thy righteousness."

The lyrical ebb takes place here. He has asked to be delivered from his corruption and that God would be re-

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conciled with him; but now the sense of his guilt rushes upon him with overwhelming force and bows him for the moment to the earth. It is a great difficulty. The psalmist can, any one can, conceive himself as pure instead of being impure, and God as looking upon him with pity and love, instead of with loathing and indignation.

These are hard things, but they are conceivable. But committed crime can never be uncommitted, and how then can one who has committed a crime be acquitted by perfect and omniscient justice? Yet this amazingly bold request he makes. Undoubtedly guilty of murder, he asks to be cleared, and then, to add to the paradox, engages to celebrate the justice of the Judge who declares him not guilty. But does the verse mean this? Does "Free from blood" mean, "Make me not guilty?" May it not refer, as many think, to the threatening of the prophet,—“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house,” (Second Samuel, 12: 10) and fulfilled in the case of his immediate family, in the two notable instances of Amnon and Absalom.

The last clause would mean, “I will celebrate Thy faithfulness to Thy promises to me and mine, since for their sake Thou hast kept away this evil that I have incurred.”

To justify this interpretation of the first petition in this verse, some commentators adduce the fact that the word “free” is used generally—with reference to deliverance from danger, and find in it an allusion to Gen. 4: 10, as if he had said, “Deliver me from this blood that cries out against me.” If this is so, then the word “blood” would only mean the blood of Uriah, and the prayer a general depreciation of the punishment of murder, and especially that denounced by the prophet Nathan, but with no direct allusion to it. But if the petition, “free from blood,” does not mean more than this, it would be very much lower in tone than the rest of the psalm; for to bring in amidst these expressions of agonizing penitence a prayer merely for deliverance from punishment would be a strange dissonance.

No interpretation should be admitted that did not give the experience, set forth here, the profoundest character; for this psalm goes everywhere to the root of the matter.

Now, there are three things that every penitent soul desires, and these three granted, his case is perfectly met.

First:—That God should regard and remember his sins no more. The preceding part of the psalm has been occupied with these two needs, but there is necessary, in order to perfect his deliverance,—

Third:—That he should be freed from all its desert. No matter how clean present impulses may be, no matter how many assurances I may have that my ill deeds will never be brought up against me, the mere feeling that I am eternally a convict will be of itself, punishment. To think I am living on sufferance, that my impunity is out of harmony with the eternal laws of the universe of things, will sometimes cloud the sky of faith, and make peace itself a struggle. In such a psalm of universal penitence we would suppose that this need would find expression, and if anywhere, here is the place for this “free me from blood” means “free me from guilt.” Something certainly was asked for here that required a mighty effort of faith, and this is shown by the repeated call on God, and its intense form—“God of my salvation. “Indeed a literal translation of “blood” is “bloods” meaning idiomatically murder. So this would stand “free me from murder,” of which we would only say that it may possibly contain an allusion, through equivocation to Nathan. Because the psalm belonged to the ritual for universal use, Nathan’s threat of a special punishment has no place in the petition. The individualization of the crime, and especially because it is a capital crime, would all the better make it a universal psalm, for if a murderer could ask freedom from guilt, anyone could. David seems to say, I do not know how Thou wilt save, I only know Thou canst in Thy boundless power, and hast in the past and hope Thou wilt again, because necessary for my salvation. Amazing request! God’s power

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can make us pure, free from punishment, but can it remove guilt? The feeling of guilt, no doubt had been removed under the old Law. "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul," and the soul's restoration, no doubt from the very first was felt to need justification, over and above cleansing and pardon. The distinction may not have been always clean cut before the mind, but more or less clearly, it was present, in the case of a true penitent. Indeed, it is the part of true penitence that is most prominent in even a shallow and fleshly sorrow for sin, and the easiest to be removed in such a case. A man who had little or no sense of his corruption, and who cared very little for the loss of God's favor, might feel very intensely his, and be ready to make great efforts to expiate it, and throughout Christendom and heathendom there are a thousand contrivances of man, which are effective as a temporary opiate for the feeling of guilt. The ignorant formalist, who confesses his sins in the most perfunctory way, will often go away feeling no longer guilty. The formula that occurs so often in the book of Leviticus, "and shall be forgiven," doubtless, often ministered to the want of the truly penitent soul, where that want was not distinctly brought out before the consciousness. The fact that the great Jehovah forgave, would also make a man feel guiltless in ordinary cases. But let a man have a deep conviction of sin, and a profound sense of the perfection of God's justice, and guilt will not seem to be a thing lightly to be gotten rid of. He is not blind like the simple and shallow minded. He sees that the sinner must be justified or never forgiven. For God's justice, not being satisfied, will punish, though it rends His heart. Earthly rulers have been capable of this, shall not the Judge of all be as heroic?

This feeling of guilt was very deep and general when Christ came, and it was meant to satisfy it that (as we are told, Rom. 3: 24-25) Christ suffered on the cross. David's experience had brought him to just this feeling. Perhaps he was the first who had the clear consciousness of the need

of justification as distinct from cleansing and pardon; and it is touching to see how he appeals to God for this thing, to God directly, without any knowledge of the mode in which this is to be done.

The worthlessness of sacrifices as a means he distinctly sees, the Old Law fails to give a remedy, and yet such a rite as that of the Day of Atonement might be in his mind at this time to justify his petition. That rite seems specially desired to meet this need of the soul. The sins of the people were said to be put upon the head of the goat, and it was added, "and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited." This was certainly calculated to make the people feel not merely that they were pardoned, but that they were no more sinners, and corresponds directly with the petition of this verse, which is equivalent to, "Take this murder away from me."

David might well say, thinking of such a rite as the leading away of the goat symbolically laden with the sins of the people to a land where there were none to be made guilty by them—yes, well might he say, "Remember Thy word to Thy servant upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." But he would be enabled to do this through no doctrinal inference, but only by a mighty effort of faith.

In the second clause of the verse we see a manifestation of another feeling. Not only is it necessary for his salvation to be made formally guiltless—he must be really so. The Judge must do it rightfully. Neither in law or equity ought there to be any claim upon this justification. He must be made strictly not guilty,—or the Judge's own character is stained. Truly, it is a mighty work to save us. Says Baxter, "and much ado He hath to get us home." God must always be just. The psalmist sees (verse 4) that his sin shows God's righteousness in condemning, and now he only asks that God's righteousness may be equally displayed in his acquittal.

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It would be little joy in heaven for us to feel that we were saved at the expense of the slightest injury to the character of God. God Himself in the integrity of His perfections is the great possession of the redeemed, and it will in reality add to their bliss to think that God's Justice is all the more exhibited and glorified by their salvation. It is with some anticipation of this feeling that David thinks, "How delightful it will be to be saved, and yet to be able to revel in the perfections of God, and present Him to this generation as all just, and all merciful. Make this possible, O God, make me guiltless, that I may rejoice in and praise Thy justice in my salvation."

To say, "My tongue shall celebrate," is stronger than to say, "I will." It is as if he had said, "My tongue will be taken possession of, and used by an uncontrollable impulse to praise."

With the completion of my brother's comment on verse 14th, there also ends his work on Psalm LI. In reference to that he quotes this sentence from the Talmud:

"It is not incumbent on thee to finish thy work, but nevertheless thou must never cease from it."

What follows is an attempt on our part, to finish as we may, the work he had no strength to accomplish. We will begin at the fifteenth verse.

### VERSE 15

"Lord, my lips Thou wilt open, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise." Both Alexander and the Prayer Book decline using the imperative rendering of the English Version, and substitute the prophetic, trustful future of "wilt" and "shall." "Shall declare Thy praise." A satisfactory clue to the forceful meaning of these words, may be found in the fact of David's constitutional capacity (augmented by the presence and power of the Spirit) to praise the God of Israel, whom he worshipped and in whom he delighted. Recall (II Sam. 6: 14) the occasion when "David danced before the

Lord with all his might," and also his many psalms of exalted praise. Then add to these the language of Psalm XXXII: 1. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," words quoted by the apostle to confirm his gospel of imputations in Roman 4; and then tell us if we are not warranted in saying that David's normal condition of heart was an inextinguishable and triumphant praise, far beyond and above the average attained by other Old Testament saints? If this be conceded, then we are permitted to say, that underneath the wounds made by a sword-thrusting conscience, underneath the self-horror and bitter sorrow, coming into existence with the crushing words, "Thou art the man," there abode as the food and pillar of his soul, enthusiastic love for the Lord God, and joy in His presence; and this was true even when Nathan's sword-tongue pierced his soul.

Therefore it was, oh David, rare man of God, that, although thine abhorrent sins eclipsed the Father's face and darkened thine own for a brief space, it was not a total eclipse, for in the nearest approach to totality there were straggling rays of covenanted mercy shooting forth from the corona; and therefore thy face, oh, David, begins to shine with restored trust, hope and praise.

Truly thou art of the tribe of Judah (Praise), and truly the last five verses of thy penitential song are but the beginning of a life-long Magnificat, perhaps not less exalted in its strain than that of a later descendant of the same tribe of Praise, who was none other than the Virgin Mother of Jesus the Messiah, "made of the seed of David according to the flesh."

Verse 16. "For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give (it), in burnt offering Thou delightest not."

David here refers to the butcher-like, formal, ritualistic slaying of animals in the temple, and which was not mingled with penitence and gratitude.

Verse 17. "The sacrifices of God (are) a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, (oh) God, Thou wilt not despise."

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This is but an extension of the thought expressed in the preceding verse. The slaughter and crushing out of the life of the innocent animal is only pleasing to God when the guilty man offering this substitutionary sacrifice, himself comes with a broken heart and crushed soul, the vital substance giving spiritual significance to the otherwise hollow, dead forms of the ritual.

Thus there is a perpetual thank-offering allied to a perpetual joy and praise.

Verse 18. "Do good in thy favor to Zion; Thou wilt build the walls of Jerusalem."

When individual Jews are built up in their most holy faith, love and zealous works issuing from a repentance unto life, then can and will be blessed the entire nation, and internal spiritual prosperity will eventually bring in its train an external and material prosperity.

The spiritual intelligence and assurance of faith, which fearlessly asserts the restored welfare of Zion, once diminished perchance for a while by the sins of the King; and the rebuilding of the protective walls of the Holy City, once undermined by the transgressions of David, bear witness to the recuperative joy animating the penitent, forgiven, trustful, and (through the substitutionary righteousness of Jehovah—Jesus) the guiltless, spotless, white Theocratic King in Jerusalem.

Verse 19. "Then shalt Thou be pleased with sacrifices of righteousness, burnt offering and holocaust; then shall they offer on thine altar bullocks."

Alexander calls our attention to the fact that holocaust translates one Hebrew word, meaning a sacrifice entirely consumed.

"Then," ah! Then, after the fresh discovery of the sinfulness of sin—of the depth, height, length and breadth of our sinfulness—after a more radical self-loathing and confession to God, after the trustful, thankful acceptance of God's offered mercy, then let innocent victims be offered in



my place, for no more will they be vain oblations; for the more frequently offered, the clearer will I see that though my sins be as scarlet, they become as white as snow, when confessed over the head of that Lamb, the Great Judge accepts as the sinner's substitute.

A. B. K.

## Psalm 101.

Title.—The King through His ruling glorifies the King of Kings.

This psalm is an example of the purely lyric code. The abruptness of its close is remarkable and would be intolerable in a literary age. Not having in mind any audience, the psalmist pours himself forth and adds nothing to the utterance, of impulse to explain their character. One must be transported into his feeling in order to enter into what he says. Now what is the feeling? It is the Kingly feeling—the Kingly feeling of David. Saul could never have written such a psalm as this for though as a religionist he was a servant of Jehovah, he was not Jehovah's servant in his Kingly station. But David, lowliest when he was mightiest, made himself a royal servant—an implement used by his God. In giving out then that he himself is something, he means to intimate that his Master is more.

Verse 1. By David. A psalm.—“Mercy and judgment will I sing; to Thee Jehovah, will I play (or make music).”

This is a song, it is poetry and not prose. Utterances full of feeling do not constitute poetry. Feeling must have enkindled the imagination, and through the seen must appear the unseen, in the individual the universal; and yet what is there in this psalm more than the prosaic utterances of a state paper. It must be more, for David warns us by significantly telling us “this is poetry, not prose.” Yet did we have nothing more than this it would remain still nothing but prose to us. The pattern upon the great tissue of Scripture is splendid and complicated and no one part of it can be understood without taking in the whole. And when we see dimly shadowed forth in the Prophets an ideal Jerusalem that corresponds to the real, called definitely by Paul

in Galatians, the Jerusalem that is above, and shown in the Apocalypse as descending to earth, and when we see, that according to scriptures (Rev. 3: 7; Luke 1: 32) the Kingdom of God has come when the Kingdom of David is realized, then only does this dry document become a song. Gem it may be, but it flashes only when the prophetic ray falls upon it. As in the blade we see the full corn in the ear, so in the little city and petty Kingdom over which he rules, David saw that glorious, all-embracing Kingdom, into which it would be transformed. Dim sight as through a fog doubtless, still it made divine the commonplace details of the kingly office and turned his words about them into a song.

But "mercy and judgment" are said to be the subject of the song, and when we look at the psalm there seems nothing at all resembling mercy except in Verse 6, and that hardly answers the character of mercy, but is rather the reward of faithfulness. But the faithful would never have been rewarded, they would have been crushed out were it not for the judgments of the Lord that removed the wicked. Plants in the garden grow by their inherent vigor, but they would have no chance to grow if the weeds were not removed. And so the judgments of the Lord upon his enemies are mercies to his friends, and so in this song, judgment and mercy are one. "To Thee O Lord will I play." The grave and solemn terms, "mercy and judgment," so often used to designate the greatest attributes of God, would be enough to show that David was not going to talk merely about himself. But he will have no mistake, and says, "Thou knowest, O Jehovah, that I mean not to praise myself. The axe boasts not itself, against him that heweth therewith. The saw does not magnify itself against him that shaketh it." (Isaiah 10: 15).

Verse 2. "I will act wisely in a perfect way. When wilt Thou come to me? I will walk in the integrity of my heart within my house."

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After this clear declaration of his temper, David does not fear to be misunderstood, even if he does say, "I will do this," and "I will do that," as if he referred only to himself and as if the strength to do is his own. But the first two clauses of the verse, manifest this independent dependence of David. In the first he gathers himself up to carry out in all shrewdness, a pure course of action; in the second he cries out, "Leave me not to myself." David says, "When wilt Thou come unto me," as if God was not present with him. This is remarkable in a poem in which the psalmist makes his own acts the effulgence of God's glory. It marks the consciousness of David that, though he was God's theocratic representative and justified in assuming that God acted by him, still he might be left to his own unaided human strength. There is no fanaticism about this piece. Trust in the living God, is the very basis of it. And now in the third clause the Royal Magistrate begins His wise and perfect course of action, where it ought to begin, at home. Good laws and their energetic administration are excellent, but if the monarch who stands up for God would be really efficient, he must set a good example. His household should be the type of which he would have his kingdom be. There should prevail the same law of justice and right that he imposes on the community. David did not always act up to this high principle. He, on one notable occasion, prostituted his high office to his sin, but in the main, he was a pure man and a disinterested king. He had unruly and wicked sons, but although he had a very affectionate heart, it is evident that he did rule them strictly. But we are not concerned so much with the fulfilment of this resolution as with the resolve itself. It is a model for a ruler, and woe to the kings that have ruled for themselves and not for their people; woe to the official in the church or state who uses his position to further himself or his family. Woe to the minister who stands in God's place before his people, who does not in the first place seek to rebuke and purify himself.

Verses 3 and 4. "I will not set before my eye a word of Belial; the doing of apostasies I hate, it shall not cleave to me. A crooked heart shall depart from me; evil I will not know."

The four clauses of these verses are each susceptible of a double explanation. e. g. First, I will not propose to myself any wicked plan, or I will not tolerate an evil purpose in others. Second, I hate to apostatise, I will not be stained with it, or I hate to have others apostatise and will not share in the guilt by overlooking it. Third, I will not be perverse, or I will not put up with perversity. Fourth, I will not sympathize with an evil thing or person, or I will not show favor to an evil thing or person. The most natural and immediate application is doubtless to himself personally, but there is something about the words that suggest an equivoue. Indeed, David could hardly have made any resolutions with regard to his personal conduct that did not involve official conduct as well. His rule was of such a personal character that his moral state was reflected at once upon the government and community. He was not only an absolute monarch, but he was forming a nation, and this made his life so potent for good or ill. Ordinary men may seclude their evil or their good, especially their good. But to David no seclusion was possible. If he was going to be a holy man he must do his duty by his family and strive to make that holy likewise, and to an oriental monarch it was impossible to draw the line where his family ended and the community began. So that of necessity these clauses must bear not only a personal, but official meaning, just as of necessity, every impulse of David towards God and righteousness implied the impressing of that impulse upon the community. This is seen in the extraordinary instance of the fifty-first psalm, where David turns his own repentance into a form of repentance for the community.

Verse 5. "Slandering in secret his fellow; him I will destroy;  
"Lofty of eyes and wide of heart; him I will not bear."

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The equivoque of the third and fourth verses serve as a transition to this in which he speaks alone of his official position.

In the declaration to punish slander and pride, David selects the two things, that tend most to evil in an oriental absolute monarchy. The king cannot look to everything himself he must trust others. And, since all offices are held from him, the rewards of successful slander are very great and immediate. He who gains the ear of the monarch has all rivals at his mercy. Suspicion, chronic suspicion may be said to be the curse of such kingdom, and this it is which enables the meanest and wickedest of men to rise to the highest positions. Again, if slander tends to make the working of an absolute monarchy evil, pride—that is an attitude of pride towards the monarch—strikes at its very existence. The very idea of such a government involves absolute submission to the will of the king. No matter how high spirited, how “wide of heart,” a man may personally be; no matter how he may lord it over others, towards his Lord he must be lowly. An abyss separates the king from the highest of his nobles, for, great though they may be, they are his creatures. Nothing is dreaded so much or crushed so quickly as a spirit of independence. And it may be said that slander and pride had given David especial trouble. In his youth as annointed heir, apparently he was persecuted by Saul because the jealousy of the king had been inflamed by slanderers, and it was the wild pride of the king that prevented that naturally generous man from submitting with a good grace to the preference of God for David. And so in later years, when by the foundation of a metropolitan city and ritual, he began a new development in the life of the people of God, it was slander and tribe pride that especially stood in his way. As slanderers said before to Saul, “He will hasten to seize what has been given him”; so now they said Judah is made dominant over the other tribes, Jerusalem monopolizes all the religious

honor. And now as respects worse movements in the Church of God. These two evils are the very creators of that immobility and violent opposition that so prevent happy reforming changes. That which David promises to do will be done in truth, when the Kingdom of God is come. No slanderer will be there, no food of pride shall thither ascend.

Verse 6. "My eyes (are) on the faithful of the land to dwell with me (one),

"Walking in a perfect way, He shall serve me."

We have shown that the whole lyric force of this psalm depends upon David's assuming the position of God; in this verse he seems to assume more than a royal state. The expressions in the first sentence, the watchful eye over the land and the reward of faithfulness—dwelling with him—both expression and attitude recall to readers of Scripture, God in His relations to His chosen people. The coincidence between the first clause of the second verse and the second sentence in this is remarkable. It seems to assume that the relation between his servants, and subjects, and himself, is the same with the relation between himself and his God. This may be said to be true merely to the idealizing imagination, but it is true in reality to Faith. David's position was honorable and awful because he not only was God's representative, but an inspired ruler. God not only wrote "upon his heart" the forms and measurements of the Temple, not only did the Holy Spirit speak by him in the Psalms, but his ruling was by the Holy Spirit as well. His architecture was Divine Architecture, his poetry was Divine Poetry, his government was Divine Government. And it is in this point of view that what might be otherwise considered an ostentatious glorification of himself becomes an ascription to God, since it declares what God will do by him. If the ordinance of a heathen ruler could be the ordinance of God (Rom. 13: 142) with much more propriety might the chiefs of a nation of priests be called, in their official capacity, "God's," (John 10: 34 and 35. Proverbs 8: 2 and 6. Exodus

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22: 9), and surely in the inspired deliverer, governor, poet and ritualist of Israel this assumption of a divine character as ruler, so far from transgressing the lowliness proper to a creature, is of itself an expression of the most profound humility. As when the Apostle Paul said, "I can do all things," it was no self-assertion, but an acknowledgement of his dependence. With the Psalmist it is even a song of praise. We must not lose sight of the prophetic character of such an utterance as this, it will be only when the perfect governor, the King Emanuel shall reign, that what David resolves to do shall be done. And it is the sight of this time and the consciousness that he says more than meets the ear, that not only makes this a song, but must have glorified the every day acts of David's life and lighted them up with more than an imagined ideal, an ideal which he was sure of seeing realized. And thus every Christian man is privileged to feel. In all that he does he feels that there is a divine acting. What he does will remain forever. In what he effects he sees as through lens a work more glorious. In feeble results he can find traces and beginnings of a perfect society, a State where the worthy alone are called to power. Wherever and whatever he is, the boundless realm of hope is his assured possession. In this verse we see a watchful governor calling the best to his service. Surely nothing could better characterize a perfect rule. There is the absence of evils, the oppression and speculation of happy officials, the mismanagement of the stupid, there is economy, efficiency, the intelligent execution of large and beneficent plans, no "partial frustration" now, but perfect realization of the idea of the Governor. And since the best serve, every one finds his place; no cutting blocks with razors. The best reward of service is from the service. The able man is found work to task his ability. No need of the fretting endeavor to appear fit. It will only be incumbent upon men to be fit. The precious talents that now are rendered us, less by stupidity in power, the finest and rarest gifts, will be



called into the service of the community, too coarse now to be served by them. Then there will be the stimulus of sure and just promotion. Thrilling through society will go the promise of the best of all rewards—position where every gift shall tell on men for good. Ambition will not be the perilous dice-play it is now; the bright eyed boy will have something to look forward to, happy time, when woman can at last come forward from privacy, and clothed in the robes and with all the sweet honors of womanhood, take part according to her gifts in the business of the outer world. But we are looking far ahead. No doubt David's government was in all these respects a great advance upon that which was before him. A wondrous revelation it was of what government and society might be, but to realize perfectly all this it will need a greater governor than David and a wondrous change of circumstances. After that great Governor, after that wondrous time David reached forth in all his acts, and institutions and in poetic vision sees it and sings it here. We may do it in assured hope that his coming and the great restitution draws nigh.

Verse 7. "Not in the inside of my house shall dwell practicing fraud, telling lies; not settled shall he be before My eyes."

Here, one would think, the psalm properly comes to an end. The judgments that he was to sing has culminated in the great aim of judgment in the uplifting of the right and the ordering of the kingdom. But just here, as we find again and again in the psalms, the cadence is avoided, the psalm ends in the storm and struggle, in which the singer finds himself at the time he sings. The lyrical unity here, as often is, that of one predominant feeling; the resolve of the King to crush out evil. Not yet has arrived the beautiful time hinted at in the sixth verse, "He must be up to strike down the monsters and even in his song he girds himself up and addresses himself to the work. The terrible power that a wicked favorite wields rushes upon his mind and the resolve

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follows that such a one shall not gain his ear. The confident strength of the assertion implies more than that David is going forward in the strength of God, it also intimates that only the Messianic significance will fill out the meaning of these words, which can be true of no government but that of Him who knows what is in man. Although in this verse there is a repetition it is a variation. In the fifth verse slanderers were to be cut off; here the most dangerous of slanderers, one who has the monarch's ear is to be cast out, and in the last clause the punishment is reduced to a mere negative, while the position that slanderers often (e. g. Haman) hold is made still stronger, as if a deeper impression of the injury that the slanderer could work fills his mind. It is, as it were, a reaction from the sixth verse. "The good shall serve me; liars shall not, as they often do, dwell in my house; they shall not be maintained and upheld permanently, by me." There is an intimation here in this deliberate choice, that monarchs are not always deceived in their favorite, but knowing what they are, keep them still, because they are convenient to them or minister to their pleasure.

Verse 8. "In the morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land (so as) to cast off from the City of Jehovah, all workers of iniquity."

The first expression is equivalent to "every morning early, I will begin to destroy." It is the main business of the king to put down evil men not for his own comfort and safety, but to make the city called by God's name, God's city indeed. This motive adds zeal and energy to his action, but would prevent all wanton cruelty. He who goes forward in God's strength, for His sake will go forward in love for his fellowmen. The coincidences in language are striking, act "in a perfect way" (verse two), walk "in a perfect way" (verse three), fixed before my eyes, (verse seven), faithful of the land (verse six), wicked of the lamb (verse eight). These coincidences in expression are remarkable in so short a psalm and are indicative of close

analogies between the phrases in which they are found. He views himself as standing in the same relations to the Lord, as his servants to him. Thus his choice of one walking in a perfect way (verse six), to be his servant, is entirely analogous to his (devotion) choice of himself to God's perfect service. His determination to call the faithful to dwell with him (verse six), is entirely analogous to his petition that the Lord will come to him and dwell with him. (verse two). So also the exclusion of the liar from his house (verse seven) is analogous to the exclusion of the liar from his heart (verse two), and the denial of his deliberate favor to the liar (verse seven) is analogous to the refusal to propose for himself or to favor in others evil plans, for he who entertains evil men will soon entertain their plans. The ending of this psalm with a renewed resolve to destroy the wicked is strikingly illustrative of the position of David. His duty consisted in the crushing of evil, whether in the form of Philistines or rebels; he was constructive as well, but this was his hardest and most imperative duty, and the office of the magistrate through all time is mainly to put down wickedness. "He beareth not the sword in vain." If the magistrate would ever be a terror to all evil doers, society would of itself take on the most beneficent forms, the *laissez faire* policy, would then be the best. Construction seems specially needed in the presence of evil; were evil away society would construct itself.

"There's not the smallest orb that thou beholdest

But in his motion like an angel sings,

\* \* \* \*

Such has money, is in immortal souls

But while this muddy vesture of decay,

Doth closely hem us in, we cannot bear it."

For the individual Christian, the main work is to put down sin, that once away, the heart seeks its God, and through seeking its God orders its life. And in his magistrate's position of citizen, the Christian ought to feel that it is not enough if he himself does right; he must arm himself

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to put down evil. It is at the present time and in this country that we need to learn this. Good men are afraid to fight evil in the shape of evil men or else they take as their sole duty that of private good living. We need to catch some of the spirit of David and resolve to destroy the wicked of the land. There is too often a cowardly surrender or else a selfish shrinking from trouble and thus it is that the work mounts up upon the high places of the land. If we only would take upon our lips the "I will," of David and move on in the strength of God, our resolutions and plans would be songs of praise to God and our lives the manifestation of His glory.

## Psalm 116.

A person of a princely and representative character (as shown by vv. 14th and 15th) is suddenly roused from security by the faithlessness of those around him, which threatens his life, fills him with sorrow and exposes him to the peril of error.

Overwhelmed, he calls upon God, and is delivered. His heart is filled by an experience of love strangely new; he feels that he can re-enter the security of trust, and declares that he will manifest his gratitude to the Lord by continued faith, and by such a public acknowledgment of His mercy as shall show, not only his thankfulness, but his subservience to God in his princely station, and his devotion to his worship and people.

Verse 1. "I love, because Jehovah hears my voice, my supplications."

The word "love" stands in the original without an object, thus:—"I love, because the Lord," etc. Of course, the Lord was the object, but attention is intended to be called to the emotion specially. The strict grammatical form, "I have loved," rather indicates this, for from the rest of the psalm it is manifest that the feeling is present at the time. The manifestation of the feeling would require the present and an object, while the past is logically proper in describing a feeling, for while it is described, it cannot be present to the mind. And well may attention be called to this feeling of love towards a deity. Throughout the Old Testament history till the time of David, we hear little else about the love of God than the command to love him, till we reach the times of David. Doubtless there was love, but awe, reverence and dread were the predominating feelings till the psalms of David struck another note, a note of love.

These affectionate songs, which the psalmist made for public worship, must have come to the ears of the worship-

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pers like a new revelation of God. And even at the time when this psalm was written, late though it was in all probability in the history of Israel, the feeling of love to God had not the predominance even in the minds of faithful men over the feeling of dread. And heathendom, with all its "fair humanities," did not present one God that the human heart could love, or in its literature one expression of love to its Gods.

We are now for ages familiar with the idea of love to God, but we must not forget that it is a sublime point that the human affections have reached when they can grasp the Deity.

Whoever the writer of this psalm was, though he evidently had exercised faith in God, and had been a true servant,—still he is surprised to find himself standing in a nearer and dearer relation to the Almighty, being surprised into love by the mercies he has received. "My heart has been and is now thrilled with love," and why? Here note the strict grammatical form,—"because the Lord will hear."

Not merely the experience of an isolated mercy fills him with love, but because that mercy has revealed the fact to him that he has a sure hold on God's sympathies. It is the knowledge of the tenderness and mercy of the Lord that calls forth his warm emotion.

Verse 2. "For He has inclined His ear to me, and in my days I will call (upon Him)."

The inclining of God's ear denotes that the cry sent up to Him was distant and faint, and indicates the lowliness, and perhaps the sinfulness of the petitioner, and the weakness of his faith. He said to himself, "Perhaps God will hear," and cried; now he says, "God will always hear," and as long as I live I will call upon Him." The last clause marks not only his faith, but his love; for it is an expression of adherence to God amidst a world of idolatry. Perhaps this adherence is indicated by the fact that the verb "call," like the verb "love" in the first verse, has no object. Atten-

tion is confined to the act of calling specially. Just as in the first verse to the act of loving. As if he said, "therefore I will perform the act of calling," etc. This explanation elevates an expression of extreme self-consciousness into an act of loyalty and worship and communion. One cannot help putting the two expressions, "I love," and "therefore I will call," together in another way, which is perhaps the special way intended. The "call" may thus be more than a conscious expression of love by a loyal application to the official King of Israel,—one who has shown himself great and good in the past; but may be an unconscious manifestation of love by confidence in him whom he knows loves him,—a personal dealing with God.

Verse 3. "The bands of death inclosed me, and the pangs of hell found me; distress and grief I find."

Whether the Hebrew word translated "Sorrows" be "bands" (Alexander) or "snares" (Maurer), it describes well the helpless position of one not only in danger of death, but perfectly helpless, as a man bound hand and foot, as a snared animal who can neither fight nor fly. So is a man situated upon whom disease has laid an irresistible hand, and who says, "All is over," or whom difficulties overwhelm, whose life is destroyed and all heart for living, or whose sins make him feel their mighty power. The "pains of Hell" are not merely the sorrows that naturally fill the heart of one whose many and close ties to life, death breaks, nor the awe and dread that enter the mind from the contemplation of the change of worlds; the words "got hold upon" (Alexander) "found" indicate grim terrors approaching from the world of spirits which, whether in health or disease, manifest themselves in the vicinity of death.

The last clause sets forth the effect on the mind; the same verb is used. They "found" me, "I find" (Alexander), or perhaps better as the Prayer Book, "I shall find." The awful expectation that is the most poignant part of the

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pains of Hell fill his soul. He is not only helpless, hopeless, but all alive with terrible anticipations.

Verse 4. "And on the name of Jehovah I call: Oh! now, Jehovah, deliver my soul."

Now comes the change. If we keep strictly to the tense, which the Prayer Book does and the others do not, the effect is very lyric and vivid. We are brought into the very scene. "And on the name of Jehovah I will call." If this were the case of a worldly man, he would despair, but the extremity of earth begets power of faith. He resolves to call, not upon the Lord, but upon the name of the Lord—that is, upon the Lord as He has manifested Himself so far to Israel or to himself. This is faith, though not the highest sort of faith.

It takes courage to ask God to do again what He has done once or what He has covenanted to do. The psalmist, the powers of Earth being against him, remembers the days of old, the wondrous deliverances of his people, his ways as shown in the past, but goes not beyond that bound. Just as we, in our prayers, so often confine our petitions to the known ways of God hitherto, or the specific warrants of Scripture. In the second verse the soul approaches God not in view alone of the Divine actualities of the past, but the Divine possibilities of the future. Then follows the petition—short indeed.

Verse 5. "Gracious (is) Jehovah and righteous, and our God shows pity."

Well for a soul in its extremity, if it could feel that it deserved a better fate. But his faith had not only to struggle with the terrors of earth and the grave, but with a guilty feeling. Though he may not have deserved evil at the hands of man, yet it often happens that in the twilight of earth, sins remembered, start out, gleaming like stars from the far forgotten distance. Humbly he calls, tenderly he acknowledges the mercy. Gracious is the Lord, though He allowed me to fall into trouble, for out of the eater came



forth meat; righteous was He in His permitting it, for as respects him, I deserved it; pitiful all the while, for he held it back, and I was not tempted overmuch. And then again, in my deliverance he was gracious, for I did not merit it; righteous, for I did not deserve destruction at the hand of man; and pitiful, because it showed that it was prompted by the tender heart.

Verse 6. "A preserver of the simple (is) Jehovah; I was brought low, and to me He brought salvation."

The simple is one not crafty, plots not, hardly plans, acts, not thinking of consequences, and, as implied, acts from pure motives. He was a guileless ruler. He merely tried to do right. Ordinary rulers do not esteem this sufficient; they must counter-plot, and so it is with private men. But God takes care of those who for His sake take no care of themselves,—and indeed if one is influenced by the highest impulses, it almost necessitates a giving up of all policy.

May not the peculiar grammar of the last phrase of the verse, "He saved to me," indicate that the salvation was something added to the imperilled believer, and not wrought out through his co-operation? He remains "simple," even in the process of being saved, is led as a child by the hand of the Lord.

Verse 7. "Return, oh my soul, unto thy rest, for Jehovah hath bestowed upon thee (favor)."

The natural conclusion of one having passed through such a peril would be, after this I will be watchful, careful, shrewd; but he goes back to his old security. Before, it was the security of inexperience, now it will be the security of trust.

Many a ruler, gentle and trustful at first, has been made a bloody tyrant by once experiencing the faithless character of the mob. Many a private man, having undergone such great peril, has, as it were, the sword ever after hanging over his head. This princely man is not to have his peace poisoned by suspicion, his attention strained to detect and stop

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the beginnings of evils. Through the breaking up of his earthly security, he has attained unto spiritual security that cannot be disturbed. He is going to serve God and his fellow men, and care nothing as to the resisting of evil. Would that the church would enter into her rest, merely living a full life and leaving the rest to God.

In the latter clause we have another verb without an object;—"dealt bountifully with thee." Hengstenberg has "gifted thee." Then again the attention is called to the action and the actor. It is not so much what the Lord has given, as that He has really given; has really interposed, added something to second causes, and revealed His hand in the psalmist's life. That, without considering exactly what He has done, is a stable foundation for peace. It is when God appears distant, inactive, or unwilling to act that we have reason to be disturbed.

Verse 8. "For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my eye from weeping, my feet from falling."

Here, however, is a statement of what God has done—saved him from death, sorrow and error. It is a short description of the trouble. It was a deadly danger, it involved the peril of that which he, as a princely man, loved most, the honor of God and His cause in Israel, and was a situation in which he might easily make a mis-step. God has guided him through it all, and,—

Verse 9. "I will walk before Jehovah in the land of life (or of the living)."

His conclusion is that he will "walk," that is, act, "before Jehovah,"—that is, in the presence of, and instinct with His power and favor, reflect His authority and glory among men.

Verse 10. "I believe, for (thus) I speak; I was greatly afflicted."

Here is another verb without an object—another expression of self-consciousness unusual in Lyric poetry. What is its purpose in the psalm? The first clause is quoted in the

4th Chapter of 2nd Cor., verse 13th, in such a way as gives us the key to this extraordinary introversion. The Apostle is showing that he and his brethren, while in themselves worthless, have granted to them precious gifts, just as a common vessel of earthenware can hold a quantity of gold. God's light shines from them as a jet of light through a porcelain shade. They are nothing, and yet they must magnify themselves because of that which they transmit to the church. Also they are troubled, persecuted, dying, that they may minister the life of Jesus to others, and the means by which this takes place is their faith, which enables them to receive and convey.

Now in this psalm we have a man who puts himself forward as the representative of the people, calls attention to the love that is in his heart, to his purpose and consciousness of power to worship,—and strangest of all, in the 9th verse expresses his confidence that he is to be the recipient of God's power and favor.

Now these words, "Believe, for I speak" (thus), constitute a pivotal declaration of humility. This confident statement of mine, he says, is an exhibition, not of self-confidence or a feeling of self-desert or confidence in earth, but of trust in God. The psalmist assumes a position of splendour at the end of the psalm, but yet is lowly throughout, like the Apostle. This psalm exhibits what Madam Guyon calls "the all of God in the nothing of the creature." Overwhelmed with earthly trouble (v. 3) he is nothing; in agonizing application to God (v. 4) he is nothing; simple and delivered (v. 6) he is nothing; resting on God (v. 7) nothing; delivered (v. 8) nothing; confident (v. 9) nothing, for he believes, he trusts, that is the reason why he speaks so. It is simply belief, for when he looked to earth, he was "greatly afflicted."

Verse. 11. "I said in my terror, all mankind (are) false."

He could draw no confidence from earth. How it is possible Alexander can make these words a manifesta-

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tion of faith passes my comprehension. The last clause evidently is a hint at the character of the trial he had undergone. It was something of the character of a treacherous revolt against the authority of the psalmist. This is thrown in as a confession of his weakness and to heighten the ascription of his confidence to faith.

When he says, "I said," the feeling of dread is nevertheless present. The experience shadows him again for the time.

Verse 12. "How shall I requite to Jehovah all His bestowments upon me."

But his gratitude for his deliverance gives rise to a desire to make some suitable return to the author of his salvation. And out of this lovely and noble emotion comes sometimes one of the subtlest temptations.

A man may well suspect and guard against his grateful feelings, if they lead to any act that shall seem to lessen the obligation. Oftentimes the desire to make a grateful return to God is secretly a desire to free oneself from the burden of obligation to Him, and the feeling steals in together with our works of service that we have of ourselves something that is of worth to God. But there is no such feeling here; as soon as he seeks the means of a worthy return to God he finds that the only way for him is to take the cup of salvation that God offers to him,—

Verse 13. "The cup of salvation will I take up, and on the name of Jehovah will call."

To accept the blessed lot—deliverance and rest and power and honor—which has fallen to him, and then, just as he called on the name of the Lord out of adversity and sorrow, so to call upon the name of the Lord out of his prosperity and joy, for further blessing. This is lowly indeed, when to return is but to receive; it is in harmony with the lowliness of the whole psalm—"the all of God in the nothing of the creature." And how true this is of all our acts of grateful service to God. He who gives inspires

our thanks, He whom we adore and praise inspires our adoration and praise; and every one of all our acts of service is but an appropriation of the divine strength that suffices to do that service, and a new reason for gratitude.

Petition is often described as honoring God; the cry "Hosannah to our Saviour," the petition to save, was the greatest honor He ever received in His earthly life.

The true receiving implies a sense of dependence, a child-like relation which we human beings know is most grateful to us in those whom we love and do for, and so we may well think it is to be grateful to Him in whom all human affections attain their perfection, and the mere relation of giving and receiving implies a communion that God permits us to say is precious to Him.

The occupation to the full of our blessed lot implies the energetic exercise of all our blessed lot—the translating of all God's graces given into acts, for we never love fully till we act out our love; and so with all other gifts; and so we become by the full reception beneficent communicators of God's grace.

Verse 14. "My vows to Jehovah will I pay—in the presence of all His people."

But though we can express our gratitude only by receiving God's gifts and seeking more, still in the manner of our reception and application we may further God's designs and help to carry out His wishes. We can publicly acknowledge God's goodness, and thus spread His fame, and make Him thus a blessing to others. This reception shall be a reception in the sight of all. The "vows" are the vows of requital. This requital shall be made so that all shall know to whom he owes everything. And so, through him, God's way shall be known upon earth.

There is in the words, "in the presence," etc., plain indication of the princely and representative character of the psalmist. The recognition of God's mercy was to be splendid and stately, and yet to destroy any appearance of self-

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importance. This that he was to do for a benefactor is intended as a privilege.

Verse 15. "Precious in the eyes of Jehovah (is) the death of His gracious ones (or saints)."

Here would seem to be an end; public thanksgiving crowns the reception of God's favors, and requites as far as creature can requite, the Creator's munificence; but the cadence of this lofty-lowly strain is not yet reached. The recollection of his past danger comes sobbing in again, but so softened that it takes the form of a comforting assurance derived from the experience. The recalling of the past peril only heightens the sense of security. Now know I that it is a great matter to God when one of his servants dies. When the snares of death took him and he was in his agony. God seemed far away. The world and all its powers seemed near and mighty. Did God care? Now he knows that God was all the time watching, guarding, and had salvation ready to reveal it at the proper time. This is true for all time.

Verse 16. "Ah, now Jehovah—for I (am) Thy servant, the son of Thy handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds."

But he cannot cling to this comfort without clinging directly upon God and pleading that he may take this comfort.

Ah, now, Lord, surely I may say this, for I am a member of Thy family, a slave born in Thy house and therefore having the strongest claim upon Thee. This very deliverance proves that I may make this claim.

The Hebrew word translated "bonds" is the same one used in describing the hold of the foreign kings upon the captive people of Israel; it is a different word from that translated "bonds," or snares, in the third verse. Thus, though the reference is in the first instance to his recent trouble, the poet may by a sudden turn intend to give the psalm a national import. And certainly, although the details of the psalm

forbid the hypothesis of Hengstenberg that in it the church is the speaker, still the experiences she had been through at Babylon were such that it suited her case, for she was nigh to destruction and wondrously delivered. Perhaps the enigmatic juxtaposition of his claim to be a bond servant, and the assertion that his bonds are loosed is meant to indicate that something was intended more than met the ear. I am Thy servant, he would say, but no longer the servant of men. How David-like is this. In the midst of princes who were ruling as earthly gods, he proclaims his subordination and servanthship to a higher ruler.

Verse 17. "To Thee will I sacrifice a sacrifice of thanks, and on the name of Jehovah will I call."

His devotion to that higher ruler is shown in his giving of thanks. It is to be in the use of the worship that he has ordained, and by it he proclaims his adherence to that worship from which so many princes had fallen away. That worship which now, in the feeble renewal of the nation after the Captivity, was so little and despised amid the mighty and splendid systems of idolatry around. He called on the name of the Lord at first (verse 4th) because his faith was weak and he could not go beyond God's previous manifestation of Himself, and now as his application to God is for the purpose of requital and giving of thanks, respect must be had to his recent manifestation of himself as a deliverer as far as it is a public event. For it may be said also that to call on the name of the Lord is more proper for public worship, i. e. upon God as He is known to all the congregation rather than as He is known to one, or conceived by one through the bodying forth of creative faith. Just as familiar pet names of friends are improper in the presence of strangers, so too great familiarity with God is improper in public. "The secrets of Divine Love are to be kept," says Madam Guyon. A minister in conducting the public worship of the congregation should not refer in his thanksgiving (e. g.)—to his own private experiences of God's goodness, but to the public ex-

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periences of the beneficence of God, well known to the assembly, as a common experience of God's character and works.

Verse 18. "My vows to Jehovah will I pay in the presence (I entreat) of all His people."

This verse, though identical with the 14th, is uttered with a somewhat different sentiment. There it is for the purpose of thanksgiving and requital that he desires the public performance of his vows; here it is the expression of a home-like confidence that grows to its climax at the end of the psalm. He is freed from his fears, he feels the everlasting arms around him (verse 15th); he is a member, however humble, of God's immediate family and can plead a righteous claim on that account (God's deliverance but acknowledges that claim); and now the gates of the home of homes—the Sanctuary—unclose (verses 17 and 18), the precious privileges of a worshipping believer are to be his, and yet it is all in faith, not self-confidence, for as he crosses the threshold he says, "I entreat," till at last the Lowly One.

"Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint," finds himself—

Verse 19. "In the courts of the house of Jehovah, in the midst of thee, Jerusalem. Hallelujah."

Standing royally in the "courts of the house of Jehovah," whose very walls are promises; and as the central figure in the great metropolis of God, whose are the sure covenants—his very privileges and blessings confirming and perpetuating themselves, and surrounded by which, his loftiest and at once lowliest utterance bursts forth,—"Praise ye the Lord."



## Psalm 120.

The Psalmist delivered from trouble repeats his petition to the Lord.

This psalm is a lyrical narration, in which the psalmist repeats his past utterances with the facts that occasioned them. This form is often used in the Psalter, and gives often a highly dramatic effect to the composition. This is the first of the songs of ascents and the title is part of the form. This psalm may refer to the Church of God, but if so, then the form under which the Church of God appears, is that of a pilgrim approaching Jerusalem—the final goal and resting place, of all his wanderings. He has come up out of great tribulation and as he passes along, at the halting by night or at the start in the morning, in the weariness of the way or even in sight of the Holy City itself, the recollection of the dreadful past is yet vivid in his soul, shadowing it, and yet making deeper its sense of deliverance. The ground swell of terror yet heaves. The cause of the weeping is gone and yet, there is the sob yet that tells of the past agony. It is the picture of a man who with great earthly loss, without the right hand and without the right eye, enters the Kingdom of Heaven.

Verse 1. "A song of ascents. To Jehovah, in my distress, I called, and He answered me."

And now the pilgrim speaks. He tells us that he has been in distress, has called on God, and has been answered—here he is, his feet on the way near the Blessed Place. Then he repeats his "call" through which we learn the character of his distress. Examining the "call" we have the past succession of feelings on the part of the psalmist.

First, Agonizing prayer for deliverance, (verse 2). Second, Faith strengthened enough to denounce, with rage, punishment upon his calumniators (verses 3 and 4). Third,

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then utter weariness, a weariness that is, as all our weariness may be, a sagging down upon the Lord in faith (verses 5, 6 and 7).

Verse 2. "Oh, Jehovah, free my soul from lips of falsehood, from tongue of fraud."

This psalm has doubtless an universal application. It suits the individual Christian; it fits his great Master, and the Churches of the Old and the New Covenant; but the occasion of its composition was, as commentators think, probably the trying position of the restored Jews under "the spiteful misrepresentation, by which the Samaritans retarded the rebuilding of the temple as recorded in the fourth chapter of Ezra," Alexander says. Misrepresentation is exceedingly powerful at the time of the beginning of movements or the founding of institutions. Old established things are let alone, but here was a change. The Jews had been captive for more than two whole generations, during this period the Holy City had been desolate and the Temple in ruins. The Restoration, not yet an accomplished fact, was, as it were, on trial before the world. Now was slander's opportunity, and well did enemies know how to take advantage of it. In this day we have the same history enacted again. The Press, the great disseminator of Truth, is used as the disseminator also of untruth. And again the enemies of the Light say, "by our lips, we shall prevail." The most effective way in which good men and good measures are slandered, is to take hold of real sins and exaggerate them and evil tendencies that are inseparable from every good movement and make out that they are its essence. Calumny, especially in this free land, retards progress more than anything else. Here again it is seen as of old that old doctrines and old institutions are let alone, and the cloud of calumny gathers around the head of him who dares take a step in advance. And yet it is only by constant steps in advance of the old that the old is preserved; indeed it is by the transformation of the old, that the old remains.

Verse 3. "What will He give to thee, and what will He add to thee, thou tongue of fraud."

Literally, what will He give to thee, and what will He add to thee. Alexander thinks that there is here, a reference to the form of imprecation, "God do so to me and so add." If this is the case there seems to be an intimation that they have made themselves amenable to something like the guiltiness of a broken oath. They have taken God's name in vain, that is they have professed to do in God's name deeds of malice and cruelty. In Isaiah 36:7 and 10, and Jeremiah 50:7 and 11, we see the spirit of the enemies of Israel. They hated her because they hated God and yet they professed to be God's servants in executing punishment upon her. The Lord says to them that when He was angry with Israel, they tried to aggravate his anger and increase the severity of the punishment. They say profanely by their act as others say profanely in words, "By God I will do it," and that strength of God which they profess to take hold of to enable them to do his will upon the Jews, takes hold of them for their destruction. The Lord does so to them and more also. This rhetorical interrogative may then be interpreted thus, "O! what dreadful things may be imprecated upon thee even."

Verse 4. "Arrows of a warrior sharpened, (together) with coals of juniper."

The tongue "of fraud" partially personified in verse 2 is now addressed and this enables the writer to introduce (verse 4) a metaphorical penalty in the form of what was likely to be the punishment of calumniators in those times—piercing the tongue with an arrow and burning it out by the roots. That there is any direct reference to war in the words "sharp arrows," is unlikely when we consider how rude an interruption, that would be, to the figure, the tongue being directly addressed, to conceive of mighty men ranged in order of battle against it, would be ridiculous, as to form. And it may here be said that sacred poetry conforms to

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the strict laws of taste far more, than most persons are aware. The artistic excellence of the poetry of the Bible has yet to be done justice to. When we come to the second branch of the description, "coals," the inapplicability of the description to war is still more manifest. War against the tongue with coals is inconceivable, and as to war in general, it is doubtful whether fire was, as early as this, used as an instrument of attack. It could hardly be called a happy description of a flaming arrow either. An arrow bearing coals being ineffective in reality is ineffective poetically considered. Where also would be the use of the sharpness. Besides, as is plain from the context, these calumniating enemies of Israel are described as nomadic tribes, who do not dwell in cities, and for whom fiery arrows would have few terrors. If we take the words as describing a punishment dealt out to the tongue, it is so condign and congruous to the offence that one can hardly resist the impression that such a punishment was really in use, but it would be enough if it was merely invented by the Psalmist. There is something artless at once and powerful in the terms which convey this description. The tongue is not merely to be pierced and burned, but by a terribly destructive arrow and by the intensest fire, coal of broom, the portable and strong fuel of the Bedaweens. Of course, logically, all arrows and every kind of fire would be the same to the culprit, but these expressions appeal to the imagination and surround the punishment with terrors, that would be felt by simple minds and even by minds that are not simple. For though we would not feel as a child would, the terrors of the sword of Nebuchadnezzar over other swords, yet the sevenfold heat and the vast size of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace would have terrors for us over other furnaces. There is a rhetoric of danger and death and he who would not dread Nebuchadnezzar's furnace more because of its sevenfold heat and size might shudder at falling into the sun. There is something then in this artless form that appeals universally to the imag-

ination of men. We may expect that the rhetoric of this psalm will be imitated at the last day. A familiar death has lost some of its terrors, but at the end of all things, the power of God will be exerted, not only to bring down the substance of punishment upon the sinner, but also to enhance the terror and to display the wrath in the most impressive way.

Verse 5. "Alas for me, that I sojourn (with) Meshech (and) dwell near the tents of Kedar."

Meshech—barbarous nations on the North, Kedar—barbarous nations on the South, between which Israel was placed. The mention of arrows and coals makes an easy transition to the barbarians among whom the bow was the great weapon and especially brings up the nomadic tribes of the South, who used coals of broom. Edom was perhaps the most violent enemy that Israel had. They had doubtless a great deal to do in bringing down the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar upon the Jews, playing the part of spies and triumphing over them at the dire event (Ps. 137:7) (Obadiah 12:13, 14). It is not necessary to suppose that any special reference was made to the northern barbarians. Alexander says, "As these races, dwelling far off, in the north and south, were never in immediate or continued contact with the Israelites. These races are probably named as types and representatives of warlike barbarism. Just as the names—Goths, Vandals, Huns, Turks, Tartars, Cossacks have at different times been used preverbially in English to describe those supposed to exhibit the same character, however unconnected or remote in genealogy and local habitation." These names may, however, be more than abstractions. The northern tribes may have troubled the Jews as well as the southern. Invasion, certainly, came for the most part, from the north and we may well suppose that the Assyrian hordes were preceded and assisted by the native tribes. It is remarkable that in the prophecy of Ezekiel (38:2) the northern tribes are set forth as, in the future, the great

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persecutors of a restored Israel, just as the southern tribes are in the history, as the past persecutors of God's people. So that these two words, "Kedar" and "Meshech," may shadow forth the whole past and future martyr history of the people of God.

Verse 6. "My soul has dwelt too long for her with (one) hating peace."

The words "for her" make a further and stronger expression of weariness begun in the word "also" in the 5th verse. This is made still stronger by the word of self-consciousness, "my soul." It indicates that hate, terror or any other feeling that would naturally be aroused towards the author of suffering, is, by suffering, extinguished, and the mind occupied with that which suffers—"my soul," "for her" as if he said, I can stand it no longer. There is in this, utter giving up, an indication, that hope of release is present. In ordinary trials the man justifies God and says, "There is a needs be for this." He sees how it is to make him better wiser or stronger. He also trusts farther than he sees. He feels also strongly to wrestle and his consciousness of strength is the basis of the feeling that he is getting or will in the end get good from his trouble. But there are times when all this is changed. The man feels no strength to resist, no healthful recuperative power, he is conscious that his trials are not developing him, but preventing development, degrading and not elevating him. A persuasion steals into his mind that the time has come for a change; and it probably has come. There is a temptation that is "overmuch" and God will not suffer that man's extremity is God's opportunity. By faith, he knows that he does not have his home with Meshech but only does "sojourn" (verse 5) there. So he lets go in order to fall on God. He sags down in utter weariness upon the Almighty.

Verse 7. "I am peace and when I speak, they (go) to war."

"I am peace," not I am for peace. They make every word an occasion for strife. These words evidently show that the national occasion does not exhaust the significance of the psalm. Indeed the psalm would little profit the church of God if it might not be used for the cheer of any Christian, who is in the midst of slanderous enemies. He may learn to call on the Lord, to expect from God's Justice the terrible overthrow of his enemies, and if the trial is too hard for him may draw comfort from the extremity of the trouble, and be brought nearer to the Lord by his very succumbing to his anguish and weakness.

## Psalm 119.

### AUTHORSHIP.

The author of this psalm is evidently a young man (vv. 9, 99, 100), in the midst of peril from enemies (vv. 61, 84, 95, 109, 110, 121, 134, 150, 154, 157), and of princely dignity. This last is shown, first, by the character of his enemies. He is exposed to the machinations of a number of princes; they are called by that name in vv. 23 and 161, and appear under the character of "proud" men in vv. 51, 69, 70, 78, 85, 122. The troubles which these enemies bring upon him are not those that great men bring upon their inferiors but such as equals inflict upon equals. The princes "sit" and "talk" against him, 123; in 161 they are said to "persecute" him; in both which expressions there is some indication of power as against his enemies on the part of the sufferer. So also the "proud" are said (v. 51) to deride (vv. 69 and 78), to traduce and (v. 85) lay traps for him. These expressions are not suited to a little one of earth in the hands of powerful oppressors but rather applicable to the case of one against whom his enemies have to set their wits and exert their force as against a formidable foe. The dignity of the sufferer's person is also implied in the terms (v. 87) describing the evils wrought upon him by his enemies. The expressions are such as would be proper in the case of the attempted destruction of a nation and find their justification only in the fact that the oppressed one is in some sense the representative of a nation—the Holy Nation. There is another consideration from which the princely dignity of the psalmist appears—he is the subject of a special promise (vv. 25, 41, 49, 50, 81, 82); and this appears not only where a promise is undeniably and specifically mentioned but in all those places where the psalmist speaks of himself as looking to the Judgments



of God for the realization of his desires. "Judgments" is a mighty word, and implies something great in the character of the punishment and the deliverance; and when the psalmist says "for in Thy Judgments I hope" (v. 43), it is evidently the expectation of one who regards himself as one of more than ordinary importance. These delivering "mercies and salvation according to Thy word" (v. 41) form the burden of a large part of the psalm and in v. 46.

Second, he engages that, if God will fulfil His promise, he will not be ashamed to bear testimony to Him "before kings." There are three ways in which he might bear testimony before kings, as a martyr, as an ambassador, and as a king before his fellow kings. In the case of either of the first two the declaration could only reach the lame and impotent conclusion "if I ever should be a martyr or an ambassador I will then bear witness to The before kings"; this is not to be thought of and there remains therefore this as the declaration of the verse since the granting of his desires would make him a king, he will then before his heathen fellow kings, acknowledge the Lord, his Heavenly King. The impression of his princely character is strengthened further by: third, verses 74 and 79 where "the fearers of Jehovah," who may be understood to mean the theocratic party in Israel, are represented as ready to rejoice at the fulfilment of the promise to himself and are by him, (verse 79) expected to return to his leadership from which they appear to have fallen away through discouragement, perhaps induced by God's trying dealings towards him.

Fourth, it is strikingly characteristic of an expectant ruler—a crown prince—to take great interest in public affairs, and as a general rule to be very observant of the faults and follies of public administration. This critical attitude often impels to great zeal for reform and right during the time of expectancy if no longer. It has been often remarked that the Prince of Wales in England is generally in the opposition. Such a public spirit and sense of responsibility is

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to be seen in the psalmist's zeal for the Law and his excitement against law breakers (verses 53, 126, 136, 139, 158.)

This princely person is unsettled—a waiter and so forever (verses 54 and 123), is despised and spoken against (verses 22, 42, 51, 141), constantly tempted (verses, 29, 36, 37, 110, 115), is constantly apprehending disgrace (verse 39), is lonely and needs counsel (verses 19 and 24) and (verse 66), craves specifically wisdom. There is one young prince in whom all these characteristic traits agree. Solomon, son of King David, ascended the throne in his early youth, but there was an earlier youth of which we read nothing in the Scripture, but whose character we can well divine from its supreme and final moment of trial in the revolt of Adonijah. Those early years must have been crowded with many anxieties and perils and temptations to the young prince, wise beyond his years and born to an inheritance, which must have made him the object of jealous hatred on the part of his brothers. At his birth he was by God given the name of Iedidiah, or “beloved of God.” He was by a communication of God to David especially appointed his successor and given the charge of building the temple. This, of course, would be known to all, and we can easily imagine the feelings of the excluded brothers. We can see from what is told in the history that they had no intention of tamely submitting to the exclusion; and from what we know of Absalom, Adonijah and Amnon it is plain that there was no lack of ability or audacity on the part of David's other sons. There would not be wanting prudential reasons, which indicated one older than Solomon as the proper person for the succession in such troublous times. The intrigues that are so rife in Oriental courts would be intensified in this case by the very promise that secured the throne of Solomon. It would be the case of Joseph and his brethren over again, save that here was no vague and shadowy pre-eminence promised, but a glorious throne. We

see how on the occasion of Adonijah's attempt, that all the King's sons made common cause against Solomon, and we have every reason to think that, however jealous they may have been among themselves, Solomon would be the common enemy. There was, doubtless, direct peril of his life, greater peril from false accusations, greater still from the temptations that had for their object the seizure of the power that was falling from the hands of the aged monarch. Solomon, early matured and emphatically a man of affairs, must have been at times miserably chafed and impatient, while watching these plots and hard must it have been to keep his hands away and persevere in waiting and trust. Whether Solomon wrote this psalm or not, it seems to record just such experiences as those of Solomon, and, if read as his, will be full of lyric power. The style of the psalm is in marked contrast to those of David, the tone is not warm and glowing; there is no expression of love for God or his people, no enthusiasm, at most quiet, contemplative gratitude. The psalmist's view seems bounded by his own affairs, his own troubles and joys. The style is aphoristic, and the constantly expressed desire for the knowledge of God's precepts indicates a subtle metaphysical and subjective habit of mind. It needs hardly be said that all this is peculiarly suited to Solomon. It is to be noted that though the psalm may record the experiences of his youth, it need not have been written in his youth, or at least may not have been finished then. Or it may have been written by another, but as if by Solomon in his youth.

## Psalm 119.

### ALEPH.

Verse 1. "Happy the perfect of way, those walking in the law of Jehovah."

"The way" is the way of the "Law"—the most general expression for the whole Mosaic Institutions. Perfection in those in its fullest extent would include all moral perfection; but here the meaning is pre-eminently and especially perfection in the observance of the Mosaic cult—all those rites and ordinances which marked a true Jew.

Verse 2. "Happy the keepers of His testimonies (who) with a whole heart seek Him."

The word "testimonies" refers especially to the Moral Law—the ten commandments and all the law that grows out of them. Here the blessing is narrowed. A person may be a strict Jew, and may even keep the ten commandments in their narrow logically interpreted sense, but it is quite another thing to be earnestly seeking God to know what He commands or prohibits. Great fear is implied in this. But yet after all something is still to be desired. Balaam had great fear of God, and earnestly sought Him to know His will; but for all that he had an evil will of his own; and in order to make him obey it was necessary that God should speak very plainly and exactly to him. Balaam's conscience, or love to God or man, was not to be appealed to, for there was in him little of the sort. So, like Balaam, a man may be willing to do all that God commands with the utmost exactitude when those commands are exactly expressed—when chapter and verse can be found for it; or when it can be logically inferred from any distinct command, while at the same time he loaths it. The Pharisees, who logically developed the law to the minutest extent, tithing

mint, anise and cummin, neglected the weightier matters of the law. The legal spirit is not necessarily a holy spirit, the exactness with which it obeys is the measure of the exactness with which it narrows the scope of the law. Therefore it is to complete the picture of the Blessed One that the Psalmist goes on to say.

Verse 3. "(Who) also do not practice wrong, (but) in His ways walk."

"They also do no iniquity." They are not only perfect in the practice of the ordinances, not only do they do what God has distinctly commanded in order to holiness, but they interpret the law with the heart. They do not rest in the skeleton of duty, which the law lays down, but fill it out, not according to the law of logic, but the law of obedient love. They are therefore no whited sepulchres—they do no iniquity. They pattern themselves not merely upon God's institutions, or precepts, but upon His "ways"—they try to act as He does. This last is not merely something additional, but is the very means by which they avoid doing evil. The law as God's example lifts itself above the narrowness of precept and institution and adjusts itself to all the life of a living man.

Verse 4. "Thou hast commanded Thy precepts to be kept strictly."

This calls attention to the vast import and scope of the precepts of God. They may be in form, narrow, but they must be kept broadly, not according to the letter, but largely according to that spirit that seeks for His precepts and prizes His commands, and esteems itself richer and freer, the richer and more searching it makes the meaning of the law.

Verse 5. "Oh, that my ways were settled, to observe Thy statutes."

The form of the description is not kept up, but the thought progresses. The aspiration is for something more than merely to look to cult, commandments or even the ways

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of God, for the single purpose of moral improvement, as one department of life work; it is that the whole business of our lives should be this very thing. All our ways, like the many branches of a river, should pour into this one channel.

Verse 6. "Then shall I not be shamed, in my looking unto all Thy Commandments."

Here is an argument for this course and also its justification. They will be kept from shame, who look to God's statutes. And since God in His commandments implies that what He commands is best for His people, we may know that sooner or later prosperity is the result. Look at the law as a model and standard of action, and you will not have cause to blush for yourself. Look to the law as a reliance, a portion and inheritance, and you will see good, you will not be ashamed of your hope. This justifies, the aspiration of the preceding verse, and besides it may be said, though all are dedicated to God's service, still the work of the world and the use of means will not be neglected. The true pursuit of holiness permits and involves all proper activity.

Verse 7. "I will thank Thee with rectitude of heart, in my learning the judgments of Thy righteousness."

We may, indeed, without this devotion to God's service, have earthly prosperity and may thank the Lord. But our thanks will be without rectitude, will be sinful thanks, if we have not heeded in our previous course, and with a good conscience attained our worldly success. This verse ought not to be limited to the connection. True, thankfulness will be induced without added prosperity if we only learn what are the judgments of God's righteousness with regard to ourselves. Humility involves content. The thanksgivings of the humble are the strongest manifestation of holiness and justify and honor God more than any other praise. It may be applied to deliverances, national or personal. The thanks of triumph and deliverance must not be made with pride. Delivering judgments upon our enemies,

while they should draw forth our thanksgiving, ought also to make us tremble to the marrow of our bones, for they are judgments because of sin, and we are sinners. So also when we escape calamity. They, upon whom the tower in Siloam did not fall, only if they repented, might congratulate themselves.

Verse 8. "Thy statutes I will keep; oh, forsake me not utterly."

We have in this verse two things blended which have often been declared by the spiritually ignorant to be incompatible, fixed resolve and dependence upon God. There can be no resolve, which is at the same time intelligent without dependence upon God; and there can be no true dependence upon God without fixed resolve. God works not on us, but in us, to will and do, and therefore dependence upon Him is the highest form of independence, it is dependence upon a deeper greater self.

#### BETH.

Verse 9. "By what (means) can a youth cleanse his path, so as to keep (it) according to Thy word?"

It is essential, in interpreting this stanza, to keep in mind its purely lyric character. It would be worth very little as a record of the results of self-introspective analysis—a self complacent pleading of one's own meritorious moods. Every verse must be taken as a self-forgetting outburst of feeling. The verse we are considering is not to be taken as a mere inquiry for the sake of information, but an exclamation drawn forth by an intense appreciation of the extreme difficulty of a young man's making his life pure by the use of the law. This exclamation is at the same time a searching question in which the psalmist grasps after that which may help him in the effort. "O how can I, a young man, make my life square with the law of God? I look everywhere for help, and am ready to lay hold of anything that may serve." The mood is one that expresses,

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First, a sense of the strict requirements of the Law. This connects with the preceding stanza.

Second, a consciousness of the peculiar difficulty under which a young man labors owing to the thoughtlessness of youth, its strong passions and surrounding temptations. This is a wise youth who utters this, for youth generally feels strong to do right.

Third, a strong desire to make holy the life in accordance with the law.

Fourth, an humble readiness for any help whatsoever, while

Fifth, there is at the same time a resolute summoning of one's powers.

Verse 10. "With my whole heart have I sought Thee; let me not err from Thy commandments."

Here again, care must be taken not to lose the naive lyric character of this utterance. If it be understood "I have as a past act sought Thee, and therefore as a reward let me not err from Thy commandments," it becomes completely prosaic. But the past shades into the present, and implies the future. "I have sought" marks strong resolve, settled tendency and purpose. "With my whole heart" indicates unflinching, unflagging, unmixed desire. This whole desire to seek a whole God, marks the highest spiritual state conceivable. But where the desires are whole, the object of those desires is conceived but partially. We may seek God, but only on one side, or merely for a purpose. The seeking God indicated in this verse, is for a purpose, a purpose fixed by the latter clause. The psalmist wishes to know His commands. The latter clause is but a manifestation of the seeking—"let me not mistake Thy commandments, let me not fail to keep them." The word "err" or "wander" indicates the peculiar significance of the word "commandment"—the law as guiding.

Verse 11. "In my heart have I hid Thy saying, that I may not sin against Thee."



To hide in the heart the saying of God is to engage the inclinations and affections for it. The ordinary phrase "to get by heart," while meaning only to fix in the memory, reveals the fact that ordinarily we remember only that which has impressed us through our affections. The young man's safety is not simple restraint of his inclination, but in the engaging of the whole force of his active powers and impulses on the side of God. This is effected so far as the young man is concerned, first, (taking "saying" in the sense of command) by hearing God in obedient love and by studying the command and finding out the righteousness of it, how well calculated it is to benefit him and others, and, second, (taking "saying" in the sense of promise) by studying to learn the attractiveness of what God promises and to find out its fullness; and where we cannot see attractiveness, where eye does not see and ear does not hear, then exercising faith in love, by trusting God for the character of what He has promised as well as for the performance. The affections being once engaged, all the multitude of actions follow easily enough, while old and base affections are expelled by the new. Often, Christians would better heed the law if they better heeded the promise. The will is not omnipotent, and the Christian like a jaded beast will not be roused by the spur, and is a prey to doubt and inaction. But when the proper stimulus of prophecy and promise is applied, then all is changed, easy are labor and self denial. He runs and is not weary. He who only resists sin, will find that there is a limit to his resistance, defined by the limits of his natural powers, and that it is not safe to neglect any means, that is appointed by God and according to man's nature. The youthful Solomon, like multitudes of expectant kings, was doubtless tempted to turn aside to youthful sins, but the great expectation before him, if his heart was filled with the glory of it and its opportunities for doing good to his fellows, would, and did, doubtless, avail to keep him from sin. In this is the answer to the

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question of verse nine. Christians nowadays, cannot afford to do without the great incentive to all right doing, found in the promises of God, and to make this more effective they should, by study of the prophetic Scripture, bring this promise near to them, putting human life into it, and grasping it with human affections. We are not marching to a land of shadows, peopled with ghosts; we are going to where alone, is the real substance, and where humanity alone attains its full perfection. But we should not only look to the promise in the Word of God, but to its partial performance in the world around us; this will bring it very near to us and make our strivings more direct, only let us separate the real from the ideal and not mistake the one for the other, turning the partial realization into an idol and a false God.

Verse 12. "Blessed (be) Thou Jehovah! Teach me Thy statutes!"

The word bless is primarily "pray for," and to bless Jehovah is to pray for Him, and in the case of one who is conscious that nothing can be added to the felicity or power of God it amounts to a hearty loving assent to Jehovah's governance. In order to keep a young man in the way of the law it is not sufficient that he should receive the commands of a king, he must, as far as in him lies, enthrone that king, and as far as will goes, endow him with power. To desire that Jehovah should reign implies a desire to know His commands, and likewise a desire not to know His commands implies a latent desire to dethrone Him. The word "teach" means, bring my mind and heart into sympathy with the command. They who first hide the commands of God in their heart, through their mere fealty to Him, may then ask God to make them understand the full scope and bearing of the command.

Verse 13. "With my lips have I recounted all the judgments of Thy mouth."

No mere past act is referred to nor is it so much a description of a habitual state of mind, as an expression of

that state of mind. Neither is attention called, by the expression "have recounted," so much to the communicating of God's judgments to others, as to the making of them his own. It would be a little thing for him to tell God that, like a parrot he repeated His judgments; it implies comprehension, acquiescence, sympathy with, and what might almost be called authoritative reutterance. Notice the parallel expressions "lips" and "mouth"; "what Thou hast delivered by Thy mouth I redeliver with my lips." "Judgments" includes, first, the commandments of God, considered as an expression of what is just, and also in reference to the threatenings, expressed or implied, connected with them. Second, God's past sentences of condemnation and severities upon the guilty, and all the threatenings that have regard to the future—His declarations as to what He is about to bring upon the world and as to the condition of the finally impenitent. Third, God's accusations of sin and statements of desert, and all that in the Scriptures which, through the Holy Spirit brings home to a man God's judgment about himself. All these the servant of God accepts fully, at first, through faith, even if the heart shrinks back, afterwards by entering into the spirit of them, first, by appreciating their justice and second, by realizing how necessary they are to the fulfilment of the promises to the people of God.

It is prophesied that in the end of the world God's people shall judge the whole earth, and in recounting the judgments of His mouth, they are but anticipating as far as they can, their final position. God's declarations are sometimes harsh and terrible; these should not be believed in as something dark and mysterious and spoken of with bated breath. We should aim to reutter them with full assent, and maintain them in the face of all blasphemers. We ought to share somewhat in the responsibility that God too often now bears alone. This will not result in making a Christian cold blooded and unsympathizing, but the very reverse. The harsh and awful forms of doctrine learned by rote and re-

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peated by rote, would often wear a very different aspect if we recognized the fact that no doctrine is true doctrine for us unless it is our own, by being brought into thorough harmony with ourselves. Divine truth is the same always, but takes special forms to harmonize it with the consciousness and needs of the men of a time; but men and times change, and these forms are preserved as something absolutely true, and so doctrines grow as old fashioned and obsolete as garments. The wondrous Word of God is ever new, like an ever-during spring time in Nature, while the history of doctrine is strewn with many a theological form, which becomes gracious and even significant, only when we adjust it to the circumstances in which it originated. It is only by ever forcing ourselves to recount with our lips the judgments of God's mouth, that they become the truth for the time, for only then, do they take on the form, proper to our own age. There should be no such thing as cast-iron-orthodoxy. Theology should be plastic under the intelligence and the love of the people of God, or it becomes something worse than the Gibeonites' mouldy crusts and withered water skins. This may appear to make doctrine but a shifting sand; not so. The rock of doctrine upon which Christ has built His church is a living rock, a human soul, mobile and changeable, as that of Peter, but, which, like Peter, first sees and then says, "There is no safety in treating the statements of Scripture as philosophical formula and deducing from them what we are able. Scripture so modifies Scripture, that it becomes a living thing with the heart, like the heart of a man, and it is only as we are able from our mind and heart to reutter it, that we possess it at all." Thus it is that the Christian in recounting with his lips God's judgments, is not like the underlying of a tyrant, who must obey the harsh letter of his decision, but as a fellow judge of the King of Kings, and in assuming the judicial position, assumes also the judicial care, the judicial sympathy, the judicial mildness, and a certain judicial authority, which will enable him to draw from his

own heart some forceful ground of trust in the mighty scope of grace and mercy. But a servant of God is called upon to recount not only those judgments of God, which are harsh and severe, but also those judicial decisions, which bring deliverance and blessings to His people. They who survey the field of history, have often to recount God's judgments, not only with assent, but with thankfulness; and such recounting will be in the far future, the burden of the songs of the Redeemed ones. Happy they, who in the happy changes of their lives can see the hand of their God, giving sentence for them. This verse, if indeed it was written by the young Solomon, brings him before us as a preacher of righteousness, as one who warned his peers of the wrath of God upon evil doing. It could have hardly been otherwise, when we consider Solomon's peculiar talents for governing. Another Joseph, child of a loftier promise and higher hopes, he doubtless, like the son of Jacob, reproved his brethren and got their hate therefore, used perhaps God's threatenings to induce them to acquiesce in his advancement.

Verse 14. "In the way of Thy testimonies I rejoice as over all wealth."

"In the way of Thy testimonies"—in the doing of Thy testimonies, as a means to an end, and in that through which the "way of Thy testimonies" is ever leading. "Flowers laugh before Thee in their beds, and fragrance in Thy footing treads." Wealth is provision for the future, present power, respect of others, pleasures, means for the attaining of cherished aims. The youth rejoices over wealth for what it immediately brings, he realizes pleasures at once. Is not rejoice a peculiarly suitable term for the spirit of a young man? The old man does not rejoice over wealth for he knows how little it can do for him personally. He clutches it more eagerly and understands its power, but it is with a grave, desolate intensesness. To a young man, money is a key that opens the gates of all bliss. Gold to him is gilded by the visions of what is possible by means of gold. And

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no young man that ever lived was likely to form a more magnificent conception of what might be done with gold than Solomon. What a happy and godly youth Solomon must have been! What heavenly splendors must have fallen upon his private path! What enthusiasm and eagerness and hope in the following out of the holy precepts! Visions of more than earthly grandeur must have floated before his mind. Generally the feeling that they have to resist, who would be obedient to the moral law is that it lessens their power and opportunities in this world. Here, obedience fills with a sense of power. The young man is rendered younger by it, and if ever the old man grows young again, it is in assuming that childlike state of perfect loving, hoping, obedience and recognizing it as the means to power and happiness. Let every Christian man then act out the testimonies of God, bear the same witness in his obedience to them that He bore in enunciating them.

Verse 15. "In Thy precepts I will meditate and look at Thy paths."

"Precepts," that is the work or employment that God assigns to His servants to do. God's commands are a revelation of His character. That which He tells us to do He does Himself, since we are created in His image. Therefore study of the way He marks out for us shows us His ways, and in order to understand the scope of the command we must study His modes of action. For the sake of the ignorant and the feeble—in order to let light gradually upon their eyes, He gives His commands in such narrow specific forms, that if the servant of God brings little heart to the obeying of them, it will be easy for him to interpret them in such a way as, while affecting the closest legal strictness, to nullify them as did the Scribes and Pharisees. The heart that fears to find the law that would keep it away from itself as much as possible, is hasty in dealing with it, and satisfies itself easily, that what it sees at a glance in the command is all that is to be seen. It allows the law to thrust

itself upon its notice, but does not search after it. This young man gives himself wholly to the law, meditates in the precepts. He has made them externally his own, and has hid them in his heart; now he expands them from himself—he makes them to germinate in his soul, he carries out their idea and finds how broad it is, sees that it sets forth God's character and falls to studying God's ways as a commentary upon the command. He looks forward at God's paths as those in which he is to tread and prepares himself to "walk in His ways," (verse 3) as the true and only full obedience to the precept. There is something in the word used for path that suggests the idea of God as a way-farer, as being occupied upon a path rather than as using it as a means to an end. As if it was "the paths you use, the paths you travel on." The idea of employment, customary occupation, is suggested perhaps. "I will meditate in the occupations you give me, and your occupations, and look to the paths you go to and fro upon."

Verse 16. "In Thy statutes I will delight myself; I will not forget Thy word."

The word of promise casts light upon the statute. If "word" is understood as meaning simply law, then the last clause is an anti-climax that produces a very bad effect. But as "word" is the word of God's promise, then in his not forgetting the promise, lies the key to his delight in God's statutes. Where the statute or arbitrary order of God seems to cut off all hope of happiness, then the promise assures him that all will be right in the end. Faith in God's promise is needed to enable him to delight in the statute. To the sight it may appear not comely, to the taste bitter, in the use painful, but the Word lightens up all.

#### GIMEL.

Verse 17. "Grant to Thy servant (that) I may live, and I will keep Thy word."

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Throughout this stanza, except the 18th verse, there is a plain implication, where there is not a direct statement, that the writer is surrounded by enemies and peril. The petition here, then, is not that God will not take away his life, but that He will defend him. The latter clause may be of the nature of a covenant, perfectly proper where God's part is evidently understood to be gracious, as in the case of Jacob's covenant. If then, God will be so gracious as to lengthen out my day, I then will honor His promise by holding fast to it. Indeed, the two clauses are not to be understood apart. The first is not a bare petition, but also a claim for the fulfilment of a promise—"fulfil Thy promise by granting me life, and then I will be able to trust in the promise proved to be faithful." But the first clause is a true petition and it is to be noted here that the fulfilment of God's gracious promises are to be sued humbly for, by the servant of God. For it is clear that when we appeal to God for the fulfilment of His promises, we are almost always asking for the realization of our own conception of the promise itself, or of the time and manner of its fulfilment. It is perfectly right that our petitions should be colored by our own special views and desires, and God may choose to fulfil His promise in accordance with them, or He may choose another way, for He is always free. Thus it is that the claim for the fulfilment of a gracious promise imports the struggle of faith, since it is not the promise absolute that we crave, but the promise as shaped and modified by our desires. The prayer of Daniel for the deliverance of the Jews, according to God's promise at the time when he became convinced that the limit of seventy years, assigned to the Captivity, by the prophet Jeremiah, had arrived, is a model for all claims on God based on His promises. God will not be tied up even by His promises, and it behooves faith to be lowly while persistent, or God will find a way to fulfil His promises and at the same time disappoint over-confidence. There is this besides in the clauses as they stand—"let me



live, and then it will be possible for me to keep Thy word, for 'the dead praise Thee not.' " The keeping of God's word implies not only keeping a confident heart in the promise, but also all witness of words and acts of confidence to God's faithfulness.

Verse 18. "Uncover my eyes and I will look,—wonders out of Thy law."

"Law" here, as in verse 1, signifies the whole cult, especially the ceremonial and symbolical part of it,—the "law" that is perfect "restoring the soul." The wonders that one would expect to shine forth from such a law are wonders of grace and mercy, and these are just what would delight and astonish the psalmist, who in these verses, declares himself to be in so much peril and distress. For when a servant of God is in such a case, that which sharpens the swords of his enemies and makes his strength as weakness is the thought that God is against him or does not care. He is full of fear then, not so much by reason of the dangers around him, as because his eyes are covered, so that he sees not God's gracious countenance. This is by reason of first, ignorance; the grace in the law was somewhat hidden, and spiritual insight was needed; second, want of faith; third, dreadful sense of guilt; fourth, surrounding fears; fifth, by relying on God's name rather than Himself, that is, expecting of God and as King, asking Him for only what He has previously done, instead of relying upon His infinite power and love to do anything, however new and strange. God enlightens him a little, strengthens a little his faith, somewhat eases his burden, gives him a little stouter heart, or lessens the stress of his perils, and shows him His gracious self, so that the man begins faintly to believe that even if his case is peculiar, and though he cannot have a warrant in God's past dealings and specific promises, still he may have what he needs. And so, his eyes being uncovered, he begins to look. We cannot expect the blessed revelations of God to thrust themselves

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upon our attention. We must look, and every look is rewarded. The measure we mete to the word of God shall be measured to us. If with really uncovered eyes we look with utter faith, we shall be rewarded by the sight of "wonders," wonders of general grace, and also of God's special good will not only in the long run but now. We will then see that the observance of God's law is protection, policy, deliverance, and in the very presence of our enemies, we are full of amazement to find ourselves in a fortress. These wonders are like the wonders shown to the servant of the prophet, when he had his eyes opened and saw chariots and horses of fire around him, and his master, and saw that the source of his danger was in turn endangered. So shall pass away, as a dream, the terrors of those who trust in the Lord.

Verse 19. "A stranger (am) I in the earth; hide not from me Thy commandments."

The latter clause, the stranger's special request, indicates the special view taken of the stranger's need of "Commandments" are God's precepts of guidance—all that is included in the English phrase, "showing the way." The "stranger may know what to do, but "how to do," that he lacks. He knows where he wants to go, and has certain ends to attain, but he cannot find the right way. He knows not the ways of the people around him, and therefore he knows not the way he ought to act. Such a stranger was young Solomon; he must have hardly known whom to trust or how to act. But he is not merely a stranger in the court or the land. Then he could hope that a little change in his circumstances would alter his situation completely. But he is more than a stranger in the land; he is a stranger in the earth. The little sphere of trouble in which he dwells, shows to him that wider trouble that enwraps the whole world. He feels that to make this earth anywhere or under any circumstances a home for him, there must be a radical change. He looks forward to a life passed amid a stranger's

hardships and precious becomes the guidance of God to him. In the petition "hide not" is implied that God does sometimes hide the guide posts in the strange land and leave us to our own devices for a while. He is not bound to make things easy for us. To let us alone for awhile to grope our way out is often a part of the improving discipline of His providence. Christians, as well as the ancient people of God, are taught and strengthened in this way. Yet it is a perilous position. It is sometimes a necessary evil as was the wandering in the wilderness, but still it is an evil. Blessed they, who are guided ever, from whom God does not hide His commandments. For this is often done as a punishment. They, who neglect God's guidance will have to do without it and thereby learn to prize it. Happy are they, if it be restored to them before they have wandered far out of the way. It is at best a time of perplexity and sorrow; and a Christian may well pray to be delivered from it and not to be led into it. Those who use God's guidance are those from whom it will not be taken. To those who have, more shall be given, and from those who have not, shall be taken even what they have. They who feel and acknowledge that they are strangers on the earth, are the very ones who will be guided. To have the stranger spirit is to have a claim on God, who in His law, made strangers an especial object of compassion, and whose law is a reflex of Himself.

Verse 20. "My soul breaketh with longings for Thy judgments at every time."

"Breaketh with longing" is a hyperbole like the familiar one, "he was dying to do" so and so. To have my desire is necessary to my life. Intense desire is indicated. This desire indicates not merely that the psalmist is at the time, in great peril and in need of God's delivering judgments; for the statement is made as universal as in the preceding verse. The psalmist is not only a stranger everywhere, but at all times in great need of God's judgments. The little peril and loss of God's children is the means through the Spirit of making

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them know their infinite loss—their lost estate, the lost estate of the world, the thorough need there is of a deliverer. No little change will deliver them from their care. When a fair day comes, they still call out to a delivering God as in the tempest, for His power alone makes the day fair and keeps it so. They that know how to agonize in supplication in the hour of prosperity are those who alone hang upon God and have any right to be secure. The realized blessings of God, if trusted in, become the peace of this world that is easily broken; but we must not trust in God's blessings, but in God Himself. This intense longing, this heart breaking desire, for God's judgments in times of distress, implies considerable faith. There is no despair where there is longing. "At all times" would imply a readiness to receive God's judgments with regard to our character, either in the way of His providential dealings or having our eyes opened by His holy Word. Such judgments are very mortifying, but hard and humbling though they are, are very precious, and happy that man that holds himself ready, ever ready for them. These words imply a readiness to receive God's judgments with reference to our own wishes and aims, no matter how contradictory to them. The true servant of God never desires to take the bit in his teeth, but is ready to have the curb applied at any moment and be guided to the right or left by God's judgments—commands, of which we can only say, "God judges best." And all this, without any sullenness; for more than ready and willing submission is implied by this longing; hope, trust, love, fills the heart, even under the greatest disappointment. And this, too, although God's decisions often come suddenly and are therefore all the harder to bear, and although these sudden chastisements, checks and commands come not directly from God Himself, but through medium of creatures and things. If indeed, the young Solomon wrote this, he had early a deep experience of the need we have of the presence of the living God. He doubtless saw many pleasant and hopeful days bringing

present deliverance and power and opening a prospect of better things, but this did not deceive him; he knew nothing but discouragement without God.

Verse 21. "Thou hast rebuked the proud, the accused those wandering from Thy Commandment."

Rebuked, that is, with judgments. Because it was done in times past, he has full confidence now. "For this God is our God," Ps. 48. In the word "proud" we have a glimpse of his enemies and the spirit that opposed Solomon's rise to the throne. It was not merely the selfish desire for advancement on the part of his brothers, but the proud desire on their part and that of their adherents to have the kingship, independent of God, to have God remanded to the position of the object of religious worship by the nation, without interfering in political matters. Because they are "proud," they are accused. Their pride sets them apart for destruction. The word "wandering" indicates the directive character of what are termed, "commandments." A proud person may submit to be told what to do, many a proud person in feudal times readily called another his master, but it is hard for a proud person to bend his mind to receive directions. We see this in the fact that it is socially creditable to do hard work, and that for hire, if only one in the details of the work directs one's self. The proud party in Israel hated that their king should be turned into a servant. Independent authority is necessary to respect. That which makes domestic service socially degrading was exemplified, to the minds of the carnal in Israel, in the case of David, who was the Lord's servant indeed. The kings of Assyria and Egypt and other nations were ready enough to proclaim themselves the servants of their gods, and, in the case of the Assyrian king, even the servant of Jehovah to overthrow Jerusalem. But as the prophet Isaiah says in the 10th chapter, "Howbeit he meaneth not so." It was, after all, an hypocrisy. Their pride showed their independence. It was to low ideas of God that this unwillingness to become subservient to Him,

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was due. Once believe that He is the Infinite One—infinite in Wisdom, Love and Power, and to be His lacquey is honor in the most honorable. That interfering specific direction that the humble heart craves and often carnally craves is especially distasteful to the proud worldling. He detests God's interference not, be it noticed, in religious matters, but in business matters. The worldling delights in ritual religion, and also often in sentimental religion, if only God will leave affairs alone. There are many evangelical Christians, who will make God the author and finisher of Salvation, and supreme in Heaven, who would not like Him to meddle with their private business, or their political transactions, or the details of their ecclesiastical or benevolent enterprises. "Wandering from Thy commandments," means not merely breaking them or offending against the spirit of them, but shrinking from the very idea of being commanded, avoiding the hearing of a command. The action of pride in avoiding God's commandments is seen in the unwillingness of Christians to be directed by providential circumstances, by others, even those who are near them and whom they regard as their inferiors. When God's Word comes to us through our fellow it is most harassing to human pride. They who were willing to hear God's word from Heaven, were unwilling to hear it from the tabernacle, and they who would receive it thence, would not receive it from His minister, and they who now will listen to God's minister, will not hear it from a fellow often little, ignorant, disliked, and even wicked, and yet true humility is especially seen in this latter submission.

Verse 22. "Roll from off me reproach and contempt, for Thy testimonies I have kept."

Alexander thinks that there is some allusion here to the rolling off the "reproach of Egypt" which meant, whatever else it may have meant, the ending of a long term of disgrace and a final taking of His chosen people into favor by God. If we apply this to the case of the youthful Solo-

mon, it has great force and beauty. His novitiate was doubtless a term of relative disgrace. An heir apparent, who folded his hands, and who at the same time was surrounded by other pretenders, who were free by their want of principle to make a show of energy, and who seemed, as far as earthly things went, to have much the better prospect of attaining the kingdom. "Make this all to end," he asks. "Would that I might be acknowledged as the heir to the throne, and that my credit for energy might suffer no more diminution." Doubtless his inaction would lead shrewd men to think that he had not the kingly qualities. He certainly had not the heroic qualities so necessary in the founding of the kingdom, and there must have been a very strong temptation ever instant to show the ability as a politician, which he as certainly had, and cause himself to be recognized as a man of power. The position of an heir apparent is very often a trying one; mean men are over him, and have power and glory, while he is doomed to a forced inactivity. But in this case the trial was in part avoidable, if only he could give up principle, and he is able to plead the fact that his reproach and contempt were caused by his adherence to the "testimonies" of God—His Moral law. This is the reason he adduces why God should put an end to his period of trial. One cannot but sympathize with Solomon, in that splendid removal of his reproach, when suddenly the summons came for him to be crowned, his father yet remaining alive. Those must have been happy years of power and prosperity, when he had his father and his throne and could at last show what was in him. Christians are often called upon to suffer reproach and contempt in this way. In all the spheres of man's activity they often succeed best in making a figure, who are without principle. The very carefulness to do what is just right, tends often to make man appear weak and wanting in energy. A magnificent fortune, a mighty conquest, a great literary reputation, can sometimes be had at the price of a little compliance with the fashion of

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this world—a little regardlessness of the will of God. Christians are yet of the weak in this world. Principle is not yet power or glory. But that which is now weak and despised, God has appointed to be the overthrowing of the world and its successor in power. The Christian should be willing to be little, if obedience to God's testimonies makes him little; the time will come when his reproach will be removed. No doubt, if worldly men could have been present at our Saviour's temptation, they would have reproached and despised the scrupulousness that refused present power. And no doubt, He was reproached again and again, because He would not use His power and proclaim Himself King. He appeared ever shrinking from power and responsibility. And yet He was heir apparent, of the world, and by using the passions of the world He could apparently come to His own, much sooner. But He must be clean, and thus He had to endure much and wait long, before His day of triumph came. He is even waiting yet, He is not yet fully vindicated. He yet appears to the world, though good and loving, yet lacking the qualities of a practical ruler, who can be mighty in affairs and among men. But when the day of His return comes, then the reproach and contempt will be rolled at last away. Then, terrible as the dread that fell upon Joab and Adonijah, when the young Solomon ascended the throne, will be the awe that will fall upon the nations when He shall come, whose right it is to rule and reign. Christians if you follow closely your Master in these days, you must make up your minds to lose much reputation. You cannot expect to be treated better than your King. Wait then, rest under your reproach during the night of reproach, and in the morning it will be rolled away. God will roll it away. We must not be too careful to justify ourselves in the eyes of the world, that leads to compromise and concession and temptation, and to the Christian becoming worldly in the end. See to it also, that the reproach of sloth is not justly incurred. Despise not the day of small things. Let not dis-



couragement palsy activity. Do what your hand findeth to do, with all your might, and though you may not seem to effect much, you will bear a witness to your absent King as shall make the world of darkness tremble. And you may besides, be doing mighty things that you know not of. In the tales of the Northern Mythology, the god Thor, once upon a time, finds himself in the home of his giant enemies, and matches himself in rivalry with their might. But all in vain; he cannot drain a goblet, he cannot lift a cat from the floor, and three blows of his hammer, given in dead earnest, produce no effect at all. But afterwards, as the story states, he finds that the goblet was ever filled up by the sea, and his drinking caused a mighty ebb. The cat was the great serpent, which as they fabled, bound in safety the home of the Jotuns, while they jeered him, were expecting every moment, their utter destruction, and three great valleys were made by the blows of his hammer, that seemed to him utterly inefficient. Deep is the concealment that hides now from the Christian, the worth of what he does; but bright will be the light that will reveal to the servant of God, not merely that he is entering into power and honor, but that he was not contemptible, even in the days of his contempt.

Verse 23. "Also princes sat and at me talked together, and Thy servant muses of Thy statutes."

He, also is not grammatically connected with the preceding sentence, but is connected in sense. He not only suffers reproach and contempt, but is "also" the object of an intrigue—a conspiracy of princes. Alexander translates "talked at me." This would mean that they talked, so that he could hear what they said against him. But the Hebrew means only "talked about me," with a strong implication that they talked against him. Still, it is but an implication. The word "sat" implies deliberation and significant deliberation—conspiracy. They were princes, too, who were in deliberation against him—persons who had power to do him harm. The very fact of these princes engaging in

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an intrigue, shows the dignity of him against whom they conspire. It is a strong proof that we are right in ascribing this psalm to Solomon. The young Solomon must often have been aware of just such malicious consultations against him, and perhaps could, even upon occasion see his enemies as they sat and talked. Nothing could be conceived more disturbing; naturally it would make the mind all alert with the attempt to know what was said about him. We all know how difficult it is to abstract the attention from ordinary conversation going on about us, and fix it upon a matter in hand. But here were enemies—powerful enemies—against whom it would be desirable to counterplot, and therefore to understand their designs, and yet he does not think of them or their plots. He muses; the expression implies retired contemplation. In the very presence of his enemies (for this is the picture presented), he is in his closet, alone with the decrees of God. The title that he gives himself of “servant” is suited to the word translated “statutes.” A servant is one who obeys directions, whether he understands them or not—obeys the will of another as expressed by a command; and the word translated “statutes” describes the law as the fixed and unalterable expression of the will of God without any reference to its character. It might be translated by the word “decrees” or “orders”—“Thy servant muses on Thy orders.” God’s servant meditates upon His decrees, perhaps to find out why it is so decreed, perhaps to ascertain exactly what is decreed and how to go to work to obey, but most of all, he muses in pleasant thought, gloating over the possession of the decree, feeling safe as against all plotters, in obedience to it. In the case of the young Solomon, able, shrewd and calculating by nature, it shows a great height of faith that he should neglect to fathom the plans of his enemies, should be indifferent as to what those plans were exactly, and in their very presence and amid their false intrigues, should be drawn away to musing upon God’s orders to him. And wise it would be,

for all God's servants to follow his example. Many a child of God from his eagerness to know designs against him, has exhibited and increased his want of faith; has been kept in a constant fever, spying out and divining the changing plans of his enemies, when the final one was all that behooved him to know; has had his thoughts turned away from God, been tempted to fish in muddy waters, to deal with questionable persons, and to sin. If you have, O, child of God, His decree, then be happy and contented and safe in the knowing of it and obeying of it. In your hours of helpless ignorance of what your enemies devise, you will be in secret with God, and have pleasant times of submissive love, content to run all risks for the sake of obeying, not because the command seems wise or right, but because God wills. The decree upon which the servant of God muses in the presence of conspiring enemies is the order which comes to him to wait and do nothing. This order is announced often, simply through the circumstances which hedge us up and make action difficult, without trenching on right.

Verse 24. "Also Thy testimonies (are) my delights, the men of my counsel."

The same law, upon which the psalmist mused in its aspect of irreversible decree, is now in its aspect of testimony appealing to the intuitions of right in the servant of God, spoken of as his delights. One is reminded of the Latin word "deliciae," so often used to signify intimacy and delightful intercourse. For the law is not merely an arbitrary expression of will on the part of God, but it is a better philosophy. "It is nigh unto thee," says Moses; it justifies itself to the man, and appeals to his higher nature. The two parts of the correlation are adjusted thus. He delights in the "Testimonies," and therefore they have influence and become his counsellors. They are able to guide him into good policy—they are themselves good policy, as against his plotting enemies, and therefore he delights in them. In verse 23 we see the servant of Jehovah making no attempt to fathom

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the purposes of his enemies; carried away rather with the desire to fathom the fathomless import of the decrees of God. In verse 24 we have the same servant, knowing the hostile designs of his enemies, but finding it the height of policy and better than any counter move, or the best counter move of all, simply to obey the moral law. In the case of Solomon, who showed in his after history, how able he was in devising and executing that which would thwart the purposes of his opposers, this must have required a strong effort of faith. How well, if every Christian could be quiet after this manner—could say “hands off” to his restless energies. His faith would be strengthened—it would not be weakened by humble reliance. A great burden, too, would be removed from his shoulders, did he feel that he could wisely depend upon holy obedience. It was something to turn his attention away from his plotting foes, but it was more to put aside his friends and partizans, eager to advise, or if, as may be, the implication that he was lonely and without a friend, to feel as content and safe with the testimonies of his God for his only counsellors, as if he had around him a synod of Ahi thophels. And well is his confidence placed. They who make God’s testimonies their own, become in their own persons, living witnesses, imaging God’s moral character. And if they are like Him in moral perfection, they will not fail to be like Him in victorious might in the end. The ark of the covenant, where God’s testmonies were laid, was the center of the power and glory of God in the camp of Israel, and they who have the testimonies of their God laid up in their hearts may be assured that they dwell in the secret place of thunder. Thou who holily obeyest hast on thy side all that, which is infinite and universal, on thy side thou hast “powers that will work for thee. There’s not a breathing of the common wind, that can forget thee, thou hast great allies,” and never canst thou utterly be overthrown.

DALETH.

Verse 25. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken Thou me according to Thy word."

The soul or life cleaving to the dust would be literally death, in which all that remains of life to the eye, is dust among dust. And to this suits the word "quicken" in the second clause. Literal death is not meant here, nor is it probable that sickness near to death is indicated. Under the forms of physical dying, is set forth here a loss of moral energy from whatever cause arising. A certain political economist describes a man's life as a struggle between vitality, tending to keep him erect and gravity trying to pull him down to the dust; in the end the forces of nature overcoming the forces of life and bringing a man down to the grave. One of the most terrible experiences of extreme sickness is the consciousness of this mighty power of earth crushing one down without help or hope. This verse may refer to such a time of prostration in sickness, but these words are too strong for mere sickness, to be sick and even near to death is comparatively a little thing, if the soul is erect and of good cheer. The complaint of the psalmist, especially if we consider the succeeding verse, evidently is that he has lost heart through discouragement. At the same time, so closely allied are mind and body, that bodily languor involves moral languor, and a deep experience of disappointment unnerves body as well as mind, so that this poetical form brings into the scope of the experience all those cases, where the sickness of the body aids to bring down the mind to the dust. It is, then, in the consciousness, perhaps, of a bodily unnerving from moral languor that he says, "my soul, or life, cleaveth to the dust." Terrible is loss of heart. In the ancient fables it is told that, when Prometheus made men, the demigods wondered not so much at their wonderful construction, as that he could induce them to live and act. He said that he effected this by placing blind hopes in their hearts. The hopes of the servant of God are not "blind," but founded

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upon immutable promises; yet, nevertheless, they may be clouded to that extent, that not only is he overwhelmed in misery, but his activity is paralyzed. This is the case of the psalmist here, and he here desires a recovery of his moral energy through the granting of some desired thing. This is indicated by the expression, "according to thy word." And the application to the case of ordinary Christians can best be made by considering the case of the probable writer of this psalm. The word of promise to Solomon was that he should sit on the throne of Israel. At times it must have seemed impossible that this promise should be fulfilled, and then faith and energy would alike fail. Now, it is in such a strait that he claims encouragement in fulfilment of the promise. It is not to be supposed that he claims the throne at once, but merely the removal of discouragements, the granting of something that would give encouragement, that would tend to further or at least smooth the way to his advancement—little success that would serve to make him feel that God is watching over him and keeping the fulfilment of the promise ever in view. The child of God has promised to him a greater throne than the throne of Israel and the way to it is long and so great are the discouragements that sometimes his faith well nigh fails, and he cries out, "my soul cleaveth to the dust." God does not insist that he should overcome his discouragements by the bare exercise of faith. He does not say, "If you will believe as you ought, you will be again full of energy," but permits His child to pray, "quicken me according to Thy word." Not that he claims the great promise in its last fulfilment, not that he claims to be at once transported into the promised land; but demands support by the way, some little encouragement to faith—"a cluster from Canaan." This will not enforce belief in the unfaithful, for not all believed who saw the Eshcol grapes; but will strengthen the faith that exists, weak though it be. And it is to be noted that this special help is asked as involved in the general promise, and may be claimed

on the basis of it, when the heart grows faint and "ready to halt." And in nothing, does God show more tenderness and compassion, than in just this thing. The discouragement that overwhelms us may be really contemptible. We may really deserve a scourging for not rising above it. Lack of common force of character and courage may be at the bottom of our trouble; our fellows may make short work of our nervous fancies, hardly tolerant of them, even in the sick; but our Heavenly Father breaks not the bruised reed nor quenches the smoking flax. There is no contempt with Him, but He, according to His infinite knowledge, ministers in the infinite variety of infinite love to every case. They who are permitted to base, upon a great promise, petitions for little things in the way towards its realization and to ask for them now, ought to be as wide and as special in the interpreting of God's commands, showing the same sensitive delicacy towards God that He is ready to show towards them. If what they ask for their encouragement were necessarily involved in the promise, even then there would be mercy and grace in God's granting it; but just as likely as not it is not involved in the promise, is perhaps an unnecessary and even hindering thing, or if not that, now is not the proper time for it. If He were dealing with creatures infinitely wise, He would deal very differently with us; but He is dealing with foolish and ignorant creatures, who like children, are not contented that they are guarded in the path that will lead to a pleasant place, but will have the danger hid from their eyes, and will have a flowery path to tread. And the Lord bends his infinite plans to minister to human folly and makes even the distant howling of the wolves to cease in the pasture, where His flock lie down. This petition, then, is not based logically upon the promise, but rather upon the heart of God as revealed by the promise. For He that would have us happy, at the end of all must certainly desire that we should be happy every step of our way, and if we cry to Him will contrive to have it so.

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Verse 26. "My ways have I recounted, and Thou hast answered me; teach me Thy statutes."

The word translated, "ways" here has in the Hebrew, most of the significations of our English word "way." It is more than simply "path," it is not a path, which may or may not be used, a path becomes a way only as it is used as a means to the reaching of a certain point e. g. "this path is the way to the spring." This spoken of a man "his way," does not mean simply what he does as a means for the attainment of certain objects he has in view—the methods he adopts in the pursuit of his aims, and the man's way is good or bad not so much with the reference to the moral character of his actions, as to the likelihood of their bringing him to a happy result.

In this verse, the expression "my ways," might, considered by itself, mean "my habits of action"—"my ordinary actions"—"my conduct." But that it means something more than this is evident from the fact that the recounting of them, amounts to a petition, for it is said in the last clause, that God answers him. A paraphrase will most easily set forth the right meaning. "I have laid before the Lord the attempts and undertakings with which my life has been occupied—the various ways in which I have striven to attain my purposes. I have brought to Him all my failures as to One who can remedy all, and not only acknowledging my ill success, but also the sinfulness mingled with all these "ways," begged Him by the very act, to take the matter in hand and do for me what I ineffectually tried to do for myself." And then comes the request "teach me Thy statutes." The word translated, statutes is peculiarly appropriate here; it might be translated "orders"; it signifies the expression of the will of God as arbitrary and irreversible, without any regard to its character in other respects. The psalmist had in time past been fond of having his own way, and that had brought him to the humiliating recital of his "way," for that is the way of failure now he gives his own will up



and submits himself to God's orders—"statutes." "Teach," that is, "permit no neglect or blindness of mind to hide Thy statutes from me, when they are explicit in the Scriptures; help me to deduce them, when they are implicit; enable me to recognize and acknowledge them, when they come to me by the mouth of men or circumstances." We can easily imagine the young Solomon to have been unable to keep himself in the attitude of waiting and to have tried to help himself forward by aiming at prominence and repute and popularity. He may have also attempted to do something to thwart the designs of his enemies. Such efforts would be embarrassed by his conscientious regard for God's law. It would be very like trying to walk with shackled limbs. Schiller notices the additional energy that want of principle gives a man. Many men have made failures where they could easily have been successful, if they had only been unscrupulous. We can easily imagine that Solomon was inconceivably puzzled, seeing clearly what would be effective, but not being able to find out what would be at once effective and right. Notwithstanding all his ability, he may well have made many mortifying failures; and besides, his very successes dishearten him. The burden of taking his own welfare into his own hands is too much for him, seeing that he is hampered by moral considerations, and he comes to God for orders. What a relief! The aching will rests upon God's will; there passes into the soul a sense of safety, freedom from temptation, a feeling that success is probable, and that whether success is ours or not, we at least have God, for obedience to God is clinging to God, and possession of God. There is in coming to God for orders, a satisfaction all the greater that we do not obey, because we understand the significancy or reason of those orders, but simply from simple personal devotion, which implies a close communion and inspires the assured confidence that we are pleasing him. Christians have often need to make the kind of petition referred to in this verse—to bring their failures and their un-

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finished work to God for success and completion. When a Christian man once realizes that he is acting from himself, that his "ways" are his own, then it becomes him to recount them to God and have a new spirit put into them, a spirit which while it is one of energy is yet one of dependence; for this is one of the ways in which God answers us—a new spirit put into our work is a new efficiency. Sometimes there is a grant of earthly wisdom, sometimes we are directed to a change of work; and sometimes are made to stand still and have God work for us. Even where our work is prosperous we should in this way lay it down before God in order that it may be assured, feeling insecure as long as it is our own. A spirit of submission to God's orders, a feeling that we need God's orders cannot be too sedulously cultivated by the Christian. Even confidence in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit often leads to dependence upon one's self and wilfulness—the Christian living from grace received, rather than drawing at once upon the source of all grace. Obstinacy and wilfulness are often seen in the Christian, but if he receives God's orders humbly, he, by that, enters into the possession of what is the rightful basis of all authority and energy.

Verse 27. "The way of Thy precepts make me understand, and I will muse of Thy wonders."

Taking the word "way," in the active sense, the first clause would mean "make me to understand that thy precepts are a way to the attainment of whatever, by 'my ways,' (verse 26) I have attempted." "Precepts"—the law as assigned work. "Make me to understand how, if I do the work that you set me, I shall be doing my own." The prudential interested views of a man, whose natural tendency is to look to the main chance is manifested here, and is predominant in the psalm. It is one proof that Solomon wrote this psalm, so like is the spirit of the psalm to his character. Of course, this prudential interest is of a high and broad character; not the highest and noblest type of God's ser-

vice; not like David's attitude toward God, but still tending to bring a man onward and upward, like one, who on a lower declivity of a great mountain is yet moving towards the top. Still it involves peril, not utterly to devote ones self in love to the Lord. This, Solomon found in the latter years of his life. An acute mind, serving God from considerations of duty and looking to His commandments, rather than to Him, is in danger of explaining away commands, and reconciling the most diverse practices when temptation furnishes an inducement to do so. The spirit with which these words are uttered may be set forth thus, in a paraphrase of the text: "Make me to understand, that in letting myself be absorbed in the work Thou settest me to do, I am on the way to the realization of my wishes, and then I will occupy myself with the realization of those desires only so far as to encourage myself by meditating upon Thy wondrous works in times past, where I see, first, Thy power and will to help Thy servants; second, how, in spite of their occupation with the work Thou settest them, to the neglect apparently of their own interest, they yet came out successful, nay where third, I see how, when that which Thou settest them to do by word (as Abraham) or by promise (as Joseph) in a human sense, also precluded (see also Daniel) the realization of the very promises, still Thou didst make it a wonderful way, by means of which to attain the very summit, and higher than the summit of their desire. Thus the two clauses are in perfect correlation. To Solomon and to the servant of God now, this absorption in divinely assigned work, while at the same time, contemplating the wonders of the Lord is a mode of prayer, that would carry light into many a darkened path. How many have to crush out their tastes, how many have to deny themselves congenial society or books or study, simply because their duties come in the way. God assigned the duties, God also implanted the dates—one ought to be done, the other ought to be gratified. Bury yourself in your duties, no matter what you

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cast away; but it is also your duty to meditate upon the wonders of God. You may be absorbed in the thought of them and yet not neglect your work, nay the very thought of them will set you free to work, and make you take an interest in your work; for you will be helped thereby to trust that out of the eater will come forth meat, and as in time past God's providences were births which could not be foreseen, so it will be with you; when the Lord turns your captivity you will be "like to those that dream."

Verse 28. "My soul weeps from sorrows; raise me up according to Thy word."

Raise me up seems to be correlative with the expression weeps. A person weeping, naturally bends over and hides his face. To raise such an one up, implies that his weeping was put an end to, by the removal of its cause. In this verse the promise gets a still broader and more liberal interpretation than in the 25th verse. There, the psalmist prays that his energy may be restored, here, that his heart may be cheered; in both cases the petition is based on the promise. Now the promise could be exactly fulfilled upon its final realization alone. But, as man's activity is always implied, so we can claim, on the part of God, as part of that promise, all that is necessary to secure our activity, always saving this—it is sometimes best that God should act and not we. Sometimes He ties our hands or fetters, our spirit, in order that what we aim at, may be better done than we could do it ourselves. So likewise the servant of God can pray to be granted that which will comfort his heart and fill him with joy on the way. This must be true, since the promise of God is an expression of His good will towards the recipient of the promise, and therefore, any needless delay in the execution is inconsistent with it, and any needless suffering permitted is still more inconsistent with it. We may infer, that He who promises a time of joy to us at the end through the constraint of that very nature that gives the promise, desires and implies that He would give us that same or like joy all along the way.

Let this, however, be remembered; if the servant claims present comfort as in accordance with the promise, so let him by this very sanction to his petition, "according to Thy word," cast away all comfort and joy that is inconsistent with it. There is some joy that we must fail of, if we would have the greater and final joy. Afflictions have their need and that very often. Is it going too far to say that the cleaving to the dust, spoken of in verse 25, is a cleaving of stupidity and sensuality and worldliness destroying energy, and that sometimes sorrow, though prayed against, "according to Thy word," is retained, that the soul may be brought to lay hold of the promise and thus its energy restored "according to Thy word." Then the soul, though still bowed down and weeping, is nevertheless out of the dust and acting and praying still, against its sorrow, "according to Thy word," may look forward to a time of the lifting up of the head.

Verse 29. "The way of falsehood remove from me, and Thy law, grant unto me graciously."

Right before the psalmist stretches a way that offers to him deliverance and prosperity. But he knows that it is a lie, "a way of falsehood." He knows that it will not lead whither it pretends to. Still, it has some alluring power; a temptation ever before the eyes may be too strong for the strongest, and he asks not that he may be strengthened to resist, but that the temptation may be removed. This petition might be answered by the actual removal of the external temptations to a wrong course; or God might, while allowing the external occasion for the temptation to remain, grant such understanding of this false way, by having reports from those who have tried it, by having the tempting men or circumstances unmasked, as should take from it the power to tempt. Or the psalmist might, (and this is indicated in the latter clause) have God's way of salvation, so thrust upon his attention and illuminated, that it shall appear a better and more alluring way. This is what is specially prayed for—deliverance from evil temptation by having the soul tempted

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by God's proposals. "Grant me Thy law graciously." That broad cult and mode of approaching God laid down by the Mosaic Institutions. The law that "restores the soul" (see 19 Psalm), the broad symbolic setting forth of God's grace, this law which we are so apt to have in form, while failing of its power, the psalmist asks to possess more thoroughly, to understand more completely and to be surrounded with all its glorious privileges and ministry crying "How amiable are Thy Tabernacles, O, God of Hosts," God is asked to grant this graciously, since the way of falsehood does not long present itself to a man without his tampering with it in all likelihood, and in asking for its removal, he cannot but feel that he does not deserve to have it done. Also, in view of the many perils besetting the way of falsehood, it is an act of grace on God's part to remove it. Also it is a gracious act to grant the law in view of the law's character. "The way of falsehood" that offered itself to the youthful Solomon, was very likely some short cut to the kingly throne. Just as our Saviour was offered by the Devil, the kingdom of the world, so doubtless, to the royal youth, was often offered by the Father of Lies, the throne of Israel upon certain conditions, which, at times, seemed tempting. What these conditions were we do not know, but from the latter petition we may perhaps be justified in supposing that he might have been tempted, through his self interest at the beginning of his career, with the very same temptation, that through his unconsciousness, availed to overthrow him at its close. The administration was Judaic and Jerusalemic and there may have been a suggestion to Solomon's mind, that an apposition, founded on tribal rights, both governmental and sacerdotal, might make him popularity and power. Such a temptation, if entertained for a moment, would be so far forth, and for so long a departure from the law in the thoughts of his heart. And quick as a flash must have come the consciousness that any falling back from David's work involved a falling back from the work of Moses; that if he

gave up Jerusalem he must be content with only high-place worship and lose all the gracious verdation of the Wilderness and Tabernacle. This must have made him feel that that way was a way of falsehood and led him back with an increased sense of the law's value, crying in the dread of deserved loss "grant me Thy law graciously." A Christian is only safe in living on the highest plane. If he has opened to him the privilege of being a son of God, let him accept it with all its God-like self abnegation. Let him not try to give up any of his high position in order to enjoy any of the pleasures of sin. Above all let him not encourage others in living on a lower plane that he may yet gain by pleasing them. We should exact of ourselves strictly in this matter. Much might be permitted to David that cannot be tolerated in our clearer light. Let us not be willing to stand on David's plane of knowledge and consciousness in order to have what to David was permitted. For that we know we must realize in heart and life at our peril. Going back from the perfect cult and metropolitan rule, established by David, involved the giving up of more than that. If one goes back towards heathenism, why not go all the way. If a Christian is content to remain where he is or tries to go further back, in order that he may be in a position that will require less of him, and where he may live more of the mere natural life than he could in going further towards God, then he adopts a line of motion in which there is no stopping place and which will lead him further and further away from God. We ought to live at high-water-mark of grace, if we would live safely. "Forward" should be our word; "Forward to the highest and holiest of all." Grant me Thy law graciously. The cult that Solomon prized was splendid and gracious, but we have one more splendid and gracious still—the Temple of God in Heaven and the Great High Priest and the innumerable company of angels. Over against the way of falsehood we must set the open door, the gracious promise, the near access, the exalted dignity and the large reward.

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Verse 30. "The way of truth have I chosen; Thy judgments have I set (before me)."

"The way of truth"—the true way—the way which leads whither it professes to lead, "have chosen" i. e. have permanently chosen, do choose, will hereafter choose.

The false way is false, not only because it is in itself not calculated to bring to happiness, him who treads it, but also because God's judgments overhang it. The "way of truth" is true, not only because it is in itself calculated to promote the happiness of those it invited, but also because it avoids God's judgments, and this is the peculiar view taken of it here. The motive here, to the choice of the true path, is not that to which it will lead, but that which it will avoid. This is in striking harmony with the general tone of religious prudence, which rules this psalm; and that this has rightly a place in the experience of the servant of God is very manifest, from the very fact that God's people have had to be so often warned and threatened. Even St. Paul acknowledges that this fear has influence upon him, and is a motive to his work. "Lest I, who have preached the Gospel to others, should be myself a castaway." This declaration is the complement of the petition in the preceding verse. It will be but naught for us to ask that the way of falsehood be removed, if we do not choose the way of truth. If the way of falsehood was the opportunity offered to him of using wrong means to advance himself, then the choosing of the way of truth implies the embracing of the right opportunities of advancing himself, consistent with quiet waiting God's time. There can be no doubt but that the time of youth was occupied by Solomon with such exercises and studies as helped to make him the king he was. If he had given way to the temptation of vain and unholy endeavor, he would not have made the brilliant monarch he did. He had in his time of enforced inactivity, an excellent opportunity to study the nation in its parties. Men would unveil themselves without reserve before and towards the little and despised prince,



and he would come to the throne as rich in experience, almost, as if he had governed all this time. The judgments that Solomon set before himself as warnings, might have been God's general judgments against sin. The judgments against Saul and his house would be nearer and more suited to his case. But the judgment against Absalom would be of specific application. He was taught by these judgments that the throne was the Lord's, and that the sub-royalty of Israel was in His gift and that he was not to lay hands upon it himself. The child of God now has need to learn this lesson. He may, as Solomon was, be little and despised. He may feel that his opportunities for usefulness are limited; that, if he had more wealth, social position or official position or whatever makes power for a man, he then would be able to do more for the Kingdom of God. But let him beware, self-seeking sometimes takes this form. It may be only repining, when he is laid by helpless by sickness; it may be the neglecting of duties that imprison the faculties and tie up the powers and even appear to destroy them. It may take the form of desiring popularity, and seeking it by over eager and questionable means, and even by unholy intrigues. This is all the way of falsehood. He must reject, for there is danger in the path and the mode of rejection is the choice of the "way of truth." He must make the most of his time in the position and circumstances that God has chosen for him, no matter how unlikely it may appear that they will bear fruit for the kingdom. Special and peculiar opportunities may be found in any peculiar set of circumstances, and if used aright, they will promote not only our growth in grace, but our efficiency as servants of God. God never cuts blocks with razors; but it requires great faith not to believe it. This whole life is but a waiting time, like that of Solomon. The throne will come bye and bye, and we will be sorry enough if we are not ready for it.

Verse 31. "I have cleaved unto Thy testimonies, oh, Jehovah, put me not to shame."

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The word "cleave" means, adhere—stick-to, as in verse 25, but is followed by a different preposition. There the word is followed by the preposition "to" indicating a mere outside adherence as of lint to a rough surface. Here "cleave" is followed by the preposition "in," indicating an internal adherence or sympathy. This latter form of expression is used in Hebrew where a strong feeling attracts towards another e. g. "Ruth clave unto her" (in her). In verse 25 then, we have some part of the psalmist—some precious part designated as his soul, described as brought down into the dust and made to adhere to it; while at the same time the man himself loathing his position, cries out for deliverance. Here, verse 31, we have the man himself freely giving himself up to that which at the same time attracts him so strongly that the word well describes him as carried away by and sticking to it. These two kinds of cleaving are then dissimilar, the one is voluntary, the other involuntary and yet there is a likeness between them. A man who, of his own accord mounts a horse's back is, while he remains there, as entirely in the power of his horse's motions, as if he had been placed there and tied fast. So one who steps into a boat of his own accord, must be carried with the motion of the boat as long as he remains in it, as irresistibly as if he had been forced into it and made to remain. We must not lose sight of the original sense of the word cleave—to stick fast to. In English the word "stick" is used only of intense resolve, e. g., the cry of encouragement, "stick to him." But the Hebrew expression means more than simple resolve, however intense, something of involuntary emotion, that perforce carries a man away and which the volition merely gives expression to, is intimated. For instance, in the expression, Ruth clave to her, while there is volition, there is also a strong emotion that carries Ruth away and fastens her to Naomi, so different from mere resolve as to be analogous to the adhering of one body to another. This strong expression then of the Psalmist

manifests the intensity of his choice, its unreservedness, and the utter subserviency to the testimonies of God implied in and following from it. It is as if he gave himself up to the sway of that which from henceforth had him completely in its power. This supreme dominance of the Law of God over the man is necessary to a real and truthful relation with it. The law of God is intolerant of any other allegiance, and until the servant of God can say, "I have cleaved to Thy testimonies" he may well suspect his loyalty. But he must not let this adherence to the testimonies of God terminate in a mere mental act, if true active obedience will flow from it; indeed it may be said that an act of obedience is the necessary basis for the mental choice. As a mental act, we may accept the law and resolve to obey it, may resolve to cleave to it; but the actual cleaving to God's testimonies is in the act of obeying them from the heart. They who try as a preliminary to active obedience, to devote themselves to God's law by an inner act of the soul often find it unsatisfactory, for the mind reacts against itself. God made the mind not to act alone, but through the body, with reference to the external world, and all difficulties would vanish, and they who are sticking fast in the slough of self-consciousness would be free, if letting their mental processes alone they would fix their attention upon what is to be done and do it. Then would the soul truly cleave to God's testimonies and every succeeding act would make the dominance of the law more complete. But we must go farther than this, and say that not only is an act required, but the act must be towards God; it is in vain to try any mere dealing with the law, any care in obeying the external precept, to attain to this utter subjection of the soul to God's testimonies—the moral precepts are the very soul of the law; they command the assent of the natural reason and conscience, they attract the loftier part of man, but that strong feeling which is necessary to bear a man away and fasten him to the law forever, is attraction to-

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wards God. We must deal at first hand with Him. There cannot be devotion to the law without devotion to the law giver. He that is made in the image of God, cannot cleave to any statement of God's will because for cleaving there must be loving, therefore the testimony to God's moral character must be adhered to in all its forms and throughout the Bible. The command marks, interpreted by the Spirit, become very broad and multitudinous, reaching to the thoughts and intent of the heart and placing the servant of God en rapport with Him who is the infinite source of the command. If we were interpreting this clause alone, there is no height of loyal love which we could not conceive it to imply. But here comes in the second clause, not to trim down the luxuriancy of the emotion, but still to introduce a little regard to self-interests. Reading the two together the verse is equivalent to this, "Put me not to shame in my cleaving to Thy testimonies." There is a depth in the Psalmist's feeling that would doubtless impel him to cleave to God's testimonies no matter what the result might be, but the feeling does not carry him away to that degree that he forgets all about consequences. He is very regardful of them. This is a prudent man. He has invested in God's testimonies and is evidently understood by those around to have risked his all upon his adherence to them. And this does not derogate in the least from the nobleness of the feeling that impels him. It is, perhaps, on a lower plane than David who would forget both law and consequences in thinking about God. But still this is the expression of true and acceptable service. The truth is, many feelings unite in an impulse to obey God; a sense of his rightful authority, of his dread power, of the utter folly of disobedience, and as here, hopes beckoning forward to the attainment of one's aim, a feeling of covenant claim, all unite with love of the law giver to impel the servant to utter devotion. This would all the more easily take place, if, as in the case of young Solomon, the thing which self

interest demands were promised by God and to be viewed as but further and higher employment in His service.

Verse 32. "The way of Thy commandments will I run, for Thou wilt enlarge my heart."

"The way of Thy commandments" is the way marked out by God's commandments, which are the law, considered in its directive capacity. Now a way exists not for itself, it is merely a means of reaching a place, of attaining an end. Now in the highest sense of the word "way," the commandments point out the way to God. They are a means by which God's servant is united at last to God Himself—the real aim of all His children. But the child of God cannot make personal communion with God his sole aim. He is on the Earth and of the Earth, and earthly things must be the objects of intense interest and eager pursuit or not only would the work that God has appointed to be done here remain undone; but the proper and natural avenues of approach to God through the things that He has made, would be neglected and men would suffer spiritual loss. The child of God may and must make his aim, health, wealth, happiness, prosperity, power. All these may not only be good for him personally, but they may be made the means of something higher and better if they are subordinate to that higher and better aim. Just as the words of a sentence would be subordinate to the sense of the sentence, just as the notes of a piece of music should be subordinate, to the strain, just as the parts of a building should be subordinate to its purpose, so should all the aims of God's servant centre in one aim, in all his seekings he should seek God. The position of young Solomon illustrates both the possibility and the difficulty of this. The hope that was set before him might well be called a glorious hope, for it was a call to more magnificent service for God than had ever fallen to the lot of mortal before. Every step towards the position of King of Israel might well be a step towards God. But that exalted posi-

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tion was also an opportunity to serve himself—to gratify his taste for splendor, his desire for authority, his capacity for ruling; it was a mine of earthly pleasure for him to work. The word of promise then brought him into the scope of a temptation, and he was in danger of falling away from the search after God while seeking what He had promised. If he desired the kingdom in order that he might gratify self, then he must of needs wait with impatience, and the temptation to seize “suddenly and unholily” the throne, would have nothing to break its force save the consideration of personal peril. But on the other hand waiting patiently as one waits for an opportunity to serve, he has already the service that he seeks and would depart from it by yielding to the evil solicitation. The Lord’s way with him becomes his way. The guiding way-marks of the commandments chafe not his will, for his heart is enlarged by the Lord. Petty aims have vanished. He will have only the greatest and the best, and is able in the least to see the greatest, in the parts to see the whole, in the petty details of his preparatory training, in the alarming adversities, delays and denials, he realizes the promise. He need not wait for the summer, his bushes bear roses in the winter. His heart is so enlarged to perfect sympathy with the holiness of the command, to entire trust in God’s faithfulness, in wisdom, that he is sure that not a step marked out by the command is a step lost, to the magnificent feeling that he is serving in the highest sense possible in conforming to God’s denial of service that he bounds along in his path, however tortuous it may appear, assured that it is a true way, the true way for the attainment of his aim. This is the only way for the child of God to be diligent in business, fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord. If the heart is only enlarged the commandments solve the problem. The secular becomes sacred and the sacred secular, and the Christian’s life is one. He has intense earthly desires, but has a desire (a hierarchy of desire) that swallows these up. So he rests not in any earthly

aim even the highest, but at all times and in all things feels after God. The astronomer intensely desires a telescope, but that desire is swallowed up in the desire of the sky, and he only arrives at the perfect possession of the telescope when he forgets it in his gaze through it upon the stars. So one whose heart God has enlarged finds in the commands that restrain the worldling, his largest liberty, the worldling's ends become his means, toys turn in his hands to tools, and all the details of life precious as the parts of a wondrous song which rests not in any note, now hastens to its cadence but is perfectly beautiful only when according to the law of the strain it is passing to its perfect close. This is Christian waiting.

“The men of grace have found  
Glory begun below.”

HE.

Verse 33. “Guide me Jehovah, in the way of Thy statutes and I will keep it (to the) end.”

In the preceding verse we have the Psalmist looking to the commandments for direction and in his present state of mind he chafes at their restrictions, trusting confidently that God will, by enlarging his heart, bring him into harmony with them. Here the application is made directly to God Himself for guidance. “O! Jehovah! guide me.” In verse 33 God is looked to that repugnance to the directions of His commandments may be overcome by an inner change. Here the psalmist would put himself under God's personal direction in order to secure perseverance in the way. There is considerable difference between looking to God's commandments for direction with a heart enlarged by God's spirit, and applying directly to God for guidance. Either would secure our safe arrival at the Heavenly Home; but the first implies a more active exercise of the faculties, a certain degree of independence. Our minds lighted up by the large heart must be all alive to scrutinize, interpret and

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follow out the directions given in the commandments. But there are those Christians who crave and there are times when all Christians crave to be led like little children. Weariness, discouragement and self-distrust sometimes leave us nothing as a basis of hope in our future good conduct, but a child-like trust in God's guidance. The word "guide," the address "O Jehovah," both indicate this direct, personal appeal, the "statutes" that is, "arbitrary commands"—"orders" of God, is just what the tired and daunted soul demands to make its obedience full of rest. No impulse is asked, for the soul earnestly desires to do right; it is in the right way, but it fears lest it should not *percevere*; not instruction does it ask, for that involves the labor of thought; it wants "orders" and it asks to be guided in obeying these. One would think that if one had the statute there would be no need of guidance since if one desired to obey, he could literally obey. But there are many of God's orders which yet require the exercise of judgment in their application. For instance, Christ's command to take no thought for the morrow. That is a statute—an arbitrary command; it does not appeal to the moral sense or to human wisdom. So, also, of other directions, not to go to law, to love thy neighbor as thyself; the obedience must not be slavish; the statutes cannot be followed out with lazy literalness. They constitute no mathematical rule, and even where the soul is not under the stress of a glazing temptation, that makes the command appear other than it is—even "in the quietness of thought" it is difficult to see what is duty. Besides, the enactments of God cannot cover all special cases, the law would be so voluminous as to be impossible for us to use. We cannot keep the law by keeping the typical action enjoined or forbidden, we must expand the statute, and this requires the exertion of both art and will, and needs to be guided. Besides this, to keep the "way of the statutes" is something more than to keep the statutes. The ceremonial enactments, which are in a



great measure arbitrary, could be perfectly kept as statutes and yet without heart and without faith. They might be to the Jew only the path in which God has ordained that he should tread. But a way is more than a path. The way of God's statutes is the path marked out by God's statutes as used by the Child of God in order to attain an end other and higher than the statutes themselves. Thus a man might go up to the temple at the appointed times and discharge all the appointed dues, walking like Zachariah and Elizabeth in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord, blameless, yet without a higher purpose than merely to obey God's command. He walks in the way, but does not make it his way. He makes the statute a way, when he approaches the temple and uses the rites to rid himself of a sense of guilt and to recover God's favor again, to be filled with all hope for this life and that to come. Not without significance is the omission of the preposition "in." It is not "guide me in the way, but guide me the way." Guide me by way of Thy statutes. "Guide me in the following out of my purposes so that I may follow them out in the line of and by means of Thy statutes." The state of mind of the Psalmist seems to be this. He desires to be spiritual, craves, as some minds do, special and minute cultus, and though on the right path and with a prevailing purpose to follow it to the end, yet fears the force of temptations to turn him aside in momentary deflections which may become permanent ones. He asks for guidance, that God by providential arrangement of circumstances should incline his heart to constant obedience, and, if necessary, hedge his way up, guiding him as a horse with a rein, if it must be. This is not the way of the strong man in Christ, it is the way of weak and tired ones, who walked not as they would, strong in the Lord, but like humble sheep look to their shepherd's steps and are thankful for his rod and crook.

"I will keep it to the end." This is uttered,

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First, with a sense of the natural helplessness of the Psalmist. Looking forward to the long path before him, he feels that the only ground of hope is God's guidance. "I will keep it," is simply future. Granted God's guidance to the end, perseverance to the end will follow.

Second, it may be understood in a covenant sense, and as a resolve. "Guide thou me for Thy part, and I will for my part keep the path to the end, or more than that, will be to the end pressing forward in the path towards the end," for when the path becomes a way to a man, it is more than an ending, an aim. But this covenant resolve is based on the hope manifested by the simple future. On the God who performs His part is based all power to perform ours. The value of the covenant idea is this. If we exert ourselves to do our part, then we bind God as it were to do His—to do what is necessary to be done in order that we may do our part. This paradox is involved in every act of faith. So that the covenant resolve is very like the

Third sense, simple resolution in reliance on the Lord. Guide thou me and then in that strength I will do not one action, but all the long series of actions issuing in the great end.

Verse 34. "Make me understand (it) and I will keep Thy law, and will observe it with a whole heart."

The word law signifies the whole Mosaic Cult—the law of God not as arbitrarily laid down, (statutes), not as guiding (commandments), not as assigning duty (precepts) not as appealing to the moral consciousness (testimonies), or to the sense of dread (judgments), but as suited to the needs of His people; soothing their fears, arousing their hopes and drawing out their affections—restoring the soul. This is perhaps, vague; it might mean understand any or everything; the next clause, however, limits it as is usual in this psalm. Alexander understands law after understand; this is perhaps, too definite to be poetical. The want of regimen is part of the poetical form. A man may under-

stand the law and yet may not have the understanding that will secure his keeping of the law. The understanding asked for here is full understanding, all the knowledge that tends to put a man in due relation to the law: knowledge of God's purpose in giving it, knowledge of one's need of it, the need that others have of it, skill in the law, experimental knowledge of its power to restore the soul. It should not be kept as a mere arbitrary statute after which the heart does not go, but from the heart, as it manifests the loving heart and large purpose of God. Just as the "testimonies" appeal to the moral sense, and to be kept properly should be appreciated by the conscience and obeyed according to the principle lying beneath each, so the law should be kept as remedy, as promise, as a present revelation of God. Then the splendid structure, the awful manifestation, the magnificent ceremonial, the significant rite, fully understood, would secure its own obedience, and with the whole heart it would be observed. Such an understanding as would make obedience attractive is asked for and confidence expressed that it alone would secure perseverance. We have no law in the sense of cult. We are free of the Mosaic law, and yet have been made free only in order that we may in the Spirit build forth from a consciousness of our needs and our aesthetic and social powers a new and perfect cult. If we would only ask to be made to understand the old law of the Jews as it is asked here, and also to understand the various cults of the churches about us; instead of keeping blindly and obstinately as a statute of God our own cult despising or hating that of others, if we would come to God's house with hearts full and eager to meet the Lord; then would our forms of worship transform themselves towards the perfect cult, and we would keep the law in the sense that it is to be kept by us, and all its details would be full of pregnant suggestion to the Ecclesiologists of the future. In this last point of view we see that the want of regimen in "understand" helps to the larger meaning.

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Verse 35. "Make me tread in the path of Thy commandments, for in it do I delight."

The commandments of God, prescribing a certain course of action, mark out a path. This path used as a means of attaining one's end becomes a way, and an excellent way it is, direct, smooth and safe. But the commandments prescribe a course of action pleasant in itself considered, made so by the consciousness that we are obeying Him whom we ought to obey and love; and also by the fact that what we are directed to do is consonant with our better nature, and tends, besides, to throw around us agreeable circumstances by reason of the effects produced on others.

"Flowers laugh before Thee in their beds  
And fragrance in Thy footing treads,"

—Wordsworth's Ode to duty.

Considered merely as a path, without reference to its leading any whither it is pleasant. Both the word "tread" and the etymology of the word translated path, indicating the origin of a path by trampling show that the view, is limited here to the track marked out by the commandments. In this track the child of God desires to be made to walk, and petitions God for more forceful influences than are asked for in verse 33. In the word "guide" some choice or impulse to the right is presupposed; here, in distrust of one's impulses and powers, an appeal is made to God, that He would bring us into the right path, and secure our continuance therein by the use of means that are independent of our choice. This may be done in many ways, for the resources of God are infinite; by hedging up the way, by losses, bereavements, by chastisements, by Judgments. Christians can, in looking back upon their past lives, see how their general purpose in life has been guided in its details unto something different from that they intended. They may often also notice that God sometimes, by some sudden providence

changed their purpose, took away their relish for worldly things, and even earthly things, and made them come into the right path. This petition may be asked by one who is treading with delight the path of the commandments, and who looks to God to secure his continuance therein. But it is mainly and properly the petition of one who is out of the way and, remembering his former delight in it, desires to be set back therein again. It might be asked what more would be needed to impel one to enter the path of the commandments again than the knowledge that so doing would bring delight. But there is a natural sluggishness to be overcome. We are not always willing to pay the price of exertion for that which we know will please us when gained; and then, though reason and remembrance both assures that the course marked out by God will bring pleasure, still it does not seem so to us. The delight of the path is a higher, different kind of delight from that which is present and powerful out of the path; we feel that we would have to be different beings to enjoy the path. Reason may tell one steeped in coarse pleasures, that refined, cultured people enjoy more, and yet, being what he is, the sty pleases him best. The first steps towards the path may be painful, something of force is necessary on God's part to propel us forward. I may be perfectly convinced that the extraction of a tooth might bring me ease, and yet might need something to compel me to have it out. So I might be convinced from past experience that if I were only living on a higher plane, I would take delight in that life, but I am living on a lower plane, and its impulses so sway me that I need some impulse extra to push me forward out of it. It is but tempting God to pray this prayer if we do not strive at all. If we go on to enjoy to the utmost the coarse enjoyments of the lower plane till we are driven by main force to the higher. Indeed we cannot earnestly ask to be made to walk in the right path without some effort to give up the wrong.

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Verse 36. "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to gain."

The word "incline" is remarkable as being the strongest expression yet of the soul's dependence upon God for its motions towards good. The only expression like it is "enlarge my heart" in verse 32. Nothing could mark the age of the psalm more definitely than this does. It must have been at the end of a long national religious experience, by which the soul is forced upon a knowledge of itself, that this petition was uttered. "Heart" here means, not merely the seat of the affections, but the propulsive centre, the seat of cravings, desires, demands. The exact sense in which it is used here is seen by the next clause, which written out fully would be "and do not incline my heart to gain"—cause me not to crave gain. Gain is desired for its own sake, and the petition is that we may be inclined to crave moral purity for its own sake, for our own satisfaction independent of any reward. From the correlation of the clauses it would appear that the petition is at bottom this, "may I not be inclined to prefer gain to Thy testimonies." Now as this is a sinful preference, God cannot be conceived as directly inducing it upon the soul, or He would be the author of the sin; we are bound not to take the word "incline" in the sense of direct working upon the mind to change its states. The petition then would be very like the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, "lead us not into temptation." Place me in such circumstances, deal with me in such a way as shall incline me to prefer Thy testimonies to any gain. This petition we must not understand to be uttered as a general petition, but, in view of some special temptation to prefer gain, or worldly advantage of any kind, to the testimonies of God. In the case of him whom we suppose to be the author of this psalm, there was no lack of temptation of this kind. In a thousand ways he could gain influence and present power, and increase the prospect of his succession to the throne. We see how Absalom used his opportunities, and Solomon

was a far shrewder man. Here in the presence of some opportunity to get advancement at the expense of his conscience; he prays that he may be inclined to hold fast to God's testimonies, not because he thereby acquired a claim on God for deliverance from evils as at verse 22, or for prosperity, as at verse 31, or because it was shrewder to adhere to God's testimonies as at verse 24, for none of these he prays, but that he might be made to feel that his true gain was holiness, and in holiness to rest satisfied. Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies as unto gain.

This petition commends itself to the child of God in all ages. O, that we might be tempted by the testimony! Then would temptation be abolished.

Verse 37. "Turn away my eyes from seeing falsehoods; in Thy ways quicken me."

In verse 29 the psalmist asks that the false and tempting way may be removed from before him. There the false thing remaining, he asks that God would turn his eyes away from it. The word for falsehood is different in significance from that used in verse 29. That signifies something that appears what it is not, this signifies what appears to be something, but is really nothing. There is thus a peculiar fitness in the use of the Hebrew word in verse 29, in connection with the word "way," a way is nothing in itself, its importance consists in what it leads to. The false way is a way that leads to something, but to what is very different from its promise. Here the temptation which the false thing presents is not in what it promises, but in itself—what it appears to be. Wicked aims and pursuits considered on the side of their worthlessness and emptiness, shams of all kinds so often attractive and despotic, are indicated here. Alexander regards the word translated in our version "vanity" to indicate false objects of religious worship, but this use of the word is rare. And besides, not to say that better sense is made by the meaning "nothingness" or "emptiness," we can hardly conceive a man of the stable and contemplative piety

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of the psalmist having any strong temptation to worship other gods. In the case of the young Solomon it is still more unlikely, pious and devoted as we know him to have been, depending for all his earthly support upon the theocratic party in Israel. If we will compare further with verse 29, we shall see there a greater passivity of soul. There, there is no hope of resisting the temptation, and the petition is that the temptation may be removed—it is asked that the object that allures to evil may be taken away and another substituted, one that presenting the true way may obliterate the false one. Here there is more energy. The man that says “turn away my eyes from the temptation” instead of “take it away” contemplates deliverance through activity of his own. No change of objects or circumstances does he desire, but asks that his wrong activity may be taken away; by his being stimulated to a right course of action. “Turn away my eyes from seeing vanity, by making me live in Thy ways.” The ways of God would mean, first His customary acts (Ps. 103:7; Is. 25:9 and Ex. 33), then his dealings with men, Is. 44:5. From this the transition is easy to precepts, either direct or derived from his example (Ps. 119:3) or from knowledge of what pleases him. So the “ways of a mistress” which a good servant ought to learn may be either the directions she gives, her actions, or her wishes and tastes, all these will be a law to the servant who desires truly to serve. So the servant of the Great King strives to walk in “all His ways” and learn them from word and works, precept and acts—the law is in the truth, the lawgiver Himself. “Make me to live in Thy ways” would seem to mean, “let me live in the constant experience of Thy dealings.” Make the empty and pretentious shams that now tempt me, to vanish by bringing me on Thy part within the scope of Thy ways of mercy and love and inclining me to “walk in those ways” by, on my part, doing according to those ways of mercy and love, keeping in them by striving to do nothing that would cast me out of them,



and seeking to conform myself to all the ways of my God, imitating His example and consulting His wishes and inclination in all things. There is in this verse an acknowledgement of the powerful influence of the temptation even when its emptiness is known. Who asks any one to turn his eyes away from anything? Our eyes are under our complete command, but not under the complete command of the reason, a change in the affections and desires is needed for that. This verse also gives a glimpse of perhaps the most melancholy condition of a sinner who is slave to his sin, while knowing it to be profitless; in this condition the psalmist will find himself if God does not help him. We are taught also that the only way to be delivered from the force of a temptation is not to contemplate it—is to shut our eyes to it and also that in such a simple act as turning away one's eyes we should not strive in our own strength, but do it in God. We may learn also that our striving should be not simply to avoid the seeing of any evil thing, but to turn away from it by turning to another and better; to turn away from the pursuit of shadows and the consequent gain of nothing to the pursuit of substance and the gain of blessing.

Verse 38. "Make good to Thy servant Thy word which (Thou hast spoken) to Thy fearers."

"Make good unto Thy servant Thy word which is for Thy fear." "Thy word" means Thy promise, it cannot well mean anything else, and yet even Alexander makes it the promise as annexed to and implied in the commandment. It does not seem to me to have anything to do with the commandments. This interpretation is a remarkable instance of the power of a theory. Simply because an old commentator says, that the law is alluded to in nearly every verse it seems we are bound to make it so by force, when it is manifest that there are many verses in which the law is not alluded to. And this is one of them. Whether the first word is translated "fulfil" or "confirm," it cannot well refer to anything but some promise that God has made to His

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servant. This promise is said to be calculated to promote God's fear. This description would indicate the person to whom the promise was made to be a distinguished man, one whose experiences of God's dealings would be impressive in the community in which he lived. And it strengthens the probability that Solomon was the author of this psalm when we consider that the very making of the promise that assigned him to the throne, was peculiarly "to God's fear." It took the disposition of the throne out of the hands of people and king, and vindicated for the Lord, the political headship over Israel. The fulfilling of the promise in the baffling of so many intrigues, the overthrow of so many splendid aspirants, and above all in the elevation of one young and despised, but trusting in the word of the Lord, would make all feel that God was worth waiting for and looking to. And more than this, Solomon well knew that not for himself was the throne promised him; it was that he might build the temple, perfect the cult of Israel, and reign to the Glory of the Lord. Upon this ground then—that it would promote God's fear—Solomon bases his urgent entreaty that God would soon fulfil His word of promise. But every child of God may make this plea, if he lives manifestly and not secretly a life of trust and service, then the fulfilment of God's promises in his person, will indeed be for God's fear, and will be calculated to win others to trust and reverence, and in his degree he can join in the joyous anticipation of the Church (Ps. 65:2), "O, Thou that hearest prayers, to Thee shall all flesh come." And even though the child of God thinks that he is too obscure to be noticed, yet he may feel that in the great realization of all promises his blessed state shall help to confirm throughout the Universe the honor of God's name. They who would use this glorious argument with God, must see to it that they so live that their prosperity will tend to make God feared, for God's name is often blasphemed on account of the blessings that are granted to the ungodly.

Verse 39. "Turn away my disgrace, which I dread, for Thy judgments (are) good."

From the fact that he dreads the disgrace it would seem not yet to have fallen upon him, and yet it is called "my disgrace"; this would imply that he is already under this reproach. The word "turn away," though it may mean avert more naturally signifies "remove." Perhaps we reach the real meaning, as is so often the case in Sacred Scriptures, by taking both meanings. This would make the verse applicable not only to the case of one who only dreads disgrace, but also to the case of one who suffers under it, and is the fitting petition of him who, enduring present contempt has reason to apprehend still further and greater dishonour. It suits well the young Solomon, little and despised on account of his great pretensions and exposed to become an object of yet greater derision by the turn of events. His momentary lack of faith in his final success may find expression in terms not of the loss, but of the contempt he would then experience. But it may be that Solomon, without doubting of the final result, still prays that during the interval of waiting he may not be exposed to contempt of those around him. Taken in this sense the petition would not misbecome our Blessed Lord, who, though He could not doubt of the end, still suffered keenly under the contempt and reproach inseparable from His humiliation. It well befits the servant of God whether in a moment of despondency he doubts his final triumph or suffers keenly under the reproach that is so often his. The word translated "disgrace" is very strong, all the degrading ideas that gather round the word "exposure" belong to it, public scorn, unbounded derision, with no defence or even hiding place. The second clause is his plea for his petition, that which inspires faith; faith pleads in God's presence. The psalmist regards the ordinary events of his life as an expression of God's judgment. The malice and sneers of enemies, the losses, privations, as also all comforts and joys are God's judgments. And since they are,

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they must manifest His goodness. He has reason to think what impends will be averted, what at present annoys, will be removed, and so cries out to God. This petition may be made by a sinner who dreads public shame on account of his sins which he richly deserves. Turning to the Lord he may ask for pardon and favor, a remission of all earthly penalties, and especially this one of public disgrace. God's acts as Judge are not merely inspired by Justice, but tempered with mercy. And, indeed, mercy is a true part of judgment. It was because Joseph was a just man that he was unwilling to put Mary to an open shame by enforcing the strict penalties of the law. Samuel, although in private he sternly denounced to Saul the rending of the kingdom from him, still regarded (Sam. 15: 30 and 31) his agonized entreaty not to make his disgrace public, and honored him before the elders of Israel, and there is many a man to whom God may not remit the earthly penalty for his sin, who will nevertheless be saved from shame in the eyes of his fellows, because God's judgments are as truly an expression of His goodness as His justice. With still more reason may this prayer be made by the servant of God, who has sinned or made an unhappy mistake, and with how much greater confidence may the servant of God ask to be delivered from shame and derision when it threatens him, because he does his duty. And yet this petition may not always have an earthly answer. There is such a thing permitted, as reproach for the name of Christ (1st Peter 4:14). Our Blessed Master had His last sufferings embittered by scoffing and taunts, and followers of Him—benefactors of their race, servants of the Most High—martyrs of Truth or civilization or liberty, have gone to their death amid derision that covered themselves and their aims, but all the more carefully will God see to it that for their shame they shall have "double." So surely also shall their present shame minister to their future honour that if they could bear the marks of

their disgrace upon their persons forever, it would be forever to them a crown of glory.

Verse 40. "Behold I long for Thy precepts; in Thy righteousness quicken me."

"Behold I long for Thy precepts, make me to live in Thy righteousness." The word translated, "precepts" signifies the law as enjoining duties, commissions, the law in short as it cuts out work for one. The expression "behold" calls special attention to the fact that he does long for them, and either presents the fact as an appeal for pity, or as a claim upon Jehovah to grant him His precepts. Here it would seem to constitute a claim. This probability is strengthened by the expression "in thy righteousness." The psalmist says in substance, "Since I am Thy servant and long to have my work appointed, it seems no more than a righteous thing for Thee to assign to me my work." The word "quicken" would then indicate what he asks for. If he is made to live he would by that have his work assigned. And this will be easy to understand when we consider that the endowment of a particular form of life does of itself assign its possessor to a particular work. Let God only grant the gift and the man will need nothing more to find out his work. It is those who have no decided gifts and tendencies, that find it so hard to know what God requires of them in the way of work. But the word "behold" in the first clause, may not introduce a claim, but merely call attention to a petition, which the second clause states more directly and definitely. "In Thy righteousness" would not mean through Thy righteous acting or dealings, and so "because Thou art righteous," but rather quicken me "into Thy righteousness," quicken so that I may act righteously as Thou actest. If any prayer ought to be made in faith, surely it is this. And it will certainly be answered. Let any one long to have his work assigned by God, and God is bound to grant his desires. Whether it be action or waiting, it will be the thing that will most serve God and his fellow-men.

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God is not bound to make it clear to them that they are doing His work, that is the burden laid upon their faith; they may think themselves woefully misplaced, and chafe their lives long, but they nevertheless serve, if only they long for service.

### VAV.

Verse 41. "And let Thy mercies come (unto) me, oh Jehovah, Thy salvation according to Thy word."

The word translated "mercies" properly signifies "kindness," "favor" without any necessary implication of ill-desert as is inseparable from the word mercy. Yet God's kindness to such as we are implies great forbearance, and it is not therefore without reason that our translators have rendered it often by the word "mercy." The singular would be kindness apart from its exercise, then some great act of kindness; the plural many acts of kindness, therefore little acts, daily ordinary blessing. The use of the plural indicates that the idea of kindness is uppermost here. It is equivalent to "acts of kindness" and implies present need. This is strengthened by the use of the word "salvation" in apposition. These are delivering mercies that he asks for. He is in trouble and asks for those dealings of God towards him, that will from day to day help him. And these favors of God are asked as fulfilling the great promise of salvation. In the case of the young Solomon, the great promise was the promise of the throne, and the favors or kindnesses asked are such partial fulfilments of that promise as he needs day by day. Thus as we have seen before, (verses 25 and 28) he claims of God not only the final realization of His word, but such earnest as shall (verse 25) strengthen and quicken him, and (verse 28) such earnest as shall encourage and cheer, and here such earnest as shall give him credit in the eyes of others, such as shall be indications that he is to be king. This is seen plainly from the next verse. Solomon had doubtless the comforts of a palace. But like the child

of God whose eye is fixed on what is far ahead, he counted the present possession nothing unless it was a means and stepping stone to the future glory. What the special kindnesses were that he desired, we cannot tell. But it doubtless was something that implied public recognition, some recognition by the king, some public employment, something that would give him credit with influential men, some hampering of his rivals, something that would show that God was favoring him as heir apparent and would not allow him to drop into utter obscurity. If we may judge by the position in which Solomon was found upon the occasion of the attempt of Adonijah, this petition was not answered in such a marked way as perhaps he wished. No great party was formed for him, no prominent position assigned to him, no great power intrusted to him. And yet something was undoubtedly done for him, not only to encourage his hopes, but to keep his claims alive before the people. This we have a right to infer from the response of universal acclimation which Jerusalem gave upon the occasion of his first coronation. God would not utterly neglect such a prayer. Christians should in imitation of this prayer avoid separating the present mercies that they desire from the future promised them. Let their lives be so consecrated to God, that, like a perfect work of art, in which the whole is manifested in every part, their daily life in its cravings and necessities may be a striving towards that great final aim, and then they can claim blessings, new every morning and renewed every evening, on the ground that these are earnest, and may be claimed according to the spirit of the promise. For God will not let us wait one single moment, but will at once, as far as possible, partially fulfil what He has given us reason to expect. Not only precious to Him is the hour that gives full redemption to His people, but also the hour of their trial by the way. He tells all their wanderings, He records in His book their every tear. This petition according to its context is very suitable for the Christian who, as Solomon,

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striving for influence and power, as a child of God is discredited in his claim to royalty. He who strives by doctrines or institutions, especially novel doctrines and institutions, to do good to his fellows must often be weakened in spirit and in power to do good by the accusation that he is making a false claim, that he has no right to be heard, that he is against truth, against God. It would apply to a lowly preacher of the Gospel in the presence of hierarchical claims that disown Him. All such may ask and are encouraged to ask for God to set His seal upon them by such favors and successes as will bear witness for them that they are making rightful claims. And let not the thought of their imperfections and sins, nor the difficulties and dangers around, nor their great lack and long waiting dishearten them. God's kindnesses are always mercies and in spite of sins; and are asked of One who is able to save in spite of all danger, and who is faithful to all His promises.

Verse 42. "And (then) I will answer my reviler a word; for I trust in Thy word."

The word translated, "reviler" does not mean one who brings grave accusations, but one who deals in scurrilous abuse. We see then here, the child of God smarting under the vilest opprobrium and eager to be able to retort. In the case of the young Solomon we can easily conceive how hard it must have been to endure in silence the malicious taunts of his rivals and their minions, founded upon his present low position. We can easily comprehend how, while looking forward with unshaken faith to the fulfilment of the last of God's promise to him, he yet would be impatient to realize so much as would enable him to rebut these taunts and revilings, and deliver him from their sting. This is perfectly consistent with unshaken faith, for in the second clause he asserts that the petition is made not because he doubts, but because of the pain suffered from the sneers of others that at the same time he feels to be groundless. It is hard to hear people maliciously reiterating that



we will never attain our hopes and mocking our pretensions. Our Saviour Himself without doubt had a pang added to all His other trials in the mocking to which He was exposed during His last sufferings. The reed and the robe and the "hail" of ridicule were as really painful as the scourge and the cross. His followers may expect to be delivered from some part of this through prayer, but He had silently to endure the extremity of derision throughout the long agony of His dying. And this was all the more painful, because He could not lose His confidence that He was the Son of God and Lord of all. And here faith is a necessary element in the impatience of the psalmist. If he did not trust he would not be so galled. His hope makes the sting to have its venom. Who could feel pain at the taunt that he never could become a mighty king unless there were some prospect of it. Some there are indeed who are so cold and indifferent to the feelings and opinions of others, that they can endure very quietly long waiting and great present obloquy. So it is not with one who loves his fellows, so it is not with the large-hearted child of God. These revilings and malignant accusations may originate with evil men, who delight to hinder all good and the representative of good; but they deceive a better class. They are caught up and reechoed by those who are at heart friends of the truth and who know not what they do when they swell the howl of execration or stand by giving consent even to persecution and death. The petition of this verse may be used by the Christian as including all the evil cutting words they get from opposers among men, but it applies with the greatest force to evil ones of the hidden sphere and especially to Satan. These psalms cannot be properly interpreted unless the relation of the child of God to his spiritual enemies is taken into consideration. The Christian discouraged with the taunts and revilings of Satan may very properly pray for some token of good—some gracious gift that will encourage him and be a sufficient answer to the enemy.

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“Word” in the first clause is not pleonastic; it indicates a special answer to a special accusation, and may also allude to the fact that the special answer is based on a partial fulfillment of the great word of promise to him. This is one of the many instances in the psalms of the enigmatical play upon words.

Verse 43. “And take not out of my mouth (this) word of truth utterly, for in Thy judgments do I hope.”

The equivocal notice in the last verse is continued in this, to get the whole force of which the expression “word of truth” must be left indefinite and not as in our version referred to the word of God. The expression “take not out of my mouth” implies that the “word” still is in his mouth, or was till very lately—that he usually has some answer of the kind indicated, to make to his enemies. It is a little biographic touch and shows the young Solomon during his time of waiting as not silent, but losing no opportunity to make good his claim, and doubtless able heretofore to make a shrewd statement of his case. It is what we would expect of his ability and enhances the difficulty he must have experienced in exercising faith. But now his trials press upon him, some new crop not only causes discouragement but gives occasion for new taunts and discouraging remarks, to say nothing of abuse, and all power to answer seems to be vanishing. This the word “utterly” seems to intimate, and hence the prayer becomes importunate that God would grant that partial realization of His promise that he desires at the present time. He calls it a “word of truth,” that is a true answer, implying that if God should grant him distinguishing favors, it would not only be calculated to impress others, but would be in his case a true indication. The wicked indeed prosper for a while, but that is delusive, and even a snare to them, but the prosperity of the righteous is a solid indication of God’s favor. The word of promise to Solomon was not a promise of spiritual blessings, but of temporal power and glory, so there was the more reason

for his regarding immediate prosperity as a true indication. It may be said also that in the case of one who is to be a king, it would seem necessary to have the throne made ready for him before he ascended. A youth of distinction would add to his prestige and so to his authority when he came to be king. There can be no doubt but that in Old Testament times, God manifested His love and favor to His people by temporal prosperity as an ordinary rule, but the trials of a Joseph and a Job plainly taught them that the rule was not universal. God then, just as in the case of Christians He does now, could consistently with His promises cause His people to want and suffer. This paradox is boldly stated in almost identical expressions in Ps. 105: 19. "Until the time that His word came the saying of Jehovah tried him." The appeal in the latter clause is not to God's promises, but to God's justice, "for Thy judgments have I waited." This fixes the meaning of salvation in verse 41 to deliverance from the oppressions of his enemies. He asks for a punitive exhibition of God's justice. The argument here used with God is this: "I am in such a strait that God seems to me really called on to execute justice, as well as to enhance my standing as to deliver me from distress. The earnest expectation of the child of God is a strong argument with his Heavenly Father. But still he must not insist upon God's doing what is just, instantly or in the particular manner that seems desirable. He may say, "I have waited for Thy judgments, and now it seems full time for Thy interference," but after all it must be a pleading petition as here, "take not utterly out of my mouth," leaving all to God's decision. God sometimes delays His judgments when to our short sight they are righteously and imperatively called for.

Verse 44. "And I will observe Thy law always, unto eternity and perpetuity."

If we make here the word law to mean strictly the Mosaic Cult, we can discern a connection with

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the preceding verses. These "judgments" which he desires, this "salvation" he asks for, was in order to his being advanced to the throne, and his designation to the throne was in order to the fuller development of that "law" which he here promises to observe. That cult which was to take a further step forward towards its full magnificence and nationality through Solomon's reign, was the great means by which Israel was to be united into one nation; and there is little doubt but that one great reason why the accession of Solomon to the throne was dreaded by some, was because they were opposed to that national unity and that perfected worship. The promise and resolve of this verse are in close connection with the preceding. Answer these, my petitions, and then I will observe; that is

1. I will out of gratitude observe.
2. I covenant to observe.
3. Then shall I be able to observe on the throne, I shall be able to honor the law as I could never do while a private person.

But we are leaving out of consideration the extraordinary terms which are used to describe the length of that observance. It is to be throughout all time. How could this be the resolve of a man? It would be convenient here of course, to suppose an ideal speaker (verse 9) the church. But we have elsewhere shown the untenableness of that prosaic hypothesis. Is there not

4. "an equivoque" in the use of the word "observe," meaning both "I will keep on my own path" and also "I will watch over to preserve"; "I will look out for Thy law, and care for it by observances and institutions and especially by the great building of the temple itself, that the care shall be everlasting." "My provident institutions shall watch over the law through the long series of coming years." It is entirely contrary to the lyric form to explain these strong expressions as the utterance of an

ideal speaker. The transition is too harsh and the idea is too much a matter of the fancy. Lyric utterance is very nearly dramatic utterance, and that precludes idealization. The singer speaks in his own person. The poet once having conceived the singer must adhere with perfect consistency to the conception. Such a verse as the ninth and, there are many of the sort, utterly precludes an application to the church. While the supposition that this is the utterance of a young prince who knew that to him was committed the founding (at least execution) and development of institutions that were to conserve the Mosaic Cult, make the supposition of an ideal speaker utterly needless. To such a youth as Solomon the best part of his blessings were his opportunities. It must have been delightful to him to think that he could make such a return to God for His care over him, to provide for the observance of the law throughout the far future. His position was one of peculiar influence, but every child of God has in his degree a like influence, We live not unto ourselves. The father of a family can use these words, if not in their full import, yet with the consciousness that his example and instructions and the habits he may induce upon his children and the customs he may originate will tend, generation after generation, to perpetuate an observance of the law of God like to his. These words may be used by any one who begins any movement for God, who organizes a religious society, or church, or founds an institution of Christian benevolence. While such persons are struggling with difficulties and especially the discredit that almost always attends beginnings, they may plead the far-reaching and long enduring influence that they aim at as a reason why they should have present help to tide them over present difficulties. "Help me now, and I will see to it that thou art honored in coming time by what I am striving to rear." Taking the word in the sense of "observe"—the other branch of the equivocate, the verse may be made the utterance of either Solomon or any child

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of God. The worship of God is an eternal worship, they who "serve the example and shadow of heavenly things" here, will not depart from that worship when they leave this world, but will adore the heavenly realities in Heaven itself.

Verse 45. "And I will walk in a wide place, for Thy precepts have I sought."

In a land like Palestine where paths were so often mere gullies or ravines, down or up which the traveller had to pick his way with constrained step—a wide level plain admitting of smooth and easy paths, must have been an unspeakable relief. The pace of horse or man would be quickened, steps free (see "enlarged" Ps. 18:36) and journeying very rapid. This expression of the psalmist is a strong affirmation of the freedom with which he would act in observing the "law." Well does the authorized version translate "wide place" by "at liberty." Praying, verses 41, 42, 43, for earnestness of the fulfilment of the promise made to him, he, in verses 44, 45, 46, imagines himself in the full realization of the promise and in the kingly position at last. Almost inseparable from the idea of kingship is liberty of action, but he binds himself in the strictest manner and in perpetuity to the "law," a law which made him but the deputy of his God in the kingly office. And yet he says, "I will walk in a wide place." "I will not be obliged to put any constraint on myself. That law in its beautiful ritual, its glorious satisfactions and promises, gives to me all that I can desire as a worship. I am free, perfectly free, when I most strictly obey." Indeed the verse presents one who is cramped and restrained in the present, because he is not free to act out the inclination of his heart in obeying God. Such doubtless was the situation of the young Solomon when he thought of all that work for God's law to which he was appointed, and from which he was withheld. He must hold his tongue, and keep back his hand when the impulse must have been very strong to speak and act. No wonder that he looked forward to the beginning of his

binding service to the law as the beginning of liberty. The reason is not far to seek, it is contained in the correlative clause—"for Thy precepts have I sought." "Precepts" are the commands of God that assign duties, and he who is eager to know the duties that God assigns him, will be free in His service. This seems to be the foundation of his declaration that he will enjoy the largest independence while rendering the closest obedience. The fullest and freest activity of the child of God is only possible through perfect submission to His will, and by desiring not the gratification of self-will, in devising and carrying out plans, but to have our work appointed for us.

Verse 46. "And I will speak of Thy testimonies before Kings, and will not be ashamed."

Here is one of the verses that distinctly shows that the psalmist was heir expectant to a throne. The "testimonies" of God are the moral law. To speak of these before kings is not only to avow this moral law as the guiding principle of his action, but to urge it upon kings as their proper rule of action. This is evidently the language of a prospective king looking forward to the time when he shall be surrounded by fellow kings. These words imply that something of moral courage would be required in order to do this. A private man or an ambassador would have no conceivable reason in acknowledging before a foreign king that his religion was the law of his life. But an eastern king was considered as the source of law. It was part of his royal dignity, to do as he pleased in all things. The constant tendency in the East was to enthrone the monarch as an earthly god, and it was not easy, in the presence of such potentates, to avow oneself as bound by the rules of action that God gives. The throne would appear to most as worth just so much the less. The testimonies of God could not mean the religion—the cult—or decree by Him, for no one could be ashamed of that in those days. The moral directions of God as guiding the life must be referred to here.

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Verse 47. "And I will delight myself in Thy commandments which I love."

"Commandments," guiding law, directions, differing from law (cult), precepts (work assigned), statutes (arbitrary commands, orders), judgments (judicial decisions express or implied), testimonies (moral law). Commandments include all that tells us what to do at the moment—directions, very galling, such would be to a proud king. He might in speaking of God's testimonies before kings appeal to the eternal principles of right, but to be made to stop suddenly in a course of action, or to modify it simply because God wills it, when no other reason for our action can be assigned, would be a very trying thing to a high spirited king. Even where it involved no shame, it would be chafing. But when, as in the case of Saul at Gilgal, it involved waiting like a schoolboy when everything seemed to call for promptitude, and all the people looking to him as king for action—in such a case it must have been to one who did not love God supremely, simply intolerable. In the mood that the young Solomon is now, he looks forward, as to a time of great delight, to the time when he shall honour God by evidently appearing as His servant. O, if God will only grant him a little now to credit him, he will esteem the visible manifest servanthip to God the greatest honor. God's work he will do (verse 44), and it will be just what he will freely choose (verse 45), the holiness, that he prescribes he will urge upon his fellow kings (verse 46), and it will be a daily and hourly delight to be directed by Him in his duty. Well may he say that he loves God's commandments, for not only are they of the greatest service to him, but they bring him into nearer relations with God than any other form of His will. They are like the guiding of a child's steps by the touches of its mother's hand. The spirit of this verse ought to animate a Christian always. And yet, since now we cannot inquire of God, but must receive God's directions from providential circumstances, our



trials are in some respects harder than those of Solomon. Harder because it is harder to say of any one course of action, "thus saith the Lord" and easier, because God's will once known, it requires much less moral courage to go forward. No other gods can be in question now. The difficulty is that we and others doubt whether God does command and that even when the words, literally interpreted, would be clear. How much for example, of the sermon on the mount do we explain away. Nature and men persuade us that God has not spoken.

Verse 48. "And I will raise my hands to Thy commandments which I love, and I will muse of Thy statutes."

This would at first sight appear to be a formula for swearing—an oath to keep God's commandments, but the word used for "hand" is not that proper to the oath. It is the peculiar word for the hand as a container—the hollow hand. It is the number considered as an instrument of action "lift up your hand in the sanctuary." Ps. 134:2. Here hand is used, but it is for the acts of blessing not for petitioning that the hands are lifted up. (Though the real idea of blessing is petition for one, still it is in language use, an act); hand, is used in Ps. 28:2 and 143: 6, evidently in the sense of asking to receive and so probably in Lam. 1: 17; but elsewhere where the hand is said to be lifted up, it is a formula for swearing. Wherever the hands (are said to be spread forth, there is a petition to receive. As Ex. 9:29 and 33—I Kings 8:22 and 38: 54; II Chronicles 6: 12, 13:29, Ezra 9: 5; Is. 1: 15; Jer. 4:31, together with Job 11: 13; Ps. 88: 9 and Lam. 2:19; Ps. 141: 2, where there is undoubtedly a petition for reception. In Ps. 63: 4 the simple text would imply action, but the context reception. In Lam. 3:41 the sense of reception is a proper one—the proper one.

The lifting of the hands then in this verse is in order to receive. The psalmist lifts up his hand to the commandments as the source of benefits to him. He not only

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loves them as proceeding from the God he loves and bringing him into constant communion with Him, but as that from which he constantly receives good. "If ye love me," says the Saviour, "keep My commandments"; this is the spirit of the 47th verse. The spirit of this verse is—"if ye crave good things, keep the commandments as a delightful means of getting them. Lift not your hand to the great and powerful—to your fellows or to nature, seek from the commandments what you want." Self interest wisely followed out would lead us simply to obey the guiding hand of God. Other paths may appear pleasant and to lead to what we desire, but where God leads, there alone is satisfaction, there alone is true gain. But we must not imagine that the mere spirit of shrewdness will enable us to act in this way for our interest. The psalmist adds to the declaration of his intention to seek good from the commandments "which I love." Love must first impel; the consideration of advantage must be an after thought. The reversal of this not only makes a hypocrite; but renders us weak and deceivable in the presence of temptation. The psalmist was no hypocrite; though he sought self, he was first godly, he had that love which is the acme of all policy. The "statute" is the arbitrary command, not near enough or plain enough to be a daily, hourly guide. The love that makes the truest self-seeking to be devotion to the commands, accepts the statutes. And as one gazes at a picture or listens to a piece of music that he cannot appreciate, but which he knows is a masterpiece, so the dark and mysterious decree, which so often comes to him in the course of God's providence is to him who loves God a riddle of wonder, which, when he understands, becomes the guidance that he needs and the source of all profit.

### ZAYIN.

Verse 49. "Remember to Thy servant (Thy) word, because Thou hast made me to hope."

“The common version of the last clause (upon which) is forbidden by the facts that the Hebrew verb is never construed elsewhere with the preposition ‘on’ and that the Hebrew usage requires a different combination (which upon it) to convey the sense supposed.”—Alexander.

It may also be said that this rendering of the last clause would signify that an influence had been exerted upon the psalmist independent of the simple promise, to cause him to depend upon it, which is, to say the least, extremely unlikely. The second clause would also lose the correlative and defining office that it holds throughout the psalm, and become merely an additional and weaker argument urged upon God for the fulfilment of His promise. But used as we have always used it, it fixes the meaning of “word” in the first clause, “remember Thy word,” or perhaps better, as in the revision, “the word.” “What word, what promise might be asked. And the answer would be according to the second clause, “the promise involved in the hopes Thou hast induced in me.” “Remember and fulfil my hopes, for Thou hast caused me to entertain them.” The fact that “word” in the first clause is perfectly indefinite without the definite article or the possessive pronoun increases the probability of this explanation. If this view of the meaning of the verse be correct, then the prayer of the psalmist is based on the principle that God is bound not only by His specific promises, but by all those general encouragements that cause us to form and cherish specific hopes. And why should not this be so since in Him we live and move and have our being and all our innocent hopes are rooted in Him. He has declared that His word of promise is greater than all His name, and yet His works, words and acts—His whole glorious name is a commentary upon the specific promise. It is elevated in significance by the promise, while the promise is rendered more clear and impressive by the broad splendor of God’s name. The two clauses are in strict correlation. It is as if the psalmist had said, “Re-

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member, it is a promise, since Thou hast caused me to hope." God causes us to hope in many ways. He has created us for hope. The healthy soul must hope. The mere bounding impulse of health and youth will fill us with hope. Well, God cannot create a lie, these bright visions and anticipations are not deceptive; they are from God, He causes us to hope in this way—they are conditional promises, and we can appeal to Him to fulfil them. Whatever of hope arises in our minds in considering the abundance, beneficence, order and beauty of nature, is really a promise on the part of God, for He induces it in us. Those solicitations to the imagination in sunset skies, the splendor of opening day, the vault of heaven, or the beauty of the earth's vesture, do not deceive, they lead us to body forth the things that shall be. By these and more than all these high hopes and imaginings is God bound, and to them He will be faithful. We are made in the image of God, and all the hope that can be roused in us by the love, the mercy or the good will to others that we find in ourselves; when we think that God is better than that; all hopes based on just inferences from the course of nature to the end of nature and man, these are caused by God and He will be bound by them. All deductions from specific promises consistent with all that God has revealed of Himself and His purposes, are of the same character. God gives the outline and our imagination if it only keeps in view the whole great word of promise cannot outrun its scope. Solomon was promised the kingdom. But we have no evidence that the great glory of that kingdom was revealed to him. Yet he must have had hopes concerning it, hopes which comforted him in hours of suffering (see next verse), and yet for which he had no specific statement on the part of God. He would draw his conceptions from his own consciousness of ability, his insight into the state of the kingdom, his forecast, his view of what was needed at the time. The very name that God had given him like a piece of purest gold might

be made to extend as gilding to cover a great deal. What visions and hopes of power, usefulness, splendor, and pleasure would not arise in the mind of this young man devoted, indeed, but worldly wise, and fond of what the eye sees and the ear hears. Like a ray of purest light refracted by a prism, the promise takes shape and hue from the character of the person to whom it is made, and in that form he may ask God to fulfil it to him.

Verse 50. "This is my comfort in my affliction for Thy word hath quickened me."

This cannot well refer to anything else than the preceding verse. Hope builds its castle up into the air indeed, but upon the solid foundation of the promise, and feels that it has a valid claim for its realization at the hands of God. And truly this is a comfort, not the promise in bare outline, but filled up and glowing with such hues as the imagination alone can supply. It is comfort in present trouble to be rapt away into bright scenes which we can assure ourselves shall be. The "affliction" spoken of may well have been that arising from hope deferred. He would suffer from the fret and fever of inaction, but more from its palsy influence and seeming death. From that, the promise delivers him. It quickens him. And that does not mean simply that he is thrilled with hope and filled with the delight of confident visions of the joys and triumphs that are to come. Something of action is permitted him in this time of waiting. He can brood over the problems of sovereignty. He can master data, he can plan, and purpose and form himself for the throne. The best work of a man's life is often that which is done before what we call active life has commenced. The work of the root in the earth, and the work of the plant in the air is one and the same. In the previous verse, then, he is bold enough to claim the fulfilment of his hopes at the hands of God, on the ground that they are really God's promises; in this verse he sets forth the special formal promise as the living principle of his hopes. There

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is a double definiteness in the expression used for promise as compared with verse 49. It is "saying" instead of "word," and it has the possessive pronoun "thy" also—"Thy saying." For the significance of "saying" see Ps. 105: 19—God's "word" promised Joseph honor, His saying ordered him fetters and a prison. It is this specific promise that he owns to be the root of all his hopes. With it the whole universe is a mirror to reflect the love of God. With it the poet can look into sunset skies and say "such is that which shall be."

"Come forth, ye old men, look around  
And see to what fair countries ye are bound."

—Wordsworth.

With it all nature is bursting with the great secret of God's loving purpose; without it nature is like ciphers that have lost their numeral, like sunset clouds when the light is withdrawn. What men call the light of nature is for the most part reflected from the Word of God. Once let that go, and the great meaning is lost, and we can read the universe but little better than the brutes. We cannot depend on God's character as revealed through His name, for there are dark and terrible things written there of God. It is the promise, the inexplicable promise, that outrunning the indications of mere nature, gives nature a soul, and makes it instinct with life and love.

Verse 51. "Proud (ones) have derided me greatly; from Thy law I swerve not."

Judging from the correlative clause we should infer that the derision of the proud was on account of his keeping of the law. This would be entirely unsuitable in the mouth of the Church captive at Babylon, or in the mouth of Daniel. The "proud ones" would be foreigners and heathen, and they would never deride adherence to a national religion. It would have no suitability to the case of the youthful David, or even to the case of Jeremiah, for though

we find in the latter days of the history of Judah much worship of false gods, there does not appear to have been any opposition to the worship of Jehovah. The law is to the last a proper thing to be observed. But in the days of the Kingdom of David and Solomon the spirit was different, a political element had become mingled with the religions. The revolt of Jeroboam casts a light back upon the two preceding reigns. No one can possibly think that his revolt was his work alone. Jeroboam was but the ambitious leader who took advantage of a feeling existing against both nationality and the law. Just as truly as the pride and ambition of Solomon's brothers were offended by the designation of a Solomon to the throne, so were tribal pride and ambition offended by the designation of Jerusalem as the civil and religious capital of the nation. It was plainly manifest to all that the law—the cult that was identifying itself more and more with the metropolitan character of Jerusalem—was to be that which should restrain the independence of the tribes, humble their Kedeshes, and merge their greatness in the greatness of the nation. We can easily imagine that the Jeroboam impulse which in the end reft the Kingdom of Solomon in twain, existed then, and that doubt might be entertained whether the national impulse would overcome it or not. Shrewd, worldly wise men might well think it good policy to pander to the secession feeling. Punctilious devotion to the law would be an expression of views upon national policy—a stand taken that his proud enemies—his proud brothers and their adherents, might regard as supremely foolish, and which, notwithstanding, might inspire hate and fear as well. The humble Christian, as well as the young Solomon, have often the hard trial and temptation to undergo of appearing to others and to themselves inefficient simply because they swerve not from the law. In earlier times Joshua the son of Nun "abode in the Tabernacle" and gained prestige and influence—the same is told of Scipio Africanus. In the time of our Lord, pharisaic de-

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votion to the Law won popularity and power, but Solomon could only look for derision in the present. This derision might be a manifestation of violent opposition. And no better weapon could be used against an heir expectant of the throne than derision; to cover him with ignominy, to show him as inefficient, wanting in energy and spirit, might be the very best way to defeat his hopes. But it might also imply temptation: "Proud" ones offering their adherence and help, on condition that he would walk in their "proud" ways—the way of Saul and the nations, and it might be added, in the way of the tribes.

Verse 52. "I have remembered Thy judgments from eternity, Jehovah, and have consoled myself."

This must be connected with the previous verse. His recalling of God's judgments may not be in a vindictive sense, but may have respect to expected deliverances. As the psalmist looks back, he sees that "from eternity," that is throughout the long tract of recorded time, God's judicial inflictions have ever been ready for the help of His suffering servants. In view of that fact he may well wait without anxiety or impatience. Such a survey also consoles by lessening temptation arising either from dread of the proud or any attraction for them. Their power and pride seem mean in view of the judgments of God that overhang them; and all that they can offer worthless. He consoles himself in the third place, in view of the past judgments of God, that by his course of obedient waiting and service, though he may suffer pains and privations and have many anxieties, still he has secured perfect immunity. God's judgments, fearful as they are, are not to be feared by His servants. They should be comforting, since they are not mere exhibitions of feeling, but true judicial decisions, and to be calculated upon. Perhaps a ground of consolation is implied in the name "Jehovah"—God as covenant God of Israel. The review of God's judgments strengthens the impression of His faithfulness to His covenant obligations, and gives a sense



of power in the midst of derision on account of apparent helplessness. "From Eternity"—we cannot do without the past. God is there. In the past we find Him especially as a prayer hearing and answering God. We see His hand busy in men's lives as we cannot in the present. To vividly realize the past is one of the best ways to draw near to God.

Verse 53. "Rage has seized me from wicked (men) abandoning Thy law."

This is one of the verses that show that the real or ideal position of the Psalmist was the Holy Land. "Law" is of course, the Mosaic Cult. To abandon it was not to abandon the worship of Jehovah, but His prescribed forms of worship. Therefore this could not refer to heathen to whom they were not prescribed. It could hardly refer to the people in the Captivity, for they were shut out necessarily from the practice of the Mosaic Cult; and the effect of the Captivity was to make them very strict in observing all the provisions of the law possible to them.

The word translated, "rage" is very strong and can only be justified in the mouth of one who speaks with something of the feeling of a magistrate appointed to coerce evil-doers. This makes it very suitable for the utterance of Solomon. The incipient king so far from being tempted to transgress like Jeroboam and perhaps Absalom, is impatient for the time when he shall be king and able to coerce the transgressors of the law. This feeling may be proper to a private Christian now when he sees men neglecting or marring the worship of God, or moulding rites for evil. He may feel outraged and indignant just so far as the feeling arises from love to God and his fellows and from his sense of duty as member of a selfgoverning body. Authority implies indignation at crime; but let not bigotry or prejudiced adherence to certain accustomed forms feel justified by this. We indeed have a law, but it is not a cult prescribed to us by God, nor by the authority of that impossible abstraction,

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“the Church,” nor by use and wont; it is that which to the enlightened mind and loving heart of Christian men appears best for the present time. The law that we obey must thus change in outward form, but must keep the same relation to the church as a way to come into rapport with the loving God.

Verse 54. “Songs for me have been Thy statutes in the house of my sojournings.”

The word “house” would be entirely inappropriate in the mouth of David—a young man and wandering about, or in the mouth of the Church personified; but would be peculiarly appropriate in the mouth of the young Solomon, living, as is probable, in the palace under some sort of tutelage up to the time of his accession to the throne. ‘House of my sojournings,’ i. e. the house where I sojourn, is an imitation of the phrase ‘land of my sojournings’ which occurs so often in the patriarchal history, Gen. 17: 8, 28: 7, 37: 1.”—Alexander.

This kind of allusion is common in the psalms, and is a regular part of the lyric form used. By this one phrase here the psalmist indicates that he is tried as the patriarchs were, that longed for good is withheld, but is promised and hoped for, and, more than this a consciousness on his part is indicated that his waiting and trials are neither purposeless nor ending on himself but intended to subserve God’s great and loving purposes for the welfare and glory of His people.

During this time of waiting, he not only has the encouragement of hope, but has also matter for triumphant praise. The word “song” is used often for the subject of the song. The Lord is said to be a “song” for His servant. The song of Miriam was the simple recounting of what the Lord had done for Israel. The destruction of Pharaoh might be said to be the “song” of Miriam. The implication that the psalmist has substantial cause for rejoicing is strengthened by the etymology of the word translated “song” which associates it with harvest—the joy of harvest. And

yet that which the psalmist calls "songs" are the "statutes"—the expression of the arbitrary will of God—the farthest removed of all the aspects of God's law from anything like realization of desire. This verse exhibits the psalmist as not only entirely submissive to God's will, but as hoping all good things from the exercise of that will. God did not doubtless show him why He caused him to remain and wait so long in "the house of his "sojournings." It was a statute—an arbitrary and incomprehensible decree. So delighted, however, is he, first to know that it is God's will and not chance or the intrigues of enemies; so sure is he, second, that God tarries not in the performance of His promise, and that His time is the best time, His way the best way; that he rejoices over these privations as if they were joyous fruitions, just as a soldier who confides implicitly in his commander rejoices to execute any movement that is ordered, though on its face it may appear needless or even injurious. To those who thus rejoice in God's statutes, there will arise incidentally many pleasures. They will be relieved of "the weight of chance desires," ambition will be no more their taskmaster, the heart will have leisure and will for the first time understand its own wishes, lowliness will take the place of the two kill-joys, pride and discontent, and the slave of this present evil world will be emancipated. They who by God's decree are made to sojourn in the wilderness will not find it altogether a cheerless place. They will have whatsoever is needed for their sustenance, and they will find besides many pleasant spots in it, and there is "spicy store," as Keble says, to be gathered. But that which most of all makes God's statutes "songs" to those who receive them, is the fact that they bring them into the closest relations with God Himself. They who obey God's statutes, not because "they commend themselves" to their reason or conscience, but simply because God wills them, may well make them "songs," for they have realized a great part of the joy of the redeemed—they are made to possess God.

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And even if the "house of their sojournings" be like the prison of Joseph, it will be no prison to them;  
"Stone walls do not a prison make"

—Lovelace.

or as Madame Guyon says,

"O it is good to soar  
These bolts and bars above  
To Him whom I adore,  
Whose only name is love,  
And in Thy boundless will to find  
The strength, the freedom of the mind."

Verse 55. "I have remembered in the night Thy name, Jehovah, and will observe Thy Law."

Throughout this stanza the situation of the psalmist is the same. He is in the darkness, and yet holding fast his confidence. In verse 49 even the light of a specific promise is not granted him, and yet he hopes; in verse 50 he is suffering, yet comforted; in verse 51 derided by the "proud," and yet swerving not; in verse 52 consoled, but only by remembering God's judgments on evil oppressors; in verse 53 amid great declension zealous, in verse 54 tried with hope deferred, and yet rejoicing in God's sovereign disposal of his lot. Here in verse 55 he observes God's law although the tide is all against him, though he has to struggle against the force of example in his associates and the community, and though there is no present manifestation on the part of God towards His true worshippers of His presence or favor. This is very adroitly expressed by means of two correlative clauses, the first of which has the force and office of a similitude, used however, not as similies usually are, for ornament, or at most for illustration, but as an essential part of the statement. Instead of saying, "I observe Thy law when all the circumstances surrounding are discouraging. Just as in the night I recall the wondrous manifestation Thou hast made of Thyself," he says, "I remember Thy name in the night and observe Thy law." This is Alexander's translation. It

seems to me, however, that the idiom is very often if not always in the psalms a part of the poetic form. By giving the tenses their literal meaning the punctum lyricum is defined—the night behind the worship of the day before—also the verse is made a true *lyrica oratio* instead of a prosaic statement of two correlated facts. Thus “I have remembered in the night Thy name and will observe Thy law.” Thus the lyrical moment is fixed, and the lyrical utterance is simply a resolve to observe the law, the effect of the first clause being merely a setting forth of the circumstances of discouragement under which the resolution was made. The name of God is, of course, all that by which He manifests Himself—words, works, acts, etc., and to constantly realize that name is to have a constant sense of God’s presence and power. Now to realize the psalmist’s position we must conceive him as upon his bed in his dark chamber, for the couch is as closely associated with the night as is the darkness. All the glorious exhibition that God makes of Himself by day through the works of nature is withdrawn, even the starry heavens are shut out from his gaze. Thus he is deprived of what helps him most when he wishes to think of God, and which, when he is not consciously thinking of Him, gives him a latent sense of His presence—lifting him towards the infinitely beautiful and great. He is shut out from human intercourse, from reading the Word of God, events are brought to a stand still, the whole motion and progress of life ceases. God’s usual means of communicating with him are absent, and the poor soul (foolish though it may be to think so), seems shut out from God. The darkness has strange power, too, to quicken fears. The mind is turned in upon itself, upon its sorrows, its dangers, its anxieties. Real dangers, too, approach in the night, crime stalks abroad, diseases of body and mind are aggravated; superstitious terrors also assail, and he who is wakeful in the hours of the night is sometimes as desolate as if alone in a desert even though the first beam of morning light avails to change the

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whole course of his feelings and make him wonder at them. The very mention of night implies a bad night—a night when the spirit was assailed with doubts and discouragements; for it suggests wakefulness from trouble especially, occurring in the connection it does. It is, then, a great thing for the psalmist to say, "I have remembered Thy name in the night," for it was a hard thing to remember God's name then. It was much easier to remember the Devil's name—the power and oppression of his enemies, his sins, weaknesses and errors, his sorrows and anxieties. To remember God's glorious name, the kind acts of God in the past towards him, and the words of truth in which He was revealed in the Scriptures, so as to have a vivid realization of His presence, and power, and readiness to help, that was hard. It may be doubted whether "name" refers to any manifestation of God in the sanctuary, for the temple was not yet built, and the Shekinah glory had not yet appeared (see Ps. 122: 4), but we are warranted in including in it the metropolitan glory of Jerusalem, that dawning prophecy of a better time, which was made complete and brilliant under Solomon, and which, even now, would deeply impress Solomon's imperial mind. Thus it would be with a feeling of hope and increased confidence as heir designate not only to a throne, but to a divinely planned reform and national advance, that he would resolve to keep God's Law. The remembrance of God's acts of delivering mercy as also His acts of punishment, both essential parts of His Holy Name, may well have been the subjects of his meditation during the night watches, and would quicken his morning resolve with gratitude and fear. The feeling had need to be a strong one to enable him to face the opposition to God's law. The tide was against the appointed cult of Jehovah. The day discouraged worship as the night clouded joy. No happy crowds filled the courts of the Lord. He would be obliged to show his devotion in the face of something more than neglect. This is eminently suitable to the

time of the young Solomon when the cult of Israel was dislocated as it was at no other time; the ark on Mt. Zion, the tabernacle and altar of burnt offering at Gibeon, the king worshipping with song on Mt. Zion and sacrificing only on Mt. Moriah, the rest of the people sacrificing at Gibeon, while around Jerusalem were high places for the irregular worship of Jehovah. And yet at this time (Ps. 122:4) Jerusalem was the place of holding the national festivals, doubtless under great protest. (The text Ps. 122:4 goes to show that the name of the Lord was regarded as dwelling at Jerusalem).

Verse 56. "This has been to me, for Thy precepts I have kept."

These words refer evidently to the preceding verse. Alexander condemns as unmeaning the usual interpretation, yet his interpretation is not much better—"This (observance of the law) has come to pass since Thy precepts, etc." "I have manifestly observed Thy law, for I have kept Thy precepts." To say the least, such an utterance seems to be flat and purposeless. The interpretation disregards the distinctive meaning of the word "precepts," which is the title of the law as it assigns our work. Referring then "this" to the preceding verse, the psalmist would seem to say, "the precious privilege of being able, in the night, to realize the presence and power of a loving God, was mine because, during the day I was intent on the service He assigned me." Thoughtless, selfish, careless living is a great burden in the night time, weighing down the spirits, and tending to preclude that trust in God that helps to realize His presence, and is really included in the meaning of the word "remember." He whose remembrance of the Lord during the day stimulates him to assiduous service, will have the priceless privilege of that remembrance of the Lord that gives comfort and joy during the watches of the night. The word "this," may however, refer to the whole stanza for faithful, humble service—the keeping of God's precepts, results in

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the hope, comfort, firmness, consolation, zeal, joy, and sense of God's presence that are spoken of in the preceding verses.

### CHETH.

Verse 57. "My portion, O Jehovah, I have said (is) to keep Thy words."

To translate "my portion is Jehovah," as Hengstenberg and the A. V., gives a richer meaning and is permissible, but, however it may suit the analogy of Ps. 16:5 and Ps. 73:26, does not suit the analogy of Ps. 119, which is wholly on a far lower plane of feeling than that. Not God Himself but what belongs to Him—His law, statutes, precepts, ways, etc., are spoken of. There is not a single expression of love to God in the whole psalm. "Blessed be Thou Jehovah," in the second stanza, is only love by implication, or, perhaps, not personal love at all, but unbounded loyalty and hearty choice of a rightful ruler. Besides, if we translate the first clause, "My portion is Jehovah," and it be allowable to translate the second, "I have said that I will keep Thy words," so startling is the change of person that it might well be asked "whose words"? The fact that there is an address to Jehovah in the second part of the verse, makes it probable that there is a like address in the first. Besides, it may be said that it is a kind of anti-climax to have a simple resolution to keep God's words follow a solemn taking of Jehovah as one's portion. It is entirely in keeping with the selfconscious legal character of this psalm that the psalmist should go no farther in his devotion than the words (commands) of God. Highly religious it is, but there is little of that personal devotedness which is so characteristic of the psalms of David. Still, it is good as far as it goes. An excellent portion it is for any man to keep the words of Jehovah. It is a better provision even for this world, than houses or lands, and better for us than the clue of Ariadne when we come to enter that dark region that lies before us, and which we will soon be called upon to



traverse. The verse shows the servant of God and the shrewd man—Solomon.

Verse 58. "I have sought Thy favor with my whole heart; be gracious to me according to Thy word."

This verse is, of itself, sufficient to prove that the preceding verse cannot be translated, "My portion is Jehovah," or as an address, "O Jehovah, my portion." The latter especially, which would express a very ecstatic feeling of union with God, is quite inconsistent with these words of distance and solicitation which bear some resemblance to the approach of a courtier to a king. It is curious, however, to notice how this character of religious prudence clings to the psalm, no matter how you translate. One might well call it a self-seeking psalm had the phrase not a bad sense. It is certainly self-seeking in the highest and noblest sense. Even if we make the psalmist (in verse 57), address Jehovah as his portion; the very address, though it is ecstatic, is still not self-forgetting, is not love. And even then the analogy of interpretation which we have observed throughout this psalm would further limit this ecstasy and make it not ecstasy over the possession of Jehovah Himself, but His words.

To ask for God's favor implies that His favor is at present withheld. But from the two following verses we learn that there had been backsliding, and this makes it very evident that the verse is a petition for restoration to favor. Even if it should be interpreted independently of the context, it still would indicate a want of God's favor, and, therefore, we may take it as a suitable expression of feeling for the sinner in his first approaches to God, or for the Christian on his return to God after a sinful absence. In such a case all the conditions of successful seeking of God are present.

We must approach God with thorough earnestness, "with all my heart."

We must approach Him simply for His grace.

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There must be no sense of desert. There must be a pleading of the promise.

All these three require faith; indeed, they are but modes of faith. The unreconciled sinner must not feel that there is any need of his earning a right to the promise. If anything is needed to introduce us within the scope of grace, grace becomes no more grace. We must come to God for that which is necessary to enable us to come to God—as in Hart's hymn:

“Ho ye needy, come and welcome,  
God's free bounty glorify;  
True belief, and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us night,  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

A paradox, but a blessed one.

The backsliding Christian must not think that he has forfeited the promise no matter how long or gravely he has sinned.

Anyone who seeks God's favor with all his heart may plead God's promise.

Verse 59. “I have thought on my ways and turned my feet back to Thy testimonies.”

The psalmist hitherto has evidently not been looking closely to his actions. This carelessness may have arisen from great worldly occupations, causing him to forget his duty to God; or, what is more likely in the case of a servant of God, he has been led to feel that there is no need for him to be careful. Such a feeling is often the result of a long course of obedience or of high raised feeling. The habit of doing the things commanded has made it so easy that the man insensibly gets to feel that he may safely commit himself to the care of his good habits, or to the power of his good feelings—his gifts and graces. It would be a delightful thing if this were the method of the Christian life, if we had merely to give way to an impulse within us.

Says Wordsworth:

“Serene will be our days and bright  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light  
And joy its own security.”

But the fact is, these days have not yet come. We have not yet been made perfect, and we are, besides, walking among snares and enemies. We have, however, received the germ of a perfect nature, the beginnings of an impulse which in the end will be a perfect guide, and the life of a Christian ought, even now, to be for the most part a life of impulse, for it ought to be for the most part a life of love. The poet continues insisting on this:

“And blest are they who in the main  
This truth even now do entertain,  
Live in the spirit of this creed,  
Yet find that other strength according to their need.”

“That other strength,” that is the force of watchful obedience to God’s command. The Christian will often need to appeal to this. As well might a mariner commit himself to the winds and the ocean currents without a look at his chart or compass or the stars, as a Christian commit himself to his impulses. No! the true Christian must learn to combine watchfulness, with reliance upon grace working in himself. “Mine eyes are ever turned towards the Lord for He shall pluck my feet from the net.” This combines the two to a certain degree. But one must not regard himself as powerless, and looking to be always lifted out or stimulated forth as by a power external to himself. This is indeed, what the Christian is sometimes brought to; but he is at the perfection of Christian action at once dependent and independent, watchful and impulsive, who looks to God to work mightily in him entirely under the veil of his natural freedom, and rests upon Him in the exercise of his active powers. This is hard to attain—to be as cautious as Gideon, and yet to

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be as trustful as Gideon, when he was at last taught to trust. The temptation is to rely too much upon the portion of grace that is ours already—upon the oil in our lamps, and the result at the best is described by Wordsworth in the further lines:

“I loving freedom and untried,  
No sport of every random gust,  
Yet being to myself a guide,  
Too blindly have reposed my trust.  
Oft when within my heart I heard  
Thy timely mandate, I deferred  
The task imposed from day to day.”

Then comes a line that expresses the very resolution of the verse under consideration:

“But now I Thee would serve more strictly if I may.”

The examination that the psalmist has made of his ways—his customary course of action, has resulted, as it will in most cases result, in the discovery that he was straying from the right path. He must turn back; he must test his actions by the highest principles of holiness laid down in God's testimonies (moral law), for he has been on the verge at least, of doing wrong. In the case of the young prince Solomon we may well imagine that the temptation was something that allured him to grasp at that which was his by promise, but which he ought to have waited for. “All things are yours,” said the apostle, yet we must be content with the abundance of God's house while we are waiting, and not hazard the very promises by our impatience. Ps. 65:4.

Verse 60. “I hastened and delayed not to observe Thy commandments.”

They who find themselves straying out of the path are not without a feeling that they have sinned, for it is sinful to stray. But if they hesitate when once brought to the knowledge that they are straying, they commit a new and greater sin, a sin which is less a sin of ignorance than the other. Such

a hesitation is often because we have but slightly "thought on our ways." It is a difficult thing to weigh and judge our course of action in the presence of blinding habits that are dear, sinful delights that we dislike to part with, sinful pride unwilling to confess that the course we are pursuing is wholly wrong. When the servant of God can say, "my sin is ever before me," then he will be likely to hasten and delay not to observe God's commandments. The word "commandments," which is the name of the law as directive—as pointing out the path, admirably suits the image of the preceding verse of one straying and turning back to the right way. It is one of the little indications of connection in the psalm and of the discriminating use of the names of the law.

The word "observe" would be more poetically rendered "look to." As if the psalmist had said, "Finding that I was going wrong, I immediately looked out for the waymarks that God had placed to guide me." Of course the implication is that the right action followed. No matter how evil or lost our state, if we only look for them, we will be able to find waymarks and be set on our way at once. There is nothing of the paralysis of despair here, no hesitation from hopelessness, no waiting for anything on the part of the psalmist; he simply gives a searching look for God's directions what now to do in his evil case. And there will always be something to do—a course, a career for every one. Even if he is sick and near his end, there is a path for him to tread marked out by God, a life to live for Him, a work to do for Him, if it is only prayer and praise, or simply endurance.

Verse 61. "The bands of wicked men environed me (but) Thy law I did not forget."

It cannot be that this is an isolated utterance; it must continue the account of his experience in his conversion. The wicked men who surrounded him were not so much a peril to him as a temptation. Yet at the same time it might have

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been a threatening temptation, a menace as well as an allurements. "Be our leader in things wicked, or expect loss, expect destruction." Young princes often have temptations of this character. If we understand "law" in the sense of the Mosaic cult, then we must take the temptation to be a promise of support and advancement if only the young Solomon would agree to oppose the political and ecclesiastical plans of his father David, or agree to undo them when king. We can easily understand that the promise to Solomon of the throne and the manifest designation by David would make the young prince a good card for malcontents to play. These wicked men then solicited him not to the indulgence of youthful lusts or any sin of that character, but to go against the law. The statement that he did not forget the law sets forth not only his thankfulness and complacency because that he, even when his steps did a little wander, was saved from utter declension, but also, by implication his present devotion to God's prescribed worship. The temptation must have been a strong one. "Bands" suggest organization, and point, since the latter part of David's reign was peaceful, to political movements. It may be that this sudden and threatening temptation came to Solomon partly because of some attempt he had made to get political strength—to ensure his prospects. The child of God has himself to thank for many an unholy allurements. Had he waited on God, and been simple and patient and hopeful, he would have been untouched. But he thinks to use unholy tools holily, and lo! they aspire to dictate to him and be his masters. But he yields not—will not yield God's Law. He forgets it not. He would gladly have a cabal in his favor, but rather than make the guilty concession requisite, he will remain an isolated youth, without any adherents, but his mother, adorned with the shadow of a future possible crown, but little and despised for all that. Here he was fixed. And he might well have need of all his resolution.

There may be an equivocal in the word "bands"; it may call attention not only to the organized strength of the tempters, but to their power over him. The revised version translates it "cords." The tempters were not only banded together, but had succeeded in binding him. Had he lacked firm principle, or given way to fear, he would have been lost. But when he understood that they required him to give up the law, their power over him was gone. What a blessing in the hour of temptation it is to have something definitely and clearly before the mind that we know is duty, something that we will not concede. There is a great advantage in being able to hold to something prescribed, some institution, some act. They are at a great disadvantage in the hour of temptation who only have general principles, whose views as to institutions and specific acts are unfixed and fluent. It is a good thing to make perfectly clear to ourselves exactly what is our duty. Then we have something fixed upon which to plant ourselves, and the Devil will not be able to swamp us in a discussion of general principles. Good habits, good prejudices, wise obstinacy in adhering to that which is good, for fear that the better offered will not prove better, these are great helps. Still we must keep in mind that a Christian cannot live by prescription, but must be ever forming, ever growing.

Verse 62. "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee on (account of) the judgments of Thy righteousness."

Alexander thinks that there is here in the word used for midnight, an allusion to the midnight destruction of the firstborn at midnight in Egypt at the exodus. If this be so, it would follow that "judgments of Thy righteousness" must mean judicial inflictions. Indeed, from verse 75 we judge that it cannot be otherwise interpreted. The three stanzas, of which this is the first, have for their common subject the partial backsliding of the psalmist and his

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recovery. "The judgments of Thy righteousness," in this verse, must be the same as "Thy judgments which are righteousness" in verse 75, and they are plainly judicial inflictions—simply chastisements; here judgments of deliverance as well as chastisements.

That they are the first is implied in the historical allusion, and such judgments would be eminently suitable to enable him to emerge from the threatening temptations of verse 61. And that they are the latter seems probable since in verse 75 these judgments are personal inflictions, and in verse 65 chastisements are made the means of his recovery from backsliding. It may also be said that judgments on the wicked men (verse 61) would involve judgments on himself since he was in their company and had gone some of the way to meet them. He had sought those by whom he was at last beset. Also it is to be noted that the judgments upon ungodly companions that remove them from us are often the most severe of chastisements and the most mysterious of dispensation to ourselves. But when the due effect is wrought upon us, when the temptation is removed and we think on our ways, and turn back our feet to God's testimonies (verse 59), then no blessing of God is so calculated to call out thankfulness. Here we see it is thankfulness that will not let the psalmist sleep. The remembrance of his peril, the consciousness of his deliverance, go with him to his couch and remain with him during the night watches, and his wonder and praise at midnight are like the wonder and praise of the children of Israel upon another midnight, when, at a stroke, their chains were broken, and the march of deliverance began.

Verse 63. "A fellow I (am) to all that fear Thee and to the keepers of Thy precepts."

There may be in the word "fellow" a reference to the temptation and partial declension through which he has recently passed. As if he had said, "I have withdrawn



myself from the fellowship of those wicked men who surrounded me, and would have led me astray, and have joined myself to the fellowship of God's servants." And we may draw from this the lesson that the most effectual way to deliver ourselves from wicked entanglements, is to join ourselves to the good. It means this, but also more. The recovered backslider does not merely choose fearers of Jehovah for his associates and equals, but all the fearers of God, that is, any one who fears God, whatever his condition of life may be. Pride seems thoroughly mortified in him.

They who truly repent and turn to the Lord will be as much distinguished by lowliness of behavior towards, and loving equal union with all His servants, as by adherence to His law. And thus it is with the psalmist. Does not his mentioning it show that he was likely to be tempted to loftiness of demeanor on account of his high social claims? It certainly seems suited to the circumstances and character of a young prince like Solomon, who was ready enough, as we see by his after history, to assume lofty state and to surround himself with observance and the barriers of close drawn etiquette. The temptation that offered to him power and party promised to gratify this tendency. And this he resolves to cast away when he shrinks from paying the price of apostacy and turns with renewed love to the law of God. He descends eagerly to his position of tutelage and social obscurity, glad and thankful to make persons, nameless and despised, his companions if only they are the servants of his Master.

Verse 64. "Of Thy mercy oh Jehovah, full is the earth; Thy statutes teach me."

"Since Thy mercy fills the whole earth, let it reach to me, enabling me to understand Thy will and obey it."—Alexander. This would make the verse nearly identical with verse 124; the only difference being that here God's

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mercy as creator and governor of the world is appealed to; there, God's mercy as known by experience of His dealings. Verse 124 can mean only this, the regimen compels it. And one cannot call it unsuitable in the mouth of a man newly delivered from backsliding, and newly reconverted to God. We can imagine such a one in the consciousness of ill desert, looking for encouragement to the evidences of God's mercy in all Nature, and invoking the exercise of that mercy towards him, making so clear to him God's will, that the deserts of temptation may have no power hereafter to obscure it and so render him an easy prey. And well may God's mercy be appealed to for this, since one of the evil effects of sin and its just punishment is the loss of simplicity and sincerity of judgment, so that the soul is not only tempted, but puzzled and bewildered in its efforts to discover what is God's will. Deserving to be left in the maze, the soul may still appeal to God's mercy for delivering light. God's way of giving light, however, may be very painful.

More than one feeling may be expressed by these words. It may be that the psalmist strengthens himself in his renewed submission to God, by the thought that He is a merciful God and that what He requires will not be harsh or unnecessary. The statutes of God engraven on the adamantine rock of nature and unalterable, result in beauty, comfort and provident and even tender ministry. The whole earth proclaims that God is merciful. We may then say in sum, that the psalmist has been delivered from temptation by being taught God's statutes and praying that in the future that knowledge may ever be his; and full of the compunction arising from a clearer view of God's requirements, declares his willingness to submit to those commands whatever they may be, comforting himself with the knowledge drawn from the works of God that those commands will be gentle and beneficent.

TEH.

Verse 65. "Good hast Thou done to Thy servant, O Jehovah, according to Thy word."

This stanza continues the general strain of the preceding one. It is with the psalmist a time of chastisement and reform. The first tendency of the soul brought into trial of such a kind is to think that God is against it and is about to punish, that His patience is worn out and the promises ours no longer. Often there is a temptation to think that God is unkind and unjust in His dealings. If the psalmist has had this feeling, it has passed away. Chastisement has had its blessed effect in purging the sight and softening the heart. He is made, through the sharp stroke, to see God's hand in his life, and to recognize it not merely as the hand of a ruler but of one who loves him. He begins to learn the true meaning of the experiences through which he has passed. God has done good and not evil to him, and not only that, but He has been all the while fulfilling His promises to him. It is conceivable that one means that God used to awaken him from his false hopes, and to deliver him from his temptation, was to reveal to him the character of those with whom he was about to join himself. Tempters soon become masters. The prince who is set upon the throne by an intrigue and especially an unhallowed intrigue, is a servant to his supporters. Solomon, had he been lifted to the throne by means of a cabal against the metropolitan and theocratic movement of the reign of David, would have found himself shorn of real power. The failure of Solomon to concede anything to them, the fact that, even when environed by them, he did not forget the law, (verse 61), might have removed the mask and revealed the hidden contempt, imperiousness and malice of these pretended friends. Thus may Solomon well say, when God has spoiled all his plans and brought him into great suffering, "Good hast Thou done," etc. The

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emphatic position of the word "good," and indeed, the whole clause, implies that there had been at first a pang of disappointment, and that what God had done had not appeared good; but his eyes had been opened to behold the "wonders" of God's providential dealings. The application is easy to the case of any child of God who has hoped for gain from worldly associations, and has been delivered from those associations through the contempt and slights he was made to suffer because of his shrinking back from open sin. As the Israelites were taught the nature of heathenism by being made to undergo a heathen yoke, so with him temptation has been transmuted into a scourge and so has revealed its real character. When this takes place well may he exclaim in surprise, "It was then good and not evil that came upon me."

Verse 66. "Goodness of judgment and knowledge teach me, for in Thy commandments I believe."

The preceding verse shows the enlightening effect of discipline. He now prays that he may be permanently endowed with wisdom in this respect. He asks, "Give me insight into Thy dealings that I may know their real character, and not be tempted to hard thoughts of Thee, or even to a momentary sense of desertion and desolation." But the verse may have a wider scope. Indeed it may be said of the verses of this psalm that while commentators have needlessly despaired of finding a connection between them, still they do stand as independent statements and have a larger meaning than is necessitated by the connection. We may therefore understand this as a petition for wisdom in the discharge of the affairs of this life generally. It is worthy of being noted that Solomon's petition to God at Gibeon upon his accession was for "an understanding heart." It behooves the child of God to believe that God's divine guidance may be had in the affairs of life from day to day, and that true prayer for this will be answered not by voice

or vision as they were guided, who of old inquired of the Lord; but by guidance not less real than that which the Israelites enjoyed when the cloud and the fire led them through the desert. This confidence the psalmist expresses in the second clause, "for in Thy commandments"—the law, as directing one's path—"I believe." This is the reason why he asks for "goodness of judgment and knowledge." He believes that God has furnished to him in the "commandments" a sufficient and infallible guidance in the conduct of life. He feels that they are his best policy and that when he holds fast to them, then he is shrewd indeed. The brave command however, would not be enough; it would indeed be little, were not "goodness of judgment" also granted—power to understand and apply. Not servilely nor stupidly must God's "commandments" be received and acted out. Like the rules of an art, they must be received and applied by intuitions that are themselves directive. And this leads to the remark in the last place, that God guides and commands not merely by issuing the direction in so many words. Natural wisdom is the gift of God, and he who uses his natural wisdom lowly and in reliance on God, will have introduced into it a higher wisdom, even a divine, and thus in the exercise of his powers as a man, he becomes an instrument in the hand of the Highest.

Verse 67. "Before I suffered I (was) going astray, and now Thy saying I observe."

The keynote of this stanza together with the preceding and following one is evidently "chastisement and its blessed effects." If we have been correct in our previous exposition, the "going astray" has been by reason of false hopes; and this is corroborated by the fact that his returning and repentance is shown by his observing—looking to—God's "saying"—the word of His promise. Lured by those who had promised him a rapid realization of his expectations,

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he had well nigh turned his hopes away from the promise and based it upon these intriguers, but being made to suffer he now looks alone to the promise of God for hope and encouragement.

Suffering, pure and simple, is often sufficient to call the child of God to himself, for he is made to feel at once the necessity for God's help and the powerlessness of earthly consolation. He has a foretaste of the last result of trusting to the world, and turns to God while it is yet time—to the word of His promise. Much more is this the case, when as often happens, the error gives birth to the chastisement, when they who allure trouble him, or, smitten themselves, involve him in their disaster. Well for the child of God if suffering, that watchful sentinel, warn him in time for him to extricate himself.

Verse 68. "Good (art) Thou and doing good; teach me Thy statutes."

Not "do one good thing more by teaching me Thy statutes." This verse must be interpreted as the 64th was. The first clause is not a plea; it assigns the reason why he asks; not the reason why God should grant. There is something here of the glow of feeling with which in verse 65 he recognizes that what he had thought so bad for him was really good for him, and brought upon him by God in the fulfilment of His gracious promise. Indeed there is even a higher and deeper feeling here. The surprise and gratitude with which he discovers God's goodness in what he thought hardness and severity in verse 58 carries him forward to the realization of the fact that all God's acts everywhere are good and the outcome of a nature that is good, and this is the reason why he desires to be taught God's statutes. Now "statutes" is the law considered as the expression of God's arbitrary will. It is this that the psalmist desires to understand and, of course, strictly to obey. High as is the spirituality of this psalm, it has its limitations.

Here is no utter surrender of his will to God's will, but to God's enactment, His order. At the same time there is more here than the feeling that it would be good for him to know and obey whatever God insists upon. There is something other and higher than this; and, though we may not claim for the psalmist the unreserved devotion characteristic of love, still there is something in such a vision of the divine goodness that draws forth the soul into rapport with the divine greatness—that infinite sum of all being—and gives the soul to know that it is all, that there is nothing beyond; and enables the soul to choose it in the place of all things and repose in God forever.

Verse 69. "Proud (men) have forged a lie against me; I with all (my) heart will keep Thy precepts."

This verse has been understood to refer to the accusations made to the king of Persia against the Jews who were building the Temple (Ezra 4th chapter). No doubt the Jews at that time could make his language their own; but still it does not seem probable that it has direct reference to this. It injures the lyrical character of the piece to make it the utterance of an impersonal church; and besides it further requires a depersonification to make it suit the case of an individual believer. Besides, though pride may have entered as an element into the opposition of the "people of the land" to the Jews, still it never would have occurred to the sufferers to describe that by the sole characteristic of pride which was mainly envy and malignity and hatred of God and His people. But we know that pride, tribal pride and pride of royalty was one of the main obstacles to the theocratic Davidic policy, political and ecclesiastical. By the accession of Solomon, who without doubt had declared his adherence to the new cults, pride would be permanently humbled. Solomon's ambitious brothers would also be well described as proud men. We can easily understand that they as well as the proud chiefs of tribes, would intrigue

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against the expectant heir to the throne. The lie that they would contrive against him might be accusations calculated to poison the mind of David and make him think that this son of his was either planning to gain the throne surreptitiously, or else was intending to overthrow, when on the throne, the institutions that were specially characteristic of his father's reign; while on the other hand, these very men might be representing to the tribes that Solomon would be the very tyrant he was regarded, at the time of the accession of Jereboam. Like accusations were made against our Lord. The Pharisees strove to make Him appear to the people as a truckler to the Romans, whilst to the Romans He was accused of plotting to be king. The psalmist does not propose to make any reply to these accusations made by his enemies, or to engage in any counter-plotting. His hands and heart are full of other business. "Precepts" is the law as assigning work to do. The expression may cast light back upon the first clause. The accusations may have been a misconstruction of some activity of Solomon's, for he could not escape slander whatever course he took. If he held himself aloof from all business, he was inert and wanting in capacity. If he made himself at all busy, he was an intriguer. The response he makes is to go right forward with his work, doing what his hand found to do with all his might. Best and sufficient answer for every child of God to make to slanders which are inevitable, whatever he does or does not do. Wisdom is always justified of her children.

Verse 70. "Fat as grease is their heart; I (in) Thy law delight."

Alexander says: "The connection of the clauses lies in the figurative use of the word "fat" to denote spiritual insensibility." The only place in the Old Testament where "fat" is used directly in this way is Is. 6: 10. The word in the other places when used figuratively, denotes not so



much the spiritual insensibility induced by a satiation with good things, as the evil feelings enkindled by prosperity. It is connected with apostacy, Deut. 31: 20, Rebellion, Job, 15: 27, Deut. 32: 15; Neh. 9: 25; 1st Samuel 2: 29, Pride, Ps. 17:10, 73: 7, Is. 10: 16. And here the persons whose heart is said to be "fat" are called in verse 69 proud. Thus, although spiritual insensibility is involved in the statement and perhaps implied, still the verse is mainly a contrast between the loftiness of these men and the lowliness of the psalmist. It was pride that especially opposed the Davidic cult, which was only the Mosaic cult conserved and developed. Doubtless the service in itself was a humbling one. It was for sinners, and besides the new cult-center appointed by God at the threshing floor of Arannah the Jebusite humbled their tribal pride. And here we have the force of the verse. These "fat" ones are satiated and satisfied—lofty of spirit; they feel rich and increased in goods like the church of Laodicea. They can conceive of no enjoyment out of themselves. They value themselves upon what they have and hold. They do not know what it is to have nothing and yet possess all things. The psalmist is poor in spirit, lowly, delights in obedience to the worship prescribed by God, is a sinner, feels the need of the remedies of the law, delights in the promises of the law, and hopes for the glory of Israel through the law.

Verse 71. "It is good for me that I was made to suffer to the end that I might learn Thy statutes."

It is one of the greatest comforts of Christians under trial to realize that it subserves their present good. This, however, may not always be, one often has to wait a long time before he sees any good resulting to himself; faith is then severely tried. It is not so with the psalmist; and it is noticeable that the good that he owns as conferred through suffering is the knowledge of God's statutes. Instruction is one of the main ends subserved by trial. The direct

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effect of pain and sorrow upon the child of God is to concentrate his attention upon his highest interests. God is often so successfully rivalled by worldly things, that a little suffering, giving a distaste for many allurements, may be regarded as a labor saving expedient in the work of sanctification. Just as a master will stimulate the slow mind of a child sometimes by a sharp tone or a threat not in anger but to assist the child, so God helps to a knowledge of His will by removing those things that obscure the mental and moral sight. Pleasures that have usurped the name of duty and duty to God fall dead as withered leaves, and only eternal obligation remains. Then there is the bringing down of the proud will by suffering, effected perhaps, immediately. Then there is the intimation sometimes conveyed by the trial that one is going wrong, this recalls the man to himself. Then God never melts the will more effectually than by His blessed ministries to us in the valley of humiliation. The willing soul can learn, but the proud soul never reads the open secret.

Verse 72. "Good for me is the law of Thy mouth (more) than thousands of gold and silver."

This comparison of sacred things to gold and silver is peculiarly eastern. Gold and silver were of great importance to them. It is a child-like simile, although it may have reference to the peculiar temptation by which the young Solomon was assailed. It was the shadow of a crown that was held out to him, and with royal dignity was associated, especially in those days, royal wealth. And that something like royal wealth was meant is slightly indicated by the vague but significant phrase, "thousands of silver." "The law of Thy mouth" may mean generally "Thy commands." But the word used is one peculiarly employed for the proper cult of the Jews. We should also note that the Mosaic cult was said to have been spoken by word of mouth to Moses by God. The whole force of

the verse may be this. Better than vast wealth and the power that comes from it, are the ordinances which teach us how to approach Thee and find grace and favor, especially since they were delivered to us directly by Thee."

YODH.

Verse 73. "Thy hands made me and fashioned me; make me understand and let me learn Thy commandments."

Alexander seems to understand this merely as a simile. "As I owe my existence to Thy power, so too, I rely upon Thy grace for spiritual illumination." There must be more than this in it. The first clause may be understood as giving the reason why his petition should be answered. The Creator may well be expected to take care of His creation. He that made the machine may be expected to guide it. He who made man what he is may well be expected to grant those commandments (law directive) that shall guide him in his actions. The second verb means to establish and also to set in order. It is well rendered by "fashioned." The clause may mean, "Thou hast made me a man and hast given me a peculiar constitution, as an individual." The expression, "Thy hand" draws attention not so much to God's power as His contrivance, and connects the psalmist's frame closely with God. This is heightened by the second verb.

The force of the whole is about this: "Thou hast made me, therefore Thou understandest me. Thou knowest what is suited to me. The creator is one with the lawgiver; the law is one with the constitution of man. Make me to understand and learn thoroughly Thy commandments, and then I will act in harmony with my whole being."

Verse 74. "Thy fearers shall see me and rejoice; for in Thy word have I hoped."

This evidently is the language of one whose experience is well known. It is one of the verses that indicate

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the high station of the psalmist. "They shall rejoice in my case as a new proof that they, who trust in God, cannot be disappointed."—Alexander. It means this, and more. The rejoicing would indicate a sharing in the previous trouble and present deliverance. This is not merely a fellow-feeling because he and they are alike servants of God. There must be something more than inference here. Alexander refers to Psalm 34: 2. But the impression is irresistible that there the rejoicing of "the humble" is not because of an inference from his case to theirs but because their cause is the same.

Suppose Solomon to be the author of this psalm, and we can easily see that the true fearers of the Lord would rejoice in his success as their own. His pretensions to the crown were in the direct line of the complete development of the theocracy and his ascension of the throne would secure their prosperity and triumph. The pious young prince may be engaging here that he will see to it that God gets the glory, and that, by this means, encouragement will be given to those who fear the Lord and who, besides, shall then be rewarded. Whether this psalm was written by Solomon or for Solomon, it is the reflex of his lofty position and high hopes. And none the less does it become an humble child of God in these days, who is called by a nobler name than son of David, and has a more affectionate appellation than Jedidiah—beloved of the Lord, who has secured to him not merely by God's promise, but by His oath, a throne grander than the throne to which Solomon aspired. He, too, can feel that he is not alone in his longings and prayers, that his welfare is knitted up with the welfare of the great family of God, the body of Christ. Not only is their triumph his, but his triumph is theirs. For that "multitude that no man can number" would never be able to stand before God ascribing their salvation to Him, if only one, the humblest of all who

have laid hold of Christ, should fail to be there. The salvation of the Lord Himself is no more necessary to His church than is the salvation of the lowliest one who trusts in Him.

Verse 75. "I know Jehovah, that righteous are Thy judgments and (in) faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me (or made me suffer)".

Here, as ever in the psalm, Jehovah—the covenant God, is addressed—an affectionate title used by the psalmist even when he would be naturally tempted to impatience.

"Judgments" here cannot possibly be law. They must be judicial decisions issuing in acts of chastisements. There is not in this place any of the feeling of one despairing or thinking that God is against him. And yet there is something of punishment in His chastisements. Trials are hard to bear, and yet a consciousness that suffering is undeserved, helps to support. There is something noble and dignified in the position of one who endures wrong patiently. But the psalmist has not that support. He acknowledges (what is very hard to acknowledge) that he has deserved the infliction. The trial is a judgment upon him, and a righteous judgment. This he scruples not to say, though there might have been a great deal of injustice on the part of men mixed up with it. Every event is complex; the sufferer is not wholly at fault nor is he wholly innocent. In trial of this kind it is a gracious sign to dwell not on one's innocence, but one's ill desert. From the plural being used, it may be indicated that it required a course of chastisement to bring the psalmist to himself. The plural, however, may be used to express the conclusion to which he had come from considering his individual experience. He is able to see that not only this affliction from which he has suffered, is consistent with God's righteousness, but also, that all God's judgments are righteous. And, painful as it is, there is some relief in knowing that what we suffer is by a judicial

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decision of a righteous God. For then we at least are not the sport of reasonless nature or of men. God has not forgotten us; that thought, the most dreadful that can enter the mind, is banished. Our pains are not wasted if they are punishment. And then we have a right to remember that, if God punishes, He also pardons.

But the psalmist has a right to a pleasanter thought than this. He is able to see that in this judgment which has fallen upon him, God has been not merely just, but faithful to His promises. This is well put in the second clause. They who first acknowledge their ill desert in their afflictions may then have the comfort of seeing and acknowledging that they are not merely just pains and penalties, but also a means which God uses to fulfil to them His precious promises. Christians often fail of this comfort because they fail to acknowledge their sin—not sin in general, that is not hard, but sin in the specific matter in which they are troubled. The way to peace is through brambles. Let Christians note that all God's promises may be summed up in one word—redemption—and that until they are perfectly redeemed they may expect to find sin present in them in every trial. Now the very care and beginning of redemption is the renovation of the heart, and that needs, for the most part, chastisement and discipline, which, though they cannot plant new impulses, yet avail to bring renovation within the sphere of the will and intelligence, and thus help to make a man not only innocent but holy.

Verse 76. "O that Thy loving-kindness might be for my comfort, according to Thy word (saying) to Thy servant."

We lose the force of the preceding verse if we do not consider it a preparation for the petition in this. Here lies the force of the expression "I know." It is as if he had said, "I am well aware; I keep in mind that my present trial is not only just but for my benefit, and yet (verse 76) 'O,

that Thy loving-kindness," etc. Justice is one thing; faithfulness is quite another since it can only be for those who can claim the promises. But God can be a just judge and a faithful promiser, and yet deal very strictly and severely with His children. A faithful surgeon may give a great deal of pain. But they who acknowledge the justice and faithfulness of God may pray for something different from either of these, even God's loving-kindness. God is not like the applier of earthly remedies, who can, perhaps, sugar-coat a pill or sweeten a bitter medicine, but whose power goes only a little way in making pleasant what is needed to heal. He can, if He sees best, bring the soul, in spite of many trespasses, home to Himself by pleasant paths. His children must believe that God cannot be bound to any one course of procedure, that the resources of His contriving love are so great that He has the choice among an infinite variety of means, to produce a given effect. It is not sufficient to acknowledge His justice and faithfulness. Many do so, and then settle themselves down to endure the hard discipline under which justice and faithfulness bring them, when they should remember that God's loving-kindness is as dear to Him as His Justice and faithfulness, and that His dealings are not made perfect until they manifest that also, not only to the believer but to all around. God's loving-kindness is always present in His dealings with His children, but it is not always manifest. Many a parent in love, makes his child to suffer pain. The child of God may realize this through faith; but faith should go farther than this, and pray that God, in the strict exercise of His justice and faithfulness should still make His dealings pleasant to us. We must not make up our minds to rest in our evil case and endure, but lay hold of God, the author of all change, in whom is infinite hope. We should be quiet in nothing but God, and acknowledge the sway of any painfulness or deprivation, no, not for a single moment. We should pray for relief with all confession and thanksgiving,

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and with submission to God's will. Let not the sufferer say, "it will be of no avail." He will get by it, at least, God. Whatever he may be denied, he will have the essence of his petition. God is waiting in many cases, for just this prayer, which so honors His omnipotence, working by love. The psalmist asks that God's loving-kindness may be for his "comfort" not only, as we are to understand, by giving him relief from distress, but by bringing God near in communion with Him, through that very relief. God gives Himself in His gifts. The last clause reveals the spiritual limitations under which the whole psalm was written. It is not as a son, but as a servant, that the psalmist approaches God. It is not in reliance on God Himself, but on His promise, at the same time it honors the promise, as we have seen, by including in it not only the happiness at the end, but comfort and pleasure by the way.

Verse 77. "Let Thy compassions come unto me (or upon me) and I shall live, for Thy law (is) my delight."

In the preceding verse Alexander translates by "mercy". Loving-kindness is better, since "mercy" implies ill desert, and there is no ill desert implied in the word as it is generally used. The psalmist is at peace with God, feels that he is in the hands of a loving Father, whose dealings with him are just and faithful. He does not desire kind dealings on the part of God, for he knows that God's present dealings with him are kind; it is pleasant dealings that he desires. This view is strengthened by the plural (compassions) used here. The psalmist does not ask that God should entertain a feeling of compassion towards him; that he may be secure of, while yet asking for acts of compassion—manifestations of compassion that will be intelligible to his sore heart. "Take pains," he asks "to make the working out of Thy faithful purpose pleasant to me." It is as if a surgeon should be asked to give as little pain as possible. Only in the case of a surgeon, he is bound to do



this—no proper end could be subserved by giving pain that could be avoided. But with God the case is different. There may be reasons why He should make the fulfilling of His promise exquisitely painful to His servant, but, nevertheless, we may pray that it may be otherwise. It was to this infinite power and contrivance of God that our Saviour made appeal when He said, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Not for one moment did our Lord shrink from the discharge of His office as Saviour, but He asked that God might find out a way by which He might discharge the office and yet avoid the agony. Well might the Sinless One pray for that; but, it is permitted, even to one suffering under deserved chastisement (as here the Psalmist) to pray, "Let Thy compassions come unto me, and I shall live." If we consider that he has (verse 75) declared that he regards the very terrors and trials that he has gone through as the means God takes to fulfil His promises, and (verse 76) asks that God's loving-kindness may be for his comfort, here we must interpret "that I may live," not as referring to the preservation of his natural life, but rather to the making of that life full, free, rich. The psalmist does not desire anything that would directly go to make his life such, but only that the pain and trouble which hinder and mar the life that is now his, should be compassionately removed. That this alone is necessary we see by the second clause, "for Thy law is my delight." The law—the cult of Jehovah, the ordinances of approach to God, and worship in His presence; all those symbols and ceremonial that comfort and restore, that warn and enlighten, indeed, we may say all that made the distinctive life of a true Israelite, that is his delight, and what is one's delight, that is his life. But life he cannot fully enjoy while God's chastising hand is heavy upon him, for he asks that his distress may cease in order that he may live. Like the psalmist in Psalm 42, he says, "when shall I come and appear before God"? "for I had gone with the multitude; I went with

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them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day." And now he pleads, "Be gentle with me; let Thy hand rest lightly upon me while Thou art working out Thy kind and righteous will, and then, although I am yet in the house of my sojournings, and have not attained, I shall still have fulness of life, motive for living and scope for activity, for Thy law is my delight—my multitude of pleasures. It furnishes me with occupation, fills me with joy and kindles all hope." We cannot help thinking of Joshua, the son of Nun, who departed not out of the Tabernacle; or of Scipio Africanus, who in the days of his youth was such a devotee. "We shall be satisfied with the abundance of Thy house," says the psalmist (Ps. 65: 5) of the waiting church.

Verse 78. "Shamed be the proud, for falsely have they wronged me; I will muse of Thy precepts."

At first sight there seems to be little or no difference between this verse and the 69th in both clauses, and so there is, if we look only to the "doctrine" involved—if we put the screws to the poetical utterance to express forth some abstract truth or abstract fact as is usually done. The proud are spoken of and their falseness, and the psalmist's devotion to God's precepts; but it should be noticed that the psalmist's trouble in this verse is different from that in verse 69. There he was calumniated, here treacherously injured. The spirit is different. There he made no attempt to check the tide of wrong, but quietly bore it, immersing himself in his duties; here he feels stronger, and denounces shame on the heads of the wrong doers—shame, the most galling thing to the proud man, and that which required the greatest faith on his part to ask for. There he says that he will keep God's precepts, here that he will muse on them. There he gives the lie to slanders by doing his duty. Here the sting of treacherous injury is not keen enough to disturb the calmness of his mind—he muses on God's precepts, he

meditates on the work assigned, plans and contrives. The proud enemies have injured him, but they have no power to degrade him, to disturb the balance of his mind, or for a single instant to prevent his complete absorption in the duties God has laid upon him.

Verse 79. "Let them return to me that fear Thee, and know Thy testimonies."

This is one of the verses that more than hint that the psalmist was of princely dignity. It implies that he had a following—a party, and that circumstances had discouraged them with his prospects. Now, favor with God being restored, full of faith (verse 75), and large petition (verses 76 and 77), defiant and with a little gleam of triumph (verse 78); the feeling in this verse swells higher; and he begins to prepare for the future—to gather up his strength for earthly contest. The paralyzing night of sorrow has passed away, activity begins, hope rises like a rosy dawn as he looks for favor at the hands of men as well as God again. If we have been correct in our previous exposition, the psalmist's trouble arose from the approach to him of proud, self-seeking men, careless of God or His worship. He has had experience of them, and now turns to those who once favored him, and, perhaps were discouraged by his very coquetting with the ambitious and ungodly. He turns to them with hearty choice; with a summons, implying that his cause is their cause and the cause of God; and with a petition to God that He may cause them to come, for all this is implied in the words, "Let them return to me." He is not a man to despise earthly strength, to fold his hands when anything is to be done to further his prospects, but he desires to cooperate now only with those who fear God and know His testimonies—understand, appreciate and practice them. Nothing less than that is full knowledge. He would have to do with holy men alone.

Verse 80. "Let my heart be perfect in Thy statutes, to the end that I may not be shamed."

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This verse is plainly in connection. The dawn of prosperity suggests the dangers of prosperity and the only sure safeguard. Not strong resolution to obey, not habit of obedience, but devotion of the heart. And here the title used for the law is significant. It is "statutes"—the law as the expression of the arbitrary will of God. The law in any other aspect can be liked, in this aspect only can it be loved. For the heart to be perfect in God's statutes means that it should perfectly love God as commanding; and for the heart to be perfect in God as commanding is very nigh to be perfect in love to God. If this had been the state of the psalmist before, he never would have fallen under the power and the pain of temptation. That obedience which is loving obedience, is quick to see—sensitive as an electrometer to the slightest deviation from the path, and is the only thing that will secure from shame.

### KAPH.

Verse 81. "For Thy salvation has my soul fainted; for Thy word have I waited."

In the interpretation of this psalm, two extremes are to be avoided. It will not do, with Hengstenberg and others, to deny all connection between the verses, neither will it do to presume that the connection involves the whole significance of the verses. The verses, even when most closely connected, are, after all, independent utterances. They are very often like round pebbles touching each other, indeed, but only at one point. And as a general thing, connection of feeling is to be looked for rather than connection of thought. And as with the verses, so with the stanzas, only in a greater degree. Indeed, the whole psalm bears marks of having not been composed as a whole, but made up for the most part of isolated utterances arranged upon the principle of association of feeling and sometimes of thought. In the preceding stanza there seemed to be progress of feeling—

trouble and sorrow coming forth into something approaching peace and triumph. Here, the lyric ebb commences. This stanza presents the psalmist in the depths of trouble and sorrow. There is something very touching in the use of the preterite—"my soul has fainted," "I have waited." Of course, the present is included, but the past adds to the burden of the present, the fainting and the waiting have been long. The longing for God's salvation is expressed in terms of the suffering arising from the absence of it. It is a dumb, inarticulate petition like the "groaning" and the "roaring" spoken of in the psalms more than once; and there is something comforting in the thought that such agonies constitute an appeal to God that is heard—God hears the voice of our "roaring." Many are the times when fainting and longing are so mingled that the soul hardly knows whether it prays or not. Let it take comfort, at any rate, God hears its moaning. More especially can it do so when it can say, "for Thy salvation my soul has fainted"; when all other forms of satisfaction fail to satisfy, when putting aside all other promises and offers it waits for the fulfilment of the Word of the Great God. Then its very trials and sorrows redound so much to God's glory to the blessing of others and itself through that very glorifying, that we can easily see how God can make the soul wait and faint while earning greater blessedness when the happy change comes. He does not faint; his soul only faints. There is no giving up on his part, but still he goes through great suffering.

Comparing with the correlative clause, we note that "word" can mean here promise alone. Also we see that the experience of the first clause is not one merely due to the discomforts and pains owing to the absence of God's salvation. It is suffering also, and, perhaps mainly arising from the expectations roused by the promise. Had he not been led to hope for salvation, he could have put up with his present situation better. But the desire awakened and

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the confidence inspired make possible an acute form of suffering, and that is an evidence of trust in God, and may well bring to him deliverance.

Verse 82. "Mine eyes have failed for Thy saying, so that I say, when wilt Thou comfort me."

The first clause may have reference to the injury produced by weeping; but it more probably means the dimness of sight caused by long and eager gazing. Intense scrutiny, even without any emotion, will of itself, prevent sight, a fact well known to astronomers. Combined with emotion and its wearying, disheartening effects, producing languor and inertness, it might well make the eyes fail. The correlative clause strengthens this view. The very form of the expression "so that I said," an infinitive with a preposition, implies that it but expresses in another form the failing of the eyes. My eyes, at first eagerly intent, have become dim and listless, they gaze without beholding, they look without seeing, so that they say for me what my discouraged heart feels, "when wilt Thou comfort me." This question is the utterance of a hope that is almost dying down into despair.

Verse 83. "For I have been like a bottle in the smoke, Thy statutes have I not forgotten."

The bottle of skin used in the East would be serviceable only when soft and flexible. An empty bottle hung up amid the smoke and heat of a chimney would shrivel and blacken, and become stiff, ugly and useless. To a like state has the psalmist been reduced—to shame, ignominy, pain, sorrow and impotence. Alexander says: "The meaning of the last clause is, that, notwithstanding these afflictions, the sufferer has not forgotten God's commandments."

This remark is correct, but fails to bring out the significance of the clause. It seems to be a true correlation. His not forgetting God's statutes was the very cause of his trouble. He might have had an easy time if he had

forgotten them. It was his adherence to God's statutes that placed him in this situation of ignominy and pain.

This verse may not be interpreted independently of the others in the stanza; and the whole stanza sets forth a servant of God, unjustly treated by God's enemies. Now, if we interpret strictly according to the correlation, not only in this verse brought into entire harmony with the others, but the latter clause furnishes the most weighty consolation in trouble as well as the most potent pleading for deliverance from it. When we can feel that we are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are we, says the apostle, and well may our petitioning grow in strength into a claim—a wrestling for release.

One thing he has, in the midst of all his trouble; he knows just what is required of him, for he says, "Thy statutes have I not forgotten." He has no doubt as to what he is to do or what endure, or who gives the command. But his obedience brings him into great distress—he is misconceived, misrepresented, hated, opposed, ridiculed, injured, because he does that which is at the same time agony (perhaps) for him to do. He is like a bottle in the smoke, just as our Lord was—despised and rejected of men. And his only support it may well be is the consciousness that he is only doing God's will. For he is obeying "statutes," "orders," and may not see the reason for them. He may wonder why he is required to do what is plainly laid upon him. Such a wonder lies very near to a dread temptation. But he suffers not himself to shrink back; by main force he drags himself to his dreaded task an astonishment to himself as well as as to those around him. God's order to him may have come through circumstances, or through men, that may make it thrice as bitter and hard. So it was not with our Lord, who knew from the beginning, that He was required to die, but from that He shrank back with unutterable loathing and dread. He, too, was obeying "orders" and His obedience made Him like a

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bottle in the smoke, changed the shouts of "Hosanna" to "Crucify."

Verse 84. "How many (are) the days of Thy servant? When wilt Thou execute upon my persecutors, judgment?"

"The shortness of life is urged as an argument for speedy action."—Alexander. This, of course, is possible. The interrogative may really signify a negative as in 2nd Samuel 19: 34, and it also yields a good sense, a ready sense. There is some objection, however, to this interpretation. There is a touch of wrong about this sense that is suitable to a reply. Barzillai uses this expression as ironical and in reply to what has gone before. The psalm is too earnest and direct for this. Only as a reply can any reason be assigned why the psalmist should not have written, "How few are the days." But the great objection is that it destroys the correlation. There would be, indeed, some relation between the clauses; great trouble may remind a man that he has few days to see good in and make him impatient for deliverance; but this does not amount to a true correlation in which the latter clause adds to the former by limiting it. It seems better to take "how many" in its natural sense. The effect of trouble upon the mind is to make the days appear long and many. "How long" is an oft repeated exclamation in the psalms. Then the sense of the passage would be nearly this: "How many of these wearisome days of service are to be required of me?" "How many," in this sense may be taken in two ways: First, as a question; second, as simply a form of stating that they are many. How many are the days of task and trial allotted to me, when will they have an end?" The writer of this psalm is evidently a young man, and as such would not be likely to think of the shortness of his life, but would be likely to regard his days of painful service as long and many. The sense that we have established, for, "how many" renders the verse a perfect correlation. The first clause ex-



presses the weariness and disgust of the psalmist in his service, and the second states the cause of it. He is persecuted in it; he is persecuted because of it. But there is no vindictiveness in his exclamation against his persecutors. He appeals to God's righteousness as Judge. He "gives place unto wrath," remembering that judgment is God's, and He will repay. The latter clause is half despairing, but only half. Hope is present, even while he desponds.

Verse 85. "Proud (men) dig pits for me which (are) not according to Thy law."

There are two ways of translating this verse. The relative may be either "which" or "who," may be made to refer either to the "pits" or to the "proud." In the one case it would mean that the making of snares for him to be caught in is not in accordance with God's law. This is a good meaning. Giving the word 'law' the sense used throughout the exposition—the Mosaic Cult—we would have here a reference to the precepts that inculcated the kind and fair treatment of one's fellows of the Hebrew race and nation. The mere laying of a trap, is not, in itself, contrary to God's law. A trap may be laid to catch a rogue, of which he would have no right to complain. But there are malicious snares, true temptations, for the purpose of ruining an enemy—a neighbor whom they are bound to love. The word "proud" not only indicates who it is who set the snares, but what kind of snares they set. But what kind of snares would the "proud" dig? Bad men are apt to suspect in another, their own characteristic sin. They are very apt to lay at another's door, falsely, their own sin. And nothing would be so readily suggested as a trap to set for another as that to which their own evil desire prompts them. So the Pharisees, who at heart hated the Roman domination and would gladly have been rid of it, yet tried to trap our Lord into a false position with the empire and make Him out a rebel, and all because their pride of power, and place, and heart was humbled by the mission of our

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Saviour to men. In the case of the young Solomon, we may suppose that these snares were intended to put him in the position of opposing the great Davidic movement, political and ecclesiastical, which must have been exceedingly hated by the proud tribal aristocracy. This view may connect this stanza with the three preceding. The temptation and sinful straying from which we there have his return and conversion, may have consisted in an advance made to him by the "proud" party, which was not sincere, but mainly intended for a trap, which he now sees through. This thing is not without its parallel in the experience of God's children nowadays. The invitation to worldly conformity has often for its object merely the ruin of the tempted one. It is like Balaam's temptation of Israel through the Midianites. It is the readiest way to spike a Christian's guns, to destroy the force of his example, and to put out the light that he is holding forth in this dark world. But "which" of the second clause, may be rendered "who," then the clause would describe the "proud." It may be regarded as a meiosis; "not according to Thy law" would mean "opposed to, adversaries of." This translation, which Maurer, Conant and Barnes prefer, seems to bring this verse more into harmony with the rest, makes it easier to interpret, gives a richer meaning, and confirms the previous exposition as to the character and aims of these "proud" persons. It may be that the equivoque is used here, and that the relative may be either "which" or "who."

Verse 86. "All Thy commandments (are) faithfulness; falsely do they persecute me; help Thou me."

Giving "commandments" its usual meaning of the law as directive, we have this meaning for the first clause. All that which Thou hast commanded for my guidance is calculated to guide me aright. The implication is that he has followed this guidance. If this were not true, there would be no correlation between the clauses. It is also implied in "falsely do they persecute me." The word

translated "pursue" is generally rendered "persecute," but there is nothing in the bare word to imply wrongful treatment, as the word persecute does. And yet persecution it was in fact. Often the wickedest acts of persecution are those veiled in the fair forms of orderly and sincere accusation. The first clause, then, declares the perfect confidence of the psalmist in God's guidance. God is faithful to the promise implied in everything he enjoins. The second clause asserts that their pursuit of him is a sham. First, because it is made treacherously under false pretences of zeal for the Kingdom of God. Second, a sham, because based upon false allegations, his real offense with them being his adherence to duty and his obedience to the commandments of God; third, it is a sham because God's commandments are faithful and will guide him to a good and happy issue, and all that his enemies can do against him will be "in vain"; which last translation is fully warranted, falsehood having, in Hebrew, often an objective, as well as subjective sense, as in English, weak ice that appears strong, may be called "deceitful." The third clause shows how full and rounded is the psalmist's experience, indeed, can only be maintained by another kind of prayer—the prayer of specific position; otherwise the prayer of silence is apt to degenerate into stoicism or a confidence in a fixed state of things, which though established by God is very far from God Himself. That only is true bliss, when the heart is fixed, and confident, and calm, through rapport with an Almighty Person, with whom we are face to face. The psalmist, therefore, does not keep silence, but cries out for help to God. Note, too, that he asks help against those who persecute him—help now. His confidence in God's faithfulness has done more than assure him as to the far off issue, it has set him face to face with a loving Father, and he knows that God not only regards the grand result but will, if it may be, smooth every step of the way of His trusting children towards it. Sometimes it may not be, as in the case of our Lord's prayer in the Garden.

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Verse 87. "They have almost consumed me in the land, and I have not forsaken Thy precepts."

Maurer translates "destroyed down to the ground," that is "utterly." Other versions "in the earth" equivalent to "off the face of the earth." Alexander's is best. The sense seems to be that even in the land of promise he is in danger. "They have made almost every place in the land a place of peril for me." According to this, David would be quite consumed in the land when he was driven out of it, and his son and promised successor may well have felt at times that the "land" was no resting place for him. "And" is equivalent to "and yet." The correlation implies that it was his keeping of God's precepts—his steady adherence to the work given him to do, that caused him to be "almost consumed." Alexander gives the verbs an aorist signification, but the lyric force is best preserved by the perfect definite. The latter clause must not be considered as the bald statement of a fact, but has all the force of a resolve, "I have not," "I do not," "I will not." Many children of God, especially in the past, could make these words their own. The church has, since Pentecost, been the "land"—the home of God's people, and many of whom the world was not worthy, have found the church, to them, as a fiery furnace, and all because they were faithful to their God.

Verse 88. "According to Thy loving kindness quicken me, and I will keep the testimonies of Thy mouth."

The appeal to God's word of promise so often made does not exclude the simple reliance on His loving kindness. Indeed, be it noted that that reliance on God which is merely dependence on His promise is insufficient. There is a reliance on God's promise which is accompanied by aversion from God Himself. This was seen in the Jews who rejected Christ. Our reliance must be on the promise as rooted in the infinite love of God. And our reliance on God's love will be vain if it is not reliance on God Himself—if it does not embrace His other attributes as His wisdom

and justice, as well as His far reaching purposes with reference to others besides ourselves. Indeed, there must be rapport with God, for any true reliance on God. To be merely told, though even in the Bible, that God loves us is not enough, we must have that love revealed in us. We must have enlightened love for God, for the heart has eyes as well as the head (Eph. 1:18).

A sense of ill-desert is very apt to make a child of God rely on His nature rather than His promise. For a promise of God is, in some sense, a covenant, these are conditions to be fulfilled. And it is when the soul feels that it has failed in its part of the covenant and cannot claim the fulfilment of the promise, that it turns from the promise to that which the promise reveals, to the infinite love—to God Himself. Then it finds that He who “will by no means clear the guilty” is the same God who “forgiveth iniquity, transgression and sin.” The sinner who dare not claim the promise dares lay claim to God Himself, and is able to cry out, “Thou art my hiding place,” “Quicken me,” “Give me life,” “Save my life”; this sense is suitable to the case of the psalmist almost consumed in the “land.”

“Quicken” may mean “add to my spiritual life,” “rouse up my soul to higher activity.” This suits the case of every child of God everywhere. The last clause may be considered as the psalmist’s part in a covenant; “save me and I will keep”; or as a condition necessary, “save me in order that I may keep”; or as the response of love, “manifest Thy loving-kindness to me, and I will manifest my love for Thee.” The expression, “testimony of Thy mouth,” suits this interpretation. The reference is to the law of the ten commandments delivered on Sinai by word of mouth. “Thy mouth,” not only points to this, but indicates the character of the obedience—it is a personal devotion to God—it is not obedience to the law of righteousness, but to the word uttered by God.

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### LAMED.

Verse 89. "To eternity, Jehova, Thy word is settled in heaven."

The Heavens not only exhibit the word of promise (Ps. XIX), but have it inwrought into their very constitution. Their order and beauty as well as their beneficent ministry to men arising out of their structure and nature, is a partial realization of the promise. And this is the case "forever"; the hand that God has laid upon chaos He will never take back; what He has done towards making His universe perfect, He will never allow to be undone.

Verse 90. "To generation and generation (is) Thy faithfulness; Thou hast fixed the earth and it stands."

Faithfulness to His word of promise is manifested by the stability of the dry land that rose out of the waters of chaos and by the permanence of those natural laws that make the earth a secure dwelling place for man, and a minister to his wants. This is "unto all generations"—the farthest future of the earth will but exhibit and realize, more and more fully the promise of God.

Verse 91. "For Thy judgments they stand today, for all are Thy servants."

God's "judgments" often minister to the fulfilment of His promises. The Canaanites were cast out that the children of Israel might have a home. The Jews were rejected that the gospel might be preached to the gentiles, and Antichrist is to be destroyed in the day of our Lord's coming that the church may be delivered. The heavens and the earth are here said to be ministering servants to perform His judgments. Thus the stars in their courses, the earth as it turns on its axis, or circles round the sun, all influences from above, all powers and changes below—the whole mighty movement of the universe tends to realize God's promise.

especially because it even tends to destroy wickedness and the wicked.

Verse 92. "Unless Thy law were my delight, then should I perish in my affliction."

The "law" is generally the scheme of salvation revealed to the Jews. In it the word of promise was wrought. The saint, delighting himself in this law, has his faith strengthened so that he endures, when, by reason of afflictions arising from nature or men, he is tempted to believe the nature of things is against him. Nature and men so near to us, and so powerful, make for us a strong temptation. In prosperity we were tempted to rely on them, and in adversity to despair, because of them. Only the constant proclamation of the promise through the law to the Jew and through the word and ordinances to the Christian can keep us without fear.

Verse 93. "To eternity I will not forget Thy precepts, for in them hast Thou quickened me."

Literally "forever I will not forget." The "word" being wrought into the texture of the universe, the precepts were also. That is, they bear such a relation to the universe of things, throughout all its duration, that no change whatever will destroy their significance. They are the law of the saint's life, the means by which God ministers to him, life; and under the new dispensation, they are the indispensable condition of obtaining and holding, that which will last forever,—the new life. Therefore they are to be remembered forever.

Verse 94. "Thine am I, save me, for Thy precepts I have sought."

The soul that waits not for God's precepts to be thundered in its ear, or forced upon its notice, that does not demand to have them stated with a severe exactness,

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which it, with severe exactness, will then obey; but seeks, searches for, and longs to know, God's will; which runs before all expression of God's will in words, and tries to divine what God would have; that soul has as surely as the heavens and earth the word of promise made part of its very constitution, unites itself to the irresistible development towards glory with which heaven and earth are instinct, and in prayer for salvation with imperious wrestling, lays hold on God and says, "Thine am I."

Verse 95. "For me have wicked (men) waited to destroy me; Thy testimonies will I understand."

Destruction threatens from enemies. The way to thwart them and deliver one's self, is not to strive with them or counterplot, but to turn the whole mind to God's testimonies to understand them for the purpose of obeying them. There is safety. So surely do His testimonies, expressing His character, while they tend to make the soul morally like God, also tend to make the soul, like God, invincible and indestructible.

Verse 96. "To all perfection have I seen an end; (but) wide is Thy command."

All earthly law and custom is perfect only in its place and time. Tomorrow the best will be obsolete and even foolish, and even today, carry it but a few miles away from its place, and it will become inapplicable and barbarous. This was especially so in ancient times. If it is less so at the present time, it is because laws and customs are informed with the spirit of that "commandment which is exceeding broad,"—which is wide as the universe, which is fitted to the whole scope of things, and to the last syllable of the history of things; whose "beams are laid in music," set to the secret harmony by which all things move; and which, though the fashion of this world passes away, changes not one jot or tittle. He who holds to it shall not be moved.



MEM.

Verse 97. "How I love Thy law! All the day it is my meditation."

This is the shrewd stanza—the politic stanza. Solomon is called to mind as especially astute of all the kings of Israel. This expression of love for the law and the habit of quiet meditation upon it are peculiar to this psalm and Psalm 1st. Very suited is it to Solomon's position, as a young intelligent prince desiring activity, and yet shut out from it. We may well conceive the delight of young Solomon when here he found exercise for his faculties, comfort, preparation for his future, satisfaction for his scientific mind in the knowledge of the origin of things. In these hours of quiet meditation he found that knowledge of God's great love for the saint, and that communion with God entered into which finds expression in the Song of Songs. And as the word "law" here signifies the whole of Mosaic revelation of grace in history, precepts, instruction, and especially ritual, we may well imagine how these quiet meditations of the future builder of the temple were filled with the vast conceptions of a fuller and more complete worship, and a further revelation of grace to the people through it. Perhaps even then the thought came into his mind, that he was to be in his own royal person, a revelation and prophecy of God's grace to men, a thought that came to its expression in the 72 Psalm.

Verse 98. ("More) than my enemies do Thy commandments make me wise; for to eternity it is mine (or to me)."

But specially does the study of the law delight his shrewd spirit, for it makes him wise to act. His enemies, counting as his enemies his ambitious brethren and their supporters, doubtless thought him inactive and dull of mind because he did not intrigue. But he feels that he knows better than they. And then, (what is particularly intended in this verse), he feels that as far as his enemies' plans are

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directed to ruin him, the best way to thwart them is to keep God's commandments. If he should do as Absalom or Adonijah, he would break at least the fifth command. By adherence to the simple command he would have God for him, and in the end all the power of earth. No doubt but that the holy behaviour of the young Solomon prepared the way for the throne, not only with his father, but with the people. The word for commandments, indicates God's law as directing actions. In the face of one's enemies there is no time to plan. If a plan of action has been made, it cannot provide for all the quick shifting and unexpected turns of the struggle. We need something that will direct unmistakably, instantaneously and strongly isolated actions, and yet have all these actions consistent. Now take the fifth command, how powerful and minute a director of isolated actions must it have been in the case of Solomon. How quickly the "no" must have come to banish a snareful solicitation to do something that would weaken his father's authority and retard that consolidation of the kingdom which so many dreaded, notwithstanding that it would be clothed with the temptation of popularity. Thus Solomon would be wise, for time in being directed by God's law; but the expression "to eternity they are mine." (Alexander) would seem to intimate that Solomon took a "larger view"; forever, can hardly mean "all my life," it may mean my descendants shall sit upon the throne, (for the Sacred Scripture gathers them up in the person of David; why then may they not be in the person of Solomon?) it shall be to then perpetually directive. Or it may mean the results of my obedience last forever, either referring to his being made head of an everlasting line of kings, or else to his enjoying throughout eternity the fruits of his obedience.

Verse 99. "(More) than all my teachers I act wisely, for Thy testimonies (are) a meditation to me."

"Teachers" indicates the young man in his pupilage. As I understand it, he does not compare his actions with

theirs, but asserts that he acts more wisely than they have taught him to act, for he has a wisdom higher than they could impart. "More than all my teachers I act wisely."—Alexander. "Testimonies," that is, the moral law, and well may it be said that knowledge in that law is uncommunicable. One must know it for himself. No teaching can enable one to dispense with meditation. Does not this give the lie to the doctrine of priestly authority in instruction and does it not teach the necessity of private judgment and the rich results of it?

Verse 100. "(More) than old men I understand, because Thy precepts I have kept."

"More than the ancients," or (Alexander) "more than old men," that is, "I am wiser than all the wisdom garnered in the traditions and maxims handed down from old times," or "I am wiser than the shrewdness natural to old age." "Precepts" are the law as it assigns work to be done by us. The experience of the past and the wisdom of age are especially available in the formation of plans of operations. He says, "I have not a large experience, but I have what is better." It is not to be doubted but that Solomon, born king of men as he was, meditated largely and profoundly upon the law as it disclosed the political institutions of Israel, and bodied forth in his constructive imagination from its principles the political institutions of his kingdom that was to be. The wisdom of the Almighty as applied to the problem of governing Israel, was his, in His precepts.

Verse 101. "From every evil path I refrain my feet, to the intent that I may keep Thy word."

The "word" is specially the word of promise to him that he should be king of Israel—a promise not without its implied conditions (2nd Sam. 7: 12, 16) and limitations. He keeps himself pure and holy in order that that promise may be joyfully fulfilled to him. And then especially, he does not attempt to advance himself by ways that are sinful

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or in themselves innocent, are yet wrong because they involve him with wicked men, or entangle him with questionable plans. The word translated, "path" is strictly "direction"; "I do not turn in any evil direction." The psalmist does not represent himself as walking in any path, but as it were standing and resisting solicitations on every side to evil. "I do not turn in an evil direction." Of course, it is not meant to deny that more motives than one impelled him to this course, fear of God, love to God, dislike of what is wrong, etc., but one motive alone is presented here. It is that he may be able to keep God's word—the word of His promise. Now, if we should consider the word translated, "evil path" as meaning merely evil course of conduct, it is very wise in Solomon to act in this way. We not only have no title to the promises when we deliberately indulge in evil, but we cannot lay hold of the promise to the full if we deliberately indulge in sin. The external part of it we may take to ourselves, but not the promise in its real inner meaning and fulness, thus a sinful man may believe that he is going to Heaven, but how little of the promise is he expecting. His very sinful state prevents his desiring and therefore expecting what the promise of heaven holds forth. He cannot keep God's "word." But the word "orch" means "direction," and refers not so much to behaviour as to the deliberate aim and purpose of the mind. Now then, if a man aims at evil, he must give up the good that the promise holds out to him. And if it be said that the good and bad man aim alike at their own welfare, it may be said that a choice of means is in this case a choice of end; a good thing may not be sought in a bad way. And then, besides, the attempt to reconcile evil aim with the keeping hold of the promise may be brought to a *reductio ad absurdum* thus. Every evil way is walked in, in reliance on our own strength, independent of God, and this makes it morally impossible for us to trust in both, we must make our choice. The psalmist has made his.

Verse 102. "From Thy judgments I do not depart, because Thou guidest me."

God's judgments which are, as Alexander well defines, "the external exhibitions of the divine righteousness by word or deed, by precept or punishment," are in the psalms, and especially in this psalm, the deeds of divine justice. In this verse it would yield a good sense to regard them as the divine precepts. The sense would be: "I do not err in the carrying out of Thy precepts, for Thou dost show me how, and dost exert by providential arrangements, various influences upon me to keep me in the right path." But there is no good reason for departing from the natural and common meaning of judgments. Deeds of judgment, either punitive or justifying, are calculated to make a deep impression on the mind. While that impression is strong, a man will be likely to go in accordance with it i. e., avoid that which brings down punishment and follow after what brings reward. But impressions are evanescent, and the most impressible men are often those who soonest "depart" from God's judgments. But he has not departed from God's judgments; this he says, not in self sufficiency, for in the latter clause he attributes his constancy to God. "I have perseverance because Thou has guided me." This may refer to the guiding force of the judgment. It opens the eyes, it points out the way. It not merely awakens feelings of awe, or fear, or joy; it imparts knowledge. Sometimes the only way that God can take, apparently, to instruct His servants in the path they ought to walk in is by judgments on themselves or others (Psalms 19: 11). It is because God has guided me by His judgments that I do not depart from them. The influences of His spirit are needed for this or else the spiritually stupid awakened to awe, terror or remorse, by God's judgments, will soon depart from them. The spiritually stupid may triumph in God's judgments, while failing to make the application to themselves. Many and terrible judgments could the young Solomon in his se-

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clusion and tutelage look out upon. God guided him in the way of His judgments. These terrible and wondrous deeds searched out the thoughts of his heart, and were constant instruction and monition to him, because he was enabled to look upon them in the light of the Spirit.

Verse 103. "How sweet to my palate are Thy sayings, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

The word "sayings" being in the plural had better be interpreted as general, equally—what God says, including all kinds of precepts and all kinds of promises. "The passive form may possibly denote that the psalmist's relish for God's word was not a native, but an acquired taste."—Alexander. In Ps. 19: 10, the figures "sweetness" and "honey" are used with reference to the judgments of God. We might infer from this, that the reference is here to God's judgments, spoken of in the previous verse, as to those monitions that guided him in the way of them. Accepting Alexander's suggestion, we would have these monitions of God, which kept the psalmist ever dwelling near God's judgments, filled with the humiliating sense of them, and walking in the humbling path of them, at first, perhaps, irritating and painful, at last become sweet "as honey" to his mouth.

Verse 104. "From Thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every path of falsehood."

Here again appears the shrewdness that appeared at the first to characterize Solomon. "From Thy precepts," that is from the law as it assigns my work—my duty in life, "I get understanding," that is, I am made practically wise. "Path of falsehood," that is, plans that are plausible, but which must come to naught—impracticable as they are wicked. The law guiding my life, makes me shrewd enough to detect the emptiness of and loath every proposition that would turn my feet astray.

NUN.

Verse 105. "A lantern for my foot is Thy word, and a light for my path."

The paralellism is here very beautiful. In the first clause we have the lamp, or lantern hanging by a cord near the foot, as may be seen now any evening in Florence. In the second clause, we have the light illuminating the pathway. The word translated "path" means the beaten track. There is thus a perfect picture suggested. There is no reference here to the aim of the wayfarer—the direction in which he is going, as e. g., in verses 101 and 104. It rather refers to the various details of life that he is conversant with. We may all be walking in the same direction, our "way" may be the same, yet our paths may be very unlike. As position, means, and office vary, so does the "path" vary, though the way (derek) and the aim (orah) may be the same. But the same "word" (promise) guides all upon these varying paths. The stimulating power of the promise is manifest, its guiding power may not be so clear. And yet it is plain that the soul, full of the hope and expectation of the glorious things that God has promised, is by that, made wise to find its proper path. Its tastes, expectations and demands are raised so high, that it is keenly alive to whatever is inconsistent with their high claims, and quick to shrink back from anything which not merely compromises those claims, but which is not consistent with, and a partial realization of them. They whose souls are filled with these lofty hopes are led aright by a kind of instinct—by their very cravings. It is possible for the immediate aim of every day and hour to be essentially one with the great final aim. The whole work of the world in all its varied aspects may be done in the spirit of one who is assisting in preparing for the coming of the great King. Every moment we may be approaching God, and having some faint foretastes of the final glory, at least through faith. It is not by minute attention to details, and studious questioning

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as to our duty in the details of conduct. It is not said "Thy statutes" or "Thy precepts," are "a lantern, etc.," but Thy word (promise) that we are best guided. Let then the mind be filled with eager desire to move towards the realization of the great promises, that great aim will dominate over all minor aims and unify them. We will walk upon a straight line most surely, not by looking carefully at the line, but by fixing our eyes upon a distant object and walking towards that. The helmsman fixing his eye on the distant harbor light, will with hardly a thought move the rudder so as to guide the ship. So does the far distant hope direct us to the next duty. Many a difficult piece of casuistry would be decided at once if we used the promise instead of the law as a touchstone. The last words of the verse do not form a correlation, but a beautiful parallelism and lifts this verse far above the slavish spirit that reigns in the hymn "Lead Kindly Light." The Christian who is guided by promise and not prescription, not only is guided step by step from within, but may look forward and around by the light of God's word of promise.

Verse 106. "I have sworn and will stand to it to observe the judgments of Thy righteousness."

The oath was a very prominent religious observance in the days of the old dispensation. The Lord swore to Abraham (Gen. 15: 17 and 18) and the symbolical act of the people (1st Sam. 7: 6) were both of the nature of an oath. It pledged themselves, risked all they held dear upon their fidelity. It is the very highest form of resolve to do, or the desire to do, and of a sense that which one ought to do, and of the extreme peril of not doing. It is in this last point of view that there is a beautiful propriety in the phrase "judgments of Thy righteousness." These "judgments" are the moral decisions and condemnation of God with reference to sin, express or implied, in every command that He gives. If the lesson of God's righteous judgments was learned, he would feel that whether he pledged his



existence and happiness upon his fidelity or not, that still it was imperilled if he were unfaithful. The oath in that case would be a mere formal recognition that the way of the transgressor is hard. These words are suitable in the mouth of a prospective king who engages to see to it that God's righteous law shall be respected and hardened transgressors punished. It will suit the ordinary child of God who has, or who is looking forward to power or position of any kind. They engage him to use that power and position, (and who has not some) not for the furtherance of the low and false judgments of this world, but to carry out God's decisions as to what is right. The oath permitted and even enjoined in the Old Dispensation, is discouraged and even forbidden in the New. Since the latter brings us more nearly face to face with God, Christians, constantly in His presence need not make a formal agreement with Him that His attribute of justice shall be exercised without mercy upon them, if they are unfaithful—they know it will. The oath taken by the servant of God under the old economy put him into the same position with regard to God's punishments, that the spiritual worship of the new induces in the Christian at all times, with a great difference, however. The oath excludes from the sphere of mercy. The punishment was conceived as less, but it was inevitable, "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who taketh His name in vain." Whereas it is the duty of a Christian to conceive God's mercy as reaching to the measure of His justice. We are told however that there is "a sin unto death."

Verse 107. "I have been afflicted to extremity; Jehovah quicken me according to Thy word."

The first verb does not merely refer to a mental state, but includes the external trials that tend to bring on mental trouble. So, also, the second verb means more than a mental change, but also an actual deliverance from danger that threatens the psalmist's life. The sense is, "I have been exposed to exceedingly harrowing trials, filled with

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fear and full of danger—trials prolonged and increased till they have become more than I can bear. He is about to sink under them and calls out for his life, "Quicken me. There is danger that I die, Thou has promised." "Man's extremity is God's opportunity, "often because only in extremity will the man turn to God. Only when he sees no help on earth will he lift his eyes "to the hills." Christian lay long in Giant Despair's dungeon and suffered much, before he pulled the golden key promise out of his bosom. Blessed is this direct application to God aside from the use of means. But still more blessed is it, to use means in utter dependence on God. Indolence ought not to masquerade as faith. Still when all means fail, even though through our guilty neglect, let us confess the sin, and plead the promise in sure hope that we shall be heard.

Verse 108. "The free will offerings of my mouth, accept I pray Thee, O Jehovah, and Thy judgments teach me."

Free will offerings are sacrifices, neither prescribed by God nor dictated by a sense of duty. They were expressive of thankfulness and praise and devotion, a desire for God's society. The private festivities of ancient Israel were generally of this character. "Free will offerings of the mouth" were spontaneous utterances of thanksgiving and praise. It might seem to detract from the spontaneous character of these utterances, that they are called sacrifices. And indeed the expression is one of the many marks in this psalm that indicate a lower tone of spirituality than the naive lyric outpourings of David. But though the tone is lower, it is one of true spirituality and the service is doubtless acceptable. We have one here, whose impulse to praise and thanksgiving is not quite self-forgetting. There is a consciousness that such utterances are pleasing to God and a tender desire to please Him by them. And so he takes these praises and thanks, as it were in his hands, and lifts them up in the very uttering of them to God. The most

striking manifestation of this attitude of the soul of the Old Testament is in Hosea 14: 2, in the expression, "calves of our lips" and of the New Testament in Hebrews 13: 15, "sacrifice of praise—fruit of our lips." This calling of devout utterances, sacrifices, was not a mere figure of speech, such speech was of the very essence of sacrifice, for it was the manifestation of devotion to God. The more ritual sacrifice was not the sacrifice ordained by God as is shown in Jer. 7: 22 and 23 in expressions amazingly strong and even paradoxical. And the verse is one of the many places in the Old Testament in which the gradual revelation of the true nature of sacrifices was made, foreshowing that time when God, desiring no longer the sacrifices of beasts, sent Him on the earth who became a living sacrifice and in whom we may all become living sacrifices and offer priestly service to God with the sum of all our rational and emotional powers. Ps. 40: 6, 7 and 8, Rom. 12: 1. From his regarding the utterance of his praises and thanksgivings as sacrifices, flows naturally the earnest entreaty, "accept I pray Thee, O Jehovah." When we offer anything to God we must consider whether it is worthy, and these words disclose his sense of inadequacy and faultiness of his praises and thanksgivings. It is a gracious act on the part of God to accept them. This petition is enforced and illustrated by the correlative clause "teach me Thy judgments." Some of the most offensive things that have ever been offered to God are praises and thanksgivings. Witness the Te Deums for the massacre of St. Bartholemew, and for the auto de Fes that have disgraced Spain. And so it is often in the affairs of individual Christians, and the church, God is often praised and thanked for successes attained by means that He cannot approve of. Well does the 8th verse of this psalm say, "I will thank Thee with rectitude of heart when I have learned Thy righteous judgments." Our praises and thanksgivings may well halt, till we have learned God's opinion of the matter. This verse

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has something for the lowly soul which is sometimes cast down at the thought that it has so little to offer to God. Let such a one remember that in the 50th Psalm God, while speaking scornfully of costly sacrifices, which are merely the offering of slain beasts, shows that He does desire and prize the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Let him be sure that his praises and thanks inadequate and faulty though they may be are in God's sight precious and of more worth than the hecatombs of kings.

Verse 109. "My soul is in my hand always, and (yet) Thy law have I not forgotten."

That is he is always in peril of death. There was not a moment of rest or peace. This verse must not be taken as a mere setting forth of what has been, a simple narration of the facts as regards his situation and conduct. We must consider such statements as we have elsewhere had occasion to do, rather as a lofty profession and resolve. In the midst of these perils I have not forgotten, do not, will not forget Thy law—the rites and ceremonies of approach, intercourse and expiation, that thou hast ordained this cult given in the wilderness to the children of Israel, long in abeyance and half forgotten, was rapidly coming to the fore under David, greatly to the disgust of the tribes who saw in it the curb to their independence and the downfall of their pride. These "proud" ones must have felt an intenser hate towards the heir presumptive as they gazed upon the rising metropolis which was to be his capital and watched the preparations for the temple he was to build. It was not wonderful if every day should have its peril for him. Yet he says, "these dangers shall not preoccupy my mind, nor prevent my being drawn by the remembered delight, and filled by a sense of the beauty of the law. I shall not be frightened out of acts of devotion, or the advocacy of the great forward movement inaugurated by my Father." Alexander says, "Yet Thy law I have not forgotten." This is too prosaic and limits the connection

of the clauses to the difficulty of keeping the law in remembrance in times of great and continued peril. It is more lyric to leave the connection vague. "And," should have the force of meanwhile, and the whole verse should set forth not merely that he adhered to the law in spite of danger that threatened him on that account, but also that the law was his comfort in the midst of danger whatever. Strictly analogous to this is the case of Daniel calmly continuing his private worship, although he knew the king's decree had been signed, or of the early Christians persisting in assembling for prayer and praise, and the breaking of bread in the face of appalling dangers or of the Scotch Covenanters, gathering for worship in the recesses of the hills, and also of any private Christian nowadays, who, though he may not be in danger of life, if he boldly professes his faith, is still in danger of loss.

Verse 110. "Wicked (men) have laid a snare for me, and yet from Thy precepts I have not strayed."

The snare may be hidden in the path that the psalmist treads the way of God's precepts, or may be a snare meant to allure him from that way, or a snare to frighten him from that way. But whether it is a concealed danger or an open temptation daunting or alluring the psalmist goes on in the way of God's precepts, that is the discharge of the duties God has assigned him for that is the force of the word "precepts." Here again "yet" is narrowing as used by Alexander to connect the clauses. The psalmist walks in the way of God's precepts not merely in spite of the snare. But finds in God's precepts the very clue he needs to guide him through the labyrinth of the snares of the wicked. "They lay their snares to catch me. I hug myself with the thought, that I have in God's precepts that which will ever deliver." "Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good." "That through which they seek to take me is that very thing which makes me safe and also secure." So Daniel, by his ad-

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herence to the law of his Lord was delivered, when "occasion" was found against him "concerning" the law of his Lord. When will Christians learn that in times of danger and perplexity the best policy is simply to do one's duty.

Verse 111. "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart."

The three stanzas, Lamed, Mem and Nun, have for their special subject, the praise of God's revealed will in its aspects of prescribing duty and giving assurance of future good—precept and promise. This verse is a strong expression of regard for the moral law—God's testimonies. We still see in it the prudence of a man who has regard for his own interests in the highest sense. He takes God's testimonies as a valuable possession. But this is simply the form, as to substance the verse unmistakably expresses the deepest spiritual sympathy for the commandments, witnessing to God's holiness and prescribed to His creatures under awful sanctions and terrors. This is brought out clearly by the correlative, limiting clause, "for they are the rejoicing of my heart." In verse 14 the psalmist rejoices in the obeying of the commandments because it is wealth. It is that wisdom whose price is "above rubies"—invaluable for this life as well as that which is to come. When we put together what we escape by means of it, and what we gain by means of it, well may it be said "man knoweth not the price thereof" (Job 28: 13). Here, God's testimonies which have been enjoined on him, are not merely submitted to, but regarded as a valuable possession, because they in themselves delight him. And what is more calculated to excite joy in the devout heart than the fact of the imposition of the moral law upon His creatures by God. How it enhances the dignity of man, when He, the work of whose fingers are the very heavens, "visits" him not merely to do him physical good, but to reveal His own character to its depths and say to him, "Be like unto me." Consider too, what a beneficent purpose is revealed by God in those

commands. His imposing them implies that He would see to it that they were obeyed. He foresaw the inevitable failure to obey, and long before the giving of the law, gave a promise that foreshadowed all the means and apparatus of redemption. Consider the laws of the first table and mark God's desire to have man know and love Him—His desire for communion with Him on the part of His creatures. The very thought is a fount of joy. Consider the laws of the second table and note God's purpose to make this world a happy one, for happy would we all be if they were kept. These ten "words" are ten joys, and joy is more precious than gold or lands. No wonder that the psalmist takes them as his sole and sufficient possession. And not for himself alone; it is a heritage for ever. It is for his children after him.

"Our lips shall teach them to our sons,  
And they again to theirs,  
That generations yet unborn  
May teach them to their heirs."

Some things grow old fashioned, but God's testimonies never, it is a fashion forever exhaustless by time or eternity. If God's testimonies were a precious heritage to the psalmist and are to us, how precious our better heritage, even He who is God's testimonies embodied, who is at once Life, Law and Light and who is our eternal possession and joy.

Verse 112. "I have inclined my heart to do Thy statutes to eternity, (even to) the end."

The English word that perhaps best represents the active Hebrew word that is translated "inclined" is "bent." "I have bent my heart to do Thy statutes." At once we feel that there is something strange about this. It is natural to say "I have bent myself," "I have bent my energies" for that means merely I have guided my active impulses in a certain direction. But this statement of the verse is quite

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different. Here the heart, the source of active impulses, is said to be bent. It is as if the volition got behind the inclination and pushed it—laid it under constraint, which would destroy the very nature of "inclination." And undoubtedly this cannot be directly done, the emotional nature is not under the control of the conscious act of will. But indirectly we have the control of our active powers. We can bend our lazy energies upon any object, by pouring in upon them, streams of quickening influence from our living heart, and so the dull and lazy heart can be roused; however dull and dead we may be. We can deliberately place ourselves under enlightening and stimulating influences. We can seek the society, we can put ourselves in the way of utterances that will tend to rouse the sluggish soul. But especially is it in the doing of congruous acts of obedience, those acts that we cannot do without another heart to do them with, in the very doing of these acts, we receive the stimulus necessary to the doing of them. It must be no mere trying to do; that will not bring the blessing. We must actually will to do and that, by the very constitution of our nature. we cannot do unless we are conscious of sufficient power. And being conscious only of our weakness, we can only will to do in the faith that God will work with us. So it was with the man with the withered hand, he willed in Christ to stretch forth his hand, and forth it came. So it was with the palsied man. He must rise in order to be able to rise and he could not will to rise without the fullest confidence that He who commanded him to rise would enable him. This is the paradox of faith. Hart says in his matchless hymn, that we must go to Christ in order to get the grace that is absolutely necessary to enable us to go to Him.

“True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh,  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”



Let anyone in this spirit set about stimulating his dull and languid heart. Though the limbs are as lead, though he does not seem to desire what he petitions for, still let him set about in faith, in Christ, working the works of Christ and it will end in his being occupied, interested, and finally carried away. How soon "I have bent" becomes "I am bent," resolve transforming itself into tendency and tendency into passionate devotion. The psalmist seems to have arrived at this. He makes no chary resolve. It is not for a time, but forever that he will serve God. The bondage is to be eternal. He has not merely bent his hands, his feet, or his brain, but his very heart. He is upheld by a "willing spirit" (Ps. 51: 10). And what but an eternal service is worthy of God, and what can render any eternal service tolerable but that devotion of the heart that will make it perfect freedom.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage."

In taking God's testimonies (moral law) for a "heritage forever" verse 3, the psalmist is binding himself to something, that he approves, appreciates and likes. For we cannot keep the moral law unless it comes home to our sense of justice and purity. But here in binding himself to God's arbitrary commands (statutes) he binds himself to God as His servant to eternity. This verse comes nearer to David's expressions of devotion than any other. But it is not quite up to them. It is not God's loving one who speaks, but God's devoted servant.

We cannot but contrast this verse with the prayers we often hear in church and prayer meeting; which seem well nigh to disavow any responsibility on our part for our feelings. "May we praise," "may we pray." We need to be sure, divine influence to enable us to praise and pray aright, but we deceive ourselves often, and fail to realize that we are responsible in a great measure for the state

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of our hearts. We should rouse ourselves up to say with the psalmist, "I have bent," "I bend," "I will bend," my heart to do Thy statutes to eternity.

### SAMECH.

We regret to say that Mr. King's work on the eight verses under this letter is lost, and all the editor can now do is to give his own views in addition to the invaluable words of Alexander which we quote.

Verse 113. "Waverers I hate, and Thy law I love."

"The first word in Hebrew occurs only here. According to the most probable etymology, it means men of divided and unstable minds. See above, on Ps. 12: 3, (2), and compare James 1: 8."—Alexander.

The variorum Bible gives this rendering: "I hate them that are of a double mind."

Paraphrasing, we might put the following in the mouth of the psalmist. Jehovah Thy law reveals Thy perfections, and because perfections cannot be lessened or increased, Thy law has, like Thyself, a rock-like unswerving stability which commands my admiration and love, and through grace, in turn imparts to me a measure of that strength and fixedness of purpose like Thine own in kind. Therefore do I hate the fickleness of the disobedient, who at one moment commend Thy law, and the next despise and break it.

Verse 114. "My hiding place and my shield (art) Thou—for Thy word I wait, i. e., for the fulfilment of Thy promise. See above on verse 81. "The first word in the verse means properly a secret or secret place. The shield is a favorite figure for protection. See above in Ps. 3: 3, 7: 10, 18: 2, 30.—Alexander.

The common, intense exhibition of the sinner's alienation from God, is hiding from God's eye (Gen. 3: 8 to 10), and shielding himself from His face by calling upon the

rocks to fall on him. (Rev. 6: 15, 16). That the psalmist selected as a hiding place and shield God Himself, shows how well ripened in him was the gracious process of sanctification. See 2nd Sam. 24: 14.

Verse 115. "Depart from me evil doers, and I will keep the commandments of God."

It might be well to ask if the relation between the two clauses of the verse is that of cause and effect. Certain it is that our Lord with emphasis of sympathetic love urged His disciples to "Pray lest ye enter into temptation." But if all things else being equal, it is as easy to obey God's commands in the presence as in the absence of evil doers, why is spoken this strenuous warning injunction of Jesus?

Verse 116. "Uphold me according to Thy promise and let me live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope."

"Promise literally saying, that which Thou hast said, as in verse 82. 'Let me live,' might also be translated 'and I shall live,' or paraphrased 'that I may live.'" See above on verse 17. 'Of my hope,' literally 'from my hope,' which some understand in a privative sense, 'away from,' 'deprived of,' 'without my hope,' i. e., without having it fulfilled. 'Ashamed of my hope' does not convey the sense so fully as 'shamed in my hope,' frustrated, disappointed, in my expectations."—Alexander.

Verse 117. "Sustain me and I shall be saved, and I will look to Thy statutes always."

"The first verb is nearly synonymous with that at the beginning of verse 116, and the same that occurs above, Ps. 20: 2; 41: 3; 94: 18; 104:15. 'I shall be saved, or let me be saved,' or 'that I may be saved,' precisely as in the preceding verse. The strict future sense is here to be preferred, as the verb is not both preceded and followed by a prayer, as in the other case."—Alexander.

Look to—for dependence.

Verse 118. "Thou despisest all (those) straying from Thy statutes, for a lie (is) their deceit."

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By implication we find in this verse three things.

First, Jehovah's statutes are rooted in justice and truth. Second, Those who shrink from these statutes evidently prefer flattering falsehoods, and are (at least in the desires of their hearts) liars. Third, These liars are worthy of contempt for in attempting to deceive others, they best succeed in deceiving themselves, with their own lie.

Verse 119. "(As) dross hast Thou made to cease all the wicked of the earth; therefore I love Thy testimonies."

"The verb in the first clause, which occurs in its primary sense in Ps. 8: 2, is applied to purging out of leaven at the passover. (Ex. 12: 15) and to the extirpation of wild beasts (Lev. 26: 6)."—Alexander.

There is also a reference in this verse to the work of the refiner of silver, who separates the silver from the dross by subjecting the ore to a long process of refining, first crushing it to powder, and then the mass is put into a crucible and over a hot fire. The dross is very willing to escape from the great heat, but the precious metal is rather willing to remain in the crucible until it becomes so pure as to mirror the face of the refiner, who bends over it in love. Just so true is it with the wicked who are blind to the blessings hidden under afflictions, and seek only to escape from them. So is it true that "the sorrow of the world worketh death." But saints know that "it is good to be afflicted," and that every species of trial is a proof that God loves us. Mal. 3: 2 and 4. Heb. 12: 6, 8 and 11. Thou dost testify of these things in the Scriptures, therefore I love Thy testimonies.

Verse 120. "My flesh shudders from dread of Thee, and of Thy judgments I am afraid."

"The first verb in Hebrew occurs only here, but is universally admitted to denote some bodily effect of fear, such as trembling, shuddering, or the instinctive creeping of the flesh. Afraid, in the last clause, does not fully rep-

resent the phrase which denotes not mere apprehension of something still future or absent, but terror in view of something actually present. Judgments has its usual wide sense, but with special reference, in this case, to God's penal visitations. Here ends the fifteenth stanza, in which, as in the one before it, every verse has a distinct initial word."—Alexander.

There are but few words we wish to add to this valuable comment.

In the case of one so godly as the psalmist, and whose hope clings to God's mercy, we are not constrained to suppose that his terror and creepings of flesh, are the result wholly of a sense of guilt and shrinking from God as Judge, which distresses the hearts of the impenitent. It is rather permissible to conceive that these are due to a felt sense of the near personal presence of the infinite, eternal God, in the sublime majesty of His glorious attributes, in the awful grandeur of His being, and in the piercing strength of His boundless and ceaseless vitality. Many of the great saints of our race, have been so affected when they have perceived, by the senses of the body, that they were in the actual presence of, and in bodily contact with our living Creator and God.

Abraham (Gen. 15: 12). "Lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." (18: 27). "I am but dust and ashes." Jacob. (Gen. 28: 17). "How dreadful is this place." Moses. (Heb. 12: 21). "So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.'" David. (II Sam. 6: 9). "And David was afraid of the Lord that day." Daniel. (Dan. 10: 8). "I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my vigor was turned upon me into corruption, and I retained no strength." Paul. (Acts 9: 6). "And he trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do'?" But not only does

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Jehovah's awful majesty cause us to shudder in His presence, it also causes us to see the depths of our iniquity with self-abhorrence. (Job :4 26).—"Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

### AIN.

Verse 121. "I do justice and righteousness; leave me not to my oppressors."

The meaning is not that he has acted right and therefore can claim that God will not desert him. There is a closer connection between the clauses. There is a true correlation here, the latter clause limiting in some degree the former, and so giving a hint as to the character of those acts of justice and righteousness which he did. They were such as subjected him to enmity and oppression. These words are perfectly suitable as referring to the acts of a private person, and yet is there not almost involved in the words something more than the utterance an obscure individual? It would seem that the psalmist was one whose acts were influential upon others. These words might be at least the words of a prospective magistrate, who views his private acts under the aspect of a laying down of principles and policy. The supposition that young Solomon was the author of this psalm, harmonizes the official authoritative air of the first clause with the state of humiliation disclosed in the second. The form of the first clause is justified, when we consider that these oppressors would not care about those acts of righteousness of Solomon, which were purely personal, but only for those which defined his attitude as heir apparent to the crown. This verse is very suitable for just magistrates and judges under obloquy, but also for any private Christian whom the pursuance of duty has brought into trouble. The prayer in the latter clause, may be made in the strongest confidence that it will be heard and specifically answered; and yet, at the same

time, how easy is that resignation which is the complement of true prayer; since, if we are called upon to endure, it is plainly for God's sake—for the name of Christ and therefore to His glory. That which inspires confidence in the specific answer, is the very thing that inspires resignation. The vagueness of the first clause, while it does not disclose the situation so manifestly, and therefore lacks energy, still better enabled it to be the utterance of all the tried servants of God of all ages and times.

Verse 122. "Be surety for Thy servant for good; let not the proud oppress me."

The use of the legal term "surety," may have been suggested to the psalmist by legal oppression with which he was threatened—e. g. false accusations, perhaps of treason. A surety is one who places himself voluntarily in the position of another, so that upon certain contingencies he shall become the substitute of that person and shall be mulcted in the same or equivalent penalties. The primary meaning of the Hebrew word is, to interweave. The surety interweaves his cause with his for whom he is bound, so that if he falls, the surety falls. The surety pledges himself. The psalmist asks God to pledge Himself for him, so that they shall alike be involved. The word "servant" is significant. There is in it an implication of the legal principle, "what one does through another, he does himself." "I am Thy servant, and as Thy servant and deputy, I do what brings me in danger of oppression by the "proud." There is therefore an implied claim—a demand that of right God ought to be surety for him. "For Thy servant" is defined by "for good." When Judah was surety "for the lad" (Gen. 43: 9) it was for his being brought back again. The psalmist asks God to be his surety "for good." That is, to engage to secure his good"—his prosperity, peace, deliverance, or else be subject Himself to oppression and trouble. The petition is one in which God has placed Himself more than once in the oaths that He took which were neither more nor less

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than making Himself surety for the fulfilment of His threats or promises. He was surety for the generation of the wilderness for evil (Numb. 14: 28), He was surety for Abraham for good (Gen. 22: 16 and 17). "Be surety for Thy servant for good" is then equivalent to "be surety for Thy servant's good." The latter clause defines the nature of the good God is asked to pledge Himself to secure. The designation of the oppressors of the psalmist as "the proud" points very distinctly to the time we have fixed upon for the composition of this psalm. For never before did pride so stand in the way of spiritual and national advancement as in the days of David, and never afterwards till David's antitype came. It was pride more than anything else that opposed our Lord. And that which the psalmist here asks, was granted to the fullest extent. The Lord was surety for His people, became involved in the same condemnation, and in order that "the proud" might not oppress us, He was Himself oppressed. He entered into an engagement with Abraham to die or fulfil His promise to Him, and, seeing that there was no other way, actually suffered that death to which symbolically, and under the guise of smoking furnace and a burning lamp, He had become subject so many ages before.

Verse 123. "My eyes fail for Thy salvation, and for the word of Thy righteousness."

This verse is very like the 82nd. There is in both the same agonized weary longing, but in verse 82 it is well nigh despair. Here it is very far from that, but rather the longing of one who boldly claims. There is a difference too, in the object of the longing. In verse 82 it is for the fulfilment of a promise; here it is for the good thing that the promise secures. There is a difference between the two. I may desire what I have no promise for, and I may desire the fulfilment of a promise, not so much for the good is uppermost, and the promise is mentioned mainly on account of the binding claim it gives him on God for that



good. This is the reason why the word "righteousness" is so significantly added. The fulfilment of the promise involves the righteousness of God. In verse 82 the desire that God would fulfil His promise is uppermost. That is sometimes more precious than any good it brings. The fulfilment of a promise by a husband may be desired by a wife, not so much for what it will give her as for his sake—that he may be found true and noble, and that she may have assurance that she possesses him. Thus the servant of God in desiring that He should fulfil His promise is often really desiring God's glory—that he and others may be enabled to honor God through the clever display of His truthfulness and faithfulness and love. In other words they desire God Himself rather than His gifts. "Salvation" is a broad word, but the latter clause limits it, the salvation for which longing has well nigh become fainting, is what God has specifically promised; in the case of Solomon, the throne, in the case of the ordinary Christian, a greater promise, a better throne.

Verse 124. "Deal with Thy servant according to Thy loving kindness, and teach me Thy statutes."

This verse again, is very like the 64th with the exception of the significant epithet "Thy servant," and that in verse 64 the mercy is inferred, and here it is assumed. This makes the relation of the clauses different. In verse 64 the psalmist says, "I see abundant evidence around me that Thou art a kind and loving God, and that inclines me to place myself at Thy orders." Here he says, "Since Thou art a God of loving kindness, I may make bold to ask, yea, I may even go so far as to demand, that Thou make a display of that attribute by teaching me Thy statutes." The demand seems to be implied in the word "servant," for is it any more than fair that a servant should have his orders? This demand God will not disregard; He will never leave a servant, desirous of doing His will, without the means of ascertaining what that will is. But

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He uses in His Providence many ways, and all of them righteous. There are some to whom He teaches His will through the stress of trial, through painful self-revelations and mortifications, every precept comes with a pang. There are those who are left to be in a state of doubt and bewilderment as to what God would have them do. Those who are compelled to wait long and go through hard experience before they get their orders, are so treated often because without it, their obedience would be shallow, unspiritual and mechanical. By trial they are not only taught God's will, but the secret of that will. There are others who are shown what they are to do in quite another fashion, the way of knowledge is made plain and easy to them. This is what the psalmist asks for—it is that he may be taught his duty "according to God's loving kindness." And wondrously easy God can make this learning. He may place us under the guidance of wise masters and teachers in Christ, He may enlighten our minds that we may understand His word and the leadings of His Providence, or He may pour into our hearts such an endowment of love for Him and our fellows as shall be better than any oracle, making us all alive with eyes to see for ourselves what God orders for each moment as it comes. Well may the psalmist regard it as an act of God's loving kindness that he should be taught His statutes. Happy are the servants of the Highest who always know just what to do—happy in their loving service, and happy in the assurance that their labor is not in vain. Their faces are towards the dawn "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." We draw both warning and encouragement from this prayer of the psalmist. They who are careless about knowing God's will, or knowing, disobey, are often terribly chastised by having God's will hidden from them, when they grope like the blind, but find not till they repent and He visits them in mercy again. On the other hand, those who are eager to know God's will and zealous in their

obedience, will find it easier and easier to understand the word of the Lord to them. Indeed, He will speak to them no more as He did to the outside multitude of old, in parables and dark sayings, but plainly as He did to His chosen ones. And in them will be fulfilled the saying, "Unto him that hath shall be given."

Verse 125. "Thy servant am I; make me understand and let me know (or then shall I know) Thy testimonies."

Maurer translates "that I may know Thy testimonies." Here the claim to the knowledge of God's testimonies is distinctly and nakedly based on the fact that the psalmist is God's servant. God's testimonies are the Moral Law, the witness to His character. The servant may claim at God's hand a knowledge of His statutes in order that he may do what a servant ought to do, and he may also rightfully claim at God's hand a knowledge of His testimonies, in order that he may be what a servant should be. The man is the representative of His Master and therefore should be like Him. The claim that a servant may make for knowledge of God's law under its various aspects can be stated thus: "Grant me Thy statutes that I may know Thy orders, Thy precepts, that I may know the details of the work assigned to me, Thy commandments that I may know how to do it well, Thy testimonies that I may do it holily, Thy judgments that I may have the stimulus of fear, Thy word that I may have the stimulus of hope, and Thy law that I may not despair on account of my faults and failures." (See Ps. 19: 7). The petition, "make me understand," brings out clearly the nature of God's "testimonies." They are God's witness of Himself to man, and are a witness just so far, only as men understand them and feel their propriety. God's "testimonies"—the moral law—may not be obeyed as we obey God's "statutes" (orders) simply by bending our wills to His. It would not be pleasing to God for a man to obey,

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say the first or the sixth commandment, simply because it is God's will. Our hearts must obey—we must understand—or it is no obedience at all. God's "testimonies" is that phase of God's law under which it must be re-enacted by man, or it is not God's law to Him.

Verse 126. "(It is) time for Jehovah to do; they make void Thy law."

There is a propriety in calling on God by His covenant title, Jehovah, to act for the law was Jehovah's covenant with Israel, and if the covenant was broken, then it behooved God to come forward for the honor of His name. The word "break" means more than simply "transgress." King James and the revision say, "make void," which is more nearly the word. There was never a time when the law was not transgressed, but this must have been a time when the infraction amounted to a decisive and effective rejection of the covenant. Such times sometimes occur, and though the servants of God are often short-sighted and think that all is lost, when there would be no danger were it not for their panic fears, when all they have to do to ensure safety is to be calm, hopeful and active, still there sometimes comes a crisis when man seems to have done his utmost in vain, and one more step only remains for wickedness to be impregably entrenched, and the evil to become irremediable. Then God's people can plead the necessity there is for His direct action. Then it becomes them to "stand still and see the salvation of God." Such a time seemed the present to the psalmist. If, as we have conjectured, the young Solomon was the author of this psalm, we can easily conceive a situation of affairs that might have called forth this utterance. Remembering that Solomon was the divinely appointed successor not only to the throne of David, but to his plans and theocratic policy; remembering that the dread of this policy was upon many in Israel, and that dread caused and made virulent an opposition to Solomon's succession; we can

easily see with what intense interest he would regard each move in the game. He would naturally regard a successful combination against him as aimed directly at the theocratic development, ecclesiastical and national, which was nothing more than the conserving of that law whose full form was first attained under David. Whether the prayer was answered or not we cannot tell. Probably it was. Probably God did providentially intervene and check the movement that appeared so threatening. But if not, if the case was not so critical as it seemed, still it was a proper and consoling prayer, and doubtless not without spiritual fruit to him who offered it. God regards our prayers not in the light of His superior knowledge, but puts Himself in our place, as we do in the place of our children; and is ready to soothe even our groundless fears. "He knoweth our frame." Let not the prayer, however, be made in the spirit of presumption—the spirit of Uzzah. God is all wise and knows when to intervene.

Verse 127. "Therefore I love Thy commandments (more) than gold and (more) than fine gold."

Alexander says: "The first word does not refer to the immediately preceding verse, but to the whole previous description of the excellence of God's commandments."

This can hardly be. There is nothing said directly (whatever may be implied) in praise of any aspect of the law since verse 105. And it may be said further that very few of the verses of this psalm directly praise the law; almost all of them are simple expressions of devotion to it. We cannot suppose either, as Alexander does, that the mere exigencies of the alphabetical arrangement led to the use of the word. "Therefore" in this and the next verse. The ingenuity of the writer was surely greater than this. If any connection can be made with what goes before, it should be done. "Therefore" implies some fact set forth in what goes before, because of which, he is led to value God's commandments. No such fact, express or

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implied, is set forth in the stanza except in the verse that immediately precedes, to which we would naturally be referred by the word "therefore." We find there a petition that God should act directly, expressed in such strong terms as to amount to a claim that God should act and certainly involve the principle that God will not allow the wicked to go too far, but may be expected to intervene, and bring to naught their devices and their works. If this is the case, how precious these commandments, the guide in life's activity. How perfectly secure may the good man be who allows them to govern his life. The opposers of the good public man, especially, may be using craft and that sum of all power, gold; but he has something better than gold—a guide better than power or craft. The last expressions of the verse may be fairly held to mean more than vague expression of value set forth in a childlike comparison—at least, it may possibly have a reference to the power of gold in political affairs.

Verse 128. "Therefore all Thy precepts (as to) all (things) I think right; every way of falsehood do I hate."

For the same reason that the commandments (the law as guiding) are precious, so likewise are the precepts of God (the law as assigning work) precious. The great work that had been assigned to Solomon in his earliest years was the work of reigning. His main occupation in life was getting ready to reign, and there would be a strong tendency on his part to shape his actions so as to ensure his possession of the throne, and to smooth the way to his prosperous reigning. But the temptation would be also strong to neglect those duties which were for the time, of waiting. The fear of God, the dread that is in him, when he thinks how just it would be for God to interfere, and how probably imminent the interference with those who break His covenant law, quickens his approval of God's precepts, and stimulates to the performance of the full round of duty appointed him by God. The word translated

“think right” does not have so much reference to moral rectitude as to their wise character. “Thy precepts are excellent, because in the practice of them I can think without fear of Thy intervention in the affairs of the nation.” The correlative clause strengthens this impression. A “way of falsehood” is a way that leads to falsehood or no result, which promises great good but ends in the reverse. God’s precepts—the occupations dictated by Him, lead to prosperity and the avoidance of danger. The strong word “hate” is not a mere manifestation of moral detestation, but an expression of the dread awakened in his mind by his summons of God in verse 126, and as a consequence of a sense of the danger those incur who walk in ways of falsehood. They who summon God on their own behalf and against others may well remember that God is no partizan, and when He comes to make inquisition He will not neglect us. It would little avail the psalmist, if he were guiltless of the sin of rejecting God’s covenant, if he sinned in other directions, if he were neglecting the plain duties belonging to his waiting time. This lends great significance to the claim he makes that he hates, not one but every way of falsehood, and approves not of one, but of all God’s precepts as to all things. These last two verses are not merely justificatory, but declarations of adherence and devotion.

PE.

Verse 129. “Wonderful (are) Thy testimonies, therefore my soul keepeth them.”

“Testimonies” are the moral law. This moral law is wonderful. To be wonderful it cannot be the product of human wisdom or fully explainable by human wisdom. A perfect system of scientific ethics is an impossibility. If it were possible it would not be moral, for into all morality must enter the two elements of direct authority on the part of God and unquestioning obedience on the part of man.

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The moral law must be the product of an intelligence apart from, and above man, and yet akin to man, and at once appreciable by man. God's commandment must be "nigh," to be a true commandment, yet any examination of it shows its preternatural wisdom and adds to its sanction. When a man gives himself rules that he has thought out, it will lack the element of wonder and therefore the sanction that a command of God has. It is the attitude of wondering obedience that causes the law to be kept by God's servant. The habit of casuistry either as a scientific or practical exercise, tends to destroy the law. The moment we begin to consider whether what we propose to do is right or wrong, by the light of reason and not by the light of God's expressed will, that moment we will begin to doubt, and the further we go in our investigations the more doubtful we will be. It is like trying to discover by reasoning, whether a picture is beautiful or not. Law is no law unless we derive it from an intuition which involves the consciousness of God whether we are aware of it or not, or else have it express from God and made forceful to us by an intuition. Law is no law unless it comes from God, and also comes to us ("the word is nigh thee"). The moral law of the ten commandments if reverently studied will be found wonderful. The topics selected, the form in which they are expressed, so wonderful that a strict observance of the letter in reverence and love for the Lawgiver will give something very like spiritual observance. And, it may be added, the slightest deviation from which no matter how plausibly justified will tend to great evil. Wonderful is the law if we consider the results following from obedience or disobedience whether in a single man or a community. The attitude of wonder will prevent any paring down of the form of the command, with the empty and wicked excuse that we desire to get at its essence, and with the latent desire to get permission to do evil. What is wonderful will be precious.



"My soul keepeth them." This means something more than "I keep them," which would only state, whatever it would imply, that he consciously keeps them. But to say "my soul keeps them," is to say that the emotional, propulsive part of the man, makes the man keep the law. The psalmist has not only the moral sense to understand the law and the resolve to keep it, but has strong tendencies toward the moral law from the sense of its being the guidance of superior wisdom which knows better than he does what is right. Thus God's testimonies are wonderful; they are like natural objects to which we stand related, and which we appreciate, but which transcend our powers to make or comprehend. A rose is that to us.

Verse 130. "The opening of Thy word enlightens, making the simple understand."

"Opening" as of a gate. The words of God are as open gates or doors by which we have entrance into what was before unseen and inaccessible. The realm of the spiritual is as a dead wall till the open door of the word permits gaze and entrance. There is very great harmony between this verse and the preceding. The "simple" is the uninvestigating, the not worldly wise or specially intellectual. Perhaps those who do not exercise themselves in things too high for them, (Ps. 131), who realize that there are matters in which a humble bowing down of the pride of intellect is best and wisest. Such minds find the words of God very enlightening. Of course, revelation is what is directly referred to here, but the same is true of the created works of God—the works of nature. Something more is needed than the self-sufficient investigating spirit; some submission of the intellect to the higher faculties of insight; some sense of the wonderfulness lying behind all nature as behind all revelation. Carrying out the figure more perfectly we might say that the word which is as a closed wall to the hard, scientific spirit, is as an open door to the lowly soul (the simple) who, aspiring to penetrate

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beyond the veil into the secret place finds that it cannot walk but must fly thither, and if it uses natural wings, must spread them in spiritual air and pursue its way by means of that Spirit who is given to all who ask for Him.

Verse 131. "My mouth I stretch and pant, because for Thy commandments, I long."

There is here apparently a figure taken from the habits of wild animals. They often suffer great thirst and this stretching the mouth and panting would denote extreme eagerness for water. On the part of the child of God it expresses the intensest longing for God's commandments—as the thirsty animal longs for drink, so he longs for such indications furnished by God's law, which will guide when perplexed. There is expressed a desire here for immediate direction. He will not be teased by constant interference with his movements. This arises from a feeling of helpless ignorance, an indication that his view of his situation is wider than that of those who feel wise. His is the spirit of David, not that of Saul. He is willing to be under a tutor. This connects directly with the topic of the preceding verses—the wonderfulness and the enlightening character of the law of the Lord. Men often gain a principle from the law and then proceed to apply it, but with the principle enters also the spirit of self will and self conceit and leads a man upon a wrong path, while he thinks he is following the precepts of God. It needs, it may be, some other precept to recur to him which he also must obey and which will modify the application of the principle that he thinks he has perfectly seized and is perfectly applying. It is not enough, then, that one should be full of zeal for enlightenment and of energy in the applying of that knowledge. He must crave as a thirsty animal craves water to be directed in his zeal and energy, in other words, to have God's commandments. It is curious that as the figure for longing is taken from the habits of wild animals, so the absolute necessity for constant guidance, implied by the eagerness

to be directed, suggests a brute animal harnessed, as a horse or mule.

Verse 132. "Turn to me and be gracious to me, as (is) due to the lovers of Thy name."

We have in this stanza set forth, one who is acquainted with God's "testimonies," and has been enlightened by God's words, but who craves earnestly practical direction—or that view of the law that will tend practically to guide. He is also subject to trials. "Turn to me," implies that God has not been gracious to him. There is no implication that the psalmist has lost God's secret favor—that God has any controversy with him. For such a feeling as that must necessarily be accompanied by a sense of ill desert, or else God would be regarded as a fickle and capricious God. Now so far from any ill desert being indicated here there is on the contrary a strong assertion of merit. He was one of the lovers of God's name, and there was therefore something due him. There is also as strong an implication of the consistency of God and His want of caprice in the expression "as (is) due" literally "according to judgment," which some translate "according to Thy wont." Both ideas may be included. For "judgment" does not mean simple right, but God's decision as to what is right; God's usual decision, the decision that may be expected of Him. Caprice is excluded then by the very expression that sets forth the psalmist's merit; and we have here not the utterance of one who like the heathen, solicits the favor of his god, which he has lost he knows not how, but a prayer for the manifestation of God's favor, through acts of kindness and compassion which he has reason to expect from what he knows of Him. To be a lover of God's name, is to love all the manifestations He makes of Himself in words or works or acts. This does not amount to loving all that is made or happens, for though the whole universe shows forth God's glory, it also shows forth something else, since there is evil and imperfection there, and not till the creation

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has partaken of the liberty of the glory of the sons of God, can we rejoice in, or even accept all things. We love that part of God's name which we see to be God's name, because it seems to us to exhibit His goodness and beneficence. And if we are really in rapport with Him, then we shall be able to love His name even where we cannot see in it goodness and beneficence, through faith that they are there even if we do not see them. In the earlier day God's people limited His name to the vicinity of the theophanic glory, and later, to the Shekinah glory of the temple so that the Jews at Babylon were careful to pray with their faces towards Jerusalem, because there God had "caused His name to dwell," and all along there failed not those who understood God's intimate relation to His universe in all its parts and His dominance over it all. A remarkable example of this is seen in the 29th Psalm. As time rolled on this doctrine commanded more and more the assent of God's people, and now that the light of science has flooded the whole realm of creation, the universe is seen to be one and instinct with reason, that is with God. Yet the universe is not without its dark corners; there are hard problems for those to solve who desire that all God's works and acts should praise Him, and to overcome which, there needs something of love and loyalty as well as intelligence, something of the spirit of Ps. 133. Would that that spirit were rife at the present time. But it is to be feared that another spirit is even in the church, a spirit that manifests itself not always in direct complaints of God's dealings, but in a mood of disquiet and anxiety ("so brutish was I and ignorant") that amounts to doubting whether goodness is on the throne; a thing which there are found those who deny.

To love God's name then may well draw God's favor and kindness. This the psalmist claims, but humbly and modestly. He does not claim as of absolute right that God would make things pleasant for him, but says "so Thou judgest right to deal with those who love Thy name." God

must be free to bring tribulation upon His most devoted servant as in the case of Job. And yet we may be sure that if we appeal to God for His favor and kindness, glorifying the while His holy name, nothing shall happen to us without His love going with it and a purpose to make it subserve our benefit. A distinction ought here be made. We ought to love all of God's holy name and yet we are not obliged to like it. We may writhe under God's dealings and pray to be delivered from them (as Job) and yet love them. As a daughter might love her father's taking her to a surgeon for it might evidence his self denying love, while she might at the same time shrink from it with dread. Clearly does the apostle (Philipp. 4:6) teach us the love of God's name in the midst of trial, for he tells us that the prayer that brings peace in troublous times is to be made "with thanksgiving."

Verse 133. "My steps establish by Thy word, and let not any iniquity rule over me."

"Establish," make firm, as opposed to steps sinking in the mire. "By Thy word," through the cheer and energy induced by Thy promise and through its fulfilment. The servant of God is struggling onward in his toilsome pilgrimage towards his goal and reward, and he asks that everything that hinders his free activity should be removed "by Thy word." That is, by bringing to mind the promise when it is forgotten, or inspiring trust in it when confidence is ready to fail, and also by the hope it inspires with its resulting energy, and also by the fulfilment of that word. This last will not fail for He who pointed out the goal and promised the reward by that pledges Himself to be with us every step of the way and to bring us safely through. The peculiar trial that is upon him and makes his footing unstable, appears in the correlative clause. It is the rule of iniquity over him either feared or experienced. We can easily sympathize with the psalmist for every child of God is in danger from the rule of iniquity. First, there is iniquity

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without the evil ruler, whether governmental or social. To be dependent in any sense upon one who is evil is a dreadful thing for one who not only desires to do what is right but what is large and loving. He can never know the delight of one's own impulses, in the rhythmic activities of love. Second, iniquity within—heart iniquity and its fruits, rooted habits of evil, and the tyranny of committed sin. This is a rule that governs and enslaves the intellect as well as the emotional nature. Third, the power of the evil one in tempting and swaying the soul, and organizing and intensifying evil around us. One of the most dreadful results of sin is that it enslaves, and one of the noblest results of holiness is that it sets free. One of the best definitions of holiness is freedom. Of course, perfect freedom will not be till the rule of evil be entirely swept away, and with new bodies, and a new world, we begin at last to live. But the apostle teaches us, that the slave while yet a slave, may be the Lord's freeman. And so the servant of God opposed by form of evil that hamper him and conscious of evil in his heart can be made by the light that the word of God causes to shine through the grates of his dungeon, a prisoner of hope, and therefore the Lord's freeman.

Verse 134. "Redeem me from the oppressions of man, and I will keep Thy precepts."

"Oppressions" in the plural is very strong—many acts, many forms of oppression. "Man" in the singular is also very significant. The troubles of the psalmist do not arise from any peculiarity of character in those about him and in whose power he is, his position is such that he is placed in antagonism with human nature itself. So was it with our Lord. It was the fact that not merely did certain men strike at him, but human nature struck at him, and became guilty through His death. So was it with the apostles. They conferred not with their own flesh and blood, and as little with the flesh and blood of others. Their message was directly in the teeth of the predilections and prejudices

of their nation. An influence from above had to be granted or it would not have been accepted. So was it with the prophets. They were a living reproof, and even in their promises they often held forth what was humiliating instead of the glory that was craved, and bitter instead of the delight that was desired. So is it with the humblest servant of God he often has to say "it is not men who have opposed me but man." And here is a consideration that tends to induce pity and forgiveness under oppression. As our Lord's "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." This form of expression would be peculiarly suited to the young Solomon, for the opposition to his reigning or his policy as a crown prince, would be largely an outcome of human nature itself. Tribal pride revolting at the idea of Jerusalem's becoming either politically or ecclesiastically supreme national pride revolting at the king of Israel's under the tutelage of Jehova, would be largely used, to oppose the accession of Him, who, as was well understood would be not only the heir of David's throne, but of his policy. The Assyrian king would loudly proclaim that he was a servant of Asshur and did all things through his might, but Isaiah 10: 13 shows how little reality there was in that. David the man after God's heart was really subservient to Jehovah in his royal position. "I will keep Thy precepts." This may be understood as a covenant resolution. "If Thou wilt redeem me, I will keep Thy precepts." But it is better to take it as setting forth the reason of the petition of the first clause. "Thy precepts"—the work Thou has appointed me to do, hindered and thwarted by the oppressions of my enemies. Set me free from them, that I may do it. Happy they who pray to be made free only that they may accomplish their mission; they may well pray in assured hope. Still we should try to feel that even if we are tied up from doing the work that seems ours in the world, we still are submitting to His will. If we are not doing His precepts we are keeping His statutes. The

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main point is to realize that God orders everything, even to our being laid aside by incapacity, infirmity or oppression. In waiting we not merely serve His will but His purpose also.

Verse 135. "Let Thy face shine upon Thy servant, and teach me Thy statutes."

The word "servant," indicates not merely who he is, but what he is who makes this petition. He is God's servant and may claim something because of this relation. It does not imply that he is a profitable servant, but that he holds the office of servant and desires to do service. This is sufficient to found a claim that God would teach him His statutes (orders). What can a servant do unless he has his lord's orders. The true prosperity of a devoted servant is to have his master's orders. And when that master is God the more specific the orders, and the more numerous they are, even to the end occupying of every minute, the happier he is. That would be a perfect realization of Carlyle's "fire proof days." This interprets the verse according to the strict form that we have ascribed to the verses of this psalm according to which the second clause limits the signification of the first. It may be further said that the expression "Let Thy face shine upon Thy servant," can be taken as a general petition for prosperity; the confident petition inducing a grateful desire to know God's will. And it may be further said more directly in the line of the correlation, that one of the best ways that God takes to teach us what He orders, and at the same time to enable us to enter into the spirit of those orders—teach us something about their nature, and so to let His face shine upon us, to bring us into close rapport with Him.

Verse 136. "Streams of water run down my eyes, for that they do not keep Thy law."

"They" is emphatic—the community, the people around me. This verse fixes the place of the psalm either at a time when the law was not fully established, or else when it was falling in the esteem of the people. It would



seem at first glance fitted to express the feelings of a Jeremiah, or a Daniel, or an Ezra. But in the case of Jeremiah, his reproofs are directed rather against the political and moral iniquity of his people, than ecclesiastical shortcoming. And in the case of Daniel, it can hardly be the case that there was any extensive defection among the children of the captivity. The historical result of their captivity was, as we know, a remarkably strict adherence to the law, and the effect must have been begun to be wrought during the captivity. From the animosity against the Jews as appeared in Esther and indeed in Daniel, it seems clear that they did not coalesce religiously with the people of the lands. And in the case of Ezra though the past sins of his people afflicted him, yet they repented and reformed. That was a hopeful case in which there was little occasion for weeping. This is the language rather of one who dwells amid persistent opposition to the law and who is helpless in the face of it. It is certainly fitted for the mouth of the youthful Solomon, who would be filled with sorrow all the more bitter, because he was not naturally of the melting mood, because he could so plainly see the remedy that ought to be applied and knew how to use it. This psalm and this verse would be all the better fitted to be the vehicle of pious emotion for all ages, than if it was originally the utterance of one in exceptional circumstances, as were Jeremiah, Ezra and Daniel. Solomon's position was a universal one. A servant of God holding to a promise of future rule over wicked men, whom he was at present able to do nothing to restrain. Able only to exact a limited influence, for the most part serving God by witness bearing, and enduring obloquy on account of his adhering to God's law.

TZADDE.

Verse 137. "Righteous art Thou O Jehovah and just Thy judgments."

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This verse was probably the outcome of a spiritual struggle. God's judgments had been brought very near the psalmist. He had felt them in his own person or was the witness of the infliction on his friends or neighbors. Now in such a case, the temptation is first not to recognize what has happened as a judgment at all. It is a mishap due simply to natural forces, or it is a wrong inflicted by evil men. We are loud in proclaiming our innocence. The awful judgment of the French Revolution fell upon those who were full of self-complacent enthusiasm—their very efforts to do good brought down the judgment on their heads, God's judgments are often so disconnected in appearance with the sin as to need insight in order to read the warning. The psalmist has insight. He is taught his sin by what has befallen him, and his anger against others gives place to anger against himself. He feels that he deserves all that has befallen him, and an overwhelming sense of God's righteousness fills his mind, which is near to acquiescent submission and the recovery of an eternal friend.

Verse 138. "Thou hast commanded righteousness, and Thy testimonies, faithfulness—exceedingly."

The revisors give the sense correctly and smoothly by supplying "in" before righteousness and faithfulness. "Thou hast commanded Thy testimonies in righteousness and very faithfulness." This is admirable as a translation. There is, however, great poetic force notwithstanding its harshness in rendering literally "righteousness" and "testimonies" as oppositions. The verse then might be paraphrased thus: "Thou hast commanded righteousness in commanding Thy testimonies and faithfulness also in an eminent degree." The state of mind expressed by this verse is what Christians often fail of attaining to, and yet it should be the feeling of all. We should acknowledge that the moral law which He calls on us to obey is no more than He ought to exact, and we ought to render. To be righteous Himself, He must insist upon our being holy, and that insistence

involves the awful menace of what He must inflict upon the disobedient. We are apt to consider with the old Jews, that God has tied Himself up by the covenant of grace, to give us every good thing if only we perform the stipulated condition. Our trust to Christ takes the place of circumcision and can as easily be made consistent with a sinful life. Religion can be in our case as thoroughly divorced from morality as it is among the Musselmans. It was remarkably so in the Middle ages, and there are survivals of that feeling in the present day. Not many years ago a faithful Lutheran missionary having charge of several country churches not far from Easton, Pa., had to be guarded in his passages to and fro from the animosity of many of his congregations, who maintained that he swindled them, requiring as he did, repentance and faith, when they had complied with all the conditions required, being baptized, having children baptized, paying all church dues, and taking the communion regularly. We smile when we read this, but how much better is the young man of the world called Christian, who makes of Christ a convenience, to be relied on in his extremity as delivery from the consequences of his sins, but who cuts and carves and trims down the moral law to suit the exigencies of one who must obey whether or no the customs and maxims of society; who bridles in the little love he has for God and man lest it enact for him a law more exacting than any literal interpretation of the old. What better is that emotional Christian, full of enthusiastic feelings, who thinks that he fulfils the conditions God requires by unbridled emotion, when there is just one condition He has laid down and that is holiness. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Holiness and Godliness is essential," Paul says; "though I understand all mysteries, though I give my body to be burned and have not love I am nothing." And shall the Lord not insist upon righteousness?" "Many shall say unto me in that day, 'Lord have

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we not prophesied in Thy name and in Thy name cast out devils?" The claim is correct, but it gains nothing for them. Alas, the surprise and shame that awaits many who look forward confidently. That was a gem of comic poetry of the Rev. Quake Strong, who was an eminent revivalist on earth, and who expected to be received with all honors to heavenly mansions. He would not have been received at all, had he not humbled his claims and appealed for mercy as a miserable sinner. No, God means that His law shall be obeyed and woe to those who trifle with it, for it is trifling with Him. We may call God, Father, but let us remember that as St. Peter tells us, that God judgeth without respect of persons according to each man's work, and that nothing will pass muster except obedience. It is in "very faithfulness" to His promises, that God requires holiness. What sort of a God would He be who was not hostile to the unpenitent sinner? What sort of a heaven would it be that admitted unholiness? It is illegal for the sinner to be saved, and yet Christ saves him because He has power to justify him. It was illegal for Christ to touch the leper, and yet He touched the leper; for when He touched the leper it was no leper that He touched, such is the Paradox of grace.

Verse 139. "My zeal consumes me because my adversaries forget Thy words."

The words translated "zeal" is more commonly used in the sense of jealousy or even "envy." We must give the word the association with the jealousy of a husband; and the envy of one who craves the possession of a precious thing that another has, to get at the strange strength of the feeling. It consumes the psalmist. It passes all bounds and becomes exclusive, destroying for the time all others. This verse is a very intense expression of desire for the honor of God. The situation is this; he has malignant adversaries, and he is in the midst of their strivings against him; immediate peril and prospective loss menace him

through their machinations, to say nothing of their bitterness against him personally which tends to awaken bitter feelings. Yet here all anxiety, fear and anger that is personal are swallowed up in thought for God's honor. Natural feeling in one who believed in God's "words"—His precepts and promises with their tremendous sanctions, would be contented with the fact that his enemies forgot God's words, for it would be their exceeding great loss. But there is here something better than nature. Not love of his enemies, but such a desire for God's honor as not only makes him eager that those who hate and would destroy him, should hold fast God's words and gain full fruition from that adherence, but so fills him with the desire of it that jealousy is the only word that can express the feeling. Jealousy is one of the most egotistical and selfish of feelings, yet the word describes his position of self abnegation because he has so indentified himself with God, that he feels wronged in himself by the neglect of God by his enemies. This becomes stronger if we consider these words as either actually or dramatically Solomon's. One of those words of God forgotten by His enemies, was the word of promise that he should sit on the throne of his Father David. Had his adversaries remembered that word they would have been his adherent supporters. It was natural that the denunciation of his adversaries' contempt of God's "words" should be inspired by self interest. But it is not so. He feels that the promise of the throne was not made to him for his own sake, but for the sake of his people. And he claims that it is because that promise is an expression of the large faithfulness of God to Israel, that he is so outraged because it is disregarded. There are abundant indications throughout this psalm that it was in this wide view of the purpose of the promise, that Solomon desired the throne. It is a great spiritual height to attain when we desire our good not because it is our good but because it promotes God's glory, and the welfare of others. Far easier it is

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for us to acquiesce in an evil for God's glory. Solomon did not always keep this frame of mind. Indeed, his whole life was a great temptation to desire the honor and glory of God for his own glory. For his office in the history of redemption was to make palpable, and exhibit in forms of prophetic splendor and beauty and wise organization, the purpose of God to His people and all these redounded to his own glory also. Tyranny and oppression could thus be easily justified and was doubtless justified. The glory of God was hidden by the glory of Solomon.

Verse 140. "Pure is Thy word—exceedingly, and Thy servant loves it."

Pure, smelted, refined, purified, as some precious metal without any earthly matter or slag in it. What does this mean as to the word or promise of God? It would seem to be this. God's promise in its real meaning holds out the expectation of that which is most precious and of only that. Now, that which is most precious is not regarded by all as such. A work of art in pure taste is only enjoyed by the few. The coarse taste of the mass is attracted by something gaudy and glittering. Fine flavors require a refined palate. That which is best and most precious, appears often at first tasteless and weak until we understand how to appreciate and enjoy it. So it is with the word of God. It holds forth most precious things, but they are often not recognized as precious. They cannot at once be realized, they must be waited for. They may be not what is desired, or perhaps what goes contrary to the desires, e. g. In our Lord's time the Jews desired salvation and would have welcomed a Saviour who offered them dross and slag instead of pure gold. When the pure gold was offered them they despised and rejected it. They could not appreciate a salvation that consisted in reconciliation with God, and required an humbling of their proud self will, and a brotherhood with all nations. So it is with God's promise at all times. It is too pure and high to be appreciated by

any but those whose heart God has touched. The promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was a pure promise. It held forth what should be precious throughout the ages eternal. It required faith in the patriarch to believe not merely that it would be fulfilled, but that it was good at all. The acceptance of it involved renunciation for generations on the part of the patriarchs. Doubtless Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had a far off understanding that there was more in the promise than met the ear, that no mere home for their descendants, nor their great increase was signified by the promise, but higher blessings for themselves, for others, and for all. But how many of their successors understood them in a narrow material sense, appropriating for themselves the dross, the slag and not the refined gold of the promise. How many are now complaining of God that He does not fulfil the narrow literal form of His promises. The promises to true prayer are interpreted as if they meant that each one of us may have his own wilful way if he chooses to ask for it. But God gives us often the pure gold by denying often our earnest request for that which is mere slag. The promise to our Lord was that He should not dash His foot against a stone, yet He was given over to death, but through that door He entered into immortal glory. The psalmist had insight, he loved this "word" because of its exceeding purity. He says "Thy servant loves it." "Servant" is significant. The acquiescence of docility is the main thing necessary to induce the acquiescence of satisfaction. Submitting to the severe purity of God's word which sometimes seems hard and trying, God's servant learns to love it. The child of God should learn to do without present delights and realizations—"the ginger that is hot in the mouth" and believe that God's promise waits only that it may be fulfilled more perfectly and that in truly waiting for it, the child of God has begun to realize it. "Loves it," this is something near to an expression of love to God which is singularly wanting in this psalm. The very far off applica-

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tion of the promise, yielding so little in the present, indicates the far reaching wisdom and love of God, and awakens like love in the psalmist.

“There is no architect  
Can build as the muse can;  
She is skillful to select  
Materials for her plan.  
She lays her beams in music.”

Verse 141. “Little (am) I and despised, (but) Thy precepts do I not forget.”

This is one of the verses which force us to the conclusion that this psalm has reference to a real person whether he speaks in his own person or is spoken for dramatically. No ideal Israel will answer the requirement. Here is a person who is “little and despised,” and yet, who appears from many places in the psalm, to be a person of great importance, worthy the opposition and hate of princes. Indeed, the very word “despised” indicates a certain prominence, when the position of the despisers is considered. He is evidently a pretender to some high place, and in the public eyes. It is evidently inapplicable to Daniel in the days of his tutelage at the Babylonian court, and to Jeremiah appropriate only at the opening moment of his stormy career. David was despised and regarded as little for a very little while and only in the bosom of his own family, by his brothers. But the psalmist was despised by “the proud,” by “princes.” David was hated by Saul but not despised. From the very first of his public career he was regarded as formidable and prominent. It suits Solomon perfectly in the years of his tutelage. But what is the connection between these clauses. “Precepts” is to be understood as meaning the law of God as it assigns one’s work. Now there is nothing strange or striking in the fact of a little and despised one, keeping to the work that is set him by God. Indeed, service is closely allied to a lowly station. Yet these clauses are set over against each other



as if they were in some respect contrary to each other. The key to the relation of the clauses may be indicated by the context. If we look back we find in verse 137 and 138 a strong assertion of God's righteousness and faithfulness made in such a way as to suggest that appearances were against that righteousness and faithfulness. In verse 139 we have the adversaries of the psalmist. Judging according to those appearances and disregarding the injunctions and promises of God. Then in verse 140 we have the same implication in the emphatic assertion of the purity of God's word, that present appearances are against it. Carrying on this view of the stanza we would have in this the 141 verse one of those false appearances that make it necessary to assert in strong terms God's righteousness. He—God's servant—is little and despised. This in the minds of worldly men is sufficient to create more than a presumption that the service of God is unprofitable. This presumption is not contradicted in express terms, but in effect, and lyrically, by the antithesis of these two clauses, "I am little and despised (yet) I do not forget Thy precepts." I keep to the duties that God has assigned me. My situation does not show that God is unrighteous or unfaithful; I am able rather by my adherence to God's precepts, to give the lie to my littleness and the contempt with which I am regarded. I have by it the warrant that I am not what I seem, that I shall be great and honored. So these adverse clauses involve the same assertion of God's righteousness that the others do. The children of God should lay this consolation to heart and boast (Rom. 5:2) in the hope of the glory of God. The laborer is worthy of his hire, and no one serves the true and faithful God in vain—though he wait long.

Verse 142. "Thy righteousness" (is) right forever, and Thy law (is) truth."

The word "righteousness" must not be understood as an abstract quality, as an attribute of God in the theological sense. It is equivalent to right doing. "Righteousness"

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and "right" are respectively masculine and feminine forms of the same word. The first is concrete, the second rather abstract. Taken in this sense the verse would read, "Thy right doing is right forever and Thy cult—Thy law of ordinances is reality itself—right forever." Standards of right and wrong vary. One age reverses the judgments of another. The long lapse of ages will but bring out in clearer light the righteousness of God and force a recognition at the hands of unwilling men. But God's righteousness is not approved at all times or all at once. As the great man's work is meant "not for a day but for all time" and requires a long interval to bring out fully its merits. So the righteousness of God needs the great forever to bring it out clearly before the minds of all. This last harmonizes with the tone thought of this stanza—which is a strong assertion of the righteousness and faithfulness of God in spite of appearances to the contrary. And here is found a great source of consolation for God's afflicted people. If God's word and work is for all ages and is to be judged by all the ages, it stands to reason that a hasty and partial view may cause misunderstanding. The afflicted one can see but a little way. Let him be assured that what appears unfair and untrue in God's dealings is so because of His partial view. The promise that He makes and seems not to fulfil, he fulfils as far as possible, nay, the very withholding tends to the realization. The law of God with all the warnings and promises contained in its types and symbols is truth. It leads some-whither. He who takes that path will arrive. There is no delusion about it. It means all and more than all it seems to mean. Besides it is not all promise, or instruction or precept; it is realization, partial realization—foretaste and prophecy of what shall be to the individual and to society. Compared with other nations, Israel must have been while she kept the law, a social paradise. We have reached the rock when we repose on what God has ordained.

Verse 143. "Distress and anguish seize me; Thy commandments (are) my delight."

Here again we have the tone thought, or rather the tone situation of the stanza—present trouble, prospective deliverance, present comfort through faith. In this verse, as in so many cases, the second clause modifies the first. The trouble and anguish are not utter, there is great alienation; the psalmist can take delight in the commandments of God. If he were merely called to work it would be much, for that call, heard and heeded in the stress of sorrow, is very comforting and healing. Well does Carlyle call occupations "fire proof joys." But this is occupation appointed by God. Great is the sanction to that, and glorious must be the issue. In one's trouble and anguish God may appear to be absent. Well, in His commandments we have something that is His. We all know what pleasure there is in carrying out the commands of one who was loved and is departed, and how much society there is for our lonely hearts in carrying out what we know would be his desires. No wonder that the psalmist takes delight in God's commandments, for it brings him into communion with God Himself. There is the refuge from sharp cutting words or sharp cutting acts or from threats or machinations that fill the heart with disquiet. We are able to forget all these through the joy of rapport through obedience and we can well afford to forget them. There is no need for us to be alive to all the plots of our enemies in order to counteract them. God's commandments are our best guidance through the mazes of our enemies' designs, and better and shrewder than any plotting on our own behalf. In obedience to them is a sure hope of deliverance from trouble and a better recompense for all losses. Here is trouble amounting to anguish to be exchanged for pleasure amounting to delight by simply following God's commandments. That is not only the way of peace but of victory.

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Verse 144. "Right (are) Thy testimonies to eternity; make me to understand and I shall live." "Testimonies"—the moral law.

The moral law will command the assent of rational minds forever. It is eternally right; right in an absolute sense; right in its accordance with the highest moral taste; right and faithful in the results that flow from obedience, throughout eternity. The judgments of passion and prejudice and self interest are but for the moment. The conscience is often warped, but the law is eternally right. It is the standard of right. It is that by which conscience corrects itself and educates itself before perfect works of art. Its dictate is "do this and live, disobey and die." Life is the result of obedience, not merely because by obedience we are delivered from death as the extra punishment of an offended God, but because the commandments of the moral law are a true source of life if obeyed. Acts of obedience are acts of the higher life and naturally result in life as disobedience, likewise naturally, results in death. Hard would it be for us if that law, which the final result of the ages approves, should be attained only through the experience of the ages. Even if it were given to us in letter, it would be worth little to us if the long experience of the ages were necessary to understand it. But this is not so. It was given to us in letter by the infinite mind which comprehends all the ages, and our souls made to chord with that infinite experience, so that all men naturally confess and approve the right. But we have need to pray with the psalmist "make me to understand," for while we accept and admire a general moral principle. It is in the application of it to the details of life that we are deceived and fall into sin. The most intense obedience becomes the intensest disobedience. As St. Paul says, sin used the commandment to deceive him and so he was slain. We need that the Giver of the commandment should use the commandment to enlighten us and to make us live.

KOPH.

Verse 145. "I have called with a whole heart; answer me Jehovah; Thy statutes will I keep."

The omission of the object of the verb "call," especially since it is found in the next verse, seems to direct attention to the simple act of calling, as in Ps. 116: 2. The point made is not that he calls on Jehovah, but that he calls at all, and especially that he calls with his whole heart. That the psalmist is in difficulty and danger is manifest throughout this stanza. But his mind has been troubled about the manner of his calling. He feels that he has not called as he should. Now he says "I call whole heartedly." The omission of "my" confines the attention still more markedly to the simple call itself. What is this calling with the whole heart? It is an unreserved call. I might call a man in for a purpose. "Come in" I would say, yet I might very soon wish him to go away. I need his special help, but I do not need him. A true call on God in the highest sense, summons Him without any reservations. It calls Him to the soul to stay there forever, and to reign there as God, in all the vast meaning of the word. This verse seems to be the expression of a soul which has conquered its indifference or repugnance and says: "At last, I call with a whole heart." There will be something involved in such utterances as this, something different in each individual case. In one it will imply the passing away of a guilty dread; in another the giving up of a sinful desire or practice; in another (as here) the submission of the human will to the Divine will. This last is sometimes the hardest of all. The "statutes" of God which he here engages to keep, do not mean the "law" as it appeals to the rational and moral man, but the expression of the arbitrary will of God which orders without assigning any reason for those orders. Dreadful is the state of that soul, which, conscious that it needs God, is also conscious that it is unwilling to submit to God—to obey His will *ex animo*—for that is the meaning of

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keeping His statutes. God will never accept constraint of ourselves for whole hearted service.

Verse 146. "I have called Thee—save me—and I will observe Thy testimonies."

In the preceding verse the desire expressed is to enter into relations with God—relations before broken or imperfect. "I call," he says, "answer me"; not answer me by doing something for me as is the usual signification of the phrase. But answer in personal response—in whatsoever of supernatural reply that we may call communion with God. At least this is the poetic form. In this verse his mind is full of his danger and of Him as a helper upon whom he calls. Instead of saying, "I call," he says, "I call Thee"; instead of saying "answer me," he cries "save me." Truly there is an order in this. The bar that often prevents the souls cry for help is the consciousness of broken relations with God. That last communion reestablished, then comes the cry of faith for help, "Save me." The deliverance that the psalmist asks for is indicated in verse 150. He is surrounded by enemies and is in danger from them. It is a touching exhibition of the trials of young Solomon's position—this cry "save me." He must often have seemed about to be swept away by those who were striving to catch all that was promised to him by God out of his hand. But there is that in the last clause which indicates a sense of sin; as in the preceding verse, he resolves to submit to God's will; here he resolves to be more than ever careful and conscientious in the keeping of the moral law. The cry for salvation to be a true cry must be accompanied with, yea half-inspired by the decision to obey God's holy will—to strive after holiness. Sometimes the prayer for help to God, is restrained by the consciousness that we only desire God's will to be done in helping us, and together with the prayer for help comes a striving after a higher life. "Of what use" we feel, "is it for us to be saved from external danger, if our better self—our soul is dead to all the glorious life for

which it was created." In this point of view this utterance of the psalmist becomes the utterance of every child of God, who finds it in his heart to ask God for help. And even if he has not human enemies that he knows of, still let him be well aware, that his deliverance must be not only from himself and his sins, but from the power of an evil spiritual world, that ever surrounds and ever wars against him.

Verse 147. "I have come before (Thee) in the (morning) twilight and cry to Thee, for Thy words do I wait."

The construction would be quite clear were it not for the preposition "in." Without it "anticipate the twilight" or "meet the twilight" would mean. "I rise at the morning twilight." That the preposition is used significantly, however, is plain from its disuse in the next verse. Yet most interpreters try to do away with its significance by supplying the verb rise, as if it were, "I anticipate to rise"—I rise early and so there would then be no reason for the use of the preposition. It is better to supply as object of the verb the pronoun "Thee," which indeed is almost forced upon us by the preceding context. Or without understanding any object we might translate, "I present myself in the twilight." The verb has often the meaning of "meet" also (with "face") come into the presence of a person, before whom we stand as before an object. In Ps. 88: 14 we have "come before Thee" and we have, in verse 145, an example of the significant omission of the object pronoun. Indeed if we give the verb this construction we have a curious uniformity in this stanza. The first two verses begin with the verb "call," first without, then with the object "Thee." The next two begin with the verb "come before" with the object "Thee," omitted in the first instance, and supplied in the second. It is harder to say what the significance of the omission or why he speaks at all of the morning twilight unless he pleads this as a proof of his sincerity, and a reason, why, therefore, God should hear his prayer. This is thor-

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oughly artless and may be made lyric by the consideration that he also encourages himself by the thought of his praying in the morning twilight. It is congruous to earnestness and therefore can become part of his cry to God; just as bowing the knees, prostration, or sackcloth and ashes. These are all but utterances of what in the case of some, would be done in silence. We must remember that this is not silent but vocal prayer. It is not self-forgetful. The thought of himself is rarely absent from the psalmist. This is the utterance of a servant of God, but of a highly self-conscious one. He is filled also with the thought that he is in the presence of God; and the surrounding circumstances—the twilight, etc.,—join to impress him with the feeling that he is performing an act of much solemn service. "I am standing before Thee," he says. This solemn gathering up of the soul for the meeting of the great King in His state, it is well for the child of God often to perform. We should not always come in haste before Him, not always familiarly. God is our Friend and Father, but He is as well the Lord of heaven and earth. "I present myself," he says, and "I cry" as if his mind was not so much occupied with what he cried for as with the mere fact of his calling on God. And to this corresponds the last clause—he waits not for "Thy word," that is Thy promise, but "for Thy words." Here we have set forth the waiting servant. He presumes not to dictate at all to the great Being in whose presence he stands. He does not so much as refer to His word of promise, to hold Him to that. He waits to hear whatever He may please to say, to receive whatever He may please to give. The last clause corresponds to "answer me," in the first verse, "give me words in reply," "I wait for Thy words." Nothing is more unexpected than a word, who can prophesy it? Who can prophesy the words of God? Yet we know that they will be words worthy of Him, instinct with love and providential care, and also of power, for His words are Himself. Better than any provi-



sion that we may make for the future is it to wait for the words of God. For "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Alexander remarks about the augmented form of the second verb, that some grammarians consider it to denote motion towards. Cry to, or cry towards, gives the impression of entering a presence; here may be the reason for the omission of the object.

Verse 148. "My eyes anticipate the watches to muse of Thy promise."

The "watches" divided the night, they were properly intervals of time, but came to mean the time of changing the watch. This verse states that the psalmist is kept awake at night by thinking on the promise of God. He is awake at the turning of the watch. His eyes meet the watch as it is coming. Alexander explains the verse, thus: "Before the stated hours of vigil he is awake and ready for devout meditations." This can hardly be called happy. For the word "vigil" implies that the watches were set for religious purposes; and it destroys the poetry by substituting vague "devout meditation for 'to muse of Thy promise.'" The psalmist is in trouble, in danger, in need, if we allow the context to influence the interpretation. He lies awake at night thinking of the promise that God has given, trying to exercise faith in it, trying to encourage himself in it, pleading it with God, hoping for immediate fulfillment. At the same time we may well suppose that such a time of silent striving and meditation must have had its happy moment. By musing on the promise he must, many a time have been filled with joyous hope or, what is better, with a blessed sense that God's present ordering is best, insert, full of love and pregnant with victory. Note the advance in "muse of Thy promise," upon, "wait for Thy words."

Verse 149. "My voice hear according to Thy loving kindness, O, Jehovah, according to Thy judgments quicken me."

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This whole stanza is gathered up in one pleading tone and may be said to be a continued act of prayer. It is hardly the utterance of a bold faith. Something of distance from God is preserved. And yet faith is here and that of a high quality. The attitude is that of leaving one's interests in God's hands—and waiting on Him. Certainly it suggests the idea of one who is powerless to act in his own defense, whose sole help is in God. The peril is evidently very great, and yet only two verses contain direct petitions for help, verse 45 and this verse. There is, as it were, a certain inaction in the presence of his enemies. The fact is, his mind is more taken up with God than with his peril. And yet there is confidence and hope. He "muses" on the promise, (verse 148), He waits for God's words. He simply gazes (verse 150) on those who are coming against him, and simply realizes (verse 151), the presence of the Divine Helper. There is little crying to God, no panic; there seems to be a feeling that he will, he must be helped. He is standing in the presence of God and he cannot be destroyed there. God is near and therefore there need be no fear, even if his malignant enemies are very near. In verse 152 he seems to draw strength from the spirituality of the ten commandments. There is no feeling of merit with God to originate or enhance this confidence. Here, in this verse, we see the appeal made to God's loving kindness. This may fairly be understood to imply demerit on his part. In love towards him he asks to be saved from death (for that is what the expression must mean), but in judgment towards his enemies. "According to Thy judgments," i. e., after the manner that Thou judgest." These enemies are unjust to me, through me they strike at the good—even Thy cause. Deal now with them as is Thy way to deal, as the great Judge of heaven and I shall be saved.

Verse 150. "Near have drawn those pursuing wicked devices, from Thy law they go far off."

“Wicked devices.” The etymology of the word implies carefully prepared plans of evil. The statement that they draw near implies that these devices are directed, at least in the first place, against himself. But the expression is intentionally vague, so to leave room for and to suggest that the evil these men contrive respects more than himself. Alexander in place of wicked devices translates “crime,” which has the advantage of suggesting something of public interest, in the evil machinations of the psalmist’s enemies. “Mischief” is not only too vague but suggests just the opposite of what is really meant—something puckish, impish, irrational or at least thoughtless form of evil. This evil has a deep purpose, not merely to injure a single person, but to catch away from him certain advantages—to supplant him. And not only that but to thwart a great policy, political and ecclesiastical. And this corresponds to the last clause—“from Thy law they go far off.” This last is a meiosis, a great deal less is said than is meant. The fact is in their drawing nigh the psalmist they are doing their utmost against the “law” which represents the whole movement in advance initiated by God through David. This is what is principally in the mind of the psalmist—not his danger but the danger to the law, and therefore it is an implied argument of urgency for God to interfere. It is as if he had said “this is Thy cause, Thou wilt see to it, and it will be for Thy honour. Here we see the connection with the preceding verse. “Thy judgments” suggest punishments and deliverances upon a vast scale and of great public interest. In crushing those who were drawing near to destroy him, God would be doing something of a moment beyond the welfare of a single individual or the bringing to naught of a petty intrigue. This strengthens the impression that the authorship and circumstances of this psalm have not been misapprehended and that the psalmist’s joys and sorrows were of national import, and are of far reaching meaning to the children of God, who, like the author, are

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heirs to the promised throne, and who wait for it in training and trial, as well as in temptation and danger.

Verse 151. "Near art Thou, Jehovah, and all Thy commandments are truth."

"Thou drawest nigh, Jehovah." The connection with the previous verse is manifest. With the approach of enemies to injure, Jehovah approaches to aid. If he does not appear Himself in person, He appears by the commandments He has given. "Commandments," as we have often stated, is God's law as guiding action. "All Thy commandments are truth. The guide posts 'Thou hast placed to mark out my way are true guide posts. Following them I am safe. Following them I am led near to Thee. His adherence to the law brings his enemies upon him; his adherence to God's directions brings him into the scope of safety, into the presence of God. "Are truth"; this does not mean merely that they are true; (the term is a concrete one); they are the truth itself, that is, the reality. The moment we begin to move in that path upon which God's commandments set our feet, we begin to arrive. No matter how far from the Celestial City we are when we begin our pilgrimage, we are in its suburbs at once. The earnest and foretastes that we have are of the very nature of the blessedness at the end. The Interpreter whose house stood at the beginning of the way, is the Blessed One who receives at the last. The Lord who calls Himself the Way, calls Himself at the same moment, the Truth. There is no clearer sight of Heavenly realities than the sight of Him, and Heaven itself holds nothing more precious.

Verse 152. "Long have I known from Thy testimonies (themselves) that Thou, unto eternity, hast founded them."

"Testimonies," moral law, especially the ten commandments. There is here something which goes to prove that our explanation of the term "testimonies" is correct. The precepts of the moral law are peculiarly self evidencing.

The soul in its healthy state sees at once that they are right, and not only so but that they are right forever. This impression the psalmist has, and that not for a moment by a happy gleam of insight, or by being attuned to them for a little time by a flash of high wrought feeling, but he has known it long. It is an experience of his soul—a direct intuition that these tetsimonies are not for any temporary purpose, any conjuncture of circumstances, which, however enduring, must at last change; but forever. It is impossible for him to conceive of God's repealing these laws, they must always be fulfilled throughout eternity. The only change that can come to any one of them is the broadening of its scope. It is in that way, that it adjusts itself to eternal realities. No matter how large and liberal of view they may be who dwell in the eternal world, they will never look upon God's testimonies as narrow, nor upon those as narrow and bigoted who in the spirit obey them. Many a true act of fidelity and faith has an element of the ludicrous about it, because the form that it takes is distorted through misapprehension. The pilgrim fathers sent out an expedition to search for a good landing place which was benighted on Saturday evening and remained all that night and Sunday night, on a low little island, exposed and unsheltered in a cold, pelting storm. They did so because in their narrow view they had no right to work enough on the Sabbath to get themselves into better quarters. Now, of course, there was in that an element of the literal, unspiritual, legal and slavish. If there was only that in it, it would doubtless appear ridiculous to the enlightened society of the upper world. If they did it because they dared not do otherwise, or because custom was a law to them, or the fear of their fellows' judgment, then they did not do a noble thing. If they did it through the fear and love of God, thinking He had commanded such a strict observance, then their act, so far forth noble, showed a pitiful conception of their God and of Christian liberty and discretion. This

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word "long" implies a quiet consistent course of life, for that is necessary to a quiet and long continued intuition of the character of the testimonies of God. A long intuition has the force of geometrical progress in strengthening the impression. There is no knowledge like that with which the soul knows that the moral law of God is an eternal law. And he who keeps God's testimonies may well feel that he takes hold on eternity. He who founds his fortunes on them "lays his beams in music" and may be assured that the long flight of ages cannot bring harm to him or his. This verse seems like all the verses of this stanza, to be written in a spirit of confident repose in God—a feeling that because God is, He must be safe. He seems to think that the main condition of safety is to be in relations of communion with God, and to properly wait on Him. There are really only two petitions in the stanza and one (verse 149) actually amounts to a claim. In this verse the psalmist seems to feel that the very eternity of the "testimonies" ensures his deliverance and safety. He, by obedience, shares in their everlastingness.

### RESH.

Verse 153. "See my sufferings and deliver me; for Thy law I forget not."

Perowne says, "look upon," or "look at" would be better, for "look upon" implies both sympathy and action, which do not appear to be indicated here, but rather attention to, and scrutiny of the psalmist's sufferings. The force of the word seems to be this. Either the suffering is too great for explanation in words, or too obscure, or else it has wearied out body and mind to that degree that he cannot make himself utter forth a detailed supplication. He comes to God as to a physician, who, at a glance can see, what is the disease, and can understand more about it than the patient himself. Taking into consideration the next clause, the tone of the stanza and the larger context of

the psalm, we understand this trouble to be because of unjust, wicked and even traitorous enemies; his enemies, largely because he is God's friend. Yet we must always understand the verses so that they may be the utterance of any child of God, and if this is to be the case something of sin must mingle with his trouble. The whole book of Psalms is full of outcry to God because of unrighteous oppression. But at the same time the whole book is full of confession of sin, and the two are inextricably mingled. It is sin that almost always is the heaviest part of the burden that the psalmist has to bear. So in this verse we must not exclude the idea of wrong doing. When the psalmist says "see my affliction," he lays himself and all his involvements open before God, not merely as a summary confession, but as confiding to His fatherly love, glad that He knows his errors, weaknesses and sins. It is not merely "see what I am suffering for Thee," but "see my affliction, sound the whole depths of it. I rejoice to have Thee know all even if it be to my shame. I rejoice to have a Father to whom I can reveal my shame since He can remedy even that." But at the same time this is the utterance of a true servant of the Highest. He comes to God with the burden of trials, perplexities, anxieties, difficulties and dangers, feeling that they are not unmixed with sin, conscious that the very mistakes which have brought so large a part of them on him are not innocent mistakes. And now how great is the comfort of such a one to feel that he does, after all, desire to and serve his Master. "For I have not forgotten Thy law." How it helps his prayer assuring him that he is not a hypocrite. How it encourages him to pray when he thinks that he is worth something to God, that he can look forward to future service if he is delivered, not because of strong resolutions born of sorrow and gratitude, but because his past tendency has been towards service. If the young Solomon wrote this psalm, he must have felt a peculiar thrill when he came to the word "law" for the

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word was strong with God as an argument for his deliverance, for it was the law of Jehovah, the gracious cult—one might say the cult of grace, that Solomon was appointed to confirm and develop.

Verse 154. "Strive my strife and redeem me; as to Thy word, quicken me."

In the preceding verse he lays himself and his woe before God for investigation and for deliverance. Here very much the same tone of weariness finds expression. "Strive my strife," "fight for me." This indicates the nature of the trouble that oppresses him. It is the opposition of enemies. This also takes the word "quicken" out of the mere mental and moral sphere and gives it an objective meaning—save my life. "As to Thy word." This is generally translated "according to Thy word." In saying this last which is so often done in this psalm another preposition is used. The word "promise" to Solomon was the throne, but again and again has the psalmist pleaded the promise as securing another good on the ground that the promise implied it. It may seem an over refinement to make the expression here mean anything else. But the expression is strikingly different, and when we consider how wayworn and discouraged the believer sometimes becomes, how pressed nigh to being overwhelmed with the trials and dangers, with the temptation of the evil one and the troubles that he and his bring upon us, may not this change of expression betoken a state of mind in which the Christian's great hope, while not given up, becomes dim, and the present anguish is very pressing, when strength seems about to give way and we are about to be crushed. Then instead of appealing to the great hope that all troubles may be swept away, we ask for help in our troubles in order that we may keep fast hold of the great hope. "Thou hast promised me a throne and eternal glory, at least perform part of Thy promise, and deliver me from my pressing misery. It certainly suits the air of exhaustion and fainting struggle that pervades this stanza.



Verse 155. "Far from the wicked (is) salvation, because Thy statutes they seek not."

Salvation it may be presumed is what the wicked seek for. Salvation, that is, what they understand to be salvation, all men seek for. The crowd on Palm Sunday hailed Christ as the bringer of salvation, and yet they desired not the salvation He brought. They desired a partial salvation that contradicted itself. We must have a whole salvation or none at all. The wicked desire to be saved only from certain evils that they understand. But true salvation keeps out of their reach like a rainbow pursued. "Seek" in the second clause, explains "far" in the first. The wicked are far from salvation though they seek it, because they do not seek for more, than the attainment of a certain limited good. If they only sought God's statutes—his priceless orders, in other words if they only sought Him, He would be near them (verse 151) and so salvation would be near. "Salvation" may mean any kind of deliverance or blessing. The salvation sought by the psalmist is deliverance from his enemies, from the tyranny and tyrannical temptations of men, who are seeking for liberty, power and self gratification by trying to thwart God's purposes for good and to crush him who has been appointed to be His minister. These tyrannical oppressors of the psalmist had the name of being free, he had the name of being persecuted and despised. And yet it is remarkable that, pained and tried as he is and exposed to fearful dangers, he looks upon his enemies with a kind of pity as upon those who in their very attack are seeking a salvation which they can never attain.

"The sensual and the dark rebel in vain,  
 Slaves by their own compulsion in mad game  
 On their bars and manacles they wear the name  
 Of freedom graven on a heavier chain."

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If we do not seek the orders of God we put ourselves in the way of the orders of men; and what orders are they?

Verse 156. "Many are Thy compassions Jehovah, according to Thy judgments quicken me."

This is something different from saying "Thy compassion is great"; the point is that God's compassion is manifold. It is not always the man of strong and deep compassion that can sympathize. The compassion of men is narrow. One man may have a sympathy with you—a fellow feeling on one matter, and yet be totally unable to understand and so compassionate other troubles. One reason why women are more compassionate than men is because their sympathies are wider. The father may sympathize with and feel compassion for his daughter in any physical or intellectual want, but what does he know of the cravings of a young girl's heart. And even the compassions of a mother often fail her daughter, because she lacks knowledge or else is narrow hearted. Man's compassions reach but a little way; they are not multiform enough to meet all the carying states of mind and heart of their fellows. God's compassions are manifold exceedingly. "According to Thy judgments" plainly indicates that he desires that God should do justice to him and upon his enemies, and does not permit us to give "quicken" the meaning of "rouse spiritually." It must mean deliver my life. And yet the meaning we have given to "many" would indicate more than one kind of trouble to be delivered from—not only death but something else—many other things besides. The strict meaning can be kept however, by considering that the psalmist mentions the multiform nature of God's compassions, to enable him to feel that even such a one as he may find compassion. "Thou dost compassionate many sorts of people, high and low, rich and poor, good and bad, then I too may find compassion." Or the psalmist may say to himself, "I ought to stand up and fight, I ought not to fear. If I was courageous I would be in no

danger. But I lack courage, I cannot fight; God can feel for a poor timid one, though he is so strong. Thy compassions are manifold save me." The soul may believe that there is no real danger, and yet may fear the danger all the same, like a timid woman who knows she is foolish, and yet appeals to one who will not rebuke her foolish fears. Take for example a spiritual assault. "Resist," the apostle says, and that is the privilege of the Christian, but he is not shut up to it. He who rules over all spirits as irresistibly as over physical nature, can yet sympathize with, and have compassion for the weakness and weariness of one who has tried unavailingly to resist. Even though such a soul may blame itself for its weakness, it may appeal confidently to God's justice against its enemies. They deserve rebuke, and for itself, justice often expresses itself by compassion. "And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man," (Matt. 1: 19). And then our Blessed Lord, under whose especial guardianship we are, remembers that, He was in the garden, weak and wearied and well nigh over watched, needing the ministry of an angel to give Him comfort and to add to His strength.

Verse 157. "Many (are) my persecutors; and oppressors; from Thy testimonies I decline not."

Many and therefore mighty. There is a cumulative force in oppositions and trials that are numerous. And number is also daunting out of proportion to its real power. "Many" may also mean many kinds. This is suggested by the preceding verse. If all our adversaries were of one kind we might learn how to deal with them, and how to endure them. But it puzzles the wits and strains the temper to be tried by many sorts of men and in many ways. The trials of a housekeeper with servants is in point here. Hardly anything is more harassing to mind and nerves. The words "persecutors and oppressors" are happily chosen. The first indicates one who makes it his sleepless aim to annoy and injure you. The second, one who has acquired power

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over you and uses it to annoy and injure you. If we may continue the illustration of the housekeeper we would instance an influential guest in a boarding house who is inimical to its head as a combination of a persecutor and an oppressor. "Testimonies"—the moral law. "I decline not." I do not swerve. I am not forced or induced to go in the least aside from what seems to my conscience right, notwithstanding these oppressors and persecutors. These may gain their aim if they can induce or force me to some compliance in a matter they may think desirable. I resist, but I must be careful how I resist. I am asked to do something that infringes upon one commandment, but I may refuse in such a way as to infringe upon another. I must not forget the law of kindness; I must not treat them unjustly.. I must not show wrong feeling of any kind. It is a great attainment to resist our enemies and the Lord's and still to love them. And yet it is very easy to "decline" to yield. The force of the temptation is to be measured not merely by the number and variety of the persecutors and oppressors, but by the smallness of the concession demanded. It is hard to make a servant of God retrace his steps and give up his service, but it is quite another matter to make him swerve, and to effect that swerving when the persecutors and oppressors of the world set themselves to accomplish it. They will be satisfied with that little concession; it does not involve anything essential; it is only a form, a manner of doing a thing, the softening of an expression, an omission. But God's servants should remember that a swerving aside is a switching off. It is a beginning to leave His service altogether. Yield not an inch should be our motto. The correlation of the clauses implies that the persecution and oppression would cease at once if he only would swerve, but he feels that peace would be bought at too heavy a price. To the hasty reader, the latter clause may appear but a self complacent and perhaps self righteous assertion of the psalmist's merits. It is however to be regarded not

merely as describing his action in the present, but as expressing the firmest resolution for the future. The present in common parlance often has this force.

Verse 158. "I see traitors and am filled with loathing, (those) who Thy saying keep not."

By traitors does not mean those merely who have treacherous dispositions, but those who are manifestly acting treacherously by their failing to keep God's "saying." There is no manifestation of fear of the traitors, they do not seem to be aiming at himself. Or if these traitors are the persecutors and oppressors of the previous verse, any feeling of fear or dread is swallowed up in disgust at their treachery. His disgust comes to the aid of his conscience and causes him to cling more closely to the service they have forsaken (see verse 159). "Saying" is the promise of God. In the case of the Jews it is easy to see how failure to look to this promise as their only hope, and allow it to govern their lives involved broken faith. They were God's people, whose very choice involved a promise. Their nationality and patriotism consisted in an adherence to that promise. They had become participants in the partial realization of that promise that their national life afforded. Every tie of honor, loyalty and gratitude bound them to a close adherence to that promise, and to labor for its full realization. These men were labouring against that realization when from the pettiest and most contemptible of motives—"the shrieks of locality"—they secretly strove to undermine David's great political aims and theocratic policy. Many disloyal men have been still noble and honourable, they were contemptible and disgusting.

Verse 159. "See how I love Thy precepts Jehovah; according to Thy loving kindness quicken me."

Both here and in verse 156, any idea of spiritual rousing seems to be excluded from the petition of the second clause. "According to Thy judgments" (verse 156) could not mean rouse me spiritually after the fashion of Thy vin-

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dictive judgments; and hear the petition—quicken me—is preceded by the statement of the psalmist that he is spiritually alive, at least filled with love for God's precepts. "Precepts" are—the law as work assigned. He loves the duties God has appointed for him because he loves God, not because he likes them. This verse is truly lyric. It is not, "according to Thy judgments"—as I deserve because I love, but according to Thy loving kindness. He pleads his love not as a merit, but as something that will move God's compassions. "Permit me not to be taken from the work I love." So in verse 156 he says "according to Thy judgments," but that is preceded by assigning God's compassions as a reason why His judgments should awake. Love of God's work does not constrain God to continue us in it. It is of His mercy that we are allowed to exercise our highest aspirations. We can however appeal to God's wont—he does exercise compassion in this way.

Verse 160. "The head of Thy word (is) truth, and to eternity (is) every judgment of Thy righteousness."

The word "head" in Hebrew has much the same significations as the word in English. It indicates what is the most striking and important characteristic of a thing. "Truth" is not truthfulness, but reality, fact in its largest sense, and the meaning of the statement is that the most striking and important characteristic of the promise is its consistency with truth and fact. The promise to Abraham had this characteristic. It was no act of partiality. It was in accordance with God's duty as Creator towards all His creatures. The calling of Abraham was but the confiding to him and his race of a ministry for the salvation of mankind. It is not inconsistent with the great fact of God's Fatherhood as Creator. Again the promise of Solomon to the throne was no act of partiality, that too, was "truth," and the psalmist, (if Solomon must have been strengthened in his reliance on the promise, by the knowledge that not for his own sake but for the sake of his people he was chosen. He could

feel that it was what ought to be, what the long ages would not discredit, that it was for his people's best interests and that their best interests would subserve higher interests yet. The promise of the Gospel to the sinner has many characteristics. It is gracious, it is beneficent and compassionate, but its most striking and important characteristic is its accordance with the truth of things. The "head" fact of the Gospel is the death of the son of God that great submission to inexorable fact and truth on the part of God. So important is this that St. Paul says that Christ was sent to make an exhibition on the cross of God's adherence to truth in his plan for the salvation of men (Rom. 3:25 and 26,) to show that He could be inexorably just and yet be able to exercise to the utmost His infinite pity and loving kindness towards the sinner. All this is strengthened if we give to the second clause its correlative office. There could hardly be a stronger assertion of the fact that the judgements of God's righteousness are in accordance with the truth of things, than to say that they are for eternity—that they will never be reversed. And this reinforces the first clause when we consider the promise to Abraham was a judgment upon the nations around. The promise to Solomon was a judgment upon his persecutors and slanderers and all the tribe of plotters who would thwart God's purpose in the calling of David to the throne, and retard the movement of his people towards the goal of grace. And may it not be that the salvation of those who will be saved is on its other side the condemnation of those who will be lost. If so who can complain that it is "to eternity?"

#### SHIN.

Verse 161. "Princes persecuted me without cause—and at Thy words my heart is awed." This is one of the verses that give a personal, individual form to the psalm, and seem to require the ascertaining of the author and, at

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least, guiding the interpretation by his peculiar character and circumstances. The plural number strongly indicates Solomon. It was a league of princes, and that not trying to oppose, to thwart, but trying to injure maliciously. Certainly he whom princes leagued against was not one of the little ones on earth. They could not crush him, they could only persecute, annoy and injure. "Without cause" does not mean that they had no reason for it. There was reason enough. There was reason why his brothers and their satellites should pursue Solomon. The very fact that he persisted in his claim as against them, or with his claim conceded did not allow himself to be used to thwart the Davidic policy, civil and ecclesiastical, was enough to rouse malevolence. The persecutions of these princes consisted probably in false accusations—not only false, but insincere. Their action was merely factious. They could not pursue their main aim; they had failed in that, and were now striving to injure on false pretense. Our Lord was treated in the same way. His real offence could not be presented before the tribunal that tried him. He was persecuted without cause. And so it is with every child of God, the enemy almost always gets up a false issue in order that he may persecute. The words imply intense, sleepless manevolence ever watching and ready for the assault. Naturally the psalmist would be occupied with the thought of his danger. Few persons, even the most hardy, have been able to resist a constant wear on the nerves like this. Men who could stand up against one great danger, one great strain, will at last break down under a continual pressure, like a string that could very well stand a great strain, but would, in a little while, be worn asunder. It is not said that he is calm under the trial. He is filled with another feeling—awe at the words of God. Two awes cannot be felt at once. The superior must predominate and cast out the other, and especially when one is of such a nature that it contradicts the other. The fear of man contradicts the fear of God,



and vice versa. The words must, of course, mean the written word of God. There seems to be an imaginative conception of God as a prince on a throne, and the psalmist standing in His presence and hearing him speak. It might be going too far (although the strict correlation would seem to require it) to make the psalmist conceive the words of these haughty persecutors, and slanderers, and wicked opposers, God's messages to the Christians. We may be striving with all our might to serve God, but sin mingles in our working. Pride, and self seeking, and an unloving spirit mar our work and make it offensive to others, or at least, give others an occasion against us; and one of God's ways to recall us to ourselves and to consider our ways, is to allow our faults to bring punishment on us. We may well then hear and be awed by God's words in the words of our persecutors and slanderers. Well for the church had she heard God's words in the shout of "Allah" which announced the Mohammedan attack! Well for her had she seen in it not merely a new and terrible danger, to be self-righteously resisted, but a reproof and warning from God, to repent, to cast her idols to the moles and bats, and to turn to Him in spiritual worship and love.

Verse 162. "I (am) rejoicing over Thy saying, like one finding much spoil."

The strict present strongly asserts the constant habit of his mind with reference to the promise of God—the special promise to the psalmist. We must suppose a special promise or the poetry becomes too vague to have a personal root. At the same time the great promise of God to His people must be meant or the psalm lacks its poetry and thus becomes unfit for the general use of God's people. If this is a promise to an expectant king, then we see how the special promise could be a general promise. And here is made the transition to the case of the child of God in any age. For all Israel, with its economy and history, is but

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the germ of a better economy and covenant. Thus, even the psalmist, in his rejoicing over the personal promise to him, could rise to higher and higher spheres of rejoicing as its effects widen to his contemplation like concentric rings in the water when a stone is dropped into it. The stress of the simile in the second clause may be made to depend on the word "spoil." Then the intensity of the rejoicing over the promise is measured by the intensity with which one would rejoice to find unexpectedly a treasure. But the stress may be laid on "finding." Then construing the participle the same way, "I am constantly rejoicing, like one who is constantly finding." And this interpretation of the second clause is needed if we make the first a strict present. Constant rejoicing implies constant finding—constant novelty and surprise. And here it may be said that this holds true of all truth, of all fact, indeed. We grow familiar with the most astonishing fact, the most wondrous statement of truth. Feeling is evanescent in its nature and can only be fed by novelty. The fact that feeling towards a person is permanent is nothing against this; for a person is the source of constant novelty. The object of love is an ever-changing object, it follows that if we would ever rejoice over the promise we must ever find new things in it. And to do that we must constantly apply it to our ever-varying circumstances and carry it out into the breadth of all things. Thus the presence (v. 161) of persecutors and slanderers would tend to make the promise ever fresh and new.

Verse 163. "Falsehood I hate and abhor; Thy Law I love.

"Falsehood is not so much untruthfulness as the thing that is untrue—the thing that promises much and leads to nothing or worse. This interpretation of the word agrees with that of "Law" in the second clause—the concrete promise of the old cult which in its own self realizes so much and holds forth so much more. "Hate" has reference to

the spirit in which this false thing is held forth for acceptance and "abhor" is used with reference to the thing itself and its results. The lures used, the baits proposed are falsehood, they will afford no real advantage, and the system which is wished to advance by the compliance of the psalmist is falsehood also. The law on the contrary yields immediate and personal advantages while holding forth future blessings to himself through the blessing upon all God's people. He, therefore, loves it in the sense of liking it. It is, besides, an expression of love throughout—the love of God for his people and, therefore, also he loves it. These two meanings of the word love correspond to "abhor" and "hate" of the first clause. Then again, the system of the law upheld and would develop—the law in its fuller extension of the time of David was truth—tended to real and blessed results therefore he loved it. This verse is a good example of the correlation of clauses. The strength of the expressions of the first clause should be deeply considered by us. They are not the impulsive utterance of deep emotion, but the well-considered expressions proper to the servant of God of all ages. We ought to demand of ourselves the same hate and abhorrence of sin—of sin considered as "falsehood," for that is the special meaning here. This may well be after we have experienced the effects of that sin after yielding to temptation. But this clause is not to be taken alone. "Hate" and "abhorrence" to be worthy in its character of an enduring defence against temptation, must be accompanied by love to the law—that is, love of the means of grace—all the ordinances of the Christian cult. Else it is a mere fright or disgust that will vanish with the remembrance of the disagreeable occurrence with the renewal of the temptation. And this love for the means of grace is necessary to ennoble this hate and abhorrence, to make it a true hatred of sin and not merely of the sinner and certain of his acts that have been injurious and to prevent its running into bigotry and intolerance or mere revengeful

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feeling, as has been the case too much on the part of Protestants toward the Roman Catholics. Well for the Church of God if such a holy hate and abhorrence of sin could pervade its members. The tone nowadays is rather one of sympathy with sin. Prisons are rapidly becoming hospitals, and the sword that the magistrate bears for the defence of society he is not permitted to use upon the offender.

Verse 164. "Seven times a day I praise Thee, for the judgments of Thy righteousness." "Seven times," that is very often—indicates strong reason for praise. In v. 62 he rises at midnight to thank God for the judgments of this righteousness—so strong is his thankfulness that it disturbs his rest. Here it breaks in upon all the cares and occupations of the day; and in spite of all the other things that demand attention. Night and day he thinks of God's judgments. It may not be hypocritical to notice that thankfulness at night, when despondency is apt to fill the heart, and praise during the day, when so many objects claim our attention and trust, is peculiarly strong. This whole stanza seems to be full of the presence of God and acknowledgment to Him. And in these first four verses, though there seems to be a reference to the presence of enemies, the rejoicing of v. 162 is stimulated by that presence, the hate and abhorrence of v. 163 indicates that presence, and here his praise to God for His judgments has its root in his danger, "Paradise is under the shadow of swords." The judgments of the past, the terrible overthrows, the startling deliverances, are his protection. They make him safe, they prevent his enemies from doing what they wish. They also make him secure. He may feel safe when he thinks that the Judge of all the earth will do right. He will intervene if there is any need of intervention to prevent His promise failing. Or, perhaps, that last remark is not strict enough, for the masculine form for righteousness is used, and judgment of His righteousness does not mean judgments for the purpose of carrying out faithfully His engagements; but

rather judgments that are in accordance with His righteous character as Ruler and Judge. Rapidly and surely was this confidence in God's judgments justified in the case of the young Solomon. Like a dream past was his painful tutelage and weary sojourn in his father's house. When the time was most critical and all seemed to be lost, he attained at once the summit of his hopes. Happy are they who feel that their enemies are in the wrong, and who can appeal to God's justice to defend them, who dare to say "Judge me, O Lord." We should be ever about our Father's business so that, if we are interrupted therein—(or perhaps it is better to say) we should sanctify our whole lives even its refreshments and enjoyments that we may feel that our paradise is under the shelter of God's sword of justice. We should not be unmindful of the enemies of this world, who ever stand ready to attack him who bears witness for God. Civilization or enlightenment will not shelter us. Our only safety is that God never will permit the "rod of the wicked" to rest "on the lot of the righteous." He will, he is bound to see the right done. Also we should not be unmindful of the evil spiritual enemies that surround us, and think often of the saying of the Saviour, that "the Prince of this world is judged." It may be that the very destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah will yet send a thrill of joy and exultation through our hearts "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

Verse 165. "(There is much peace to the lovers of Thy law, and there is to them no stumbling block.)" The connection between this verse and the one before it, is not far to seek. There is one thing that breaks up the security set forth in verse 164, it is sin—let a person feel sinful and it is hard to appeal to God's justice in his behalf, or to wait secure at its exercise. It may, however, be done. David again and again appeals confidently to God's justice

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and claims that he is righteous when at the same time acknowledges that he is not without fault—fault even in the things whereof he is accused. He can rejoice in God's righteous judgments, for his faults are exaggerated by the tongues of enemies. God will judge him fairly. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. Then again, the real fault, in their eyes, was something very different from what they accused him of. He was really reproached for the name of Christ, though accused of a sin. This is what secured him. It enabled him to look to God confidently for defense. He was jealous for God; that brought him into difficulties, that enabled him to be at peace in the midst of them. Still it requires strong faith to overlook our own errors in action or courses of action that are indicated by the highest motives. Now, then, if there is anything that will eliminate errors from our working for God it is the love of God's law. It is love of self that so often smirches our best work, self-seeking, often latent, when we are trying to serve God. Simple and single love will enable one to escape the stumbling blocks that lie in the way of one who would originate, or develop, or carry on a movement that pertains to the economy of God's home. It is mortifying that a man with a great purpose and with great energy should ever have cause to blush and ever seriously be hampered by little faults. Hearty love for the work will make a man meek and single in his aim. It will render a man so far forth as the object of his love, well-nigh perfect. What is true of a servant of God in public station, with reference to public work and work for God is true as well of those whose lives are obscure, and whose work that of private life. If we would have peace, we must avoid sin, and if we would avoid sin we must avoid occasions to sin, not by departing from the life that affords occasion—but by importing into our lives that love which will render temptation no temptation at all. Many stumbling blocks lie in the way of one whose love is not fixed upon his wife. With

every attractive person he meets his affections begin to wander. But if his heart is fixed where his affections are due, temptation of that sort becomes the very reverse of temptation. The eye does not see; the ear does not hear, like Madiline in the Eve of St. Agnes, "hoodwinked by faery fancy," alive only to that which is absent, that which is beyond and above what the eye sees and the ear hears. There is little need for such a person to be careful and cautious.

"Love is an unerring light  
And joy its own security."

The tithing of mint, anise and cummin will never enable us to render acceptable service to God or ever keep us free from sin; questions of caruistry are endless, bottomless and at the last unsolvable, the question of duty is solvable by the judgment which, quickened by love, is unerring. The question of duty is simple and strictly this, and nothing more; and is what I ought to do in this matter in this place, at this time. The moment we begin to lay down abstract principles or rules, difficulties commence. Besides God likes positive characters.

Verse 166. "I hope for Thy salvation. Oh, Jehovah, and Thy commandments I do." The past of the verb is used in both clauses, but it is a past that does not exclude the present or the future. Omitting the consideration of the special force of the tenses, let us look at the correllation of the clauses. It is sufficient to remark that the psalmist is not making a prosaic narrative or setting forth his merits, though in the verse he may take a self-conscious view of the grounds of his peace. As to the clauses we have in them the two extremes of life, the meditative and the practical. One perfects the other; true hope always manifests itself in activity. Hope that palzies exertion is a sham; neither is there any interest taken in what is expected. The psalmist asserts both hope and action with regard to himself, and the

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motive might be to lay down a model, using his own experience as a means of instructing others. Yet the address to Jehovah appears to exclude this. The soul of the psalmist seems to be alone with God. This militates against the idea of his having others in his mind. Unto Jehovah, he may say, "I hope and do, what lack I yet?" Or something either past or future is excluded from the meaning of this tense, this may be a resolve in the form of a mere statement of fact. "I hope in Thy salvation, and Thy commandments I do," that is my fixed state. We have often found this the force of like statements in this psalm, and ordinary speech furnishes many examples of the same sort. For a company of soldiers in a battle to say, "we are going right on," would be to express their determination to fight as strongly as words well could. This may be regarded as a private transaction of the psalmist with God recorded for our benefit, as it is indeed a noun of conduct. There is a great propriety in the use of the word "commandments." It is the law as guiding toward that salvation which is offered to us. The activity of the servant of God in running along the path marked out by the commandments and leading to everlasting salvation, is but an expression of his hope. This "do" answers to "hope," and "commandments" to "salvation." The beginning of salvation is to have the commandments. A clue found is deliverance begun. Hope together with activity, hope expressed by activity, activity lighted up by hope. That sums up the Christian's work in the world.

Verse 167. "My soul observes Thy testimonies and I love them exceedingly."

The peculiarity about the first clauses that it is not said "I observe," but "my soul observes." This self-conscious expression has great force. I might observe God's testimonies by virtue of a resolve. The Pharisees observed God's testimonies in this way, it was without any heartiness, though with the extremity of resolve. When the



psalmist says "my soul observes" he brings into view a force beneath the conscious volition—the feelings, that will propel a man forward, which act with lightning rapidity, and which direct with the most acute discrimination. A man may do a great deal by effort, but when the feelings become enlisted, then alone can the whole man be said to act. What are those feelings? First, fear of God. Second, response of the moral nature to the command. To disobey is going against the soul itself. How easy and to-be-depend-ed-on is the action of a man when his soul is engaged, when it becomes unnatural for him to disobey. And this ought to be the aim of every servant of God, to educate himself towards this. And to ask of God whatever change in him by the Holy Spirit is needed to make it unnatural for him to disobey. Advance in the religious life is not merely the educating and disciplining the volition. Volition is not service. Volition may be heartless. It is when the will is the man that the submission of the will is grateful to our Heavenly Father. In the second clause love is used in the sense of "lie," and the correlation with the first clause is complete. "My soul observes," i. e., "my inclinations tend toward the observance of the commandment? "I love," the commandment. I incline to obey them. Of love proper, terminating on a person there is little in this psalm. Still in a latent way here, as in v. 163, liking of the commandment may be a manifestation of love for the Giver.

Verse 168. "I observe Thy precepts and testimonies because all my ways are before Thee." The first clause is remarkable as being the only clause containing in it two of the terms used to designate the law in this Psalm, namely "precepts"—work assigned, and testimonies—the moral law. This verse presents a detail of the emotional experience summed up in the preceding verse in the expression "my soul." The fear of God explained as one element of that mental attitude is here stated alone. And well will it be for us if we, amid our various mental exercises fail not to exer-

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cise fear towards God as a separate and distinct feeling, and a means to be used to keep us in the right way. We must not rely upon a general cultivation of, or depend on, the general influence of the Holy Spirit, or seek for that alone. Our faith ought to be exercised on single and separate objects or it will become too vague in character to be effective. And surely a place is to be found for that exercise of faith, that realizes the Invisible One before whom all things are naked and open. If we do not we will lose a vivid stimulus to right action and a means of direct appropriation of a special grace. Also, we will be in danger of relying upon the impulses of our own natural hearts, taking unwarrantably for granted the influence of the Holy Spirit. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." Not that a Christian man must walk habitually through fear of the Lord. The psalmist does not here mean to say that this sums up all the motives that he has for the observance of God's precepts and testimonies. When he says, v. 167, "my soul observes," he indicates many others. The verses of this psalm may be considered as the great impulse to service analyzed into its elements for the use of God's people. "All my ways" all that pertains to my activity is before Thy sight, before Thy judgment and before Thy power.

### TAU.

Verse 169. "Let my cry come near before Thee, Jehovah; according to Thy word make me understand."

The figure of a king is indicated here; and as it is a sign of attention and favor to invite a petitioner to come near, so the request is that his "cry" may be permitted to come "near before" Jehovah, since the monarch's ear, once gained, all else will follow. It is remarkable how exclusively, in this Psalm, the appeal is made to God by His covenant name, Jehovah. There is a very great and importunate petition, and claim in the very use of the word. According to the correlation the cry in the first clause interpreted by the pe-

tion in the second, would have cleared up certain mysteries of God's providence. No more speculative interest however is sought here to be gratified, the word "cry" is too strong for that. The psalmist is evidently in difficulty if not in danger. And these troubles are mysterious to him; he cannot see why they have come upon him. Perhaps there was an element of novelty, as well as terror—the opening before him of a new and unexpected sphere of apprehension. So was it with our Lord in the stress of His trial. We are told by Mark that at the entering upon the agony of the garden he was "greatly amazed," and, on the cross, he asked "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And this is often the hardest part of a trial, that it attacks the peace. Hard as it is in itself, the trouble may be borne if we can see its purpose and that it is kind and loving. This seems to be what principally presses upon him; his soul is dark—his peace is disturbed—he does not understand. His petition is that he may understand "according to Thy word," i. e., First, In fulfillment of Thy promise grant me understanding; for, as we have often seen, God fulfills His promise not only at the last, but all along, doing whatever is in accordance with the spirit of the promise. The apostle argues a fortiori from the great gift of the Son of God to the lesser things, not logically, but spiritually implied. And so, we may argue, that the promise that was meant to cheer and make bright at the last, was also meant to cheer and make clear to our minds God's good-will to us throughout our pilgrimage. We can claim whatever is needed to make us understand and can ask that the promise may, of itself, minister understanding to us.

Second. Enable me to see that the promise accords with our present trials.

Third. This is a petition for hastening the fulfillment of the promise. After all, we cannot understand clearly until salvation is revealed. Gleams of understanding we

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can have but full satisfaction we can never hope for until faith is changed to clear vision.

Verse 170. "Let my supplication come before Thee; according to Thy promise deliver me." The form of the first clause is such that one cannot help regarding this verse as a correlative of the preceding. The first noun, according to its etymology, denotes a prayer for grace or favor,—Alexander. This makes the clause answer to the first clause of the preceding verse, which is not so much a petition to be delivered from trouble as from a mind troubled from a loss of clear sense of God's wisdom, and goodness and love, from heavy trials that beset it. "Let this, my earnest desire for a sense of Thy grace and favor, come before Thee. It is curious to notice the difference between this and the preceding verse. The vague word "cry" is replaced by the more definite "supplication." At the same time that "cry" is more vague it is more intense—expresses stronger emotion. And so we have in the former, "come near before" and in the latter, only "come before." The omission of the appeal, "Oh Jehovah," is significant, also, and suitable to the lowered intensity of feeling of v. 170, since the very fact that Jehovah is the covenant God is what makes it some times seem mysterious. The petition in the second clause of v. 169 subordinately includes a prayer for deliverance from trials, but principally seeks for renewed union with God through clearer light upon His ways with His people. In this verse the petition is directly to be delivered from trouble. And yet the phrase used suggests something more than external trouble. "Set me free," disentangle me," indicates perplexity, and this correlates it slightly with the preceding verse. "Deliver me from the trouble of perplexity," "disimplicate me," "help me to the feelings I ought to entertain; enable me to see what is to be done and how it is to be done."

Verse 171. "My lips shall pour forth praise; for Thou shalt teach me Thy statutes." Here we have in

the promise of future praise an indication that he is not yet ready to praise—that God's glory is to a certain degree, darkened. The "pour forth" marks the depth of the darkness by the intensity of its promise. For this is a promise—a resolve, and yet it is more. It is the statement of what will be the inevitable result of the granting of his petition. "My difficulties will all be cleared away. I shall understand. I shall be relieved of my perplexity." What that perplexity is may, perhaps be understood from the last clause of the verse. He wishes to have God's orders—the expression of His arbitrary will. This is stated, not in the form of petition, but in that of confident expectation—the true petition of faith. The mere knowledge of God's arbitrary will, cannot, of course, reveal to the mind the wisdom and love of which these statutes are the expression. But such a knowledge would be calculated to call forth praise on account of the clearing up of one's path. One of the most mysterious of God's dealings with His servants is that He sometimes leaves them without orders. We often can see the reason of this. Such a deprivation demands the exercise of, and develops intuitional judgments as to what is right and best. It is a great relief, when one has been left to judge for one's self and has been puzzled and wearied beyond endurance, to be able to lean against the arbitrary will of God. There is a delight in knowing just what to do at every moment. We may arrive at the knowledge by a clear light being thrown upon some preceptive passage of Scripture previously misunderstood or by the brushing away of some temptation that obstructed the clear view of our duty. Or God may give us a statute, by hedging up our path, to give us ease and even delight though it may break up our plans of life and involve loss. The word "teach" may mean, not simply state, but explain. A statute it would seem has need often to be more than a mere arbitrary decree to enable us to differentiate it. God can teach us by letting us a little into

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the heart of an order, and so to get at its principle, or by providences that may lead us to the application of it into all details. And in this way God may evoke the pouring forth of praise from us by showing us what wisdom and love were hidden in this arbitrary will. After a long struggle with disease at a missionary station in India, after all the resources of science had been used and many prayers, in faith, certain missionaries were at last forced to abandon their position and choose another place for a central station. They immediately found the advantages of the new location were so great that they counted it well worth the enduring those trials that compelled them to recognize God's arbitrary will and compelled them to obey.

Verse 172. "Let my tongue answer Thy saying—that all Thy commandments are right."

The word "saying" throughout the psalm means the promise. The proper response would seem to be thankfulness, joy. It should also be obedience stimulated by thankfulness and hope—eager actively in seeking the kingdom of Heaven offered to the servant, by a path leading through many duties; for it is a proper effect of the promise to guide; and it may even be said to enact a law for the recipient. Thus, by the impulse of the promise they "rive the dark by private ray." But the steps we ought to take are sometimes prescribed to us. These prescriptions seem sometimes unwarrantable and even contradictory to the promise. There was a full and free promise made to Abraham and his seed, but long after the giving of the promise, a condition of holiness was annexed to it. Now a man, without moral sense, would pronounce the commandments wrong. A man of keen moral sense would be inclined to count the commandments right and to give up the promise. This is often done, especially when the mind is clouded with a sense of transgression. It is a far harder and indeed wondrous thing for a man not only to declare the commandments right, but consistent with the promise, and that in

answer—who to the promise, as an expression of the feelings that the promise awakens. It is as if he saw the promise in the commandments. And, indeed did not the law of Moses requiring holiness of God's people really add a further grace to the promise of Abraham. Did it not make the promise pregnant with a higher promise? They who see furthest and best see that the law and the promise are one. Cromwell on his death bed comforted himself with the thought that the covenant of works and the covenant of promise are one in Christ. God's "saying" is essentially one with the promise, and yet, by itself, it seems often hard to bear. In Psalm 105:19 the two words used in this psalm for "promise." "Word" and "saying" are used in the same verse and discriminatingly. "Until his word came, the saying of the Lord tried him." The "word of God to Joseph held forth the promise of great advancement, and yet from the time of the giving of the promise, the providential appointments of God (represented by the word, "saying") tried him. He was hated by his brethern, cast into a pit, sold into Egypt, and left to languish in prison. Yet all these events so contrary in appearance to the promise, were in reality steps to its fulfillment. The word that promised, and the word that imposed these trials were really one. And if Joseph realized this it must have given him good cheer even in a dungeon. And we Christians, if we only are able to see that providential dispensations of God are not contrary to his promise, will have peace no matter how thorny a path His commandments call upon us to tread. The "saying" will always be to us as the "promise." The optative is used in this verse: "Would that my tongue might." The psalmist has not attained unto the power, but only to the desire of it, which is a great attainment. Christians nowadays can easily see the consistency of the commandments with the promise, since both can be fulfilled. Even sinners can enter into the promise if they will accept of it. But how could the Old Testament saints respond to

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the promise in declaring the commandments right. It may be that this optative describes the position of the Old Testament saints. Letting the promise over against the commandments, accepting both, and believing both to be consistent, and catching gleams of that consistence in the terrors and the splendors of the law (Thorah)—cult, they yet longed for more, they desired to accept the commands in the same spirit that they accepted the promise, realizing that they were both a source of joy and expectation. Faith prompted the longing and faith, perhaps, nay doubtless, bridged over the gap, for in God are all solutions. If this psalm was written by the young Solomon we can easily see the difficulty of reconciling His promise of a throne, with the path which God laid down by this way marks for him to tread which seemed to lead away from it.

Verse 173. "Let Thy hand be near for my help, for Thy precepts I choose."

Perhaps it is not straining the meaning to establish a connection between this verse and the preceding verses of the stanza. In verse 173 the bewilderment of verse 169, the perplexity of verse 170, the doubt as to what is God's will of verse 171, and the doubt as to the consistency between that will and the promise of verse 172 all reappearing in a burden of mysterious perplexity, doubtful and trying work that is laid upon him, which yet he chooses because God assigns it. There is something more in choosing than mere acceptance—acquiescence. Many accept as a burden what they would find bliss in choosing if they only loved God and felt confident in His good will. Here the psalmist seems to rise at least towards the height of his petition of the preceding verse. When we heartily accept the life's lot and work that God has assigned us, we are in a fair way to choose them with joy, to take them as we take the promise, and indeed as the promise. At any rate the psalmist accepts the commandments that guide him to his work, which He chooses to be his. And notice how neatly



the verb of the first clause is suited to the title precepts in the second clause. "Precepts" is work assigned, and the petition is for assistance. "I choose *ex animo* the work assigned, help me do it." Surely here is something to base a petition upon. If we behave slavishly, doing God's will of constraint we can have less of a spirit of supplication for help. The farther we are from choosing, the farther we are drawing God. And there is something contradictory in our drawing near to God for help from his hand when we draw away from His hand that assigns our burdens. But in drawing near to the hand that assigns our burdens, we draw near to the hand that helps.

N. B. May we not gather something from the form of the clause? Is there not something of the claim about it? Is there not an implication that God's hand ought to be for his help, since he chooses what that hand assigns? Is there not, also, something of general trust rather than specific request? He does not desire that God should give him some particular sort of help (as to way or time,) but relies simply on God's hands—this whole hand, and asks whatever that hand can do.

Verse 174. "I long for Thy salvation, O Jehovah, and Thy law (is) my delight."

If we give the title "law" its proper meaning—the cult—the Mosaic worship, then the clauses can be easily brought into correllation. The law is especially the promise and partial realization of salvation. It appealed to the imagination even in its splendid and reassuring exhibitions, and its acts of satisfaction and went some way toward bringing about a blessed social state. Now the moment we interpret these clauses in the light of this meaning of the title law, the clauses cease to be independent propositions, one expressing desire for salvation and the other delight in doing God's will. They become closely related. The first is no more desire to be delivered from present difficulties or generally from the

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troubles of this world. It is Thy salvation that he longs for, that happy state of things national, social and personal that God had encouraged, and made deeper and broader, and in the law, too, he finds the beginning of satisfaction. The longing to be delivered from present and prospective dangers should not be excluded—the aching of the heart at the prosperity of the wicked. In this the law is a soother and encourager of the heart of God's servant, for there are parts that reveal and promise God's judgment on the enemies of his people. They "shall be as the fat of lambs." And this he understands when he goes into the house of God (see psalm 73, 3, 16, 17, 18,) and is therefore enabled to be patient and wait in comfort. Here, then, is a spiritual attitude that we ought to try to put on as we repeat these words. Longing so intense and exacting that nothing can satisfy it but that which is perfect and yet present delight in what God, at present, supplies. Divine discontent and divine content at one and the same time. Enjoying the inn where we lodge for the night, thankful for the comfort it affords, gaining from it some new conception of our blessed and permanent home, and yet longing to press forward in our pilgrimage "willing to be happy" as I heard it said of one, who though tried, still made the most of little joys. Ever content, no matter what external things may be. And thus there is in the midst of the Christian's longing always a satisfaction. He may be untroubled in the midst of trouble while he makes the law his delight (Psalm 46:1, 2 and 4,) waiting and longing they shall yet (Psalm 36:8) be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, and may well say with David in what is manifestly a waiting longing. (Psalm 65:4) "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple."

Verse 175. "Let my soul live and praise Thee; and let Thy judgments help me."

"Let my soul live" is evidently a petition of the psalmist for his endangered life, a petition often occurring in this psalm. But not merely life is petitioned for, but fullness of life, moral and emotional, a life full of peace and joy, and the active exercise of its highest powers. The combination occurs many times in the scriptures. When Abraham says to Sarah "My soul shall live because of thee," he means not merely that his life will be saved but that he will be secure and cheered in the confidence of it. So with Lot petitioning for Zoar, he asks that his life may be preserved by a favor that will give immediate care and comfort to him. In Jeremiah 38: 17 and 20 the same expression is used, evidently meaning Zedekiah's life would be saved on condition that he should go out to the king of Babylon, and yet it must mean more than that, for he had been promised life in any case (Jer. 34:3.) And so it turned out that not having gone out to the king of Babylon, he nevertheless lived; but as a blinded prisoner bereft of all the glorious fullness of life. So, then, this clause means "let me live in the happy use of all the multiform powers of my soul and praise Thee. That last is one of the very highest and happiest exercises of the soul. It is the greatest of the delights of life that he petitions for. And in this sense we must understand Isaiah 38:18, "For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, he shall praise Thee as I do this day." Hezekiah does not speak of praise as something done for God, but as the acme of happy living, and so it is, and eternal praise implies the eternal reception of what fills the heart with ever-new thankfulness and the unfolding of scenes of ever-deepening grandeur; the grateful praise and adoring response to which is the highest form of life. Well says the poet Addison:—

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“To all eternity, to Thee,  
A joyful song I'll raise,  
For Oh! Eternity's too short  
To utter all Thy praise.”

The latter clause limits the source of praise to extending help in righteousness. The psalmist asks that God in the exercise of His just decisions shall deliver him. It is the prayer of one whose troubles do not arise from his own fault, but perhaps from his good qualities and good actions. It may be God who is struck at in him. But what if it is otherwise? What if the injuries inflicted on him by others are simply the wages of his own ill doing? What if he feels that he deserves all he suffers? Can he still ask “Let Thy judgments help me. There was an answer to this even in the time of the Old Economy, but we have a clearer one under our dispensation. God's judgments can help even a sinner. In Christ we can appeal to God's justice for deliverance from sin's guilt. That is certainly implied in Psalm 51. “Deliver me from my blood guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud,” not of Thy mercy, but “of Thy righteousness.” But in the cross of Christ it was first shown how such a thing could be possible. The Christian may use these words in the highest evangelical sense that his experience dictates, and not beyond the meaning with which these words were uttered through the Holy Spirit from the soul if not from the intellect of the psalmist. The use of the word “soul” suggests that the praise which he desires to offer is not merely the sacrifice of his lips, but the devotion of his life, and thus understood it becomes a model of all prayers for deliverance. They should be in their essence renewed acts of self-dedication. Faith will be helped to greater flights by such a petition as this.

Verse 176. “I wander like a lost sheep—seek Thy servant—for Thy commandments I do not forget.”

We have here another instance of the careful use of terms of which we have so many examples in this psalm. They are especially valuable as helping to prove the accuracy of the meaning assigned to the various titles of the law. We have the servant of God in the first clause having lost his way and we see him in the latter relying on the commandments, the law as guiding, the way mark God has granted to keep us in the right path. The wandering meant here is not the active going astray—the sinning—but rather is the result of sin. Notice this is the wandering of a sheep. That implies sin, for a sheep need not go astray if he only will attend to the shepherd. But once having gone astray, he must wander, that is, search aimlessly and helplessly for what he has not—the way out of the condition he is in. He cannot make his home away from the fold, as the wolves and other wild beasts can. He knows something better, and he will to the end wander in another fashion than theirs. He will still helplessly and ineffectually but with true desire seek to get back to the fold. His erring course, will, if a course make it difficult to get back at once to the fold. There has been a blinding and hardening process at work upon him. He is bewildered, and that state of puzzled guilt is one of the most painful for anyone to get into. It seems almost impossible for him to recognize any act of his as an undoubted sin, much more to confess and repent of it. Well for such an one when he sees that there is no deliverance from the coil he is in but by the power of God. “Seek Thy servant;” it takes faith to say that, and yet, God is ready to seek, glad to hear the petition forced from the lips of this erring child. “Thy servant,” this expression shows that though he has lost much he has much remaining, it looks like the strain upon the clue that is to conduct him to the lost fold. The last clause, “for Thy commandments I do not forget,” is not adduced as an evidence of desert, but rather as an evidence that he looks for God’s help, and begins to hope for it. An erring child of God is at first

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tempted to rely on his own efforts to find the way back. Then, perhaps, despairingly, call on God. But no true call on God for Him to do for us what He has not done can be made, if we do not take advantage of all the help He has given us. If we desire the clearer revelation, we will prize and use whatever revelation He has already made. If we do desire Him to seek us and come to us, we will follow the indications He has given in His commandments. Perhaps there is a coincidence here. The turning helplessly to the Lord stimulates to a new attention to His commandments. And so, the words "for Thy commandments I do not forget," is merely another way of saying that he turns to the Lord. He has at last caught sight of the forgotten way marks, and springs forward in the path, crying to the Lord, for he realizes at last, that he must have something more even than God's way marks to help him through the wilderness. Here, then, we have the servant of God, a wanderer through his sins, despairing of being able to get back even when aided by the law, comes to feel that God's love goes out towards him, and cries "seek Thy servant, who striving strives not, who seeking seeks not, who coming comes not" and who helplessly cries "come to me."

# How to Become a True Christian.

## Letters to a Nominal Christian.

By

Rev. Frederick La Rue King

[These Letters are printed as an addition to the "Selected Psalms and Monographs" in order not only to show my brother's views on this vital theme, but also to reveal another phase of his literary versatility.—  
A. B. K.]

### LETTER I.

Common mistake—Must act upon knowledge possessed—not wait for feelings—Claim Jesus Christ as Saviour by faith.

Dear Friend:—

In the short conversation we had the other day about conversion, I learned, somewhat to my surprise, that you were not, what is usually called, a "professing Christian." It was also plain that you felt it would not be your duty, and would even be wrong, for you to join yourself to the people of God, and at the Lord's Supper obey the Saviour's command, "Do this in remembrance of Me," until the Holy Spirit should work a thorough, conscious, and even sudden change, in your moral nature. This you hoped would take place some time or another. Till then, you considered that your sole duty in the premises was to place yourself in the way of the converting influence of the Holy Spirit. Part of this, you see, I infer, but I think I cannot be

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mistaken. I am familiar with this state of mind. Indeed it was my own when I was young. I was brought up surrounded by religious influences, instructed from my earliest youth in the knowledge of the Gospel. I hoped, some day, to become a Christian, and expected, when that event took place, to become a member of the church, from whose privileges I was meanwhile debarred. All that was left for me to do was, to hear sermons and attend meetings, in order that, through them, by God's grace, I might be changed. I used, in fact, these means of grace, just as one goes to the fire to be warmed.

One day, I was made aware that when God says "come," He means "come now"; when He says "do this," He means "do it now," that the "accepted time" is "today." I found that the invitation, "Come, for all things are ready," was addressed to me, just as I was, that there was nothing to wait for; that it was disobedience to wait a single minute. I came to see that God does not merely ask that we should be willing that something should happen to us; that we should put ourselves in the way of the Spirit's influences, just as one goes out into the sunshine to be warmed; but demands activity of the soul that would possess Him. It must knock, seek, strive, enter; and I, at once, without any conscious change in my spiritual state, sought, and found admission to the table of the Lord, and that too, without being able to see in myself, or state to others, distinct evidence that I had passed from death to life. It was a good day when I did so—I have never regretted it.—I acted on the spirit of the hymn:—

“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
Oh Lamb of God, I come.”

“Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
Oh Lamb of God, I come.”



LETTER II.

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Coming to the Church and coming to Christ essentially the same. The excuse of unworthiness is really an assertion of worthiness, and is a marked rejection of Christ.

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Dear Friend:—

In my first letter you may think that I confound the two things, that are entirely distinct—coming to Christ, and coming to the church. I do not confound them, for they are essentially the same. What is the church? What are the sacraments, but the representation of the Lord Jesus Christ? Entering the church is but seeking the society of the Lord; coming to baptism, and the Lord's Supper, is but seeking the Lord—to have Him dwell within us as our life. You will find, I trust, hereafter, that the whole Christian life, from the first thought of love and trust in Jesus, to the last effort of hand or heart for Him, is all coming to Christ, and putting on Christ. Coming to Christ as the phrase is generally understood, is trusting Him in thought; putting the hand forth to the table of the Lord is trusting Him in act; both are essentially the same exercise of faith. Whosoever has a right to do the one, has a right to do the other.

That very unworthiness, that is given as the reason for not coming to the communion, is also often the reason, whether acknowledged or not, why we do not come to Christ.

We cannot have too deep a sense of our unworthiness. But when I say or feel that I am too unworthy to come to Christ, I show plainly that I neither adequately feel my unworthiness, nor know the character and office of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fullness of the offer He makes to us. I should not have thought that you needed instruction on this point, but we all, instructed or not, fail to realize as we ought, how wide open is the door to eternal life, and how all-embracing is the invitation to enter. The most experienced

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Christians are ever learning, more and more fully, the meaning of the words, "without money and without price."

We Protestants profess to have one mediator only—the Lord Jesus Christ—but so ingenious is Satan and the deceitful heart, that often, to veil and excuse its real unwillingness, it alleges that it is unworthy to come to the Lord. Now this, translated into plain language, means this, "I am not utterly unworthy—I am not entirely lost. I can do something to help myself. I can get ready to come to Christ. That responsibility rests on me." And so the soul manufactures a mediation to go between itself and Christ.

And it calls this humility, but it is really pride and self-confidence. It does not deny (but) that Christ is to do something for it, but is secretly of the opinion that the greatest part of the work is to be done by itself. It would furbish itself up, remove a good deal of its sinfulness, partly redeem itself, and then, come to be redeemed. It will do anything but obey the simple command, "Come." That would be too dreadful; that would be to own that it is utterly helpless, lost, and guilty, and God perfectly just in condemning it—that the impenitent soul is not willing to do. Not believing in God's grace, it would thereby be plunged into despair. No—it would rather tire its head and paint its face like another Jezebel. Saupitz said to Martin Luther "If we come to Christ painted sinners, we will have but a painted Saviour."

When that poor sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears came to our Lord, we may be sure that she did not first put on her fine clothes, her bracelets and ear-rings. If she had such things, she took them off at the very thought of coming. Not in costly array and braided hair she presented herself to Him, but dishevelled and weeping, she brought only her sinful, ruined self—and that was just what the Saviour wanted. That was what He came from heaven to seek and to save. As she came, so must we all come to Him, bringing only our sinful, ruined selves, without any

preparation of good thoughts or good feelings. He is the A. and Z. of Christian experience. There is nothing before A, and so there is in the Christian life nothing before Christ.

### LETTER III.

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Nothing need precede our coming to Christ, not even the consciousness of having faith, contrition, etc., which coming to Christ seems to imply.

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Dear Friend:—You may say that deep conviction of sin and contrition must precede our coming to Christ. No, there is no must about it. They often do precede. So, great hunger often precedes eating, but we daily eat without great hunger. Conviction of sin does not begin the Christian life. Conviction of sin itself is mere despair. It is of service in leading man to give up all idea of helping himself, and so far, makes him ready to accept the Saviour when offered. But it no more brings the Saviour to him, or enables him to accept the Saviour, than extreme hunger furnishes the starving wretch with food.

Many eminent Christians have come to Christ without having first suffered the pangs of conviction. John Newton, who always owned himself as one of the greatest of sinners, and the most completely lost, says that he had not a moment's time to feel the agonies of a new conviction. The Lord entered at once into his soul, and filled it on the instant with light and peace; so that he realized what a great sinner he was, only after he realized that his sins were all washed away in the blood of the covenant.

But you may say, I must certainly have faith first. To come to Christ is to trust in Christ, and I cannot trust without faith, and that, the Scripture says, "is the gift of God." Now, here is a nice point. I do not believe that a scientific solution of it can be given so that the reason shall be per-

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fectly satisfied. But one can be given, sufficient for all practical purposes. One day four men brought a sick friend to our Lord. He was paralyzed. He could not move hand or foot. Now mark how the Saviour healed him. He did not first remove the palsy and then tell him to arise. But while he was still helpless with the disease, He said to him, "Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thy house." Now it was impossible for him to do that. It was even impossible for him to will to do it. For such is the constitution of the human mind, that we cannot will to do—that is, make a true effort to do anything unless we have the consciousness that we possess the power to do it. Now there the man lay; to obey the command, was the only way he could be cured; and yet, he could not obey the command. He could not even make a true effort to obey, yet he did rise, take up his bed and go to his house. It was because he willed not in himself but in Christ. Let me illustrate. Place a heavy weight in the hand of a man so sick that he can hardly lift his hand. Tell him now to lift the weight. He cannot even will to lift it. But place your hand under his, and say, "Lift, and I will lift with you." Then he can both will to do and do it. So the poor palsied man looked at Christ. He believed that He would will with him, that Christ's will would be under his will, Christ's power under his power, and he was able to will and do.

An acute person can still find difficulties, philosophy would not be satisfied with the explanation. But it is enough to enable one rationally to act. The word of command, "Come," is a word of power, it enables us to obey as truly as the words, "Come forth" enabled Lazarus to obey. This is to the Greeks (people who demand a scientific explanation of everything) "foolishness," but it is, for all that the power of God unto salvation. (1 Cor. 1:22-24.) No, if you desire to be able to come to Christ, you must come to Christ.

“Ho, ye needy, come and welcome!  
God’s free bounty glorify.  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh,  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

There is the paradox of grace! There is the foolishness of God, wiser than men. Surely, true belief and true repentance are necessary to enable us to come to Christ, yet those and all other graces to enable us to come to Christ, yet Christ, we must get by coming to Christ for them.

What then have we to wait for? Come then to the Lord Jesus Christ now, without waiting a moment.

#### LETTER IV.

Salvation is not to be besought, but, being freely offered it is to be simply taken.

Dear Friend:—

Do you ask, what is coming to Christ? Coming to Christ is trusting Christ, by taking what He offers. If you offered a starving man food and, instead of taking it he should still continue to beg for it, would it not show that he did not put any confidence in your offer? And is it not dishonoring our Lord, when He says, “Come,” to stand aloof, and request permission to come? So the Medieval church stood aloof from Christ and agonized in prayer to Him for salvation. The consequence was that Christ became to them a stern judge, and they made of the Virgin Mary, a mediator between the sinner and Christ. No, there are many things we may ask of the Lord Jesus Christ—help, healing, guidance, light, etc., but to be justified in Him, to enter into the state of salvation through Him, that, we must not ask for; we must claim. It is offered, we have only to take it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ states all this, as we would never dare to do, had we not His very words. He describes

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Himself as merely a minister, a steward, to whom God the Father has entrusted gifts to distribute to men, which gifts He cannot withhold from those for whom the Father destined them. He says (John 6:38 and 39.) See also (Ps. 68:18) "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the Last Day." And now if you ask for whom the Father has destined this great gift of salvation which he has entrusted to the Son, the next verse (40th) tells, "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life."

Indeed God the Father is represented as having bound Himself, in such a manner, to save all who have recourse to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ that He cannot refuse them. (Heb. 6:17) Not only does the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross enable God to be just and (yet) justify the sinner who believes (Rom. 3:26) but makes it unjust for God to withhold salvation from one who approaches Him in the way He has appointed. (1st John, 1:9) No permission then, is needed for us to enter the blessed home of God. It is our right. Indeed, so anxious is our Lord to show us that we have waited for nothing, but enter at once into the state of grace, that He says, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." (Matt. 11:12) Think of the condescension of God! Of the gifts of His grace He speaks in this way to reassure us. It is just as if He would say, "You need ask no questions. You need not say, 'By your leave'—lay hands straight upon that which may be had for the seizing of it." What more can our Lord say to show us that salvation is free.

"And as the bird each fond endearment tried,  
To tempt its new fledged offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, rebuked each dull delay."

LETTER V.

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The peace and joy that fill the soul immediately upon the act of faith, fully warranted; though we may seem to ourselves not a whit changed for the better. But the change then entered upon is tremendous and transcendent, being a deliverance from ourselves.

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Dear Friend:—

I can easily fancy you yet incredulous. You may ask me, "Do you mean to say that I can take out my watch and before three seconds have passed on the dial I can make my peace with God, entering into a state of salvation, and may, with reason, allow my heart to fill with the peace and joy of the Christian?" Now consider: during the passage of three seconds, an angel could come from Heaven and tell you that you were a child of God and heir to the Kingdom of Heaven. If this took place you would not wait the tenth part of a second before peace and joy would fill your heart. Now One greater than an angel has assured us all in these words, "Whosoever will may take of the water of life freely." "Whosoever" includes you, therefore, to you it is said, "Take, and you shall have." And how long a time is needful for you to take? How long a time for you to look up and say, "Lord I believe." "I trust myself to Thee, I give myself to Thee."

And when should you allow assurance and peace to enter your heart? Why, the moment of your act of trust; if at the moment of your act of trust, you believe that our Lord's invitation is a sincere one. If a man who has needed a large sum of money to save him from bankruptcy should apply to a rich friend and be told, "Yes, you shall have the money at once," at what moment should his anxiety cease? Why, at the moment his friend uttered these words; that is, if he believed his friend meant what he said. He

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would not wait till he got the money in hand. Nor need we wait till we are conscious of a work of grace in our hearts—till we see evidence in ourselves that we are children of God, before we call ourselves such and enjoy the confidence and peace proper to such a happy relation. When Jesus told the ten lepers to go and show themselves to the priests (Luke 17:12-14,) that they might get the certitude that they were healed, it would have been but mockery had he not intended to heal them. They believed that the direction He gave implied a promise to heal so the moment they started they might well dismiss all anxiety and count themselves clean and restored to society. One man of the number, a grateful Samaritan, I am sure, walked along with a heart full of delight and thankfulness, though he was yet a leper, white as snow. So I believe that, if you turn your face to God, God will that instant turn His face towards you; if you choose God, God will that instant choose you. If you hear the words of Christ, "Come to Me," and will come, though your limbs seem palsied, you do come; though you seem a million miles away from Him, He is at that moment by your side, and He will never leave you nor forsake you.

What you do, is nothing, indeed; but the effects are tremendous and eternal. The hand of a weak child may dip a wire into a cup of quicksilver and establish an electric current which will generate in a moment a force sufficient to lift 3,000 pounds. So it is in becoming a Christian—only the effect may not be instantaneously apparent. If you, though your faith is so small that you seem to yourself faithless, though interest is so small that you seem to yourself indifferent, will only truly and honestly come to the Lord for what the Lord has to give you, then you may take for granted that a vital relation is established between you and Him which shall, bye and bye, become a vital possession, and shall transform your body, soul and spirit into His image.



“But,” I fancy that I hear you say, “is this the whole story? Is the whole of Christianity to be summed up in one spiritual act—the coming of Christ—which, once performed, entitles a man to everlasting life, just as a ticket purchased at a railroad station entitles one to a passage in the cars? And may a man, simply because of that past spiritual act, feel secure in a possession guaranteed to him by God on the ground that he has performed the full condition required?” I have known those who regarded the matter in this light; a view condemned by Scripture and sound doctrine. I hasten to say then, that those only, who preserve the attitude of trust with which they first came to the Lord, have any right to continued peace and security. (Heb. 10:38.) And I would also say that faith in Christ is of such a transcendent nature, that it begins a transformation of the whole man, body, soul and spirit, so that in the end, if faith is held in exercise, we shall be presented before God’s Throne, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

I have previously showed you what it was to come to Christ; the question is now in order, what do we come to Christ for? I would say in answer to this—Christians may come to Christ for help, healing, guidance, instruction and many other things. But the coming to Christ which is the very beginning of the Christian life—the Alpha before which there is nothing, is of such a nature that, if you come to Christ merely to have him do anything for you, or even to work anything upon you, you do not come to Christ in this sense at all. You may think this is a strange saying, but it is literally true. You come to Christ to be saved from what? Some such illustration as this is often used to set the matter forth. A man is in a quicksand, helpless and sinking. A person comes to the edge of the firm ground, and throws him a rope, saying, “Hold fast to this, and I will pull you out.” He has confidence in the power and willingness of the one who offers him help, clings to the rope and is drawn out. In a like manner a man accepts

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Christ's offered help and is saved. Now this is good as an illustration, but fails just here. The man in the quicksand is separate from it. But sinful man is his own quicksand. It is himself that he needs to be delivered from. As Milton quotes Satan as saying, "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell." Sinners are their own jailers, their own chains.

The marvellous thing about man is that, while he is made in the image of God, and has, in spite of the fall, so much there is lovely and excellent in him, still sin is at the root of his being. As the psalmist says, "Behold, I am shapen in iniquity." (Ps. 51:25) And a thorough conviction of sin shows a man that it is not something that belongs to him like a disease from which he would be delivered; it is not like the shirt of Nersus, from which Hercules could not deliver himself and which destroyed him, but it is the sinner himself. A man who has not this thorough conviction thinks sometimes, "I must strive against sin within me." Vain man. That very "I" that is going to strive is itself sinful; and sin cannot conquer sin. One sin can conquer another—as for instance, a man may keep from getting drunk that his hand may be steady to shoot and do murder. Much of the temperance, generosity, self-devotion and nobleness of the world is of this character.

### LETTER VI.

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Salvation is not the abasing of our wills before God's will, but the making of God's will ours.

Dear Friend: —

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When a man comes to be convicted of sin, he gets to know two things, first that sin is not an essential part of his nature, that he is not forced to commit one single sinful act. And second, he becomes conscious that sin is at the very foundation of his being and he cannot deliver himself from it. Thus, though he is perfectly free to do or

not to do any wrong act, there will be sin in anything he does; though there may be at the same time something praiseworthy about it. Though he can deliver himself from sins, he cannot deliver himself from sin. Now we come to Christ to be delivered from sin. You may say that salvation means more than this; that it comprises deliverance from sorrow, poverty, pain, disease, death, and the world of woe. True; but all these dreadful things are not arbitrary punishments of sin; they follow sin by an inevitable law of the universe of God. They are no more arbitrary than burning is the arbitrary punishment of putting one's hand into the fire.

Deliverance from sin includes deliverance from all these evils, because it is deliverance from the source of all these. So does salvation include peace, joy, wealth, health, eternal life and the blessedness of the world to come.

Sin is separateness from God, and everything evil naturally flows from it. Deliverance from sin can only be effected by unison with God, and everything good flows naturally from it. Now, a man in a state of sin thinks that he may acknowledge Him as king, and even be ready to worship God, as really as he is separate from another man. He may feel his dependence upon God, he may own God's power, he may acknowledge Him as king, and even be ready to obey everything that He orders. But there is a reserve. He is not willing to have his will swallowed up in God's will and above all, he is not able to find greater independence and liberty through that surrender. He cannot say with Madam Guyon,

"And in Thy boundless will to find  
The strength, the freedom of the mind."

The man in a state of sin is like Saul, who is willing enough to own God religiously and worship Him, but could not, would not, acknowledge Him as the real ruler of Israel. He could not understand how He could be God and

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at the same time be king. David, on the contrary (as a man after God's own heart) was willing that God should be ruler over Israel in every detail of national life, and he, himself, but a sub-king under Him. It is hard for us to realize how much David gave up in the words, "Thine is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord." (1st Chron. 29:11.) For a different spirit see Dan. 4:30. And yet these heathen kings could at times make profound acknowledgments to their God.

This was the reason why Michael despised David (2d Sam. 6:12-21) when he humbled himself to dance before the ark. She could not conceive of a king who did not keep his place, and here was a king who was behaving himself before the Lord as a common servant before his master. The natural man is willing that God should keep His place, if he is only allowed to keep his own. He may be willing that God should rule from the Heavens over him, but not on the earth and in him. Nay, the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Saviour stigmatized as hypocrites, were perfectly willing that God should rule over them. There was nothing that they were not willing to do, if God would only state plainly what it was He wished. They were also as ready to do everything that could be logically deduced from the distinct statements of His will that He had given. Their rabbis thought the week well spent in meditating how to keep the Sabbath perfectly, and as to bearing burdens on the Sabbath, nothing could be more punctillious than their teaching and their practice. They taught that if a woman should wear a ribbon pinned on her dress it would be a dreadful violation of the law, it would be labor, the bearing of a burden. No, she must sew it on the dress, and then it would become part of the garment, there would be no breach of the Sabbath in wearing it. This is a specimen of some of the results of their profound theological study. And what a lovely spirit of submission

to the will of God does it manifest. What righteousness too. In Isaiah, 1st chapter, 11th to 14th verses, you will see what the prophet thought about such righteousness. And you know what our Lord thought and said about it (Matt. 23: 13-33.) Never were people so determined to do the will of God; never were people at the same time so averse to doing the will of God. On the morning of the crucifixion they were too scrupulous to tread the pavement of Pilate's judgment hall, but they were not too scrupulous to hound on the rabble to a judicial murder.

Suppose a daughter were to say to her mother, "Now, only tell me distinctly all that you wish me to do, and I will always do it as strictly and accurately as I can." What kind of a daughter would she be? And would the mother rejoice over her? I think not. She might say that, and say it sincerely, and yet hate her mother, indeed would not such words imply a lack of love, and real devotion? A true mother does not care what her daughter can do for her, she craves her daughter's self. And so God does not ask anything of us because He asks everything of us, even our very selves. And how far are those from doing this, who regard God as an infinite powerful official at the head of the universe, and strive with all their might to bend themselves to His will, and obey all His commands. No, unless we give God everything, we cannot give Him anything. And herein is seen the truth of the old theological maxim, that we cannot please God (try as hard as we may) unless we are in a state of Grace. It sounds like a hard saying, but it is simply common sense, and we act constantly on the principle (as we have shown) in daily life. Our Saviour tells us, "After this manner pray ye." He means that it is the only manner that we can rightly pray. The only view to take of God that is not intolerable, and even terrible, is to regard Him as our Father. Take any other view, and we shall be, sooner or

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later, calling upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon us and hide us from Him.

And if God is our Father and we are His children we cannot please Him with anything that is not done in a childlike spirit. And how can we have that childlike spirit unless we are conscious that we are really God's children (not merely His creatures), unless we are led by His Spirit as they are led by the spirit of their parents, who take after their parents? We must be really His children, to have the childlike spirit. That is, we must be born, "not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). 'Tis only the true rapport of a common nature, which we obey of ourselves, then only we really obey. To obey commands issued by God as an arbitrary legislator outside of us is perfectly consistent with keeping ourselves aloof from Him. So to bend our will unlovingly to His is not to yield ourselves up to Him.

A captive king may bow to the power of his conqueror, consent to walk in chains after his triumphant chariot, and may obey all the commands, however ignominious, that may be laid on him. But there is one ignominy to which he will never submit—he will never consent to be a free and willing subject. He will never give up his slavehood, he hugs his chains because they leave him—no, they make him, a king in will and aspiration. So the soul separate from God stands aloof from Him and strives to bend its will to His. It surrenders and surrenders, but it never gives up. It merely retires into the inmost recesses of its being, and there occupies a throne from which it will not be driven. It may suffer acute tortures, it may watch to obey with pharasaical scrupulousness, but still it will hold itself, with imperial spirit, face to face with God, and independent.

LETTER VII.

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Examples of this surrender of the will in the earthly life. God, the essence of all that the true man holds as sufficiently furnishing the enabling motive to this surrender.

Dear Friend: —

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It may be thought that man, because he is an individual, must act as described in my last letter. Keep ourselves to ourselves to be free. But this is not so. Man is endowed with a self, but he is also endowed with a power of giving away himself. You shall see two persons—a man and a woman—separate and independent souls; and between them shall kindle up a feeling that shall unite them so completely, that one cannot conceive of peace or happiness apart from the other. Nor can one will anything contrary to the other's will. This state may not be permanent, but while it lasts, it is an image of the relation that should subsist between ourselves and God, and proof that such a relation is possible. Not merely in the love that causes man to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, can he give himself away. For country, for party, for philanthropy, for truth, for righteousness, for honor, and in many other ways, can he give himself away, and if he did it in all these ways and at one and the same time permanently and completely, then we would have a still more perfect likeness of the surrender of the soul to God, which is an infinite surrender and forever. For, as I said, God is not merely an infinitely powerful official at the head of the universe; He is the essence and infinite perfect ideal of truth, beauty, peace, joy, love, power, wealth, life, pity, mercy—but why multiply words? Everything worthy is gathered up in the living, loving God. To stand aloof from Him is to stand aloof from all that is excellent. To join oneself to God is to receive God into one's soul—to become everything that is excellent.

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But you may say, "Cannot one have beautiful moral qualities apart from God? Are there no persons unselfish, generous, devoted, and who are not religious, and who even deny the existence of God? And are there not many religious persons of very unlovely characters?" Granted. Man was made in God's image, and yet retains many traits of that image. You may cut a rose from its bush, and if you take care of it, it will retain for a long time everything that its connection with a bush gave it—everything except permanency of life. It will look and smell the same, but it is practically dead; and it only needs certain hours to pass to make its death manifest to all—petals and leaves and stalk will all wither. Now at the Fall man was severed from the source of his life and became practically dead. In some circumstances he withers away very rapidly, in others, where he is surrounded with the influences of true religion, the change is retarded and even arrested.

Not till the day of Pentecost could the severed branch be set back to the source of its life—could man be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Now this explains the beautiful character of many who are apparently without religion. It is a trace of God's image not wholly lost, or it is what is induced upon them by the surrounding influences of Christian society. And then we must consider that there is a great deal of secret religion. Many are looking to and depending on God, and living in Him when those who are around them know nothing of it, and indeed they themselves are hardly aware that it is so. And then, if we consider, these lovely natural characters, we will find that they often lack symmetry to that degree that they sometimes become moral monsters. Robespierre, with his guillotine, and the anarchists with their dynamite, may be called sincerely philanthropic. And in daily life we constantly meet with the same kind of inconsistency, only less striking in degree. But we are called to full-orbed virtue. Not in one, but in every direction, must the soul ray forth



towards whatsoever is good and lovely in all things at all times. And virtue is only safe, when it is thus universal; indeed then only is it real virtue. This is why we say that to love God and bow our wills utterly to His, is not only the first of virtues, but that which includes all others.

We cannot love all without loving The All, and it is just as true that we cannot embrace God without embracing all that He has made. Madam Guyon's husband said once to her, "You love God so much that you cannot love me at all." If that was the fact, then her love to God was not what it ought to have been; for "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1st John 4:20.) St. Paul says of all created men (Acts 17:28) "For in Him we live and move and have our being." And therefore much more may it be said of God's children of Grace, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us." (1st John 4:12) That is, loving others is the best way of loving God, and when others love us, that is the most precious manifestation of His love. Does it seem a hard thing to you to submit to the will of God? Why, you cannot ride on horseback without recognizing and obeying implicitly His will in the law of gravitation that He has made; and His laws are all like that. The true conception of submission to the will of God, is not the forcing our wills to bend before an external will. That is not the way we obey the law of gravitation. That law is in ourselves, it is a part of ourselves, we would not have it otherwise, and in just this way are we to obey all God's will.

We may—nay, we must, be spontaneous and free, or we have not submitted to God. Indeed it is the only way to attain true liberty. This is what is meant by the words, "I will put My law into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." (Heb. 10:16.) And "In the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom." (Ps. 51:6) That is, all my impulses, the nature that lies beneath the will, will

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be right. If you dread becoming a Christian because you dislike the prospect of doing many things you have no relish for, and to deny yourself many things you desire, be assured that God dislikes to have you do so more than you yourself dislike it. You may indeed have to do many things that are trying, but if the relish is not greater than the disrelish, it is not perfectly pleasing to God. Said Garibaldi to his followers, "The rewards I offer you are hunger, thirst, weariness, prison, wounds, pain, death." But none the less they willingly offered themselves, and Italy became free. In the fight with the Merrimac Lieut. Worden, who commanded the Monitor, was thought to have lost his eyesight. After all was over, he asked but one question—"Is the Merrimac beaten off?" "Yes." "Then I don't care what becomes of me." This is meant to illustrate not only the completeness of the surrender to God's will that I should urge, but the kind of a motive there is for such a surrender. We can see motive enough for us to suffer for freedom for one's country. The red, white and blue of our country's flag, who can see it in a strange land without a thrill? Around that beloved emblem gather thoughts of what is most precious to us—home, kindred, the blessings of liberty, the hope of mankind. Under that fluttering symbol how willingly marched our brothers to battle and death. They followed wherever it lead; to shield it from insult they held their lives cheap. They forgot self, they cast away themselves for their flag. And all that flag meant to them and means to us, God is, and ten thousand times more. The flag, precious as it is, is but a symbol; God is the reality—home, hope and liberty for the world, for the universe. If Worden's satisfaction was perfect, no matter what became of him, can we not understand the words of our Lord, (Mark 8:35) "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, shall save it?"

LETTER VIII.

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This surrender not in the power of the will; the new birth necessary.

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Dear Friend:—

I heard a certain German general say the other day, "Not one of us but would lay his neck upon any block for our dear Emperor." And now think of our Emperor—Our Father in Heaven. Is it so hard to receive God as our Father? Easy enough if our Father were Emperor of Germany, but how impossible, of ourselves, when He is sovereign of all worlds. For a moment, for one whom we love, for our country, for a finite object, we can forget ourselves and cast all away. But for all men, for all worlds, for all time, for eternity, for God who sums up all that is worth the sacrifice of self—this infinite surrender of self, so glorious is not for us with our unaided strength to make. We can kill ourselves, but to kill oneself and yet live, that is not for us to effect. And yet this alone is salvation. To become Godlike, that is to be saved. Said I not well that this man is his own quicksand, that he must be delivered from himself if he is to be saved? And it is as impossible to deliver one's self as it is to step off one's shadow. Resolve to obey all God's commands, and your resolutions will amount to nothing. And if your resolution held firm, and God should intimate His will distinctly and definitely in everything and at every moment, our very souls would be paralyzed by the constraint and self-watch. We would render to God no better worship than the postures of an automaton. God does not want a machine for a son, but a living, breathing man, and a free man, who does as he pleases, and yet pleases Him.

Unless we find out ourselves what will please God and do it of ourselves, we can never please Him. Could any friend please us on any other terms? Who could endure

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a friend to whom one would have to issue specific requests for any friendly words or deeds that we should have from him? We could no more have intercourse with such a person, than with something that we kept moving by turning a crank. But how can we be friends of God in this spontaneous way? It cannot be by any effort of our own. Let us then cease from our striving. "Behold," as the Apostle says, "I show you a more excellent way," even the way of the New Birth. That giving up of self that I have been describing is just what the Scriptures call it—it is death. We give up all the life that is ours, and receive a new life from the Lord. Just as the chrysalis dies to its chrysalis state, in unfolding its wings as a butterfly, so do we cast off self by means of the new birth, and find ourselves again in God. We submit ourselves to God and find ourselves for the first time true freemen.

We do not come to Christ, then, to be delivered from any perilous position—to be plucked back from the world of woe. It is not an outside danger that we have to dread, but the danger within—source and fountain of all ills. Without a thorough change, wherever we may be we are lost, and with that change, wherever we may be we are saved. We come to Christ to have that change wrought in us.

The inquiry is in order then—what are the means by which this change is affected? And here must be noted another point in which the quicksand illustration fails. If I were in the quicksand, I would only want to know about the man who offered to pull me out, whether he was able and willing to deliver me. It would matter nothing to me what sort of man he was. If, however, his pulling me out of the quicksand made me like him, I might well hesitate and inquire as to his character; for there are men so base and degraded, that I had better be swallowed up in the quicksand than be made like them. Now the necessary condition to our Lord's saving us is in our being made like Him, indeed that is salvation itself. And it behooves us to ask ourselves, we

who are seeking to be saved, "Do I really desire to be like Christ?" For there are some seekers so base and degraded in their views that the salvation that they seek, if they only knew it, is the very destruction that they dread. To be redeemed, that very thing must die which they wish to save.

We have seen that evil from which we are to be delivered is not something external to ourselves, it is ourselves. And so our Lord saves us, not by means of anything external to Himself—He saves by imparting Himself to us. Not by doing anything for us, or working by His power any change in us, but by joining us to Himself, and making us one with Himself. So that, as the smallest branch of a vine has all the precious qualities and characteristics of the vine, we by being set into Him come to be like Him, because we are become part of Him, John 15:5. This is the new birth, without which no one can enter the kingdom of heaven. When Nicodemus (John 3rd chapter) came to our Lord by night, he thought he was acknowledging his highest claims in acknowledging that he was a teacher sent from God. Our Lord shows him at once that he must be something more than this, or he could not be a saviour at all. His answer amounts to this: "Though I taught all I know, though you obeyed me implicitly, though you loved me with your whole heart, you would still stand outside the kingdom of heaven till born again." Does this appear to you as it did to him,—a very discouraging doctrine, and the conditions required impossible of realization? On the contrary, it is an encouraging doctrine, and the new birth is a possible thing. Consider how many persons there are of whom we are apt to say,—"It is very easy for them to be good." Their very nature lifts them out of the power of many of the common temptations of life. And then, on the other hand, how many there are who seem by their very nature predestined to evil, completely in the power of tendencies that make them-

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selves and every one around them miserable. Education and self-discipline can do something (but after all, how little!) to change birth characteristics. We are for the most part as we are born, and although alike free, we differ so much from each other, and these different characteristics so surely direct our lives, that a man may be said to be born victorious or defeated, with a happy or miserable life in the bud. His efforts will no more avail to change this than the efforts of a rose bud will avail to change itself into the bud of another flower. Who could by any effort become a musician like Mozart, a painter like Raphael, or a sculptor like Michael Angelo? They are born so. Now if God can cause men to vary thus at birth according to the laws he has affixed to heredity, while all alike are free and responsible, is it not conceivable that He by His omnipotent power could work such a change in a grown man as would endow him with qualities that he would have by heredity, had his ancestry been different? And what more blessed gift from God to us could there be than such an exertion of His power as should endow us with the most perfect human qualities, and make it as natural as breathing for us to live a perfect human life?

### LETTER IX.

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And this new birth and the presence of the Holy Spirit within us renders possible the free development of natural powers, and the resulting variety of Christian character.

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Dear Friend:—

We are not left to conjure in this matter the transfiguration and use of the natural by God's gracious Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ is a man, and God as well as man, and as he had power to send forth "virtue" (Mark 5:30)

to change disease into health, so those who in faith join themselves to Him, He has power to join actually to His person. So that they become sons of God, even as He is son of God (John 1st, 12-26). For he is the first born among many brethren. (Romans 8:29.) No new faculties are introduced, we are essentially the same persons as before, only a divine force goes through all our being, lifting us up into a higher and spiritual sphere of life. It is just like the bud of a rose tree set into the branch of a healthy rose tree of another kind, which grows in accordance with its own peculiar life, but is possessed by the energy of the bush into which it is set, and grows as it could not have grown on the branch from which it is taken. This roughly illustrates the matter but to explain fully is beyond our power. It is one of the deep things of God. The Apostle (Eph. 5:30) says, "We are members of His body", but also says (v.32) "This is a great mystery." How the Lord Jesus Christ, who must be separate from us, or we could not admire, love, obey or adore Him, should be still joined to us so that we should be in Him,—that is indeed hard to be understood.

Both facts, however, may be grasped and harmonized in our spiritual experience; and we are helped to do this by the conception of God that the church presents to us as deduced from the Word of God, in the doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father, invisible and incomprehensible, at the root of all things, so satisfying our demand for law and order, and unity everywhere. God the Son, visible comprehensible and near, satisfying our craving for a teacher, a ruler and a friend. And third in the Trinity,—God the Holy Spirit,—God within us,—soul of our souls, inhabiting all our powers and faculties, lying at the root of our being, and making us in the hidden part to "Know wisdom" (Ps. 5:1-6). It is the fact of this third person in the adorable Trinity that enables us to conceive how we, keeping

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our individuality distinct from the Lord, can yet be joined to Him,—how we, born of the earth, earthy, can be re-born brothers of the Lord from Heaven,—how we, retaining all our freedom, can be made to possess the blessed traits of Our Lord's perfect character. The Holy Spirit brings into our inmost soul something from Christ that moulds and makes us like Him. Just as the white light of heaven passing through a stained window falls tinged with the color upon the pavement below.

It cannot be too earnestly insisted on that we are not free in all this, but retain our individual characteristics. Some persons think that Christianity consists in moulding ourselves into something other than we are. Some indeed, strange to say, pass their lives in a struggle against a taste for music or painting. Fighting against nature, they are fighting against God. The mediaeval idea of a saint was one who violated every tendency of his being. See the self-inflicted tortures of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. But since Christ came in the flesh He has sanctified human nature in all its parts, in all its natural impulses. And all these it becomes our duty to dedicate to God. And we dedicate them to God, not by stripping ourselves of them, but by using them in God. And here the priceless doctrine of the Holy Spirit enables us to see how God, without curtailing our freedom or marring any one of our native endowments, can work mightily in us, "both to will and do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). It is true that there are times when we are called upon to deny ourselves,—to cut off the right hand, to pluck out the right eye (Matt. 5:29-30), but if it be possible we should rather use them for the glory of God.

We are told in the 19th Psalm that, though all days show forth the glory of God, yet each does it in its own peculiar way, so that as it is poetically expressed, one day has something to tell about the glory of God to another day, that it did not know. How much more is this true



of God's children; each should be an unique Christian, offering peculiar praise to God, and serving Him in a peculiar way. When you see a number of Christians all alike,—just as if they had been run in one and the same mould, you see persons who give very little evidence of being true Christians at all. Where there is life, there must be variety, individuality. The relations God established with each soul are peculiar to that soul alone. He comes to each believer apart from all others. Madame Guyon, in her strong metaphorical language, calls herself in relation to the Lord, “a solitary bride”. See also the beautiful figure in Canticles, 3rd chapter, 12-16 verses. That this individuality of relation is eternal is indicated clearly in Rev. 2nd, 17th, and the fact that each one of us is to be exactly like no one else, helps us to conceive how God can love each of us, and for ourselves, as we love a friend. And this individuality of characteristics involves our free development of character. Dismiss, then, the idea that Christianity is a religion of constraint or prohibition or denial. It is exactly the opposite of that. The Holy Spirit breathes itself into the church and through every believer, and it is just as when the wind is breathed into an organ and visits every pipe,—each pipe gives its own sound alone, and not that of another. And therefore as a Christian you should glorify God not apart from, but through, the peculiar tastes and faculties and energies you have freely exercised.

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LETTER X.

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But till we are perfect we must look to the Law and heed it, or we will be led astray. There will be no bondage, however, since the Law's demands are in harmony with the new life.

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Dear Friend:—

Constraint and command were the characteristics of the Old Dispensation, though love of God made the yoke easy

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to such as David. Liberty is the characteristic of the Gospel, and if we were perfect Christians, we should have only to act from our impulses and desires. In that case "Love," as Wordsworth says, would be "an unerring light, and joy its own security". So strong is the language of Scripture on this head that errorists have wrested it into the doctrine that at no time in a Christian's career need he regard and obey law. This would be true if when we came to Christ we were at once transformed into His image. But the fact is, the kingdom of heaven is in us at its first beginnings very small,—but a grain of mustard seed. Regeneration is one thing, perfect Sanctification and redemption quite another.

We come to Christ to be joined to Christ, to be regenerated. The act of true faith effects this. A tremendous change it makes in our condition. We become Sons, sons of God and brethren of the Lord Jesus. Our guilt is gone in a moment, a vital relation is established between us and the Lord.

But vital relation is not vital possession. The first is established in a moment, by the act of God, we being perfectly passive; the second requires our whole lives, and in this long growth in grace or sanctification we are active. It is, one may say, our work in the Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit. And it is just because so much sin remains in those who have been born again, that they must heed the law and be judged by it. But the Law is not their life, nor is obedience to the Law. Neither is the law their ideal. Even under the Old Dispensation servants of God were pointed to God himself as the one who was their great exemplar. But under the New Dispensation how much more is Christ our law and our ideal. You then having come to Christ and received as you trust, the gifts of regeneration, which you cannot be conscious of, but must take for granted, as the lepers whom Christ told to show themselves to the priests, took for granted their

cleaning, must in the spirit of those lepers begin to put on Christ, believing that Christ works in you to make you like Himself. We should ask ourselves often, "What would Christ do in these circumstances?" And then strive to do that very thing. If we make the effort in our own strength we shall probably fail in doing what we attempt to do and even when we succeed it will not be genuine success. A forced action is indeed better than nothing, but it is not Christian action; that is, the genuine manifestation of the Christian's real nature, upspringing from free impulse, not harnessed and bridled impulse. And to this we will attain if we, realizing that it is impossible of ourselves to do what we are called upon to do, believe also that a mighty will and power works with our power to enable us to do what our Lord under the circumstances would do. No, we must believe that He acts by and through us, and give Him the glory for it all.

To no slavery, then, are you called, no ascetic self denial is required of you. You are merely asked that, in Christ, you should turn yourself into one like Christ. That is true salvation, and they who think they have secured salvation by performing some condition required by God or going through some intense spiritual exercise, and then feel free to devote themselves to more congenial worldly matters (that business being attended to) will find themselves dreadfully mistaken. We cannot choose Christ to have Him take our guilt away, to deliver us from the world of woe, and admit us to the world of glory, without choosing Him in all acts of fairness and nobleness and self forgetting disinterestedness, courage, loving ministration and cordiality. But why attempt to make a catalogue of what are innumerable? It is sufficient to say that you must choose Christ in all the acts proper to a beautiful, perfect human being. This hardly expresses it, for our Lord is something above humanity; and we are called

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upon to live a life above the original humanity,—just as Lazarus in his state of death was commanded to do the acts of life. Not for the sake of being a beautiful human being. Not for the sake of being saved,—though each such act of choice is of the nature of a saving act of faith, whether you are aware of it or not. No,—the motive should be love of Him who gave Himself for you, “The Just for the unjust,” and for love of your brethren of God’s great family.

Remember, if you shrink from this it is entirely analogous to the shrinking that we could conceive a lower animal to experience at the thought of being turned into a higher animal. The nobler life it cannot appreciate, it cannot conceive it as anything else than torture. Suppose a fish swimming in the water should look up at a man walking on the bank and be told that, if it only wished, it could be turned into a man; it would certainly shrink from it; for to be a fish would seem better. An invitation akin to that is given to you. Do not consider it a call to constraint, to dreariness, to loss and joyless life. It is a call to a nobler, happier human life. Not more pleasureable perhaps. The first necessary condition of a human happiness is to trample pleasure under foot. The fish, if he become a man, would lose the pleasure of darting about under the water, but how much nobler is it to live as a man in the air!

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### LETTER XI.

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Faith joins us to the Lord, but not necessarily the thought of faith. We may take hold of God by an act, when we are not at all aware that it is inspired by faith.

Dear Friend:—

I have now tried, as well as I could, to show the nature of the act of coming to Christ, and also what we

come to Christ for. It remains in a few words to speak of the manner of our coming to Christ. There are two modes of trusting Christ,—in thought, and in act. The dying thief had only time and opportunity for the thought of faith. He could only say, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in Thy Kingdom." (Luke 23:42). That was enough,—though he had no opportunity to manifest his faith by works, though a few moments before he was a blasphemer; though he had no time to become sanctified, he was justified and that very day passed into paradise with the Lord. Our Saviour asks only for trust in him as the sole condition of salvation. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:4-15.) It needed but a look of faith at the brazen serpent for the Israelites to be healed, and there is eternal life for a look unto the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

The couplet,

"Between the saddle and the ground,  
I mercy sought and mercy found,"

is not too strong a statement of the instantaneousness with which the remedy which God has provided can be exhibited and appropriated. Though it would be perilous in the extreme to presume upon it,—still we must allow the possibility of a man's being saved in the article of death, for in a moment he can rest in faith on the Saviour. It is very unlikely that a man at the instant of death will for the first time trust the Saviour, but we must allow the possibility.

Union with the Lord and the Christian life begins in the case of many with the thought of faith alone. Though a man were alone in a desert, afar from his fellow men, and so unable to do the works of faith, it is sufficient for his salvation if he know and act upon the sole condition of the Gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou

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shalt be saved." But where it is possible, more than the thought of faith is required. Now all those acts in which we strive to do holily, lovingly and nobly in the Lord—relying upon His working through us,—are acts of faith and in them often begins the Christian life, in them we are sometimes for the first time joined to the Lord. Sometimes a person in his closet strives with all his might to think the thought of faith, and finds it impossible. He calls up all the promises of the Gospel and tries to give himself up to the Saviour. But he finds himself as unable to do it, as to lift himself in his own arms. After all his efforts he remains without rest or peace or hope or joy. The very eagerness of his desire tends to defeat itself. Sometimes peace comes after a long struggle, and in thought the burdened one is enabled to take hold on Christ. But often peace comes in another way. Forgetting himself and his needs, in the care for and sympathy with the sorrows and necessities of others, the man, trying to do the work of the Lord, relying on the might of the Lord, finds that he has unaware given himself to the Lord, and is planted in Him, never more to be shaken. The joy and peace of his Risen Lord fills his heart, and to his surprise he finds that he has fulfilled the condition of salvation. The thought of faith is good, and we ought to pursue it in our closets. Our Master often sought His closet, and even passed whole nights in prayer, but His life was mainly passed in acts of love and service towards His fellow men, and in such acts we most naturally draw near to find Him and company with Him, striving to do those things that without Him we cannot do,—not merely giving away to pleasant natural impulses.

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### LETTER XII.

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The Church, with her ordinances, is Christ's best representative in this world; if we come in faith and love to the Church, we come to Christ to grow into His likeness.

Dear Friend:—

There is one act of faith great and prominently associated with the beginning of the Christian life. I mean the entering the Christian Church. The great new commandments of our Master was that Christians should love each other. Christianity is intensely social. In so far as a Christian Church is not social, in so far forth it is not Christian. If, then, we love the Lord, we will not, we cannot, remain apart from our brethren in the Lord. And if Christians were only more like Christ, what better way would there be to seek Christ than to seek the society of Christians. To love Christians would be to love their Master for in them they would find their Master. But still, though Christian society, that is, the Church, falls far short of what it should be, though it but faintly and brokenly reflects His glory who is "chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely", it is still a priceless privilege to enter and become part of it. Whither must we go to hear the word of the Lord preached, which is not only a duty but a means of grace? Whither must we go for united prayer and praise,—not only a duty, but a means of grace? And there we have preserved for our use those precious symbols of grace, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which Our Lord commanded that we should forever use, that forever might be kept alive in the Church the sense of entire dependence upon His life and presence in those who are His. And if you would do what is now incumbent upon you, you must seek Christ, not only in your closet, through the thought of faith, not only in acts of faith through deeds of love and service, but also in His church,—listening humbly and faithfully to His word, singing His praises, relying on the help of the Spirit of all praise, praying as by means of Him who maketh intercession through us "with groanings that cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:2,6.); and (if you have been already baptized) drawing near to His table to take and eat of the symbols of His broken body and shed blood.

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Many there are who now having failed to find Christ in the thought of faith, or in the acts of service, have found Him in His church, and especially at His holy table,—in the large promise and offer,—bountifully free,—that He makes through those who minister in His name. “Take and eat, this is my body”. Surely, if ever, we can draw near there and then. Nowhere does He show himself more accessible, putting Himself into (as it were) our very hearts, and nowhere can we so fully realize His great act of dying for us.

This then is the sum of all that I have written. Would you be saved, you must first become aware that you are lost. Not that it is necessary for you to have that intense feeling of this. Many make a great mistake here, and think that if they do not have deep and terrible conviction of sin first, then they have no right to act in the matter. This is an exceedingly mistaken view. If you only feel your lost estate so that you are prompted to apply to the Lord for deliverance, it is enough. But you must not merely feel that you are in a bad situation, and in danger of peril from that, but that in yourself you are undone, and your desire for deliverance must be a desire for transformation into the likeness of Christ. This you are not to beseech of Christ, but to take at once,—it being freely offered to you. Simple trust will save you, for as Christ met the woman’s touch upon the hem of His garment by healing virtue from His person, so He will surely meet your trust, by sending the power of His whole life through the Holy Spirit into the centre of your life, and make you one with Him as really as my hand, eye or heart is part of myself. What I deserve, my hand, eye or heart deserves; to touch my hand, eye or heart, is to touch me; and so those who are through faith, made Christ’s members, are at once as free from condemnation as He is, and deserve all that He deserves, though in themselves they deserve nothing but punishment. This will be their confidence in the Great Last



Day. They are found in Him and in Him are justified, and in Him inherit all things. (Eph. 1:22-23).

You may not be conscious, though you do really trust in the Saviour, that this vital relation has been established, for it is the act of God, and not spiritual experience. It is beneath the consciousness. But the whole Christian life is made up of acts of faith. Seek Him without ceasing in your closet by thought, in the world by all acts of love and service, in the church in its praises and prayers, and at the Table of the Lord. At some point, at some time, you will realize that you are actually joined to the Lord, that you are His, and He is yours, and you will be filled with peace and joy. But feelings do not save us, nor are they a sure mark of a saved state. Faith saves us even though we pass through life without the assurance.

And then having entered into the way of life, go on to perfection. Put on Christ in all holy and lovely human doing, "hasting not, resting not" in the constant exercise of faith till that day when He who has the Key of David, "who openeth and no man shutteth," (Rev. 3:7) shall swing wide Heaven's portal, and receive you with welcome and plaudits to your everlasting home. Remember you must exert your will. Though you may be joined to the Lord and have the Holy Spirit, that will not perforce make you grow in grace. Your growth as a Christian will be the natural result of the life of Christ within you, just as the growth of a plant is the natural result of its life and its environment. You may have the Holy Spirit in you, but unless you exert your will in all holy acting, it will not possess you. The life in my body will not lift it, or it will hang down listless. So a Christian must exert himself if he would grow in grace. Use all the means of grace, and especially the Church and its ordinances.

Not that joining the church makes us safe, or even safer. Any one who feels a sense of security merely because of belonging to the church is in a dangerous way.

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We do not trust the Church, but we are commanded to confess Christ publicly—before all men. That is to join the Church, and the true church is found wherever there is “a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments administered” (See Article XIX). Thither go and enlist as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. Put forth your hand to His holy table, and eat and drink through faith to life everlasting. You may say, “I am too unworthy to do this”. It is because you are unworthy that I call upon you to do it. If you were worthy, there would be no need of it. The most humiliating acknowledgment that a Christian can make of his unworthiness is in taking the Holy Communion. By it he owns that he is so utterly lost and undone and corrupt; that he must be made entirely anew by the life of the Son of God. Enter, then, into His banqueting hall, and His banner over you is love.”

And now I have endeavored to bring you to the threshold of the inner sanctuary of God. Before you the holiest of all—the very presence of God. In former days, under the Old Covenant, there hung before it the separating veil. It is now rent, and the way is open for you to enter. Into it you must go if you would be saved. No high priest, no mediator, can now go for you—you must go for yourself—you must go alone. No,—not alone. No human being, no priest no church—can help you or go with you, but there stands by you at the threshold Our Great High Priest who said, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” With Him enter, in Him present yourself, and you can look up as He does, and say, Abba—Father. And say with Him, “Our Father.—(John 20:17 verse, last clause.)

## Zion===An Allegory.

[Another specimen of my brother's writings, exhibiting a rare versatility in his literary genius.—A. B. K.]

In the course of my travels through the Earth, I came, once upon a time, to a beautiful city, seated upon a lofty eminence, so as to be plainly seen while yet one was far off. They told me that the name of this fair City was Zion—The City of the Living God—and that those who dwelt in it were especially loved by him. It was very strongly fortified, with high walls and many lofty towers and ponderous gates; and upon the ramparts walked they who watched continually. I asked if strangers were permitted to visit this City, and was told that the gates stood open all the day, so that any one might enter, only when the sun went down they were shut "because of fear in the night."

So I ascended the hill upon which the City was built, and found, indeed, the gates open; but hardly had I passed through, when many of the citizens came running to me and embraced me with tears and joy, as if I was a long lost brother. Indeed, they said that I was their long lost brother and told me, "Welcome home!" They took away my clothes, soiled and worn by my much wandering. They had me bathed, and clothed me in the clean white raiment of the City, and set before me bread and wine. Much did I wonder at first that I was treated thus, but soon such a feeling of security and peace and rest possessed me that it seemed the most natural thing in the world that the people of the City should behave so kind towards me. For though I did remember the place where I was born and bred and my kinsfolks and brothers and sisters, yet, for all that, the conviction became stronger in my mind that I had been

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all my life under a delusion, and that this was my true home and birth-place, and that these were my true kindred whom I saw around me.

But now my attention was drawn to the City and its inhabitants. I walked with one of the citizens upon the ramparts from which we could survey a vast extent of country. "Your City seems large," said I, "and its inhabitants a great multitude. How are they supported? What is their occupation?" "Our support", he said, "comes from above, from the Father of lights. He sends us the hidden manna, the living bread, and wine and milk we have without money and without price. Water we draw from the wells of salvation which are within the citadel. As to our occupation, it is gone. We are gardeners, but our garden is laid waste, and we dare not enter it. All the land as far as the eye can reach on every side is our patrimony. And were it not in the possession of our enemy, it would be as the garden of God for beauty and faithfulness. But by his destructive raids and tyrannical rule, he keeps everything desolate. It is because of him that this City is so fortified and guarded. He makes many an attack in open day, tries many a surprise by night, and never ceases his effort to corrupt the garrison. So great are his craft and his power that we know it is only because the Lord keepeth the City that we are safe.

Hearing all this, I was surprised, in going about among the people, to see so much content and cheerfulness manifested in their looks and actions. No sound of fretfulness or impatience could be heard, peace and silence was over all the City.

Then I asked one how this was. "I see", said I, "that your townsmen have not forgotten their birthright and patrimony. There are garden tools in every house, and wherever a flower can be made to blow or a vine be trained, there I see flowers and vines. I note their craving for the free life of the country, by their striving to realize

garden-life as far as they can in the midst of the City,—but, then, what quiet and rest,—what absence of all complaint!”

“That is because they live in the assured hope that the King above, will, at the proper time, make them to re-possess (again) their garden-land. They never cease to desire, but they cry not out to the Lord, for they know that He knows their hearts, so they wait on Him, content. They crave the blessing, and their vow is recorded, and when the blessing comes it will be performed.”

“What vow?” I asked. Then he led me up to the Temple and showed me, together with all the implements of service, vast organs and other instruments, some of which I could not name. They were all placed in order, and in countless numbers,—as he told me,—kept in perfect tune, so that at any time they might be used. He showed me also in the cloisters, great halls where multitudes of youth and maidens were a-training in the service of song. Everything bore the appearance of the eve of a great and joyful celebration. “Surely, we know now,” said my conductor, “that the vow is the vow of praise. When the day of restitution comes, this silent City will ring with the sound of music and with voices that sing.”

“Now do I remember”, said I, “reading of this place in a certain Book,—‘as well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there’. “Grand will be the day when the voice of loud praise shall fill the City, but the best praise that can be given now is the praise of silent waiting. They do well to be quiet and prepared, so that, whether He cometh at midnight or at cock-crowing, they may be ready with their songs of joy.

I now perceived that I had come into a blessed place.

I was thankful that it was my home, and, as day succeeded day, I was fast forgetting mine own people and my father’s house.

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Still, from time to time I was made uneasy by thoughts of them. When the people of the City descend to take possession of their patrimony, what will become of my kindred and all the dwellers in the Plains? Will they be trampled under foot, as were the nine nations of Canaan? Have they nothing to hope for in our prosperity? So I asked the one who before had instructed me. "Think not", he said, "that we of this City are selfish in our prayers and expectations. Surely, you yourself know how open stand our gates and how warm our welcome is to all the inhabitants of the plains. Nay, we have sent and let them know again and again that we would have all of them come to us. But our great enemy has power to deceive them. He causes, by spells in the air,—for he is the Prince of the Power of the air,—that this City shall be invisible to many, so that they say there is no such place. And to those who see it he makes it appear, by false shows of clouds and dark shadows, most dismal and dreary. And if any catch glimpses of it in its beauty, he causes to be reported to them that the way is beset and impassable, and that they never will be received. They know not that the gates are wide open all the day."

"Our enemy also reports that this City is a dreadful prison, and we, unhappy captives, and that Our Lord is a hatefull tyrant; and while he and his underlings harass the people and eat out their substance, he layeth many of the grievous things that he does to the charge of the City's King. Many of the townsmen have gone down to tell the people the truth about this place, and to assure them of Our Lord's good will, and our loving mind towards them, but some of them have been chased away, and some of them have been killed. Only here and there has (and that by the help of the Lord, for our enemy set them against us) one been permitted to see and desire the beauty of this City, and to come near enough to know that he might enter.

Now when our King leads us forth, He will cast out the oppressor of the people of the land, and although we shall possess all, yet they shall be blessed in our blessing, and shall possess under us. What cheers us most in our long waiting is that our triumph will show them so clearly the might and faithfulness of Our God, and will bring to them so much good, that they will become willing servants of Our Heavenly King, will live with us as brethren, and together with us go up to this City, where He will ever be, (and whence His glory will shine over all this region) and worship in His presence.

The day that restores to us a patrimony will restore a Father, and that is one great reason why we long for that day.

Then I mused for a while, and said, "I now see how you can lovingly desire to cast down all the power of the land below; I see now that it is for them you pray and wait, as much as yourselves. I see how blessed they will be who shall dwell in your houses with you in the garden land that is to be."

"But how glorious the lot of the people of this City! I perceive that they are those whom the Lord makes "Princes in all the Earth". (Ps. 45:16) "Surely, they shall reign with him over the Land. Such favor can be only for sinless ones." Then my thoughts troubled me, and my sins came to my remembrance, and I thought,—I can never be one of those who will triumph from this place and reign in glory; as soon as I am known I will be cast out, into the hand of the Enemy, and who knoweth if I shall ever even see the good time of the Land.

When my instructor perceived my thoughts, for I told him, he was troubled with me, and said,—"You must banish this fear, or else leave the City, as no doubtful or fearful ones are allowed to remain here. Hasten to the Observatory. You must see some things with your own eyes or you will never be delivered from your fears."

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Now, in the highest part of the City there was built a lofty tower, on whose top was a sage with a great prospective glass and hearing tube, by means of which heavenly things could be seen and heard. To him did we ascend, and him my conductor begged to show me how it was that the people of the City kept favor with God and were righteous in His eyes. Then he bade me look through the prospective glass, and at once I saw the throne of God and Him that sat thereon, and ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels around about. Then before the throne I saw one dark and crafty present himself. I knew that he was the great enemy of the City, the ruler over the Land. "What seest thou?" said the sage. So I told him. "Now apply thine ear to the hearing tube, and thou wilt hear what he shall say." So I listened, and though I saw nothing, I thought I was there. I heard dreadful things. I heard the saints accused of fearful crimes. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David and all God's great ones were accused. I heard it said that the people of this City had been fornicators, and idolators, and adulterers, and thieves and covetous, and drunkards, and revelers, and extortioners, and I knew in my own heart that these things would never be said before the throne of God unless they were true. At last there came silence. "Look now through the glass", said the sage. I looked, and saw before the throne of the Great God and confronting the adversary one of majestic form, clothed in priestly garments of linen. He was like to Him who sat on the throne as a son is to his Father. He seemed stricken to death, His side was pierced with a great gaping wound, and His hands and feet were pierced and seemed to drip with blood. He addressed himself to speak, and I listened through the tube of hearing. Then did I hear the Son of God take shame to Himself, and confess the sins of His people as if they were His own. He made no distinction between Himself and His people. Methought He used these words,—“Mine iniquities are gone



over my head". "Mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up." (Ps. 38:4) (Ps. 40:12). "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee." (Ps. 69:5). "Thou hast known my reproach and my shame and my dishonor, mine adversaries are all before thee." (Ps. 69:19). "Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them." (Ps. 69:24). "For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk grief to those whom thou hast wounded." (Ps. 69:26).

Then boldly did He say that they who had committed the sins which Satan laid to the charge of the people of the City, had long ago died, that the spear thrust in His side and the wounds in His hands and feet, had slain them. (Gal. 2:20) That they were no more on earth and that their death had paid all claims. (Rom. 6:7) He said that those who dwelt in the City, He had begotten since the time that He had risen from the grave by the power of the Life of his Father in Him, which could not be touched by the spear or by any human agonies. Then he called all the heavenly host to look at the City, and said, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me", and claimed for them all that was rightfully due Himself. Then remember I the words, "He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin", and again, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." And again, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be in the likeness of His resurrection",—and yet again, "that He might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." I wondered, and joy and hope began in my heart, but doubt snatched it away, as I asked within myself, "Is it for me?" Then, with my heart full of doubt and fear I looked through the prospective glass, to see if I could catch a token for Good. But when I looked I

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saw the Adversary standing with outstretched hand, pointing down directly at me. I started back in great affright, and would have fled from the place, but they held me, and said that it behooved me to hear the words that the Adversary would say. So I listened at the tube of hearing, and heard his words, and I knew that all the time his hand was pointing at me.

He accused me of being the worse sinner of all, because I doubted. He said that the decree had long gone forth from the throne that the fearful and unbelieving should have their part in the lake of fire. And indeed I saw, myself, what a sin it was not to lay hold of Eternal Life as one's own, since God had so clearly given it to me.

Surely it was known in the upper region, for ere I turned away I heard what seemed the first part of a triumphant song, struck upon many thousand harps, and I remembered the words, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repenteth." And also it did seem to me as if every bell in the city did softly chime, and as when a wind rustles the leaves of a wood, a sound passed over as if every one in the city whispered, "The Lord our Righteousness." Truly this was not all, for when I reached the foot of the tower, there was given into my hands a letter that a messenger from the throne had that moment brought for me. It was to be my warrant that I had the freedom of the city. So, when I had cut the silk around it, I read therein,—“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of Life freely.”

And now a trumpeter was sent out upon the walls, to the accuser. And first he sounded his trumpet so melodious and loud, that it rang over all the plains. Then he proclaimed, "The Virgin, the Daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice? Even against the Holy One of Israel!"

When this defiance had been uttered, from the highest part of the city a flag was unrolled, and upon that flag was painted the words, "Jehova-nissi—the Lord my banner."

Methought I heard in response some note of warlike preparation, and could discern threatening movements, and the glitter of arms far off in the plain. So the watch was set with care on the walls at the down-going of the sun, and ere he lay down, every one looked to his arms, but nothing came near that night, and all night long a light shone from the Temple, and enwrapped the whole city, so that it was like day, and the Townsmen knew that the Lord was with them, so they lay themselves down in peace and slept.

Then there was silence, as if the enemy was waiting for Judgment to be given against me. But immediately I began to hear innumerable voices, whether of angels or redeemed men I knew not, but as distinctly and clear as if there was no other, and yet they seemed to be innumerable like the flakes of snow that fill the air in a winter storm. I heard such things as these, "Only believe." "Come, for all things are ready." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "I will. Be thou clean." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Without money and without price." "Come unto me."

And then there was a great voice, that seemed to sound from far away like deep thunder. "It is finished."

I cannot tell how it was, but I seemed to lose the power to doubt. I was as if borne away by a current that I could not resist. I said to myself, "If the King wills it, who am I to gainsay it?"

I ventured on God. I remembered the words, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." And I took it as my own.















