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MEDITATIONS
AND
DISQVISITIONS
UPON
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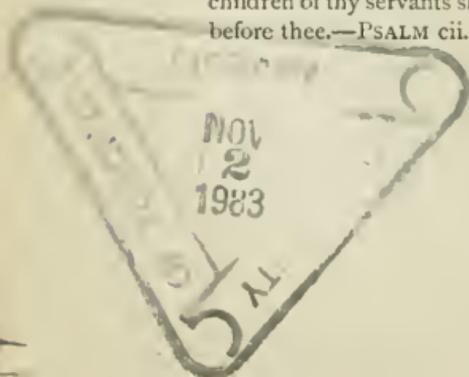
By S^R. RICHARD BAKER, *Knight*.



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Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2. Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily. 3. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. 4. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. 6. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. 7. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. 8. Mine enemies reproach me all the day; *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. 10. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11. My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. 12. But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. 13. Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. 14. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. 19. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; 20. To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; 21. To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; 22. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. 23. He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. 24. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years *are* throughout all generations. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27. But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.—PSALM cii. (Auth. Ver.)



MEDITATIONS AND DISQUISITIONS

UPON

THE HUNDRED AND SECOND PSALM.

WHO so able to hear as he that made the ear?¹ and to whom should I appeal to hear but to him that is most able to hear? If I should go to the ear to hear, it would but send me back to him that made it; for what can any ear hear if it be not animated, O God, by thee? And therefore thou, O God, that hast made the ear, and art only able to hear, *O hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto thee*² [ver. 1].

But is praying no more pleasing a thing to God, but that we must be fain to pray him to hear our prayer? Is not a prayer a tribute due to God, and must the subject pray the prince to receive his tribute? Is not prayer a sacrifice only proper unto God, and will he not suffer the smoke of it to ascend unto him, unless we make it a suit unto him? Alas, my soul, how thou troublest thyself with vain thoughts; for what if it be no prayer unless God hear it? what if it be no tribute unless he receive it? what if no sacrifice unless he smell a sweet savour³ in it? and yet more than this, for if God do not hear it, it is not so much a prayer as an idle speech; if God do not receive it, it is not so truly a tribute as a vain expense; if God do not smell a sweet savour in it, it is not so properly a sacrifice

¹ Ps. xciv. 9. ² Ps. cii. 1: "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee." ³ Gen. viii. 21.

as an *ignis fatuus*,¹ which gives a blaze perhaps, but makes no smoke that can ascend up to heaven. And is there not just cause then, or rather is it not a case of necessity, to say, O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto thee? O therefore, my soul, consider rather, Is it a mean thing for God to hear thy prayer, that thou shouldst think much to pray him to hear it? Is it a mean thing for him that dwelleth in the highest heavens² to hear the prayer of thee, that are but a worm³ crawling upon the earth? Is not God the great Ruler and Governor of all things; and is it a mean thing for him, in the midst of his infinite employments, as it were, to leave them all, and to stand hearing of thee? What is man that God should be mindful of him; or the son of man that God should regard him?⁴ Hath he not made him lower than the angels,⁵ with whom he converseth, and whom he heareth continually? Lower indeed in all other things, but in this of prayer even as high as the angels; at least no more difference between them in this than is between Hosanna⁶ and Alleluia.⁷ Both excellent songs; and if the angels perhaps be tied to sing but one of them, is it not an honour to men that they be at liberty and may sing them both? and both of them indeed are allowed men to sing in that excellent prayer taught us by Christ; but the Alleluia first,⁸ as being all for God; and then the Hosanna,⁹ as being all for ourselves; and the Hosanna we are all of us ready enough to sing, to ask God for benefits. God grant we may sing the Alleluia as well, and offer him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

But can I make any prayer to God which God doth not hear? and what need I then pray him to hear that

¹ "A fiery meteor," commonly called Will with a wisp, or Jack with a lantern, appearing chiefly in summer nights, and haunting commonly churchyards, meadows, and bogs." (Bailey's Dict.) ² 1 Kings viii. 30. ³ Job xxv. 6. ⁴ Ps. viii. 4: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" ⁵ Ps. viii. 5. ⁶ Matt. xxi. 9: "Hosanna to the Son of David." (The word means 'Save now' or 'be now propitious,' and is thus a *prayer* for mercy.) ⁷ Rev. xix. 1, cf. Ps. cvi. 1 (*et alibi*): "Praise ye the LORD." It is thus a phrase of adoration. ⁸ Matt. vi. 9: "Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven." ⁹ Matt. vi. 11-13: "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

which I am sure he hears without my praying him to hear it? I know, O God, thou hearest the least sound that is; I know thou hearest where no sound is; but such hearing, although from thy power, hath yet in it no operation. I know thou hearest the young ravens that call upon thee;¹ but such hearing is from thy general providence, and falls but as the rain upon the just and unjust.² I know thou hearest the blood of Abel,³ but such hearing is in thy justice, and is not for my turn. The hearing that must do me good is in thy mercy; and therefore in thy mercy I humbly entreat thee to hear my prayer, and to let my cry come unto thee.

I require thee not to hear me excusing myself as Adam did: The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.⁴ I require thee not to hear me justifying myself as Saul did: I saved indeed the fat of the sheep, but it was for sacrifice.⁵ I require thee not to hear me boasting myself as the Pharisee did: Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.⁶ I require thee only to hear me humbly praying as the publican did: Lord, be merciful to me a sinner;⁷ and this prayer, I hope, thou wilt vouchsafe to hear, and to let my cry come unto thee. I know thou hearest not as men use to hear; hear a supplication, and not regard it; or hear it, perhaps, and not able to help it; but thy hearing is always with a will to grant, with a power to effect; and with this kind of hearing, with this kind hearing, I humbly entreat thee to hear my prayer, and to let my cry come unto thee.

But lest my praying should not prevail, behold, O God, I raise it to a cry; and crying, I may say, is the greatest bell in all the ring of praying; for louder than crying I cannot pray. O then, if not my prayer, at least let my cry come unto thee. But what cry?—an extension of the voice by loud speaking? Indeed, David in another place commends loudness, as an excellent circumstance in praying,

¹ Ps. cxlvii. 9. ² Matt. v. 45. ³ Gen. iv. 10. ⁴ Gen. iii. 12. ⁵ 1 Sam. xv. 15. ⁶ Luke xviii. 11: "God, I thank thee," etc. ⁷ Luke xviii. 13: "God be merciful," etc.

where he saith, Sing ye loud unto the Lord.¹ But what loudness?—a setting out the voice in the highest strain? Alas, my soul, let me leave this loudness to the priests of Baal,² who cry to their gods, that have ears, and hear not.³ My God hears the loudness of the heart, and can hear a cry in Hannah's prayer, when Eli can perceive nothing but the moving of her lips;⁴ can hear a cry in Moses' prayer,⁵ when none that stand by can perceive him to speak a word.

If I be not heard when I cry, I shall cry for not being heard; and if heard when I cry, I shall cry to be heard: and so, whether heard or not heard, I shall cry still, and God grant I may cry still, so thou be pleased, O God, to hear my prayer, and to let my cry come unto thee.

But it is not so much the loudness of my crying that thou, O God, regardest, as the humbleness and the strength; for though prayer may be with reservation, yet crying is ever with submission; though prayer may be faint and weak, yet crying is always vigorous and strong; yet as humble as it is, it must not come to thee without leave; and as strong as it is, it cannot come to thee without assistance. Oh, then, let my cry come to thee, O God; let it come both permissively and effectively; that having thy leave and thy assistance it may come to thee, not only with boldness but with assurance; with boldness, as having thy leave, and with assurance, as having thy assistance. For alas, O Lord, without thy assistance, it cannot come to thee; it will either stay grovelling about the earth with worldly desires, or hang hovering in the air with ambitious thoughts, and never be able to ascend unto thee; but if by thy grace thou be aiding to my cry, [it] will then break through the clouds, and will pierce the heavens, and nothing shall be able to hinder it from coming to thee.

But say, O my soul, what is this prayer thou art so earnest with God to hear? what, alas, but this, *Hide not thy face from me when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me*

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 1: "Sing aloud unto God." Cf. Ps. xcix. 1, 2. ² 1 Kings xviii. 28.
³ Ps. cxv. 6. ⁴ 1 Sam. i. 12, 13. ⁵ Numb. xi. 2, xxi. 7, et alibi.

when I call, and answer me speedily¹ [ver. 2]. For if God hide not his face from me when I am in trouble, my troubles will hide their face, and be ashamed to appear; that either I shall be freed from them, or at least have patience given me to endure them. But if he hide his face from me, alas then I shall fall from one trouble to another; from anguish of mind to murmuring of spirit; from murmuring to repining; and whither at last but even to despair? Some others, perhaps, that were in trouble would make it no great matter whether God showed him his face or hid it from him; but I that know the blessed influence of God's face, I that know the sweet comfort that comes from the light of his countenance, I desire no greater happiness in all my troubles than this, that he will vouchsafe me the favour, not to hide his face from me.

To hide his face from me at any time must needs make a great damp in my soul; but to hide it from me when I am in trouble would make no less than a very hell within me; for if to the *pœna sensus* [sensible pain] of my being in trouble should be added the *pœna damni* [pain of loss] of hiding away his face, what greater hell could possibly be imagined? for seeing thy beautiful vision is the main object of my hope²—the hope upon which all my happiness depends—how should I be but miserable in extremity if thou, O God, shouldst turn away thy face, and hide it from me? But, O merciful God, though I cannot be truly blessed till I come truly to see thee, yet let me at least enjoy the blessedness of hope, till I come to enjoy the blessedness of fruition.

When I was in prosperity, I thought it sufficient to see thy back parts;³ but now that I am in trouble, what can give me comfort but to see thy face? and wilt thou hide it in a time when it may do most good to be seen? wilt thou hide it from me in a time when it may do me most good to see it?

But is it not a dangerous thing to pray God not to hide his face from me? Do I not run the hazard of sudden

¹ Ps. cii. 2: "Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me; in the day when I call answer me speedily." ² 1 John iii. 2: "We shall see him as he is." ³ Exod. xxxiii. 23.

death, seeing no man shall see his face and live?¹ O my soul, God's not hiding his face brings with it an influence of grace ; for from whom he hides it not, to them he shows it ; and to whom he shows it, to them he gives power to be able to see it. Not, indeed, while we live here, as it is in itself, but in its effects ; then only we shall be able to see it, and live, when we shall come to live by only the seeing it.

But is it not a vain request to pray God not to hide his face from me when I am in trouble, seeing it is the very hiding his face that brings all my troubles upon me? for is there any evil in the city, and God hath not done it?² and how hath he done it but by hiding his face? I know, indeed, that God's turning away his face from me is cause of my trouble ; but to hide his face from me is a greater degree of aversion ; for when he only turns away his face from me, I have means left to recover his sight by my turning to him ; but when he hides his face from me, how can I find it? for who can find that which he is bent to hide? and until I find it, how can I see it? Oh therefore be pleased, O God, though thou turn thy face from me that it cannot be seen, yet not to hide it from me that it cannot be found ; for that may be but for the present, but this is likely to continue, that may be but for a trial ; but this is always for a judgment ; that leaves me at least in the hands of hope, but this turns me over into the hands of despair.

But how can I hope that God will not hide his face from me when I am in trouble, seeing he hid it from his dearest Son in his greatest troubles? for what made Christ on the cross to cry, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?³ but only this, *subtraxit visionem* [he withdrew his appearing] the hiding of God's face from him? O my soul, that which Christ at that time cried, he cried for thee at this time, that thou mayest have the more confidence in crying, having Christ to cry it with thee, Hide not thy face from me, O God, when I am in trouble.

But, O gracious God, not only hide not thy face from me, but incline thine ear unto me, and answer me speedily :

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 20.² Amos iii. 6.³ Matt. xxvii. 46.

for thou art not as the gods of the heathen that have faces to be seen, but no ears to hear;¹ but thou, consisting of no parts, art perfect in all parts, and art as well active in hearing as passive in being seen. If thou shouldst show me thy face, and not incline thine ear unto me, it would seem as if thou tookest a dislike at me, as soon as thou sawest me; and if thou shouldst incline thine ear and not answer me, it would show thee rather to be displeased with the suit than pleased with the suitor; and if thou shouldst answer me, and not answer me speedily, it would seem as if thou didst not well understand my case, or didst not regard it. And alas, O Lord, my case requires a present remedy; a dilatory answer may be to me as prejudicial as none at all; and therefore be pleased, O God, to incline thine ear unto me, and to answer me speedily; for this is my case: *My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth* [ver. 3]. Oh that I could as well speak it of my sins as of my days, that they are consumed like smoke; but, alas, my sins are as smoke that cannot be consumed, but will at last break out into a flame, to consume me, if thou shouldst not, O God, in thy great mercy be pleased to extinguish it.

As the smoke is a vapour proceeding from the fire, yet hath no heat in it, so my days are come from the torrid zone of youth into the region of cold and age; and as the smoke seems a thick substance for the present, but presently vanished into air, so my days made as great show, at first, as if they would never have been spent; but now, alas, are wasted, and leave me scarce a being. As the smoke is fuliginous and dark, and affords no pleasure to look upon it, so my days are all black, and in mourning,—no joy nor pleasure to be taken in them. And as the smoke ascends indeed, but by ascending wafts itself and comes to nothing, so my days are wasted in growing, are diminished in increasing; their plenty hath made a scarcity, and the more they have been, the fewer they are.

And how indeed can my days choose but be consumed

¹ Ps. cxv. 6.

as smoke, when my bones are burnt as an hearth? for as when the hearth is burnt, there can be made no more fire upon it, so when my bones which are as the hearth upon which my fire of life is made, come once to be burnt, how can any more fire of life be made upon them? and when no fire can be made, what will remain but only smoke?

But yet my heart is the first that lives, and the last that dies; and upon this string I may hope yet my life will hold a while; but, alas, *my heart is blasted and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread*¹ [ver. 4]; and what life can there be when there is no nourishment? and how indeed can my heart choose but be blasted, when my bones, that are the next neighbours to it, are all on fire? And yet a blasting perhaps might have some recovery; but a withering like grass puts it past all hope; for as the grass, once withered, can by no dews nor showers of rain be ever brought to recover freshness, so the heart, once withered, can by no cordials of nature or art be ever made capable of comfort again. Other things are of themselves capable of reduction;² the water ebbs and flows again, the sun sets and riseth again; but the grass and the heart are none of this number; the grass, once withered, never flourisheth again, and the heart, once withered, never truly joys again.

The grass is blasted by the stroke of an adverse wind, and my heart is blasted by the breath of God's anger; in this they are like: the grass is withered for want of moisture, and my heart is withered for want of God's moistening grace, and in this they are like; so in blasting and withering, the grass and my heart are like; but in this they are very unlike, that the grass hath no sense, and is senseless of either, where my heart is sensible—alas, too sensible of them both.

But how can it be thought any strange matter that my heart should be withered like grass when my heart is flesh, and all flesh is grass?³ Alas, it is not strange at all, for therefore indeed is my heart withered because it was fleshly;

¹ Ps. cii. 4: "My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread." ² Being brought back to their pristine condition. ³ Isa. xl. 6.

for if it had been spiritual, there had been no danger of withering at all. Oh then take from me, O God, my fleshly heart, and give me a spiritual heart;¹ that though my old heart, being withered, cannot recover; yet my new heart, being fresh, may retain its freshness, and never wither.

But though it be not strange that his heart should be withered, yet this certainly is strange, that he should forget to eat his bread. I have heard of some that have forgotten their own names; but I never heard of any that forgot to eat his meat; for there is a certain prompter called hunger, that will make a man to remember his meat in spite of his teeth. And yet it is true, when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, such a forgetfulness of necessity will follow. Is it that the withering of the heart is the prime cause of sorrow, at least cause of the prime sorrow; and immoderate sorrow is the mother of stupidity, stupefying and benumbing the animal faculties, that neither the understanding nor the memory can execute their functions? Or is it that sorrow is so intente² to that it sorrows for that it cannot intend³ to think anything else? Or is it that nature makes account that to feed in sorrow were to feed sorrow, and therefore thinks best to forbear all eating? Or is it that, as sorrow draws moisture from the brain, and fills the eyes with water, so it draws a like juice from other parts which fills the stomach instead of meat? However it be, it shows a wonderful operation that is in sorrow, to make not only the stomach to refuse its meat, but to make the brain to forget the stomach, between whom there is so natural a sympathy, and so near a correspondence. But as the vigour of the heart breeds plenty of spirits, which, conveyed to all the parts, gives every one a natural appetite, so when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, and that there is no more any vigour in it, the spirits are presently at a stand, and then no marvel if the stomach lose its appetite, and forget to eat bread.

¹ Ezek. xi. 19.² Attentive.³ Attend.

But how should this happen, that David, a man after God's own heart,¹ should have his own heart so grievously handled as to be withered? Withered indeed to carnal appetites, but yet fresh still to heavenly desires; or rather the more fresh in these because withered in those; and therefore, though he forgot to eat his bread, the sustenance of his natural life, yet we may be sure he forgot not to eat his bread, the sustenance of his spiritual life. And was it not even so with our Saviour Christ, which made him tell his disciples he had other meat which they knew not of?² O my soul, there is in all the saints of God a hunger after righteousness³ which far exceeds all hunger after corporeal food; and what marvel then if the greater suppress the lesser, and if, longing after righteousness and forgiveness of sins, they forget sometimes to eat their bread?

Alas, O Lord, what time can I have to think of eating of bread, when my thoughts have enough to do, or, rather, all they can do is not enough to meditate of thy law,⁴ much more of thy love? to meditate of my sin, much more of thy anger? Oh, this takes away, not only all stomach from meat, but all remembrance of eating; to think of thy love, and what it hath done for me; to think of thy law, and what it requires of me; to think of my sin, and what it deserves; to think of thine anger, and what it threatens. Oh, these thoughts lie heavy upon me, and make me to groan with grief, that *with the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin*⁵ [ver. 5]. I am become a carcase rather than a body, and might serve for an anatomy without dissecting. If I did but only fast, the cheerfulness of my heart might yet make me to keep my flesh, and be instead of meat unto me; but now that to my fasting is added groaning, this leaves me nothing but skin and bone; skin, to make me sensible of pain, and bone, to make me durable in pain. My flesh, that should supply them and mediate between them, is clean wasted and gone, that I seem a creature of a strange composition, made up of extremes, without any mean between them. *I am like a pelican in the wilderness, and like an owl of the desert*⁶

¹ 1 Sam. xiii. 14. ² John iv. 32. ³ Matt. v. 6. ⁴ Ps. i. 2. ⁵ Ps. cii. 4:
 "By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin." ⁶ Ps. cii. 6.

[*ver. 6*]. If I offer to go abroad, all the birds of the air and all the fowls of the field come flocking about me; they wonder at me as at a monster, and seem as if they had never seen such a thing before; and though I have more feathers upon my back than any of them, yet they will not acknowledge me for any of their kind. They disagree all amongst themselves, yet all agree in opposing of me; there is not so small a bird in the company but insults over me; they suffer me not to make apology for myself, but condemn me without hearing me speak; they cannot say I either prey upon any of them, as the hawk doth, or that I threaten any of them, as the kite doth; yet they cannot abide I should come amongst them or be of their company. I therefore shift myself from them as fast as I can; but, alas, what get I by my shifting?—a change indeed, but no abatement of my misery; for where I was before as an owl of the desert, I am now become *as a sparrow alone upon the housetop*¹ [*ver. 7*]. Oppressed before with multitude, and now with solitude; famished before with fasting, and now made a ghost with watching; a wonder before to others, and now a wonder to myself: and can any misery be greater than this, that where fasting and groaning and watching are each of them enough to breed a consumption, and to make a man miserable, I, alas! am the unhappy centre where they all meet and are joined together?

I am indeed upon the housetop; the title of my kingdom is not taken from me, but I am but as a sparrow upon the housetop; the force and dignity of it is, for I am left alone, all desolate and disconsolate; and not only forsaken of my friends, but exposed to the scandal and violence of my enemies. I am kept watching,² not more by privation of sleep than by addition of care, as being always in fear, because always in danger of their malicious practices and machinations. For *they reproach me all the day long; and they that are mad at me are sworn against me*³ [*ver. 8*]. If I be where they are, they rail at me to my face; and if I be

¹ Ps. cii. 7: "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top." ² Ps. lxxvii. 4. ³ Ps. cii. 8: "Mine enemies reproach me all the day, and they that are mad against me are sworn against me."

not amongst them, they revile me behind my back ; and they do it not by starts and fits, that might give me some breathing-time, but they are spitting their poison all the day long ; and not single, and one by one, that might leave hope of resisting, but they make combinations and enter leagues against me ; and to make their leagues the stronger and less subject to dissolving, they bind themselves by oath, and take the sacrament upon it. And now sum up all these miseries and afflictions : begin with my fasting ; then take my groaning ; then add my watching ; then the shame of being wondered at in company ; then the discomfort of sitting disconsolate alone ; and, lastly, add to these the spite and malice of my enemies, and what marvel, then, if these miseries joined all together make me altogether miserable ; what marvel if I be nothing but skin and bone, when no flesh that were wise would ever stay upon a body to endure such misery ?

But though not a greater, yet I may truly say a stranger misery than any of these is still behind. *For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with tears*¹ [ver. 9]. Strange indeed in any, but most of all in David, for was not David a king ? and are ashes fit bread for a king to eat ? Yet so it is ; if kings will be sinners, they must look sometimes to fare no better. For if sin bring not such a dearth upon them, yet repentance will ; and if it be not enforced, it will at least be voluntary ; or, rather, the more it is voluntary, the more it is enforced, seeing there is no such violence as that of the will, which perhaps made Christ to say, The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence.²

But though the bread indeed be strange, yet not so strange as this, that having complained before of forgetting to eat his bread, he should now on a sudden fall to eating of ashes like bread. For had he not been better to have forgotten it still, unless it had been more worth remembering ? For there is not in nature so unfit a thing to eat as ashes : it is worse than Nebuchadnezzar's grass ;³ it is the last of all excrements, and cannot be resolved into worse or less than it is already ; that one would wonder how

¹ Ps. cii. 9 : "For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping." ² Matt. xi. 12. ³ Dan. iv. 33.

David was ever brought to eat so unnatural a thing. It is true, many in hard sieges have been constrained to eat very unnatural and loathsome things; and can any siege be harder than that with which Satan compasseth us? But this act in David here seems not so much constrained as to be voluntary, and what then could make the eating of ashes be voluntary in him? Is it that, having sinned through too much pampering his flesh, he would now eat something most improper for nourishment, lest nourishing his sinful body he should withal nourish his sinfulness, and therefore would mortify his flesh as a means thereby to mortify sin? Or is it that he therefore says, He eat ashes like bread, because, through extremity of sorrowing for his sin, his mouth was brought so out of taste that he found no more relish in bread than he should do in ashes? Or is it that where ashes are used as an external sign of humiliation, he thought it not enough for him unless he took them inwardly too? and so his eating of ashes is but feeding upon repentance, but rather indeed as Christ said, it was meat to him to do his Father's will,¹ so it was bread to David to repent in sackcloth and ashes.

And now, if you think his bread to be bad, you will find his drink to be worse, for he mingles his drink with tears; and what are tears but brinish and salt humours? And is brine a fit liquor to quench one's thirst? May we not say here the remedy is worse than the disease? for were it not better to endure any thirst than to seek to quench it with such drink? Is it not a pitiful thing to have no drink to put in the stomach but that which is drawn out of the eyes? and yet whose case is any better? No man certainly commits sin but with a design of pleasure; but sin will not be so committed; for whosoever commit sin, let them be sure at some time or other to find a thousand times more trouble about it than ever they found pleasure in it; for all sin is a kind of surfeit, and no way to keep it from being mortal but by this strict diet of eating ashes like bread, and mingling his drink with tears. O my soul, if these be works of

¹ John iv. 34: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."

repentance in David, where shall we find a penitent in the world besides himself? To talk of repentance is obvious in every one's mouth; but where is any that eats ashes like bread, and mingles his drink with tears? Is it that we may repent as well in silk as in sackcloth, and may be as good penitents with the diet of Dives as with that of Lazarus?¹ Or is it that David was more strict in his repentance than he needed? O my soul, be not deceived; for who better knew the penitent's diet than St. Paul? yet he used himself in the like case no other bread than David's ashes, no other drink than mingled with his tears; and, indeed, without observing this diet there will be found no great good in repentance, because, to say the truth, no good repentance.

But if eating of ashes were voluntary in David, why should he complain, and reckon it amongst his miseries? For who would be willing to be miserable if he might avoid it? Indeed penitence is a penance, and penitence is voluntary, penance a misery; and so he endures a misery by choice to avoid the enduring of miseries by constraint. Oh, the hard estate of wretched man, that where nothing is miserable but that which crosses the will, he should be brought to cross his will to avoid being miserable, and have no remedy for his misery but misery; yet so it is, and so we must do; for if it be true in the body, *Dolor est medicina doloris* [Pain is pain's cure], it is no less true in the soul, the pain of penance cures the pain of sin; but this is the comfort, that the misery we endure is tolerable, where the misery we avoid is most intolerable.

These are miserable effects indeed, and yet the cause worse; the *quo* [whither, or end] is grievous, but the *unde* [whence, or origin] more; for I suffer these things *because of thine indignation, O God, and by reason of thy wrath*² [ver. 10]. Alas, O Lord, if I could suffer these miseries, if a thousand times more than these, and with them retain thy love and enjoy thy favour, not only I would suffer them with patience, but I should suffer them with comfort; but to suffer them, and with them to suffer the wrath of thy

¹ Luke xvi. 19, 21. ² Ps. cii. 10: "Because of thy indignation and thy wrath, for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down."

displeasure, this puts me into ecstasy of impatience, and makes me capable of no ease, of no hope of ease, of no means of hope, of no possibility of means, of not so much as the least degree of possibility.

For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. If thou hadst never lifted me up, I should never have been sensible of casting down; if I had never tasted of happiness, I should not now find in misery a grievance; but to have been lifted up, and now to be cast down, to have enjoyed thy favour, and now to feel thy displeasure, to have been happy, and now to be miserable, *Fuisse felicem miserimum est* [It is most sad to have been happy]. We that never were in Paradise think this world a pleasant living; but Adam, that was in it, though but a while, found quickly the difference between a palace and a prison. If the angels that fell¹ had never been in heaven, they would not be so sensible of their being in hell; but now the very sense of their falling from thence is itself a greater hell unto them than that which is local.

And yet the *unde*, neither, makes me not so miserable as the *per quem*, not so grievous to me *from whence* as *by whom*. No aggravation of unkindness could better be expressed than was done by him that said, *Et tu, mi fili?* [Thou too, my son?] And is it not as great an aggravation for me to say, *Et tu, mi pater?* [Thou too, my father?] Thou to cast me down, that hadst lifted me up! Thou to bring me to hide myself in a hole, who hadst raised me up to sit on a throne! Thou to be the sword to strike me, that hadst always been my buckler to defend me!²

But why, O my soul, shouldst thou take this so unkindly at God's hands? Is his lifting up a sign always of his favour? Is his casting down a token always of his anger? No, my soul, he casts down as often in his mercy as in his anger; he lifts up as often in his anger as in his mercy; both of them in his intention of equal goodness, though not to our sense of equal relish. He lifteth up often to try our humility, and he casteth down often to try our patience. And are not patience and humility good exercises both? And in

¹ Jude 6.² 2 Sam. xxii. 31.

both of them he intends our good, and therefore in both of them good cause to praise him. O merciful God, though lifting up be most pleasing, casting down most offensive to nature, yet I had infinitely rather thou shouldst cast me down in kindness than lift me up in displeasure; cast me down, and give me patience, than lift me up, and not give me humility.

Yet see the force of unkindness, but rather indeed of guiltiness, for I cannot think thee to do that in anger which my sins have provoked thine anger to do. I cannot but think thy casting me down to be a work of thy wrath, who know that the lifting me up was a fruit of thy favour. This fear of thine anger, this guiltiness of my sin, oh these are the things that have turned even Nature from her bias, and have made my soul beside itself; these are the things that have made me to eat ashes like bread, and to mingle my drink with tears. Through these it is that *my days are as a shadow that declineth*, and that *I am withered like to grass*¹ [ver. 11].

A shadow in its best estate is a thing in appearance rather than in being; but when it declines, it is an appearance that scarce appears; and such, alas, are my days: they rather seem to be than are when they are at the best; but now are so fretted with the canker of sin, and with the blast of thine anger, that they seem to have lost that very seeming. For thou, O God, art the *Antiquus dierum*, the Ancient of days,² by whose only aspect my days have their being; and how then can they choose but decline as a shadow, when thou turnest away thy face that art their substance? Alas, O Lord, my days are but as a shadow to the sun, and the sun itself but a shadow to thee; and how then can my days choose but decline as a shadow, when they are in truth but the shadow of a shadow? Thou, O God, art the *Anticus dierum*, the Ancient of days: more ancient than days, for days were never till the sun was made, and the sun was never till the light was made. But thou, O God, art a sun³ to thyself, and wert in full brightness before—*Fiat lux* [Let there be light]⁴—any light was ever talked of. And as thou

¹ Ps. cii. 11: "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass." ² Dan. vii. 9. ³ Ps. lxxxiv. 11. ⁴ Gen. i. 3.

art more ancient than days, before days were, so thou art more lasting than days, when days shall be no more; for days can be no longer than there is sun, and the sun can be no longer than there are heavens; and the heavens wax old as doth a garment, and that which waxeth old must needs at last come to an end; so there will at last be an end of the heavens, and with them of the sun, and with that of the days of man. *But thou, O Lord, endurest for ever, and thy remembrance to all generations*¹ [ver. 12]. But what,—no longer than to all generations? How then can it be eternal, seeing generations continue no longer than the world continues? And who knows not that the world shall have an end, and so by this reckoning his remembrance should have an end too? But is there not an eternal generation, of which it is said, *Hodie genui te*—This day have I begotten thee,² and of whom it is said that of his kingdom there shall be no end?³ Although what need we go so high, for if we ask the Hebrews the extent of this phrase, they will tell us that to say to all generations is as much as to say to all eternity.

But what good is it to me that God's days have no shadow of declining, if my days decline as a shadow? What good to me that his remembrance be to all generations, if my heart wither, and be not durable one generation? O my soul, though my heart be withered as grass, yet God is a fountain of life,⁴ and can make a new spring in my heart at his pleasure. And as I am sure he can do it, so I am confident he will do it; for he *will arise and have mercy upon Zion*⁵ [ver. 13], and in Zion upon me as a member of Zion; for this is that precious ointment upon the head that ran down to the beard, even to Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments;⁶ and one of the skirts of Aaron's garments am I, upon whom thou wilt be pleased, O God, to pour down this precious ointment of thy mercy from the head, which is Christ.

¹ Ps. cii. 12: "But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations." ² Ps. ii. 7. ³ Isa. ix. 7. ⁴ Ps. xxxvi. 9: "For with thee is the fountain of life." ⁵ Ps. cii. 13: "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come." ⁶ Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

But how is it that God is said to arise? Is it to rise from sleep? but he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.¹ Is it to rise from being down? for he hath placed his tabernacle in the sun, and the sun indeed both riseth and goeth down; yet God is always above the highest heavens,² and how then can he be said to rise? When God meant to show his wrath upon Sodom, it is said he descended;³ but we conceive he descended not in place, but he descended from his mercy to his justice; and when he means to show his mercy, he may as well be said to rise, not at all in place, but from his justice to his mercy; or rather indeed he must then be said to rise seeing his mercy-seat is the highest part of all his ark,⁴ and no coming to it without rising: and now he is meaning to show mercy unto Zion, and therefore now he rises: *For the time to favour Zion is come, yea the set time is come.*

Zion hath been long enough under the hand of justice, long enough in affliction; it is time now to favour Zion, and to let her taste of mercy; for thou wilt not, O God, be always angry,⁵—thou wilt not make thee a mercy-seat, and then not use it. No, my soul; but God that made time knows best when to take his time; he will show mercy, but not till the time be fit to show it; he will take off his plasters, but not till the sore be healed; he will remove his judgments, but not till repentance is perfected; and the times of these things are all set down in God's decree, far more unalterable than any law of the Medes and Persians.⁶ And though there be some so foolish to think that all things happen in this inferior world by chance, or at least by the conduct of our own reason, and that God hath no hand at all in the economy⁷ and disposing of human affairs, yet it is a truth undoubted that nothing comes to pass, or is done in the world, (you would wonder I should say not the lighting of a sparrow upon the ground,)⁸ without the providence of the Almighty God.

God indeed is always merciful, yet doth not always show

¹ Ps. cxxi. 4. ² Ps. lvii. 5. ³ Gen. xviii. 20, 21. ⁴ Exod. xxv. 21. ⁵ Ps. ciii. 9: "He will not always chide." ⁶ Dan. vi. 8. ⁷ Government. ⁸ Matt. x. 29.

his mercy—not always to Zion herself; and what marvel then if not always to me, who can look for no mercy but as a member of Zion. If Zion were pure gold, and had no dross in it, then indeed it should not need the furnace; or if it were clean iron, and had no rust upon it, then it should not need the file; but seeing it is as iron that gathers rust, and as gold not thoroughly refined, no remedy now but the file and the furnace must sometimes be used; yet this file and this furnace have their prefixed time, in which it may be said, The time to favour Zion is come; yea, the set time is come. Zion was once carried into Babylon,¹ and there suffered the file and the furnace many years; but was there not a period prefixed in which it was said, The time to favour Zion is come; yea, the set time is come? But the greatest affliction that ever Zion endured was under Satan, which continued many ages; yet this captivity had a period prefixed, in which it was said, The time to favour Zion is come; yea, the set time is come. And though these set times of favouring or afflicting Zion be *inter arcana Dei* [among God's secrets], known only to God, yet God hath never kept them so secret in his bosom but that he hath afforded signs, preceding or accompanying, to make them visible, and in which it may be said, The time to favour Zion is come; yea, the set time is come; of which signs this specially one, that *thy servants, O God, take a pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof*² [ver. 14]. For was it not so in the affliction of Zion in Babylon? Did not Nehemiah and other thy servants take a pleasure in the stones of Zion, when so cheerfully they re-edified the temple of Jerusalem,³ that lay buried before in ruins and heaps of dust? Was it not so in the captivity of Zion under Satan, when the stone which the builders refused became the headstone of the corner?⁴ And may not we ourselves at this present time hope for some favour to our Zion, seeing thy servants, O God, take a pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof? For what else doth the work show which is now in hand to re-edify the prime temple of our nation,

¹ Jer. xx. 4. ² Ps. cii. 14: "For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." ³ Nehem. ii. 18: "They strengthened their hands for this good work." ⁴ Ps. cxviii. 22.

and I may say the glory of our Zion, that wanted little of utter demolishing and falling into dust and ruin, but that thou hast put it into the hearts of thy servants to take a pleasure in her stones, and to favour her dust?

As long as Zion is afflicted, and her stones neglected, the heathen will never believe there is any other God besides their own idols; and the kings of the earth will magnify themselves, and say, Where is God, or what is the Lord, that we should fear him? ¹ But if thou vouchsafe to have mercy upon Zion, and to make thy servants have a pleasure in her stones, then will the heathen fall to scorn their idols, and will fear thy name [ver. 15]; ² and then will the kings of the earth leave magnifying themselves, to magnify thee and thy glorious name.

Though Zion be afflicted, and her stones neglected, yet Israelites, no doubt, will fear thy name still, for the works thou hast done in the days of their fathers and in the old time before them; ³ and common people perhaps will fear thee for the fear of thy thunder and of the terrors that are seen in heaven; but if thou have mercy upon Zion, and build up the walls thereof, then both Jew and Gentile, both prince and people, will all join together to magnify thee and thy glorious name; and then it will be verified to Zion, Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers, ⁴ and thy name shall be great both with great and small.

Who knows not, O God, that Zion is thy beloved, and that her stones are thy jewels? and therefore in suffering her disgrace, thou sufferest, as it were, disgrace thyself; but if thou vouchsafe to have mercy upon Zion, that her stones may be counted precious stones, and her dust sweet powder, then her honour will bring honour to thee, and in her glory thou wilt thyself appear glorious; for *When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory* [ver. 16].

But doth the building up of Zion add anything to God's glory? Was not his glory as great before the building up of Zion as it hath been since? and if as great, why not as

¹ Exod. v. 2. ² Ps. cii. 15: "So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory." ³ Ps. xlv. 1. ⁴ Isa. xlix. 23.

apparent? No doubt, God is in his glory always equally, but appears not always equally. Our eyes are too dim-sighted to see his glory as it is; but to see it in his works he hath made us capable; and if in his works, then most in his most glorious work, which is Zion; and if in Zion, then most when Zion is builded up, for then in the perfection of the work we shall see the perfection of the workman, and seeing it admire him, and admiring him glorify him. When did God show his glory to Moses but then when he had given him the law, and had ordained Aaron and his sons to be his priests, which was the first visible building up of Zion? And when did Christ appear most in his glory but at his transfiguration,¹ when he had ordained his apostles and given his commandment,² which was the second visible building up of Zion? But when God shall build up Zion to the fullest height, then indeed he will appear in his glory, such as we are not able to behold, but he must be fain to put us into the cleft of a rock when it passeth by.³ Or is it that the building up of Zion adds nothing to God's glory, nor perhaps to the appearance of his glory; but his great love to Zion appears in this, that when he builds up Zion he will then be pleased to appear in his glory, the more to honour Zion?

However it be, it seems God shall gain much by building up of Zion, for he shall then appear in his glory. But what shall we ourselves get by it? O my soul, exceeding much, *For he will (then) regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer* [ver. 17]; he will then give ear to the suits of the poor, and not reject their supplications. But who will believe this? Is it likely that when God is in his glory he will intend such mean things as hearkening to the poor? Can it stand with the honour of his glory to stand reading petitions, and specially of men that come *in forma pauperis?* [pleading as paupers.] Scarce credible, indeed, with men who, raised in honour, keep a distance from the poor, and count it a degree of falling to look downwards; but credible enough with God, who counts it his glory to

¹ Matt. xvii. 2.² Matt. x. 1—42, xi. 1.³ Exod. xxxiii. 22.

regard the inglorious, and being the Most High, yet looks as low as to the lowest, and favours them most who are most despised. And this did Christ after his transfiguration, when he had appeared in his glory; he then showed acts of greatest humility; he then washed the disciples' feet,¹ and made Peter as much wonder to see his humbleness as he had done before to see his glory. In truth, humbleness is a stately virtue, and cannot be but in persons of state. A poor man may be proud, but he cannot in some sense be said to be humble; have the heart of humbleness he may, but not the face, for this is to stoop below his fortune; and let a poor man stoop as low as he can, he seems but level with his fortune still. And here we may observe that it is not the glory of God that need make us afraid, or can make us unfit to present our suits unto him ourselves, without a spokesman to present them for us, seeing the baser we are that pray, the readier he is to hear our prayers; and the more inglorious we are that appear, the more his glory appears in hearkening to us. And *This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people that shall be created shall praise the LORD* [ver. 18]. This shall be written for a memorial; not left to the unfaithful custody of words, which commonly vanish as soon as they are uttered, but be written in a book, and with the pen of a diamond,² that all people, both present and to come—all men, both created at first by thy power, and then created again by thy grace—may take notice of this graciousness in thee,—so far differing from the ways of the world,³ so far excelling the courses of men, that for this we have just cause to say, All glory, all glory and honour be unto thee, O God, who vouchsafeth to hear whom the proud world despiseth; who art pleased to regard the destitute, whom vain man leaves destitute of all regard: *for thou hast looked down from the height of thy sanctuary; from heaven, O LORD, didst thou behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose those that are appointed to death*⁴ [ver. 19, 20]. One would think it

¹ John xiii. 5, 6. ² Jer. xvii. 1. ³ Isa. lv. 8. ⁴ Ps. cii. 19, 20: "For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death."

should be some great matter that makes God to look down from the height of his sanctuary into this vale of misery; that makes him leave the glorious objects of heaven to look upon worms that are crawling on the earth: and yet the work not so great but the motive is as small; for he looks not down as men look down into the bowels of the earth, to look for mines of gold and silver. Alas! all that moves him to look down is to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose those that are appointed to death.¹ And is not this an incredible thing, that he should leave the blessed objects of heaven for the wretched objects upon earth, the height of his sanctuary for this vale of misery, the music of angels for the groaning of prisoners? But such is the wonderful love (a love never enough to be admired, never possible to be conceived)² of God towards man, that it is motive enough to draw him from one end of the world to another, if he do but hear that man is in misery, or suffers affliction; for then he neither regards the blessedness of place nor the gloriousness of persons; he neither regards the pleasing objects of his eye nor the sweet delights of his ear, but is content to forbear them all, only to come and relieve this unworthy creature—so little deserving it as not desiring it, so little thanking him for it as scarce so much as once thinking of it. And now, O my soul, say whether God's love to man, or man's ungratefulness to God, be greater?

But is man's redemption no greater a work but that it may be done by God's looking down? Is there no more ado about it but that it may be performed with a look?—with a look, indeed, as God looks, for he so looked down from heaven that he bowed the heavens and came down himself;³ he broke open the prison door,⁴ he plucked off the prisoners' chains,⁵ he left the jailor himself bound, he led captivity captive,⁶ and gave gifts unto men; and all this he did for his love to man,—if I may not rather say, all this he did for love to his mercy. As a merchant travels to the farthest parts of the world only for the love he bears to his

¹ Ps. cii. 20.² Eph. iii. 19.³ Ps. cxliv. 5.⁴ Isa. xlii. 7.⁵ Jer. xl. 4.⁶ Eph. iv. 8.

profit, so God seems to travel from heaven to earth only for the love he bears to his mercy; for heaven is not so fit a place, the angels not so fit persons, in which, and on which, he can show his mercy at the full: it must be some miserable place that can serve for a stage, they must be some miserable persons that can serve for the subjects of showing his mercy; and what place more miserable than a prison, what persons more miserable than those that are appointed to death?

But is it so strange a matter that a look of God should effect redemption? Did he not make the world with a word, and might he not as well redeem the world with a look? Did not Christ redeem Peter with only a look, when, after his denying and forswearing, Christ's only looking back upon him made him presently to go out and to weep bitterly?¹ And why not as easily done by God's looking on us as by our looking on him?² and was it not a present cure but only to look upon the brazen serpent?³ Was not this Zacharias's prophecy? He hath visited and redeemed his people,⁴ but only visited, did but look, and redemption presently.

But to what end is all this done?—to what end hath God looked down from heaven to set man at liberty? Is it to this end, that he may revel it again as he had done before, and that he may commit new sins to deserve new chains? God forbid! it is all done to this end, that being freed from our enemies we may serve him without fear,⁵ that *we may declare his name in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem*⁶ [ver. 21]. But are Zion and Jerusalem a circuit sufficient for declaring of God's name? Alas, Zion is but a little hill, and Jerusalem but one city; and can so small an extent be capable of so great a work as praising of God's name? It is true David's Zion is but a hill, but God's Zion is the whole world; David's Jerusalem is but one city, but God's Jerusalem is heaven and earth. There was a time indeed when the declaring of God's name was confined to Zion, but that was under the law which

¹ Luke xxii. 61, 62. ² Isa. xlv. 22. ³ Numb. xxi. 9. ⁴ Luke i. 68. ⁵ Luke i. 74. ⁶ Ps. cii. 21: "To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem."

was given in Sinai. There was a time when the praising of God was included within Jerusalem, but that was when all sacrifices to God were to be offered only in Jerusalem; but we have now a law the sound whereof is gone out into all nations;¹ we have now a sacrifice that was slain before the foundations of the world;² and therefore now it shall no longer be said, The Lord liveth that founded Zion and built the walls of Jerusalem,³ but The Lord liveth that made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is;⁴ and now the whole earth is full of the majesty of his glory,⁵ that now we may put Satan from his walk of compassing the earth,⁶ and compass it ourselves in declaring of God's name and in showing forth his praise. And oh let me never, O God, live out half my days, if I fail of this duty and perform not this service.

But see what comes of hasty vows! for while I said thus within myself, and as *the people were gathered together, and the kingdoms of the earth to serve the Lord*⁷ [ver. 22], and I preparing myself to be amongst them as if God had heard me and took me at my word, *He weakened my strength in the way*⁸ [ver. 23], and surprised me with so dangerous a sickness as if he meant to *shorten my days*, and made me to turn my note from praising him for my freedom, to pray him for my life, that *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days*⁹ [ver. 24], spare me to fulfil my course, that I may at least have time to perform my vows unto thee. Would any traveller that hath a day's journey to go be willing to make an end of his journey at noon? and why then wilt thou make me to end my journey of life in the midst of my days, which is but the noon of my life? Alas, O Lord, I have spent all the forenoon of my life so idly, or rather so illy,¹⁰ that I now desire to live in hope to make a better afternoon's work. But why should David do this? for who knows not that the latter part of life is always the worst? for then

¹ Matt. xxiv. 14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all nations."
² Rev. xiii. 8. ³ Isa. xiv. 32. ⁴ Exod. xx. 11. ⁵ Ps. lxxii. 19. ⁶ Job i. 7.
⁷ Ps. cii. 22: "When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve the LORD."
⁸ Ps. cii. 23: "He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days."
⁹ Ps. cii. 24: "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations."
¹⁰ Wickedly.

subveniunt morbi et tristis senectus [diseases come and sad old age], worst indeed for the body, but best for the soul. For in the cold of this age comes the fire of devotion to be made in the heart; all the forepart of life is commonly spent in the fire of concupiscence, and all that time there is no room in the heart for the fire of devotion; for the heart, God knows, is too small a hearth to have two fires made upon it at once. And therefore, O God, take me not away in the midst of my days, that the fire of concupiscence being first quenched in me, I may live to have the fire of devotion kindled in my heart before I die.

But how can one be taken away in the midst of his days, seeing whensoever he is taken away it is the end of his days? Hath man any more days to reckon his than God is pleased to allow him? But is it not that David speaks according to the natural proportion of men's living, of which in another place he saith, The years of man are threescore and ten;¹ and so many indeed did David live, and by that is said here may seem at this time to have been about the midst of those years? Or was it that he calls it the midst of his days because as in the midst of the day is the greatest heat, so he was now perhaps in the greatest heat of his sin? And in this sense indeed he had just cause to pray to God not to take him away in the midst of his days. For what were this but as if God should take advantage of his sins against him, and take him away when he were most of all out of the way, and most unfit to be taken away? But is this good manners in David to appoint God the time when he should take him away, as though God knew not the fittest time when to take him away himself? O my soul, it is not so meant; but David, knowing his days to be always in the hands of God, but his repentance not always in his own hands, he humbly prays God not to take him away in the midst of his days, but in his great mercy to afford him a longer time of repentance; and yet this neither not so much for his own good as for God's glory; for what glory can a workman have if he leave his work imperfect? and will he not leave it imperfect if he take him away in the

¹ Ps. xc. 10.

midst of his days, which is the midst of his work? If he take him away then, he may perhaps take away Saul a persecutor, where, if he left him to finish out his days, he might take him away Paul a martyr. Oh how happy are they who in the midst of their days can make an end of their days, and who make no distinction of their days by beginning or middle, but count every day the ending! For if it be one of the greatest follies in man that *semper incipit vivere* [he is always beginning to live], certainly it is one of the greatest wisdoms in man that *semper incipit mori* [he is always beginning to die]; for then, at what time of his days soever it shall please God to take him away, it can never be said he is taken away in the midst of his days.

The shortest time to the longest time hath some proportion; for the shortest time multiplied will come at last to make the longest time: but the longest time to eternity hath no proportion; for, multiplied never so often, it can never come to be eternal; and that which hath no proportion to a thing is to that thing as nothing; and thus my days, though they were as many as the days of Methuselah, yet to thee, O God, that art eternal, would be as nothing. And, alas then, O Lord, what is the living out my days to thee who livest for ever? My life is but a life of days, and of days that decline as a shadow; but thy life is a life of years, and of years that endure throughout all generations.

Nor is it any immortality of this body of mine, in the state I am now in, that I desire; for then I should desire to have more than the earth and the heavens themselves have; for the earth is of an old date indeed, and the foundation of it laid by thee¹ [ver. 25], who usest to lay no weak foundations; yet it shall not always continue. And the heavens are the work of thy hands, which are wont to make strong work indeed; yet it shall not always endure. Nothing but thyself is so lasting, to be everlasting. They all shall perish² [ver. 26], though not absolutely, yet wax old as a garment; and then, as thy wardrobe is not without change

¹ Ps. cii. 25: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thy hands." ² Ps. cii. 26: "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed."

of garments, they shall at last be changed; and according to the condition of changing garments, a better shall be had for a worse: but whether the stuff itself, or but the fashion only, shall be changed, is a depth I dare not dive into; yet this perhaps we may conceive, that seeing our bodies shall be raised up spiritual bodies,¹ there shall, no doubt, be such heavens, and such an earth, as is most proportionable for receiving of such bodies: *Thou only, O God, art always the same*² [ver. 27], and no change nor shadow of change in thee at all; thou only art perfect, and canst not be bettered; thou only eternal, and canst not be impaired; thou only one alone, and canst not be changed; and therefore of thee only, and of thy glory, it can be truly said, As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

It is a decree from the beginning, *Statutum est omnibus semel mori* [It is appointed unto men once to die].³ Doomsday reacheth to all; not only all men, but all creatures under heaven and earth, man and beast; the earth and the heavens themselves, all subject to this doom of dying, at least of ending, which is a dying in their kind. And now, O my soul, shall I be so greedy of life as that it should trouble me, *Mundo mecum percunte mori*,—to die when the world itself dies? Alas, I desire not to live for the world's sake, which I know must die as well as myself: I desire to live for his sake who lives for ever. If God were subject to ending, as the world is, I should no more desire to live for his sake than now I do for the world's sake; but seeing his remembrance is to all generations, and of his kingdom there shall be no end, this makes me I cannot choose but say with Peter, *Bonum est esse hic*,—it is good staying here with God,⁴ so good, as nothing good without it, nothing good besides it; all things else, not only vanity, because they must end, but worse than vanity, because vexation of spirit.

And I cannot think this desire of mine displeasing to God, seeing he seems to second me in desiring as much himself; for why else would he make the *children of his servants to*

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 44. ² Ps. cii. 27: "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." ³ Heb. ix. 27. ⁴ Matt. xvii. 4.

continue, and their seed to be established before him? ¹ [ver. 28.] Why should he promise perpetuity to their seed, if it were not good that he should, if he thought it not good, that he would perform it?

But why to the children of his servants? O my soul, was it said, The father did eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge; ² and shall it not as well be said, The fathers did the service, and the children receive the wages? and what! the fathers that did the service to receive none? Yes, my soul, so bountiful a master is God, that his wages are not only personal, but continued to posterity. Did Ham see his father's nakedness, and Canaan was cursed; ³ and shall Abraham sacrifice his son, and not his seed be blessed? ⁴ But then they must be children, not so much by generation as by imitation; not so much from their loins, as from their lines and lessons; and more than this perhaps, for though they can do no work, yet they shall have wages *in fide parentum* [on the security, or under the guardianship, of their parents]. And this wages continued not to the children of one generation, but God showeth this mercy to thousand generations of them that love him, and keep his commandments: ⁵ and lest a thousand generations should be thought too little, here is an enlarging of their patent: Their seed shall be established before God; and what is this but to be for ever?

Oh the folly of the world, that seeks to make perpetuities to their houses by devises in the law which may perhaps reach to continue their estates, but can it reach to continue their seed? It may entail lands to their heirs, but can it entail heirs to their lands? No, God knows, this is a perpetuity of only God's making, a privilege of only God's servants: for the children of his servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before him; but that any others shall continue, is no part of David's warrant.

¹ Ps. cii. 28: "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." ² Jer. xxxi. 29. ³ Gen. ix. 22—27. ⁴ Gen. xxii. 15—18. ⁵ Exod. xx. 6.

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. 2. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 3. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? 4. But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. 5. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. 6. My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than* they that watch for the morning. 7. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with him *is* plenteous redemption. 8. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.—PSALM cxxx. (Auth. Ver.)

MEDITATIONS AND DISQUISITIONS

UPON THE

HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH PSALM.

WHO would think but it were Jonah that is speaking here? ¹ [ver. 1], for he indeed was in one depth in the whale's belly, and in another depth in the bottom of the sea, and might therefore justly have said, *Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O God.* ² But what is this, my soul, to David or to thee? for neither he was, nor thou, God be thanked, art in either of these depths; and what depths, then, for either him or thee out of which to cry to God? But is there not a depth of sin, and a depth of misery by reason of sin, and a depth of sorrow by reason of misery? In all which, both David was, and I, God help me, am deeply plunged; and are not these depths enough out of which to cry? And yet, perhaps, none of these depths that David means; but there are depths of danger—a danger of body and a danger of soul, and out of these it seems that David cried; for the danger of his body was so deep that it had brought him to death's door, and the danger of his soul so deep that it had almost brought him to the gates of despair; and had he not just cause then to say, *Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O God?* And yet there is a depth besides these that must help to lift us out of these—a depth of devotion, without which depth our crying out of other depths will never be heard. For devotion is a fire that puts a

¹ Jonah i. 15—17. Ps. cxxx. 1: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD."

heat into our crying, and carries it up into *caelum empyreum*—the heaven of fire, where God himself is.¹ And now join all these depths together—the depth of sin, of misery, of sorrow, the depth of danger, and the depth of devotion,—and then tell me if David had not, if I have not, as just cause as ever Jonah had to say, Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O God.

Indeed, to cry out of the depths hath many considerable circumstances to move God to hear: it acknowledgeth his infinite power when no distance can hinder his assistance; it presents our own faith when no extremity can weaken our hope; it magnifies God's goodness when he, the Most High, regards the most low; it expresseth our own earnestness, seeing crying out of depths must needs be a deep cry; and if each of these single be motive sufficient to move God to hear, how strong must the motive needs be when they are all united? and united they are all in crying out of the depths; and therefore now that I cry to thee out of the depths, be moved, O God, in thy great mercy be moved to *hear my voice*² [ver. 2].

It is cause enough for God not to hear some because they do not cry—cause enough not to hear some that cry because not out of the depths; but when crying and out of the depths are joined together, it was never known that ever God refused to hear; and therefore now that I cry to thee out of the depths, be pleased, O God, in thy great mercy be pleased to hear my voice.

But could David, being in such depths, find no fitter body to cry to than to cry to God, who is in such a height? Might he not better for the danger of his body have cried to his physician, and for the danger of his soul to his ghostly father, who were near about him, than to cry to God who was so far off? O my soul, if God be far off,³ who can be near that is able to help? what strength is in the arm of man,⁴ if God's hand be not joined to it? God may be pleased, and often-

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 16. ² Ps. cxxx. 2: "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." ³ Ps. xxii. 1: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" ⁴ Jer. xvii. 5: "Cursed be the man that . . . maketh flesh his arm." Cf. Ps. cxxvii. 1.

times is, to use these for his instruments ; but if God's hand be not the first mover, and set them a-working, alas, of themselves they are altogether inactive, and of no operation. And therefore out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord—to thee and to no other : Lord, hear my voice. I doubt not of thy power to hear my voice, who I know art able to hear my silence ; I only doubt of thy will, Seeing thou doest whatsoever thou wilt in heaven and in earth ;¹ and I doubt not of thy will neither to hear prayer, seeing prayer is the most acceptable sacrifice that can be offered to thee ;² I doubt only of thy will to hear my prayer, seeing I am one of polluted lips, and thou endurest nothing that is unclean. Yet I have some hope in my heart, seeing thou lovest the heart ; and my prayer coming from thence, I may hope at least that for my heart's sake thou wilt be gracious to me and hear my prayer. But, alas, my heart is not cleaner than my lips ; or rather, it is the uncleanness of my heart that makes my lips polluted ; and what hope, then, of thy hearing my prayer, when my lips that deliver it, and my heart that sends it, are both of them unclean ? And art thou not now, O my soul, in a greater depth than ever Jonah was ? a depth out of which thou canst never be heard cry, unless thou call to heaven for another depth to help thee. That *abyssus* may *abyssum vocare*, one depth may call upon another ;³ for heaven hath its depth too ; as it is said, *cælumque profundum*—the depth of God's mercy. And this is the depth that only can make our cry to be heard out of all other depths ; and therefore out of this depth of thy mercy be pleased, O God, to incline thine ear and to hear my voice. But when thou hearest my voice, O hear it not as thou didst see Cain's sacrifice—see it and not regard it, hear it and not attend it ;⁴ but let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication, for then I know thou canst not but commiserate my estate, for the voice of my supplication is an humble voice, and thou givest grace to the humble ;⁵ it is a complaining voice, and thou art pitiful

¹ Ps. cxxxv. 6 : "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." ² Ps. cxvi. 17 : "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD." Cf. Ps. l. 14.
³ Ps. xlii. 7. ⁴ Gen. iv. 3–5. ⁵ Jas. iv. 6.

to men in misery; ¹ it is a groaning voice, and thou delightest in a contrite heart. ² Oh, therefore, Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication, but let not thine eyes be intentive ³ to the stains of my sin; for *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand* [ver. 3], or who should be able to abide it? ⁴ Did not the angels fall when thou markedst their follies? ⁵ Can flesh, which is but dust, ⁶ be clean before thee, when the stars, which are of a far purer substance, are not? ⁷ Can anything be clean in thy sight which is not as clean as thy sight? and can any cleanness be equal to thine? Alas, O Lord, we are neither angels nor stars, and how then can we stand when those fell? ⁸ how can we be clean when these be impure? If thou shouldst mark what is done amiss, there would be marking-work enough for thee as long as the world lasts; for almost what action of man is free, if [not] from stain of sin, at least from defect of righteousness? Oh therefore mark not anything in me, O God, that I have done, but mark that only in me which thou hast done thyself; mark in me thine own image; and then thou mayest look upon me, and yet say still, as once thou saidst, *Et erant omnia valde bona* [And all things were very good]. ⁹

But how vain is this thought, as though God, who sees all things, should not see sins; or as though sins were such slight things with him that he could pass them over, and not mark them! Is there inadvertency or connivance in God, that either he should not see iniquities, or, seeing them, should not observe them, or, observing them, should wink at them? Alas, my soul, I desire not that his eye, which seeth all things, should not see them; I desire not that his wisdom, which observeth all things, should not observe them: I only desire that his justice, which censures all things, should not censure them; for his censuring is the marking that I am afraid of; and if of this marking, O God, thou wilt be pleased to excuse me, neither thy

¹ Jas. v. 11. ² Ps. li. 17: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." ³ Intent, or closely bent upon. ⁴ Vulg., "Quis sustinebit," who shall bear it. ⁵ Job iv. 18: "His angels he charged with folly." ⁶ Ps. ciii. 14. ⁷ Job xv. 15: "The heavens are not clean in his sight." ⁸ Jude 6; Rev. vi. 13. ⁹ Gen. i. 31.

seeing my iniquities with thy all-seeing eye, nor thy observing them with thy all-knowing wisdom, shall ever hurt me.

It seems we do not stand, but because God doth not mark; for if he should mark what is done amiss, who were able to stand? and therefore our standing is not by any affirmative in ourselves, but only by a negative in God. He marks not our falls, and, not marking them, imputes them not;¹ and our falls not imputed, we are reputed to stand. Oh, then, deny me not this negative, O God, not to mark what I do amiss; or, if needs it must be an affirmative, let it be in him of whom thou hast affirmed that in him thou art well pleased.²

But if God should not mark what we do amiss, we indeed should stand; but then his fear would fall, for who would fear him that marks not what we do? O my soul, his mercy will supply that fear; for his not marking is out of his mercy: and *there is mercy with him, that he may be feared*³ [ver. 4]. O blessed mercy, that preserves the fear that is due to God's justice, and yet keeps iniquities from being marked by his justice. O happy fear, that stands more in awe of God's mercy than of his justice; and is more exercised in not committing of sins than in considering the punishment that is due to our sins.

But is this not a mistaking in David to say, There is mercy with God, that he may be feared; all as one to say, There is severity with him, that he may be loved? for if we cannot love one for being severe, how should we fear him for being merciful? Should it not, therefore, have been rather said, There is justice with thee, that thou mayest be feared? seeing it is justice that strikes a terror and keeps in awe; mercy breeds a boldness, and boldness cannot stand with fear, and therefore not fear with mercy. But is there not, I may say, an active fear, not to offend God, as well as a passive fear for having offended him? and with God's mercy may well stand the active fear, though not so well, perhaps, the passive fear, which is incident properly to his justice.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19. ² Mark i. 11. ³ Ps. cxxx. 3: "But *there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*"

There is a common error in the world, to think we may be the bolder to sin because God is merciful ; but, O my soul, take heed of this error, for God's mercy is to no such purpose ; it is not to make us bold, but to make us fear : the greater his mercy is, the greater ought our fear to be, for there is mercy with him that he may be feared ; that unless we fear, he may choose whether he will be merciful or no ; or rather, we may be sure he will not be merciful, seeing he hath mercy for none but for them that fear him ;¹ and great reason, for to whom should mercy show itself but to them that need it ? and if we think we need it, we will certainly fear. Oh, therefore, most gracious God, make me to fear thee, that thou mayest be merciful to me ; but rather, be merciful to me that I may fear thee, for as thou wilt not be merciful to me unless I fear thee, so I cannot fear thee unless thou first be merciful to me.

Indeed mercy, I may say, keeps state, and hath fear attendant upon her—to say truly, more than justice, for fear would never wait upon justice if it were not for punishment, where it waits upon mercy for very love. The fear that attends justice is a servile fear, and waits not but constrained, and as it were in chains ; the free and noble fear is never seen waiting but upon mercy, for mercy breeds reverence, where the rigour of justice breeds but stubbornness ; and if justice perhaps have the knee of fear, yet none but mercy hath her heart. Neither yet is mercy so at a beck, and so easily won, as some perhaps imagine. He had need go warily to work that gets her favour ; for if he presume, she never looks towards him ; and if he despair, she turns her face from him : and must there not needs be fear when there is such caution ? Did mercy ever show itself but to the penitent ? and can there be repentance where there is no fear ? And indeed what should I fear but that which can forgive—which justice cannot do, only mercy can ; and therefore most justly is it said of David here, There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared ; because there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest

¹ Luke i. 50 : " And his mercy *is* on them that fear him."

show mercy. And yet, O gracious God, I cannot so well say I fear thy mercy as I fear thee for thy mercy, because I love thee for thy mercy; for love is never without fear: *Res est solliciti plena timoris amor* [Love is a thing that is full of anxious fear].

This waiting of fear upon mercy, makes me, O God, to wait upon thee; and therefore, *I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope* [ver. 5]. If there were not mercy with God, to what end should I wait upon him? for after all the service I could do, to the uttermost of my power, a small error at last might, for want of mercy, overthrow it all. But God is no such master, for there is mercy with him, and specially towards his servants that wait upon him. He will wink at faults in a servant that he would never bear at a stranger's hands: it is cause enough for him to pardon my faults, that I am his servant and wait upon him. And yet I cannot more say I wait upon him than I wait for him. Nothing but himself can be object sufficient to satisfy my soul; my base body perhaps would wait upon him, for the pleasures of the flesh, or for the glory of the world; but my soul is too noble to have such mean designs: it waits for himself, and for nothing but himself; for how should it but wait for him, that came at first from him; how wait for anything besides him, when all things else are nothing without him?

And it waits not for him without hope, nor without good ground of hope, for in his word do I hope—his word a more certain ground than the ground I go upon; and have I not his word for the ground of my hope—for the hope of my waiting? Did he not give his word to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed?¹ And what do I wait for but this seed? Did he not give his word to Moses that he would raise up a prophet like to him,² who, as he delivered the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, should deliver all true Israelites from the bondage of Satan? And whom do I wait for but this Prophet? Oh, then, my soul, seeing thy hope is so

¹ Gen. xii. 3.

² Deut. xviii. 15.

certain, let thy hope be certain; possess thyself in patience,¹ and let no troubles of the world disquiet thee; let no fears of the flesh dismay thee, for thou hast the word of God, a sure anchor, to hold by; and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry,² that thou mayest be sure thy waiting cannot be long; but how long soever, never be frustrate.

And now, O my soul, what do I live for but only to wait upon God, and to wait for God? To wait upon him, to do him service, and to wait for him, to be enabled to do him better service; to wait upon him, as being Lord of all; and to wait for him, as being the rewarder of all; to wait upon him whose service is better than any other command, and to wait for him whose expectation is better than any other possession. Let others, therefore, wait upon the world, for the world; I, O God, will wait upon thee, for thee, seeing I find more true contentment in this waiting than all the world can give me in enjoying; for how can I doubt of receiving reward by my waiting for thee when my waiting for thee is itself the reward of my waiting upon thee? And therefore my soul waiteth; for if my soul did not wait, what were my waiting worth? no more than I were worth myself, if I had not a soul; but my soul puts a life into my waiting, and makes it become a living sacrifice. Alas, my frail body is very unfit to make a waiter: it rather needs to be waited upon itself: it must have so much resting, so often leave to be excused from waiting, that if God should have no other waiters than bodies, he would be left oftentimes to wait upon himself: but my soul is *Divine particula auræ* [a portion of the Divine breath], endued with all qualities fit for a waiter; and hath it not received its abilities, O God, from thee? and to whom then should it address its waiting but only to thee? And therefore my soul waiteth, and is so intente in the service that it waits *more than they that watch for the morning*³ [ver. 6].

It may seem scarce credible that any waiting should be more intente than theirs that watch for the morning, who

¹ Luke xxi. 19. ² Hab. ii. 3; Heb. x. 37. ³ Ps. cxxx. 6: "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say more than they that watch for the morning.*"

not only suffer not their eyes to sleep, but not their eyelids to slumber; ¹ whose ears are listening to every voice of the cock, and of the clock; whose eyes keep continual sentinel about the east, to mark if but any dawning of day may be perceived; and most of all seeing they then watch when it is the heaviest time of all to sleep; yet as intente as their watching is, it seems David is much troubled there should be any comparison made between his watching and theirs; and therefore he doubles his assertion. I say more than they that watch for the morning, for must there not be a proportion between the cause and the effect? If my cause of watching be more than theirs, shall not my watching be more than theirs? They that watch for the morning have good cause, no doubt, to watch for it, that it may bring them the light of day; but have not I more cause to watch, who wait for the light that lighteth every one that comes into the world? ² They that watch for the morning wait but for the rising of the sun to free them from darkness, that hinders their sight; but I wait for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness ³ to dispel the horrors of darkness that affright my soul. They watch for the morning that they may have light to walk by; but I wait for the Dayspring from on high, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. ⁴ But though there may be question made of the intentiveness ⁵ of our watching, yet of the extensiveness ⁶ there can be none, for they that watch for the morning watch at most but a piece of a night; but I have watched whole days and whole nights, and may I not then justly say, I wait more than they that watch for the morning?

But what means David to stand magnifying his own watching so much, as if there were none that watched but he; and to talk so much of his hope in God, and not to tell any cause of his hope? Is it, that with overwatching himself, he forgets what he is saying? No, my soul, for he is now about to tell the cause of his watching; and whom this hope concerns, as well as himself: *Let Israel hope in the*

¹ Ps. cxxxii. 4. ² John i. 9. ³ Mal. iv. 2. ⁴ Luke i. 79. ⁵ Intensity, fixedness. ⁶ Extent, duration.

LORD, for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption [ver. 7]. But what cause of hoping in the Lord can this be to Israel, that with God there is mercy, seeing the mercy that is with God is that he may be feared? Can Israel hope when Israel must fear? O my soul, if Israel had not feared, Israel could not hope; but now that Israel hath feared, now Israel may hope; for as the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,¹ so hope in the Lord is the progress; but no progress in wisdom but from this beginning; and as mercy in God was just cause before to fear, so the same mercy in God is just encouragement now to hope; and he is no true Israelite that confesses not with me that the meditation of God's mercy, and of his plenteous redemption, is the sole anchor of his hope,² the whole cordial of his comfort, in all tempests of temptations, in all afflictions of his troubled soul. When I think upon my sins, how numerous, how ponderous they are, that with their multitude overwhelm me with their weight, press me down to the gates of despair, oh then what an anchor of hope it is to remember that with God there is mercy and plenteous redemption! When I think upon the agonies of death, which I know I must suffer, when upon the horrors of hell, which I have deserved to suffer, oh then what a cordial of comfort it is to consider that with God there is mercy and plenteous redemption! When I think upon the loss of Paradise, and how happy we might have been if we had not sinned, how wretched we are now by having sinned, oh what a joy I take in meditation of this, that in mercy he sent his Son to restore that was lost,³ and that with him there is plenteous redemption! But what! so plenteous as though God kept open house of redemption, that every one, though continuing in his sins, may come and take it at his pleasure? No, my soul; but this redemption is solemnized at the marriage of the Lamb, and none comes there without a wedding garment;⁴ and this wedding garment is a firm hope in God, a steadfast faith in Christ, that whosoever comes in this garment is very like, or rather he may be sure,

¹ Job xxviii. 28; Prov. i. 7.² Heb. vi. 19.³ Luke xix. 10.⁴ Matt. xxii.

be admitted and be made partaker of it; but without this edding garment, no admittance.

But when it is said, It shall be easier for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for some other,¹ is not this a mercy to Sodom and Gomorrha? and if God's mercy be no more than so, it seems we may do ill enough, for all his mercy? But is it not that this is a qualifying indeed of the rigour of God's justice, but not properly a mercy; or, if a mercy (because God's mercy is over all his works²) yet not a mercy that hath fellowship with redemption, and then farthest of all from a plenteous redemption. For his plenteous redemption leaves behind it no more relics of sin than Moses left hoofs of beasts behind him in Egypt.³ It redeems not only from the fault, but from the punishment and in the punishment; not only a *tanto*, but a *toto* [not only from such, but also from all (sin and penalty)]; not only from the sense but from the fear of pain; and in the fault, not only from the guilt, but from the stain; not only from being censured, but from being questioned. Or is it meant by a plenteous redemption that not only he leads captivity captive, but gives gifts unto men?⁴ For what good is it to a prisoner to have his pardon, if he be kept in prison still or not paying his fees? but if the prince, together with the pardon, send also a largess,⁵ that may maintain him when he is set at liberty, this, indeed, is a plenteous redemption; and such is the redemption that God's mercy procures unto us. It not only delivers us from a dungeon, but puts us in possession of a palace; it not only frees us from eating bread in the sweat of our brows,⁶ but it restores us to Paradise,⁷ where all fruits are growing of their own accord; not only clears us from being captives, but endears us to be children; and not only children, but heirs; and not only heirs, but coheirs with Christ;⁸ and who can deny this to be a plenteous redemption? Or is it said a plenteous redemption in regard of the price that was paid to redeem us? for we are redeemed with a price, not of gold or precious stones, but with the precious blood of the Lamb slain before the

¹ Matt. x. 15. ² Ps. cxlv. 9. ³ Exod. x. 26. ⁴ Eph. iv. 8. ⁵ A free gift, ole, present (Bailey's Dict.) ⁶ Gen. iii. 19. ⁷ Rev. ii. 7. ⁸ Gal. iv. 7.

foundation of the world.¹ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son² to be a ransom for us; and this I am sure is a plenteous redemption.

But how may this redemption be obtained?—how, my soul, but by being a true Israelite, by putting thy trust and hoping in God?—for if thou canst be plenteous in this hope, thou mayest be sure of this plenteous redemption, and God will never mark thy iniquities, nor impute thy sins unto thee.

But is hoping in God so scarce a commodity that I may not have of it as much as I list, and be plenteous in hoping as God is in redeeming? O my soul, take heed of presuming: I doubt lest I may find thee another Peter—talk what wonders thou wilt do, while there is no danger, but when it comes to the trial be frightened with a question,³ and blown away from thy hope with less breath than a feather. For say God should deal with thee as he did with Job, take away all thy children at a blow, all thy goods at once,⁴ wouldst thou continue to hope in God still? But say he should visit thee with boils and botches all thy body over,⁵ and make thee a laughingstock to thine enemies, a loathing to thy friends, wouldst thou continue to hope in God still? But say he should give leave to have thy body be burnt, thy flesh torn in pieces, and thy bones to be racked, wouldst thou yet continue to hope in God still? Let me then try thee another way: say thou shouldst see Christ apprehended by the soldiers, beaten and buffeted by the people, judged and condemned by the high priests,⁶ wouldst thou continue to hope in Christ still? But say thou shouldst see him hanging on the cross, crying out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?⁷ and in that agony giving up the ghost,⁸ wouldst thou yet continue to hope in Christ still? O my soul, if thou canst do this I shall then say thou art a true Israelite indeed, but rather thou shalt hear Christ say, as he said to the centurion, I have not found such faith, no, not in Israel.⁹ O blessed hope, the

¹ Rev. xiii. 8. ² John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32; 1 John iv. 10.
—60. ³ Job i. 13—19. ⁴ Job ii. 7. ⁵ Mark xv. 15—26.

⁶ Mark xv. 34; Ps. xxii. 1. ⁷ Matt. xxvii. 50. ⁸ Matt. viii. 10.

⁹ Luke xxii. 57
⁷ Mark xv. 34;

Anchor of faith,¹ the ark of Noah,² the dove that bringeth the olive-branch of peace,³ the porter of the keys of Paradise, and the ladder of Jacob by which we climb up into heaven.⁴

But what good is it to Israel that with God there is redemption, if Israel be not able to pay the ransom? what good to me that there is redemption to be had, if I have not wherewithal to have it, nor means to come by it? O my soul, let Israel hope in the Lord, and the *Lord shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities*⁵ [ver. 8]. Israel shall need but to hope; and as for the ransom, he that provided a ram for Abraham to offer, instead of his son Isaac,⁶ he will look to that himself, he will be our purveyor for the ransom; O my soul, the ransom himself.

No cause can be more forcible to produce an effect then mercy is a motive forcible to breed hope; and seeing there is in God not only mercy but plenteous redemption, oh let not Israel be so unworthy to hinder hope from waiting upon mercy, and to keep them asunder whom God would have to be joined together; for though God's mercy be a forcible motive to move hope, yet it moves it not, but *mediante Israele* [by Israel's means]. It lies much in the hand of Israel whether he will hope or no; oh, then, let not Israel be either so wilful to cross God's motive, or so fearful to distrust it. Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him there is mercy and plenteous redemption.

But though there be mercy with God, and hope in Israel, must it necessarily follow that God will redeem Israel? O my soul, as necessarily as any effect doth follow the cause; for though hope in Israel be not a cause, but only a motive, for God to redeem, yet it is a motive that seems in operation to have the place of a cause, but a cause only *mediante misericordia Dei* [by God's mercy]; for as mercy in God moves not Israel to hope, but *mediante Israele*, so hope in Israel moves not God to redeem, but *mediante misericordia Dei*, of the mere mercy and goodness of God, but when mercy

¹ Heb. vi. 19. ² Gen. vi. 14. ³ Gen. viii. 11. ⁴ Gen. xxviii. 12. ⁵ Ps. cxxx. 8: "And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." ⁶ Gen. xxii. 13.

in God and hope in Israel meet together, then mercy, which was at first but a motive to the hope, becomes a promoter of the hope, to the causing of redemption. Did Jacob wrestle with an angel, and prevail, when he was but Jacob, and shall he not prevail with God, by hoping in God, when he is Israel; and if prevailing with an angel he got a blessing, though joined with halting, shall he not, prevailing with God, get redemption, and that joined with plenty? Oh let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption, and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

But though God's redemption be plenteous, yet it seems not to be general; general indeed of all, for of all iniquities; but not general to all, for to none but to Israel; and not to all Israel neither, but only to those of Israel that hope in the Lord; for if they be Israelites, and do not hope; or if they hope, and be not Israelites, it will not serve: they must be both, or as good be neither; at least there will follow no certainty of redemption. And, alas, then what good will this be to me? for were not Israelites all Jews? and must I be a Jew, or can I look for no redemption? O my soul, that which Israel was in David's time, Christians are in our time: Jews were then, Christians are now, the people and Church of God: and as to have been an Israelite then, so to be a Christian now, is a great degree of capacity for obtaining of redemption: let hope in the Lord be added, and then the capacity will be perfected. Let Israel hope in the Lord, and the Lord will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

But is not Israel the spouse of Christ,¹ without spot or wrinkle?² and if no spots, then what iniquities? and if no iniquities, what need of redeeming? It is so, indeed, in intentions and in endeavours: in intentions so resolute, in endeavours so absolute, that it may well be said it is so; but yet, while Israel is in the flesh, it is not, it cannot be without iniquities—without many iniquities, yet such as from which, if there be hope in Israel, there shall be redemption in God. No failing of this hope if there be not a failing in hope; but

¹ Isa. liv. 5. Cf. 2 Cor. xi. 2.

² Eph. v. 27.

What hope? Not a hope in man; not a hope in ourselves; not a hope in our own merits. No, my soul, only a hope in the merits of Christ, for this only is to hope in the Lord; yet think not that it is thy hope that redeems thee; hope, indeed, makes thee capable of redeeming, but it is the Lord himself that is thy Redeemer. Let Israel hope in the Lord, and the Lord shall redeem Israel from all his sins: whether sins of omission or of commission, whether sins of infirmity or of ignorance, whether sins of wilfulness or of presumption, they shall all be comprised within the charter of this redemption. And then consider how plentiful this redemption is besides; for to be redeemed from all iniquities draws after it an exemption from all the miseries that iniquities draw after them; from the unquietness of the flesh, from the frights of the world, from the terrors of hell, from the tyranny of Satan; which exemption, or rather which redemption, God grant us, as I hope he will, seeing with him is mercy, for his mercies' sake.

Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness. 2. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. 3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. 5. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. 6. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah. 7. Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. 8. Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9. Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. 10. Teach me to do thy will; for thou *art* my God: thy spirit *is* good; lead me into the land of uprightness. 11. Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I *am* thy servant.—PSALM cxliii. (Auth. Ver.)

MEDITATIONS AND DISQUISITIONS

UPON THE

HUNDRED AND FORTY-THIRD PSALM.

ALAS, O Lord, if thou hear not my prayer, I were as good not pray at all ; and if thou hear it, and give not ear unto it, it were as good thou didst not hear it at all. Oh, therefore, *Hear my prayer, O God, and give ear to my supplication*¹ [ver. 1], that neither my praying may be lost for want of thy hearing it, nor thy hearing it be lost for want of thy attending it. When I only make a prayer to God, it seems enough that he hear it ; but when I make a supplication, it requires that he give ear unto it, for seeing a supplication hath a greater intention in the setting out, it cannot without a greater attention be entertained. But what niceness of words is this, as though it were not all one to hear and to give ear, or as though there were any difference between a prayer and a supplication ? And is it not, perhaps, so indeed ?—seeing hearing sometimes may be only passive, where giving ear is always active ; and seeing Christ, we doubt [not], heard the woman of Canaan's first cry while it was a prayer, but gave no ear till her second cry, when it was grown to a supplication.² However it be, as thy hearing, O God, without giving ear would be to no purpose, so thy giving ear without giving answer would do me no good, oh, therefore, answer me, O God ; for if thou answer not my prayer, how canst thou answer my expectation ? My prayer is but the

¹ Ps. cxliii. 1 : " Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications : in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness." ² Matt. xv. 22—25.

seed ; it is thy answer that makes the harvest. If thou shouldst not answer me at all, I could not hope for any harvest at all ; and if thou shouldst answer me, and not in thy righteousness, there would be a harvest indeed, but nothing but of blasted corn. Oh, therefore, answer me, O God, but in thy righteousness, for thy righteousness never made unpleasing answer. It was an answer in thy righteousness which thou madest to Noah : My spirit shall not always strive with man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his infancy.¹ It was an answer in thy righteousness which thou madest to Abraham : Fear not ; I will be thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.² It was an answer in thy righteousness which thou madest to the thief on the cross : This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise. Oh, then, answer me also in thy righteousness, O God, and then the harvest of my hope will be as plentiful as the seven years of plenty foretold by Joseph.³

But what need I pray to God to answer me in his righteousness, seeing he is himself nothing but righteousness ? Must not his answers need be like himself ? Can he answer me otherwise than he is ? O my soul, is it not said that with the froward God will show himself froward ;⁴ and have I not then just cause to fear he should answer me frowardly, who have carried myself so frowardly towards him ? Am not I one of that stock which God charged with being a froward generation ?⁵ and can I be free from fear of the censure, who I know am not from guilt of the fault ? Is it not with God as it is with nature, that as we sow so shall we reap ?⁶ If we make an untoward sowing, must we not look for an untoward harvest ? No, my soul : God, who is the Lord of nature, is not tied to the rules of nature. He can make it harvest without sowing, as he made it light without a sun ; for how else came Paradise by all its fruits ? how else came the three first days by all their light ?⁷ And thus, O God, thou must vouchsafe to do with me ; for, alas, what sowing can I

¹ Gen. vi. 3, 5 : " My spirit shall not always strive with man. . . . And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in all the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually." ² Gen. xv. 1. ³ Gen. xli. 29. ⁴ Ps xviii. 26. ⁵ Deut. xxxii. 20. ⁶ Gal. vi. 7. ⁷ Gen. i. 3, 16 ; ii. 9.

make but only in tears? and then, if there be reaping in joy,¹ must it not be the work of thine only hand? Oh, therefore, *enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified* [ver. 2]. Not only I, but no man living. What should I speak of men that are begotten in sin and born in iniquity,² when the first man, Adam, that was neither begotten nor born at all, much less in iniquity, yet could not hold weight in the balance of thy justice? What are all the generation of men but the multiplication of Adam? and seeing multiplication of sinners can never produce subtraction of sin, how can any man living be found innocent when Adam was found guilty? He indeed was arraigned and had his judgment openly, and we all know what his offence was: none of us yet are brought to the bar; when it shall come to that, is there any man living that will not be found guilty of more than eating a forbidden apple?³ and may we not then in Adam's judgment plainly foresee our own, if thou, O God, shouldst enter into judgment with thy servants?

But is this a sufficient reason why God should not enter into judgment with me, because I can say, My fellows are all guilty as well as myself? Is the alleging of others' faults an apology for mine? No apology in justice, O God, but yet in mercy some excuse, seeing my sin is not as the angels' sin was who were disobedient when others obeyed,⁴ but my sins are the general frailties of the whole kind; not one, not any one (the second Adam excepted) ever was, ever will be, that is not an offender; and wilt thou, O God, give cause to have it said, Wherefore hast thou made all men for nought? Thou wilt not, O God, be so severe but that some men shall be justified in thy sight; and if no man living, then some men dying; and if this be so, then welcome death, the most beneficial guest that can come unto me. But what death? Indeed, the death to sin,⁵ which none can die but they that be living in him who is the life itself. But if the thus dying shall be justified in his sight, and they that thus die be men living, how then is it true that no man living shall be justified?

¹ Ps. cxxvi. 5.² Ps. li. 5.³ Gen. iii. 11, 12.⁴ Jude 5.⁵ Rom. vi. 2.

Indeed, no man living the life only natural, yet some men living the life truly spiritual ; but rather, no man living shall be justified in his sight by any right of his own righteousness, yet some men living shall be justified by the right of his righteousness who is made to us both our righteousness and our justification.¹ Oh, then, let me live, O God, to thee, that I may die to sin ; but let me die to sin, that I may live in thee, that when I tremble at this saying, No man living shall in thy sight be justified, I may comfort myself with this, that I am dead to sin ; and being thus dead, am made capable, without crossing this saying, to be justified in thy sight.

It is not anything in myself, I confess, that gives me hope thou wilt hear my prayer ; alas, I see nothing in myself² but cause of despair ; but it is thine own promise, O God, who hast promised to hear and help all them that call upon thee when they are in trouble ; and seeing I cannot doubt of thy faithfulness, I therefore do not doubt of thy promise, but have through thy mercy a hope, through thy power a confidence, that thou wilt answer me in thy righteousness and in thy faithfulness.

It was thy righteousness that thou didst make the promise, but it is thy faithfulness that thou wilt keep thy promise : and seeing I am certain of thy making it, how can I be doubtful of thy keeping it ? If thou shouldst not answer me in thy righteousness, yet thou shouldst be righteous still ; but if thou shouldst not answer me in thy faithfulness, thou shouldst not be faithful still ; and therefore thy righteousness to hear my prayer must be a suit, as being of grace, and done only at thy pleasure ; but thy faithfulness to answer my prayer may be a claim, as being of due, and no longer in thy choice. Oh how much am I bound to thee, O God, who of thy free grace hath bound thyself to me, that thou canst no more now reject my prayer than thou canst reject thine own truth and faithfulness. Indeed, if I should call upon thee for obtaining of some worldly ends, or for the satisfying of some vain desire, thou mightst justly then reject my prayer, and no disparagement

¹ Rom. v. 16, 18.

² Rom. vii. 18.

o thy faithfulness at all; but now that I call upon thee
or being in trouble, the cause allowed by thyself for calling
upon thee, now I hope thou wilt give me leave to challenge
thy promise, and that I may presume, without any pre-
sumption, that thou wilt answer me in thy righteousness and
in thy faithfulness.

And if ever trouble be just cause for calling upon thee,
now can mine but be most just when *the enemy hath per-
secuted my soul, hath smitten my life down to the ground,
and hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have
been long dead?*¹ [ver. 3]. All this the enemy hath done
unto me; but what enemy? is it not the enemy of all
mankind, who hath singled me out, as it were, to a duel?
and can I resist him myself alone, whom the whole army of
mankind cannot? But is it not the enemy of thyself, O
God, who is but my enemy because I am thy servant? and
wilt thou see thy servants persecuted—in thy cause perse-
cuted, and not protect them? Shall I suffer, grievously suffer
for thy sake, and wilt thou forsake me? Alas, O Lord, if
they were but some light evils that are inflicted upon me,
I would bear them without complaining, and never make
my moan to thee about them; but they are the three greatest
miseries that can be thought of, the greatest persecution,
the greatest overthrow, and the greatest captivity. For what
persecution so grievous as to be persecuted in my soul; for
he plays no less game than for souls: he casts, indeed, at
the body sometimes, and sometimes at goods; but these are
but the bye; the main of his aim is at the soul; for if he
can otherwise win the soul, he cares not much for either
body or goods, but rather makes use of them to keep men
in security; for whatsoever he doth, whatsoever he leaves
undone, it is all done but in persecution of the soul; and he
can persecute as well with prosperity as with adversity, and
knows how to fit their several application. And it seems he
takes me for another Job;² he sees he can do no good upon
me with fawning and clawing, and therefore falls now to

¹ Ps. cxliii. 3: 'For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.' ² Job i. 10—12.

quarrelling and striking; and he strikes no light blows, for he hath stricken my life down to the ground; and lower would have stricken it, if thou, O God, hadst not broken his blow. He strikes all downward, to keep from heaven as much as he can; and now that he sees me down, he lets me not rest so neither, but seizeth upon me, and being himself the prince of darkness,¹ hath kept me in darkness—not for a night or two, as men stay at their inn, but for a much longer time, as at their dwelling; and it is no ordinary darkness that he hath made me to dwell in, but even the darkness of dead men, and that in the highest degree as those that have been long dead. They that have been dead but awhile, are yet remembered sometimes, and sometimes talked of; but they that have been long dead are as quite forgotten as if they never had been; and such, alas, am I: so long have been made to dwell in darkness, as if I had been dead many years ago, that he that would seek to find me out, must be fain to look [for] me amongst the tombs and monuments. Indeed, to dwell in darkness is no better than the house of death; for as long as we are in life, if we want sometimes the light of the sun, yet the light of a candle will serve to supply it; but I, alas, am kept in such darkness, that neither the sunshine of thy Gospel nor the lanthorn of thy law gives any light unto thee; I cannot with confidence say, as once I did, Thou, O God, shalt light my candle for me:² and as a body long dead grows cold and stiff, and is not to be bowed,³ so my soul, with continuance in sinning, is grown hardened, and, as it were, stiff in sin; that it is as hard a matter to make me flexible to any goodness, as to bring a body long dead to life again.

And yet, it is not this great enemy himself only that thus afflicts me, but his limbs also are as eager against me. By their persecuting my soul may be seen their violence; by their smiting my life to the ground, their cruelty; by their making me dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead, their malice and spite against me, who could find in their hearts to bury me alive, and to pull, as it were, the sun

¹ Eph. vi. 12: "Against the rulers of the darkness of this world." Ps. xviii. 28
² Bent.

of heaven, rather than it should shine or give any light to me. And how then is it possible but with such a persecution, with such an overthrow, with such a captivity, my spirits must needs be overwhelmed within me, and my heart within me be made desolate? ¹ [ver. 4]; for, alas, when my soul is persecuted, what can my spirits do? and when my life is smitten down to the ground, what comfort can my heart receive?

But is it not strange that my spirits should be overwhelmed and my heart be made desolate both at once, all one as to say that the streams should be overflowing when the spring is dry? for what is my heart but as the spring of my spirits? what are my spirits but as streams from my heart? It must indeed be some strange thing that can express the strange condition of my misery, who am made, as it were, a pattern of the misery of hell itself; for as in hell there are conceived to be contrary torments, burning with heat and burning with cold, as it is said, *Et frigus adurit* [even the cold burns], both together; so upon me are inflicted contrary miseries, the misery of desolateness, and the misery of overwhelming, both at once. A pitiful case, and yet not to be pitied; seeing I am therefore overwhelmed with sorrow, because desolate of grace, and therefore desolate of comfort, because overwhelmed with sin. But though I look for no pity from others, yet I look, O God, for some pity from thee; and all the pity I desire is but this, not to take away my desolateness, not to take away my overwhelming from me, but only to change their objects; let my heart be desolate still, but let it be of sin and sorrow; let my spirits be overwhelmed still, but let it be with grace and comfort.

Alas, O Lord, the state I am now in is beyond all bounds of patience: if I were but only persecuted, I might hope at least to save myself by flight; or if only my life were smitten down, I might hope in time to recover and rise again; but now that my spirits are overwhelmed and my heart is desolate within me, now I seem brought to the extremity of evil; misery is able to carry me no further; and I am only left to

¹ Ps. cxliii. 4: "Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate."

wonder how I do to live when I have no life, and how to breathe when I have no spirits? All that keeps life and soul together in me is my meditation, for *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works, and muse on the work of thy hands* [ver. 5]. This meditation gives an ease to the overwhelming of my spirits, a comfort to the desolateness of my heart, for I am thinking sometimes upon Jonah how he was overwhelmed with waters and swallowed up of a whale, and yet at last delivered;¹ sometimes I am thinking of Joseph, how he was bound and left desolate in a ditch, and yet at last relieved;² and then I meditate thus with myself, Is God's power confined to persons? could he deliver them in their extremities, and can he not me in mine? Is his power restrained to times? could he do wonders in those days, and can he do none in these? are all his great works of old, and hath he not other new that are as great? But not satisfying myself with the consideration of things in this inferior world, I raise my meditation up to heaven, the work of his hands, and then I consider how glorious his hands must needs be that have been the framers of so glorious a work.³ But especially I muse to what end this glorious frame was made, whether with any relation to us wretched creatures that live on the earth; and then, methinks, he would never have made us so plainly to see it if he did not mean we should at last come to it. But then I am doubting, though my soul perhaps may ascend up to it, yet how my heavy body should get thither, and, most of all, how be kept to stay there still? And then I think, Why may not God as well as give power to the soul to keep the body there, which else would fall down, as he gives power to the body to keep the soul here, which else would fly up? But this, at least, seems a satisfactory reason, because our bodies in the resurrection shall be raised up spiritual bodies,⁴ and, being spiritual, no fear of falling down. But then I am troubled as much to think how this is possible, that bodies should be spiritual? for is it not to say that our bodies shall be raised up, not bodies, but spirits? But to satisfy this, I conceive

¹ Jonah i. 15—17.² Gen. xxxvii. 24, 28, etc.³ Isa. xlv. 24.⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 44.

first that a body and a spirit are not terms perhaps absolutely contradictory; at least, that there is great difference between being a spirit and being spiritual, for as our bodies now are earthy, and yet are not earth, so they may then be spiritual, and yet not be spirits; bodies in the true nature and substance of bodies, and spiritual in the qualities and endowments of spirits. And here I grow as much overwhelmed with admiration¹ as I was before with persecution, for I cannot but be in ecstasy² to think what wonderful joys these glorious heavens must needs yield to the children of God, when this low earth, as mean as it is, affords so great pleasures to the children of men; for who can doubt but that the heavens are as much superior to the earth in pleasantness as in place, and transcend it as much in goodness as they do in greatness?

With such kind of thoughts I find myself so revived that I am ready to correct myself, and say, Why should I complain that my heart is desolate within me, when it is, or may be, accompanied with such meditations? why should I complain that my spirits are overwhelmed within me, when they have or may have the allay of such hopes?

And while thus, O God, I stretch out my thoughts upon the works of thy hands, I am drawn by a certain sympathy of grace to *stretch out my hands to thee*³ [ver. 6], as if I were in hope thou wouldst take me by the hand and draw me to thee; but, alas, with all my stretching them out, they are too short to reach thee. Oh that they were as long as my desire, I would then take hold of thee, O God, and not let thee go, until, as the angel to Jacob, thou didst give me a blessing.⁴ I know my hands are but dumb suitors, yet in the best language they have, which is their stretching out, they humbly entreat thee to refresh *my soul, which thirsteth after thee as a dry land*.

But is there not some further mystery in David's stretching out his hands? hath it not a relation to Christ stretching out his hands on the cross? seeing Christ, upon his stretching out

¹ Wonder. ² A trance or swoon. (Bailey's Dict.) ³ Ps. cxliiii. 6: "I stretch out my hands to thee; my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as in a thirsty land." ⁴ Gen. xxxii. 26.

his hands there, presently thirsted,¹ as David doth here. Oh then vouchsafe, O God, not to deal so hardly with me, as the Jews did with Christ, when I say I thirst, offer me vinegar to drink, as they did him. Alas, the blind Jews were as ignorant of Christ's thirst as of his person, and therefore offered him vinegar where they should have offered themselves, for themselves it was he thirsted after, and them he would have received, though to him as sharp as vinegar, if they had come unto him, as appears by his prayer, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.² Christ indeed might well be athirst, who had been so long in a fit of burning, ever since he said I have a cup to drink, and oh how I burn until I drink it;³ and now drinking it he was, and drunk it more greedily than any dry land ever drunk in water, for as he stretched out his hands to receive all men's suits, so he drunk of this cup to quench all men's thirst; and yet with all his drinking could not quench his own, but stands complaining he thirsteth still. O most grievous alteration, but more than most grievous indignity: he whose hands stretched out the heavens,⁴ now to have his hands stretched out on a cross; he who is a fountain of living water,⁵ of which he that drinketh shall never thirst more,⁶ now to thirst himself, and have nothing to quench it. O my soul, canst thou think much to stretch out thy hands to him who had his hands stretched out on a cross for thee? canst thou think much to thirst after him as a dry land, who more than any dry land still thirsteth after thee? for whatsoever he hath done, whatsoever he hath suffered for, he hath done it, and suffered it, even for thee. Alas, O Lord, I think it not much: I so much adore the stretching out thy hands on the cross, that I am tempted to adore the cross itself on which they were stretched; at least, as Moses did the ground where the bush was burning and not consumed;⁷ and if I had of the water of the clearest fountain, if the juice of the purest grape, yet my soul in them would find no relish at all: they might serve to quench my bodily thirst, but nothing but thyself, the thirst of my soul. When the Israelites thirsted in the

¹ John xix. 28. ² Luke xxiii. 34. ³ Luke xii. 50; cf. Matt. xx. 22. ⁴ Isa. xlii. 24. ⁵ Jer. ii. 13. ⁶ John iv. 14. ⁷ Exod. iii. 2.

wilderness, thou gavest them water out of a rock, and the rock was Christ.¹ Oh, how my soul rejoiceth at this word for it is the water of this rock that my soul thirsteth after, that if thou give me of this water the thirst of my soul will soon be quenched. But then be pleased, O God, not to give it in drops or spoonfuls, that would rather inflame my appetite than quench my thirst, for my soul thirsteth after thee as a dry land. It is not dews or mizzling showers will serve; thou must open the cataracts of heaven,² and pour down plentiful showers of grace upon me, or the thirst of my soul will never be quenched.

A land without water is barren, and bears nothing; and is not this it which Christ saith, Without me ye can do nothing?³ but moistened with water, it grows fruitful, and bears all things; and is not this it which St. Paul saith, I can do all things in him that comforteth me?⁴ And have I not cause, then,—just cause, O God,—to thirst after thee as a dry land? A land moistened with water, brings forth flowers for the delight of man; corn and grass for the use of man and beast;⁵ grapes and wine for the cheering of God and man;⁶ and doth not the moistening of thy grace bring forth the flower of hope, far more delightsome to my soul than rose or gillyflower is to the eye? the fruits of charity, of far more use to man and beast than either corn or grass? the sweet grape of faith, that cheers the heart of God, as a sacrifice; of man, as a cordial? and have I not cause, then—just cause, O God—to thirst after thee as a dry land? Alas, far more than any dry land. A land though never so dry may yet of water have soon too much; but can my soul of thee have ever enough? Is it not rather in a kind of spiritual dropsy: *Quo plus bibuntur, plus sitiuntur aquæ?* [The more we drink water, the more we thirst for it.] The more I taste thee, the more I thirst after thee; the more I enjoy thee, the more I long to enjoy thee more; and long shall ever, until I come to enjoy thee for ever; and then shall long

¹ 1 Cor. x. 4. ² Mal. iii. 10: "Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven [Vulgate—cataractas cœli], and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room* enough to receive it." ³ John xv. 5. ⁴ Phil. iv. 13: "I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me." (Vulgate—in eo qui me confortat.) ⁵ Ps. civ. 14. ⁶ Judg. ix. 15.

for thee more than ever. To say, therefore, that my soul thirsteth after thee as a dry land, is not so much to express for how much it thirsteth as how much it thirsteth; not so much how extensive my thirst is, as how intentive it is; for is it not a pitiful sight to see the earth stand gaping, as it were, to take in water; and for want of moisture to part asunder, as ready to crumble into dust and powder? and in this pitiful case am I, for with want of thy moistening grace to cement them together, my soul is ready to part from my body, and my body to turn into the dust of which it was made. Oh therefore vouchsafe, O God, to pour down showers of thy grace upon me, as in regard of my great thirst, plentifully; so in regard of my great danger, speedily; for, alas, O Lord, my soul with long thirsting grows faint; that if thou supply me not with the moisture of thy grace, the sooner I shall be forced to leave calling upon thee with very faintness. And how canst thou supply me with grace, if thou afford me not the grace to hear me? Oh therefore *hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like to them that go down into the pit* [ver. 7]; and if my spirit fail for want of thy hearing me, how would it fail if thou shouldst hide thy face from me? The refreshing of my soul requites as well as my seeing of thee, as thy hearing of me; for though the hearing of me afford, I may say, the moisture, yet it is my seeing of thee that must minister the warmth; and seeing I am like to earth, not only in dryness, but as well in coldness, I stand no less in need of warmth for my coldness than of moisture for my dryness. For what good is it to the earth to have the rain to moisten it, if it have not, withal, the sun to warm it? and what can be a sun to warm my soul, but only thy face, and the light of thy countenance? Oh therefore hide not thy face from me, O God, lest I be like to them that go down into the pit. For to want either moisture or warmth, are killing things both: as want of moisture causeth death, by defect of the passive part; so want of warmth by defect of the active; and, therefore, as the Greeks called dead men *alibantas*,¹ as wanting (*λιβάς*) moisture, the fuel of life, so the Latins do as justly call them *extinctos* [quenched], as wanting heat, the fire of

e. Hide not, therefore, thy face from me, O God—the sun to warm my soul,—lest I be like to them that go down into the pit; lest, though I be not quite dead, yet I be at least like to them that are, and so should be in danger, to lose a soul, and thou a servant.

But consider, O my soul, how all this trouble comes upon thee; look into the cause, and so thou mayest the better find thyself out. And is not all thy trouble long of God's displeasure? if, then, his anger be a cause of thy danger, what can be a cause of thy safety but his lovingkindness? Ah, therefore, Cause me, O God, to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust¹ [ver. 8]. There are other causes that promise me fair to free me from trouble; but, alas, they are causes that are caused, and are not free themselves; and how then should they free me? Thou, O God, art the fountain cause; and nothing can resist thy will: oh, therefore, be thou pleased, O God, to cause me to hear thy lovingkindness, and I will never seek further, never look after any other cause for my deliverance.

But though perhaps I cannot find the full operation of it instantly, yet cause me at least to hear of it; for if once I hear it will be, I shall never doubt it shall be. And although the pleasure seem to consist in only the feeling it, yet I shall feel a pleasure in only the hearing it: the pleasure of a *preludium* [prelude], which is oftentimes as pleasing as the song itself. Who is not glad to hear good news? and what news so good as to hear of God's lovingkindness? O my soul, it is so good, that it makes all other news good, though seeming never so bad.¹ It is like the meal which Elisha cast into the pot, and made the broth wholesome which was before deadly.² It is like the rod with which Moses struck the rock, and made it gush out with water in abundance.³

But is not good news welcome at any time? and what need then such haste of hearing it in the morning? would it not serve as well to hear it at any other time of the day?

¹ Ps. cxliii. 8: "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust; cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul into thee." ² 2 Kings iv. 41. ³ Numb. xx. 11.

Alas, O Lord, my nights are very unquiet: either I sleep not at all, but am kept waking through anguish of my mind; or if I sleep, I am frightened with fearful dreams, through terror of thine anger. Oh therefore cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning, that I may at least awake in comfort, and may have the whole day before me to re-collect my spirits. To hear thy lovingkindness in the morning, makes my waking be saluted, as it were, with music; makes my troubles seem as they were but dreams; makes me find it true that though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.¹

But what may this lovingkindness be which David here so earnestly prays to hear of? Is it perhaps such a lovingkindness as Hezekiah heard of when God sent him word he would add fifteen years to his life?² but, alas, what is the addition of fifteen years? Or is it to hear of the remission of his sins, as he did indeed by the prophet Nathan?³ Or is it to hear his sick child should be restored to health, which he so much desired?⁴ All these may be; but yet no more reason for hearing them in the morning, than at any other time of the day. And may we not then have leave to reflect our thoughts upon that lovingkindness which was indeed heard of in the morning,—betimes in the morning, when the sun was yet but rising; the lovingkindness of God in Christ, and Christ to us?—the lovingkindness of Christ's resurrection? For what could he pray to hear of, so comfortable as this? If the forgiveness of his sins, this crowns it. If the recovery of his sick child, this makes amends for it. If the addition of years to his life, this eternizeth it.⁵ For as by the power of Christ's resurrection we all shall rise, so by the virtue of his ascension we shall all ascend; and ascend thither where sins shall be no more remembered, nor sickness any more be feared, and where death itself shall be swallowed up in victory. Indeed, if David had lived at this day, he would have made it an Alleluia,⁶ which here he makes an Hosanna;⁷ have made it a song of praise,

¹ Ps. xxx. 5. ² 2 Kings xx. 6. ³ 2 Sam. xii. 13. ⁴ 2 Sam. xii. 16. ⁵ Ps. xxi. 4: "Thou gavest *it* him, *even* length of days, for ever and ever." ⁶ Rev. xix. 1; Ps. cvi. 1. ⁷ Luke i. 78. ⁸ Matt. xxi. 9.

hich here he makes a prayer; and therefore, O my soul, do thou as David would have done, and say, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of his servant David.¹ It may well be said we hear this lovingkindness in the morning, seeing it makes it morning to us whensoever we hear it; for as the rising of the sun makes the morning of the day, so he, being the Sun of Righteousness,² makes it dayspring³ in our souls when we first receive him. But what should make God to cause me, that am so unworthy, to hear his lovingkindness? what, my soul, but his lovingkindness? For his lovingkindness is itself both the cause and the effect. It is his lovingkindness that causeth me to hear it, as it is his lovingkindness that I desire to hear of. But is there no cause in ourselves that causeth God to make us to hear it? There is indeed a cause; but it is but *causa sine qua non* [an essential condition]; and this it is, because of our trust in God, a cause that worketh not, but is wrought upon, and, by being wrought upon, worketh; for as I could not trust in God without his lovingkindness, so by trusting in him I obtain to hear his lovingkindness. Oh how blessed a thing is this trusting in God! I know not whether I should call it a better tree, or a better fruit: seeing as it is the tree that bears this fruit, to make us hear God's lovingkindness, so it is the fruit that grows upon the tree of his lovingkindness.

But it is not enough that God be a cause of our hearing, if he be not as well a cause of our knowing; for seeing we are going a journey to God, what knowledge so necessary as to know the way? Oh therefore cause me, O God, to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.⁴ One would think it might have been sufficient to say, Show me the way wherein I should walk; for who is so simple but he can walk in the way, if the way be once showed him? And yet this would not have served, for were not our first parents showed the way when they were told,

¹ Luke i. 68, 69: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." ² Mal. iv. 2. ³ Luke i. 78: "Whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." ⁴ Ps. cxliiii. 8.

Of the tree of good and evil ye shall not eat?¹ and yet how quickly did they go astray for all this showing! Did not John Baptist show the way plainly enough when he said, *Ecce Agnus Dei*, Behold the Lamb of God?² yet how many were ever the better for his *Ecce*? how many went ever the righter for his directing? But most of all, did not Christ himself show the way plainly enough when he said, in plain terms, *Ego sum via*, I am the way?³ yet how much was the way the more frequented for his plain showing it? It seems David knew this, and therefore would not say, Show me the way, but Cause me to know the way; for though God's showing the way may be mistaken or neglected, yet his causing to know the way can never be frustrate; but as Christ said, Whom the Spirit freeth, they are free indeed,⁴ so whom God causeth to know, they know indeed.

All knowing by other causes is subject to error, oftentimes by negligence, always by infirmity; perhaps by wilfulness, certainly by ignorance: only the knowing that is caused by God is certain and effectual, for he is the Alpha and Omega⁵ of causes: as nothing goes before to move it, so nothing comes after that can hinder it. Other causes are themselves but effects, and therefore can never be certain to produce effects that can be certain. Oh, then, cause me, O God, to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. And here now comes in another *causa sine quâ non*, for as I could not lift up my soul to thee if thou didst not cause me to know the way, so thou couldst not cause me to know the way if I did not lift up my soul to thee. O my soul, what ails thee to be so affected to the earth, and to things here below, that thou dost not voluntarily of thyself ascend up to heaven; nor indeed art able, unless thou be lifted up? Dost thou not know that thou art come from thence, and that there is thy *natale solum* [native soil], the place where thy true inheritance lies? Dost thou not know that thou comest hither but to fetch thee a body to carry up thither; and shall this body keep thee a captive here, and so far a captive as not to leave thee so much as *animum*

¹ Gen. ii. 17.
John viii. 36.

² John i. 29.
^a Rev. i. 8.

³ John xiv. 6.

⁴ Rom. viii. 2, cf.;

revertendi [a desire to return], so much as a thought of returning home? How art thou degenerated, my soul, that being sent to lift up another, thou art fain now to be lifted up thyself, and that with so much striving and reluctance? Indeed, one would think it an easy matter to lift up a soul to God, being so light a substance as it is; and it would be so indeed, if it were not for the heavy body that veighs it down, for *corpus aggravat multa cogitantem* [the body weighs down him that thinks much]; but now that it hath this heavy weight, this weighty clog hanging upon it, how it is so hard a matter to lift it up, that nothing but the strong arm of faith, the arm of a strong faith, is able to do it. I know there is a better place for my soul to be in than where it now is; and I know it is not here below; and therefore I lift up my soul, O God, in hope to find it with thee above.

But what indeed should cause David here to lift up his soul to God? Is it to be the nearer to God, the better to learn the way he should walk in? Or is it that the lifting up his soul is itself the way in which he should walk? Or is it but an expressing of the vehement desire he had to learn the way? Or is it, perhaps, to be out of the reach of those enemies that had persecuted his soul? and therefore it presently follows, *Deliver me from my enemies, O God: I flee to thee to hide me*¹ [ver. 9]; and if it be so, have we not then just cause to love our enemies, just cause to embrace our persecutors, seeing it is they that oftentimes make us lift up our souls, and to flee to God, who otherwise of ourselves are very unapt, certainly very unready, to flee unto him? But is David's lifting up his soul to God only a flying from his enemies, as though it were fear of his foes, and not love of God, that made him lift it up? No, my soul; but so long as it be lifted up, there can be no danger to the soul: then only is the soul in danger when it inclines downward too much, and by partaking of the body is made unapt to be lifted up.

It is something to be able to lift up my soul; but were it

¹ Ps. cxliiii. 9: "Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me."

not better if my soul could lift up my body, that so, both joined together, might be ready to do God service? But, alas, my body is so affected to the earth, so addicted to stay here below, that it were in vain to attempt the lifting it up as yet; but let my soul be lifted up, and go from it for a time, that my body may see what will become of it when the soul is gone; and then, after it hath tried a while what it is to be left behind, and to be without a soul, then, if my soul return and come again to fetch it, it will find my body in another humour,—not only willing but longing to be lifted up, and to leave this earth, which now it so much affects, alas! to scorn it, which now it so much admires.

Though I prayed God before to cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, yet I pray him not here to cause me to know the way how I should fight; I know I am *impar congressus* [unequal to the fight], never able to stand in my enemies' hands; the way I must walk here is directly to fly, and I acknowledge it for a great favour of God that he leaves me this way to escape from my enemies.

But is David's valour come to this, that he is come now to be glad to fly? Had he not done better to have died valiantly than to fly basely? O my soul, to fly is not always a sign of baseness; not always a point of valour to stand to it; but then to fly when we find our own weakness, and to him to fly, in whom is our strength,—this is, if not valour, at least wisdom; but it is, to say true, both wisdom and true valour. And now, O God, seeing I find my own weakness, and know thy strength, what should I do but fly, and whither fly but only to thee?—to thee a strong fortress¹ to all that build upon thee, to thee a safe sanctuary² to all that fly unto thee.

But if God be he to whom I must fly, who is it, then, from whom I must fly?—who, O my soul, but from the world, and from myself? For he that will make God his *terminus ad quem* [goal] to whom to fly, must make the world his *terminus a quo* [starting-place] from which to fly; no coming to this ending but from this beginning; no

¹ Ps. xviii. 2.² Isa. viii. 14.

arriving at this haven but by avoiding the shelves¹ within ourselves; for he that loves the world, the love of God is not in him; and he that denies not himself, is not worthy that God should own him.²

But why should I think that God will assist me flying, that would not assist me fighting?—how can I hope he will be my sanctuary, that would not be my fortress? O my soul, who can tell whether God have not left me in distress, of purpose to try what succour I will seek?—who can tell whether he have not therefore been my fortress, to the end he might be my sanctuary? Did he ever fail to deliver any that put their trust in him,³ and shall I think he will begin with me? Did he ever refuse to protect any that fled to him for succour, and shall I fear to fare worse than ever any did? He had reason, I confess, to leave me to myself, when I fell a-numbering the people,⁴ and trusted in my own strength; but now that I have renounced all confidence in myself, all help from the arm of flesh,⁵ now all the world shall not persuade me but that he will receive me, now that I fly unto him. And the rather for that I fly not to him, as the world used to do, for preferment in the world; but I fly to him only but to hide me;⁶ and he will do little for me if he will not do so much as hide me; for to hide me is no more to him than to receive me, seeing he dwells in light inaccessible,⁷ whither my enemies, that are children of darkness, can never come to find me out. I fly not to hide me in thickets and bushes, that may be felled with axes and burnt with fire; but I fly to the Bush, burning and not consuming,⁸ where I know myself safe against fire and sword. For if a flaming sword be able to keep out of Paradise,⁹ the flaming bush,¹⁰—at least he that appeared in the bush,—I am sure is able to keep out of danger.

But why should David fly to God to hide him, seeing hiding is best done by darkness, and God is all light? O my soul, God hides with light, as he is hidden with

¹ Sand-banks. ² Matt. x. 37, 38. ³ Ps. xxv. 3. ⁴ 2 Sam. xxiv. 2. ⁵ Jer. xvii. 5: "Cursed be the man that . . . maketh flesh his arm." ⁶ Ps. cxliiii. 9: "Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me." ⁷ 1 Tim. i. 16. ⁸ Exod. iii. 2. ⁹ Gen. iii. 24. ¹⁰ Exod. iii. 2—6.

light, and takes not away visibility but by addition of lustre: his *tegere* [covering] is *protegere* [protecting], a hiding that makes not obscure, but more conspicuous; and David, for all his other glories, had never shined so much to posterity, if he had not fled to God, and been hidden by him.

But though it may stand with valour to fly, yet can it stand with valour to fly to hide himself? Flying may be by way of retreat, or it may be to recover new force; but flying to hide oneself must needs argue pusillanimity, as though he durst not, as though he never meant to dare to show himself in arms again. But, O my soul, when I fly to God to hide me, my meaning is to hide my sin, for my sin and I are all one; or, rather, my sin is more I than I am myself; and were it not happy for me if sin could be made so cowardly in me that it never should dare to show itself again in arms?

And yet what good will God's hiding my sins do me, if, as often as God hides them, I lay them open again by committing of new? Oh therefore *teach me to do thy will, O God: thy spirit is good; and lead me into the land of uprightness*¹ [ver. 10]. For if thou teach me to do thy will, I shall never lay open that which thou hidest; but, rather, I shall never commit so many new sins, to put thee to the trouble of such continual hiding.

We may call this sentence a description of David's school; and it is a very complete one; at least it hath in it the three best things that belong to a school—the best teacher, the best scholar, and the best lesson; for who so good a teacher as God? who so good a scholar as David? what so good a lesson as to do God's will? I have oftentimes desired to do God's will, but never could, never could as I desired; and now I see the reason: God had not taught me to do it, and without his teaching it can never be done. Unless we be *docti a Deo*, taught of God to do his will, we may profit perhaps in the contemplative part, but we shall never be good proficients in the active part. We have many teachers to know God's

¹ Ps. cxliii. 10: "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

will, but none to do it; for, alas, the best learned are in this but learners themselves; and to teach to know God's will, and not teach to do it, can never make good scholars; it may puff up with knowledge, but can never make scholars, but worthy of more stripes. It is said of Christ, that he taught with power, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees;¹ and he might well be said to teach with power, seeing we may say indeed that he taught with power; for it is a great power to be able to do God's will—a power exceeding all strength of nature, and therefore not to be done by Scribes and Pharisees. Thou only, O God, mayest truly be said to teach with power, because thou only indeed art the Teacher of power. And as I am well assured of thy power to do it, so I am as little doubtful of thy will to do it, seeing *thy spirit is good*, and goodness is apt to communicate itself. No infection is so apt to set a disease upon another as goodness is apt to make another good; and how can it make another good but only by teaching to do thy will, which only is our goodness? And when, O God, thou hast trained me up in this school, and taught me to do thy will, oh leave me not so, but lead me on to the land of uprightness, for this is the academy to which they are sent out of this school, that the nursery of this colony; and might I not then challenge thee, O God, of unkindness, if, having trained me up in this school, thou shouldst not send me to this academy?—if, having bred me up in this nursery, thou shouldst not make me a member of this colony? Oh then lead me, O God, into the land of uprightness, that I may have a place to put that in practice which I learn here in theory,—a place, at least, where I may do thy will with quietness, which I cannot do here but with disturbance. O my soul, where I may do God's will with exaltation, which I do not—alas, I cannot do here, but with reluctance.

And now, O my soul, why hast thou sojourned so long in Mesech? why hast thou dwelt so long in the tents of

¹ Matt. vii. 29: "For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes."

Kedar?¹ It is more than time now to look thee out a better dwelling; and where is any better dwelling to be had but in the land of uprightness? I know, indeed, there is such a land, but I know not the way to it; and I know the way is so hard to find, that it cannot be gone without a guide; and as there is no going to it without a leader, so there is no leader to it but only God; all other leaders but, will carry us out of the way, that we were better to make a stand than to follow their steps. God only is the true Pharos, the true landmark, to set them right that would else go astray; for his law is a lantern to our feet, and a guide to our paths.² It was he that set a star in the heavens to guide the wise men of the East to find this land out,³ and it is he that will set the like or a better star in my heart, to guide me to it. Oh, therefore, thou that didst lead the Israelites by the hands of Moses and Aaron,⁴ lead me also by the hands of thy prophets and apostles, that as the Israelites were led into a land flowing with milk and honey,⁵ so I may be led into this land flowing with righteousness and uprightness; for as that land was the journey's end to which all their wanderings in the wilderness tended, so this land is the place of repose to which, after all my pilgrimage in this troublesome world, my soul aspires. Alas, O Lord, I live now as in a sea of confusion, tossed with the waves of misery and with the billows of sin; oh set me on land in the firm land of uprightness, where there are no billows nor waves of either misery to follow sin, or of sin to draw on misery.

There are some children of fortune that think the *insulae fortunatæ* (the Fortunate Islands) to be the land of uprightness; but this cannot be, for what hath uprightness to do with fortune? But though I cannot say the Fortunate Islands be the land of uprightness, yet I may truly say the land of uprightness is the Fortunate Islands, seeing no man ever arrived there that was not presently made, I

¹ Ps. cxx. 5: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, *that* I dwell in the tents of Kedar." ² Ps. cxix. 105: "Thy word *is* a lamp" (Vulg., *lucerna*, a lantern) "unto my feet, and a light unto my path." ³ Matt. ii. 2. ⁴ Ps. lxxvii. 20. ⁵ Exod. iii. 17.

will not say fortunate, but certainly happy. The truth is, this land to us yet is *terra incognita* [an unknown land]; discovered only that such a land there is; but no man living hath ever yet sailed into it. God, indeed, is the only Pilot to it, and it cannot be sailed into but by his compass. Oh, then, vouchsafe, O God, to sit at the stern, and to direct my course, that being led into it by thee, I may be naturalized and made a member of it,—for there, at least, we shall be all friends: no enemies there from whom to hide me; and more than this, I shall need no enemy there to make me fly to thee, seeing, once there, I shall always be with thee; and once with thee, never more to be parted from thee.

But, alas, what good will God's leading me into the land of uprightness do me, if I happen to be dead before I come there? Is the land of uprightness like the field of Golgotha, a land only of dead men's bones?¹ and am I not like to be dead when my enemies have smitten my life down to the ground already? Oh, therefore, *quicken me, O God, for thy name's sake*² [ver. 11]; for how can I doubt but thou canst quicken me, being alive, who I know wilt quicken me when I am dead? for didst thou not so to the widow of Nain's³ son? Didst thou not so to Lazarus?⁴ and can it be thou shouldst be partial to quicken some and not to quicken others? No, O Lord, it is happy for me that my enemies have smitten my life to the ground, seeing now, being dead to this wicked world, I am ready for a new life, and want but quickening; and seeing thou art Lord and giver of life,⁵ and hast gotten thee a name for quickening, oh quicken me for thy name's sake, and let not thy name be blemished for want of quickening me; that as by thy leading me into the land of uprightness, I shall have a place where to lead a life when I have it, so by thy quickening me, and renewing my spirits, I may have a life to lead when I come there. And yet, why am I so earnest with God

¹ Matt. xxvii. 33: "Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull." ² Ps. cxliiii. 11: "Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble." ³ Luke vii. 15. ⁴ John xi. 44. ⁵ John vi. 33: "He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world."

to quicken me, that am in such a world of troubles? for what would his quickening do but make me the more sensible to feel my troubles? Alas, as long as my troubles continue, it were better for me to be without his quickening—better, indeed, to be quite dead. Oh, therefore, not only quicken me for thy name's sake, but for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble; that as by quickening me thou givest me life, so by bringing me out of trouble thou mayest give me a quiet life. This, indeed, will be some refreshing to my soul; it will give me, at least, a breathing-time of quietness, but it will not yet give me a perfect *quietus est* [he is at rest]; for as long as my enemies continue, will they not always be plotting new troubles against me? And am I not then in danger of falling into a relapse of troubles? and are not relapses more grievous than the first accesses? Oh, therefore, not only bring my soul out of trouble, O God, but *of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul*¹ [ver. 12]; that as by bringing me out of trouble I have quietness for the present, so by cutting off my enemies, the root of my troubles, I may never be troubled more, but may serve thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of my life.

But mark here, my soul, with what three cords David seeks to draw God to grant him his suits: for his name's sake, for his righteousness' sake, and for his mercy's sake,—three such motives, that it must be a very hard suit that God will deny, if either of them be used. But though all the three be strong motives, yet as David riseth in his suits, so he may seem also to rise in his motives; and by this account; for his righteousness' sake will prove a motive of a higher degree than for his name's sake, and for his mercy's sake the highest of them all—as indeed his mercy-seat is the highest part of all his ark,² if it be not rather that as the attributes of God, so these motives, that are drawn from the attributes, are of equal pre-eminence.

¹ Ps. cxliii. 12: "And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant." ² Exod. xxv. 21.

But if the three motives be all of them so strong, being each of them single, how strong would they be if they were all united, and twisted, I may say, into one cord? And united they are all, indeed, into a motive, which God hath more clearly revealed to us than he did to David (although it be strange, seeing it was his Lord; and yet not strange, seeing it was his son); and this is the motive: for thy Son Christ Jesus' sake; for he is the *verbum abbreviatum* [the Word in brief], in whom are included all the motives—all the powerful motives—that can be used to God for obtaining our suits. That as David, making three suits, used three motives, so I may put the three suits into one, and use but this one motive; and say, Quicken me, O God, and deliver me out of trouble: cut off mine enemies, for thy Son Christ Jesus' sake; and using but this one motive, I shall be so much surer of prevailing than David was, as a threefold [cord] is stronger than when the three are each of them but single.¹

These three motives are all existent in God, but God looks as well for a motive in us; and one, indeed, there is in us by his acceptance; and this it is which David useth here when he saith, *for I am thy servant*; for such is the wonderful tenderness of God towards his servants, that if this motive in us be joined to the motives in him, there cannot be so hard a suit that will be denied; as it is indeed a special article in the indentures of covenant between God and his servants, that whatsoever they shall ask in his Son's name shall be granted to them; that if a threefold cord be hard to be broken, this fourfold cord will be impossible to be broken.

But is it not that David compliments here with God when he saith, I am thy servant?—using a phrase of speech which we use at parting with any of account, to say, I am your servant? And if it be so, it is like to be but a slender motive to God for granting his suit. O my soul, if David had used compliments with God, he could not have been the man he is said to be—a man after God's own heart;

¹ Eccl. iv. 12: "A threefold cord is not quickly broken."

for God is not as man, to look for compliments, much less to accept them; but as his *dicere* to us is *facere*—his word, his deed, so he looks for the like from us to him; not, indeed, in ability of performance, which in man cannot be, but yet in sincerity of heart, which in servants always ought to be. Oh, therefore, my soul, be careful, not in compliment to say thou art, but in spirit and truth to be indeed the servant of God; for he that shall use these motives to God, For thy name's sake, For thy righteousness' sake, For thy mercy's sake, add also the united motive, For Christ's sake, and is not God's servant, is like to speed no better than the Jewish conjurors did who sought to cast out devils in Christ's name, when they were not Christ's servants;¹ for how can one hope to obtain a suit for which he is not a competent suitor? and who can be a competent suitor to obtain anything at God's hand but he only that is his true servant? for though the motives in God give our suits their efficacy, yet it is this motive in ourselves that gives the capacity; but no capacity with God, who is all spirit and truth, but by being his servant in spirit and truth.

One scruple is remaining yet: how David can pray God to cut off his enemies for his mercy's sake? for is not his mercy over all his works?² and are not David's enemies in the number of God's works? and can there be mercy in destroying? Indeed, God's general mercy is over all his works, but his special mercy over none but his servants; and of this special mercy it is that David prays God to cut off his enemies; for the mercy is to David, and not to David's enemies; and is it not a mercy in God to David to cut off them that would cut off him? And yet a degree further; for is not destroying then a mercy when preserving would be a cruelty? and were it not a cruelty to preserve the wicked when they are wilfully bent upon destroying the godly?

But how should this happen to David, that a prince so just, so merciful, so pious, so careful of all religious duties, should have enemies? God knows, it is easily answered;

¹ Acts xix. 13—15.

² Ps. cxlv. 9.

For it is cause enough for the wicked to be enemies of any man whom they but see to be a servant of God ; but this makes amends, that it is cause enough for God to cut off any whom he but sees to be at enmity with his servants, which David intimates here when he saith, Cut off my enemies, O God, for I am thy servant.

And here an end of David's repentance ; yet we may stay a little to consider what a blessed end it makes, and with what happy success it concludes. He that had his life smitten down to the ground, is now quickened again, and hath his spirits revived ; he that was persecuted in his soul, is now delivered from all trouble ; he that had a world of enemies insulting over him, hath now all his enemies cut off and destroyed : that justly now he may cry *Victoria* [Victory !], and may turn his penitential psalms into songs of rejoicing ; and we may turn for him the Lamentations of Jeremiah into the Canticles of Solomon ; and all of us, if we but follow his example, may take down our harps from the willows of Babylon, and may turn our dirges into hymns, aspiring to be choristers in the great choir of heaven—to sing with angels the eternal Alleluiah.



Annotationes hæ Paraphrasticæ in 'Psalmm 143'
typis mandentur.

SA. BAKER.

Ex ædibus Fulham,
Iunij die 27, 1638.¹



¹ These paraphrastic notes on Ps. cxliii. may be printed :

SA. BAKER.

At my house at Fulham, June 27, 1638

MEDITATIONS
AND
DISQUISITIONS
UPON
SEVEN CONSOLATORIE
PSALMES OF *DAVID*:

NAMELY,

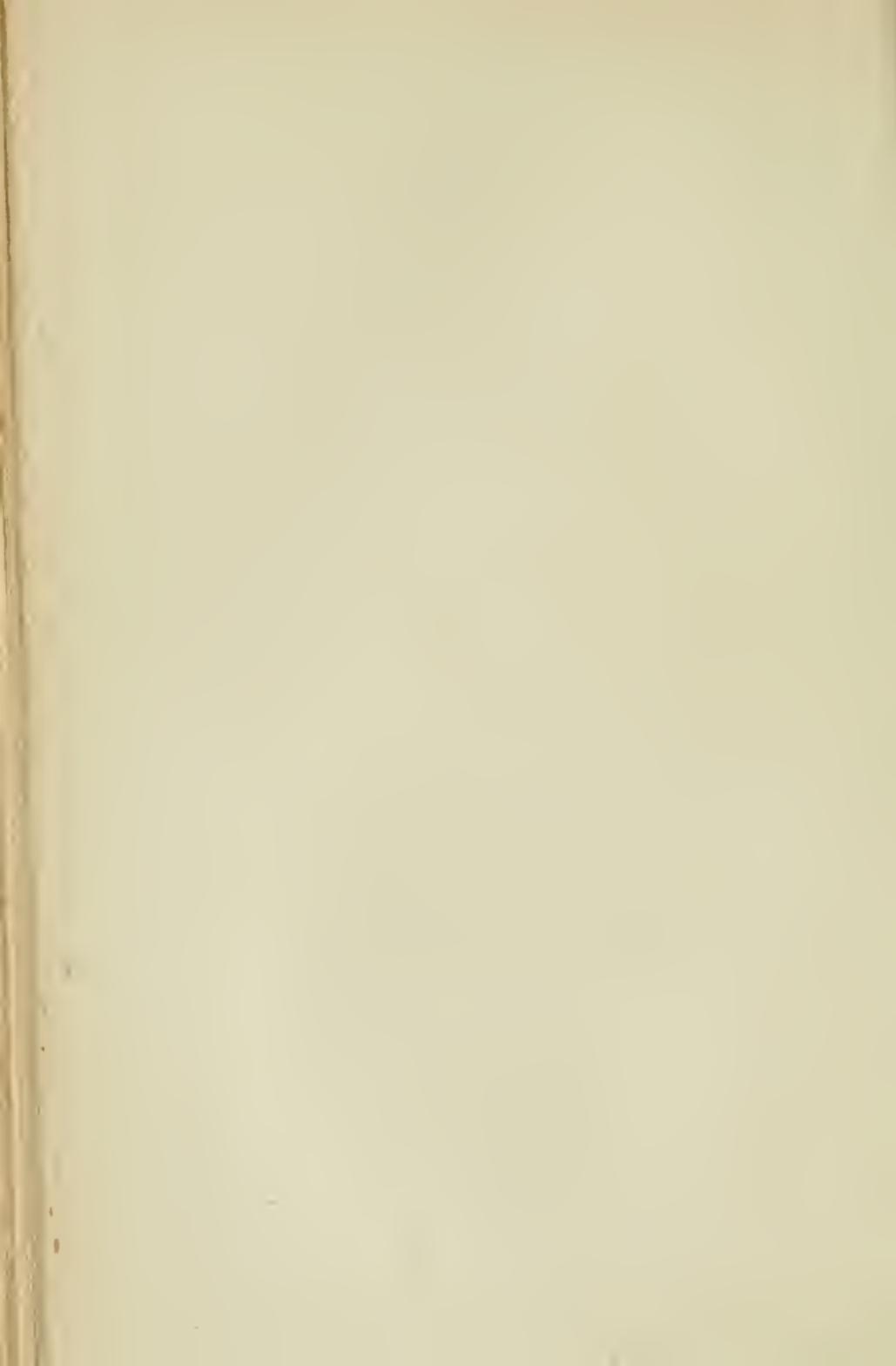
<i>The 23.</i>	} {	<i>The 34.</i>
<i>The 27.</i>		<i>The 84.</i>
<i>The 30.</i>		<i>The 103.</i>
<i>The 116.</i>		

By *S^r RICHARD BAKER, Knight.*



LONDON,

Printed by *John Dawson*, for *Francis Eglesfield*,
and are to be sold at the signe of the Marigold
in *Pauls Church-yard*. 1640.



To the
RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM LORD CRAVEN,
BARON OF HAMPSTEAD, &c.*

MOST HONOURED LORD,—I shall perhaps move envy to say, *Quæ te tam læta tulerunt sæcula?* [What happy age has brought thee?] but for myself, I am bound to say it, who have received from your Lordship indeed a great favour, the remission of a great debt; for which, notwithstanding, I account myself to stand obliged still, though in a less profitable, yet in a more binding obligation, to be your perpetual servant. I am called upon by gratefulness to erect some monument in honour of your bounty; and a more lasting monument I could not think of within the compass of my poor abilities than to dedicate these Psalms of David to the memory of your name; for though your own heroic virtue have made you a monument of the same metal that Fame's trumpet is made, which is likely and worthy to last long, yet this perhaps may prove *monumentum famæ perenniùs*, a monument that will continue your memory, when Fame itself shall be buried in oblivion. But how long soever it shall continue, yet not so long as my devotion to be, as my desire to be accounted to be,

Your Lordship's humble and devoted servant,

RICHARD BAKER.

* For Biographical Notice see Editor's Introduction.

Imprimatur,
Thos. Wykes, R. P. Episc. Lond.
Sacell. Domest.

September 11, 1639.

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.—
PSALM xxiii. (Auth. Vers.)

MEDITATIONS

UPON

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM OF DAVID.

IS it not a grievous fall that where I might have said, The Lord is my Creator, and hath made me after his own image, I am now glad to say [ver. 1],¹ The Lord is my Shepherd, as though I were but a sheep; and yet perhaps no fall in this at all, for what was I when I was at best but the Lord's sheep, depending wholly upon him for all I had,—no clothes to cover my nakedness but of his making, no food to satisfy my hunger but of his providing? And oh that I had continued his sheep still; for then, though weak, I should have been innocent; though feeble, I should have been harmless; whereas by taking (O miserable mistaking!) the serpent for a shepherd, I became of an innocent sheep a ravening wolf, and should have so continued at least a perpetual strayer, if my true Shepherd (O the wonderful bowels of compassion!) had not left the ninety-nine in the wilderness to seek after me, and had not found me out and brought me back again into his fold,² that if there be joy in heaven that the lost sheep is found, there ought to be much more joy in earth³ that the lost sheep can say, The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

But how can I truly say, The Lord is my Shepherd, seeing he hath turned me over, sheep and lambs and all, to St. Peter to be our shepherd?⁴ Can he turn me over to

¹ Ps. xxiii. 1: "The LORD *is* my shepherd, I shall not want.

² Luke xv. 4, 5.

³ Luke xv. 7.

⁴ John xxi. 15—17.

another, and yet himself retain a property in me still? But is it not that there is a hierarchy of shepherds—St. Peter and his successors but ministerial shepherds; God himself the Shepherd paramount? He led his people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron.¹ He but used the service of Moses and Aaron: himself was the Shepherd still; it was he that led them. And is it not said of kings, too, that they are *ποίμεις λαῶν*, shepherds of the people? And perhaps David speaks here as he was a king; for though a king be a shepherd in relation to his subjects, yet he is but a sheep in relation to God, for relation in all created things makes *quidlibet ex quolibet* [what you will, of whatever material], a sheep of a shepherd, and a shepherd of a sheep, till we come at God, and there relation ceaseth. For God being *summum bonum, unum et idem* [the Supreme Good, One and Unchangeable], can take no disparagement by any relation; we are all sheep to him: David and kings, St. Peter and all, all fain to say, The Lord is my Shepherd; or else can never truly say, *I shall not want*.

It is a great happiness for sheep to have a good shepherd, but a greater happiness to have him: both good and able. Many shepherds are the one and not the other; few are both; indeed none are both—none able to secure from want but only the Shepherd who is *Elohim Shaddai*, God All-sufficient. Kings no doubt are able shepherds, but yet not able to secure from want: for we see them oftentimes to be in want themselves. St. Peter an able shepherd, yet not so able as to secure from want; for who knows not what want he was in himself when time was? We shall never be sheep secure from want till we come to say, The Lord is my Shepherd; and then we may justly infer we shall not want.

Indeed, God is a Shepherd as able as he is good, and as good as he is able. *For he leadeth me into green pastures*: [ver. 2]. Not only he hath green pastures to lead me into which shows his ability, but he leads me into them, which shows his goodness. He leads me not into pastures tha

¹ Ps. lxxvii. 20. ² Ps. xxiii. 2: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures he leadeth me beside the still waters."

ure withered and dry, that would distaste me before I taste them; but he leads me into green pastures, as well to please my eye with the verdure as my stomach with the herbage, and inviting me, as it were, to eat, by setting out the meat in the best colour. A meat though never so good, yet if it look not handsomely, it dulls the appetite; but when besides the goodness it hath also a good look, this gives the appetite another edge, and makes a joy before enjoying. But yet the goodness is not altogether in the greenness. Alas, green is but a colour, and colours are but deceitful things: they might be green leaves, or they might be green flags or rushes; and what good were to me in such a greenness? No, my soul, the goodness is in being green pastures, for now they perform as much as they promise; and as in being green they were a comfort to me as soon as I saw them, so in being green pastures they are refreshing to me now as soon as I taste them. As they are pleasant to look on, so they are wholesome to feed on; as they are sweet to be tasted, so they are easy to be digested; that I am now methinks in a kind of Paradise, and seem not to want anything, unless perhaps a little water with which now and then to wash my mouth, at most to take sometimes a sip; for though sheep be no great drinkers, and though their pastures being green and full of sap make drink the less needful, yet some drink they must have besides. And now see the great goodness of this Shepherd, and what just cause there is to depend upon his providence; for he lets not his sheep want this neither, but he leads them *beside still waters*,—not waters that roar and make a noise enough to fright a fearful sheep, but waters still and quiet, that though they drink but little, yet they may drink that little without fear. And may I not justly say now, The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want?

And yet perhaps there will be want for all this; for is it enough that he lead them into green pastures and beside still waters? May he not lead them in, and presently take them out again, before their bellies be half full; and so, instead of making them happy, make them more miserable; set them in a longing with the sight, and then frustrate them

of their expectation? No, my soul, the measure of this Shepherd's goodness is more than so; he not only leadeth them into green pastures, but he makes them to lie down in them. He leads them not in to post over their meat, as if they were to eat a passover, and to take it *in transitu* [while passing onward], as dogs drink Nile; but he makes them to lie down in green pastures, that they may eat their fill and feed at leisure; and when they have done, lie down and take their ease, that their after-reckoning may be as pleasing as their repast, and that they may be free from being *soliciti de crastino* for taking care to provide for to-morrow, seeing they have a market of provision round about them, or rather their meat ready dressed to their hands for many days to come. O my soul, thus are the godly provided for by the Lord their Shepherd; and though their pastures may seem withered and dry in the eyes of the world, yet to them they are green and pleasing, and give more gladness to their hearts than theirs whose corn and wine most abundantly increaseth.¹ And now, O my soul, is it not time now to say grace, and to acknowledge a thankfulness for this plenty of my meat and drink? And can I say a shorter grace than this: The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want?

And yet perhaps there will be want for all this; for if God be a Shepherd, will he not shear his sheep? And if he shear me, will he not leave me bare and naked? And how then can I say, I shall not want? God, indeed, is a Shepherd that will shear his sheep, but he will *tondere* [shear], not *deglubere* [flay]; he will take off our old clothes, but it is to make way for new; and he takes them off in a time when we may well spare them, indeed in a time when it is better for us to be without them, and therefore neither is his shearing any cause but I may say still, The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

And yet I say still there will perhaps be want for all this; for is it enough to have food and raiment? is it enough to have ease and plenty? Alas, all these do but serve for the body; there is no provision here for the soul; and if the

¹ Ps. iv. 7: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased."

soul be not provided for, all the rest is but the care of Martha, troubled about many things, and none of them needful.¹ But he that told Martha of her error, is it like he will commit the like error himself? No, my soul, his principal care is of the soul, for *he restoreth my soul*² [ver. 3]; but as he made me not a living soul at first till he had made the earth, and the fruits of the earth to serve for my living, so he restores not my soul now till he hath first led me into green pastures to serve for my sustenance; for to what purpose were it to give a new life, and not a living, to give a being, and not give means to maintain that being? And was it not perhaps from hence that Christ took his pattern when he taught us to pray for daily bread before we pray for forgiveness of sins? But though he provide first for the body, which was made first, yet he provides most for the soul, which was given last; he but feeds my body, but he restores my soul; he ministers to my body but accidental and outward things, but inward and substantial to my soul. And why is it that God provides more for the soul than for the body, but because the soul is of far more worth than the body? for God is not as man, to take care of things out of fancy or upon mistaking; but he takes care of things according as he values them, and values them according as they are worth, *Numquid cura Deo de bobus?*—Doth God take care of oxen?³ Indeed the soul, in comparison of the body, is of far more value than the worth of an ox in comparison of a man. Oh that we could be so wise as to know the true value and worth of the soul, and to take care of things according to their values! We should then certainly be more careful of the soul, less careful of the body than we are, and be more sensible of that saying of Christ, What avails it a man to gain the whole world and to lose his soul?⁴ It may be allowed perhaps to men to provide first for the body, so they would provide most for the soul, as God doth here; but to provide first and most for the body, and last and least for the soul, as most

¹ Luke x. 40, 41. ² Ps. xxiii. 3: "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." ³ 1 Cor. ix. 9. ⁴ Matt. xvi. 26:
 "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

men do,—I say not, all for the body and nothing for the soul, as some men do,—this must needs be extremely against all good order, seeing it is so directly against God's order.

But to what is it that God restores my soul? It must be to something that my soul had before, and hath not now; and so it is. He restores it to its original purity that was now grown foul and black with sin; for, alas, what good were it to have green pastures and a black soul! He restores it to its natural temper in affections that was grown distempered with violence of passions; for, alas, what good were it to have still waters and turbulent spirits! He restores it indeed to life that was grown before in a manner quite dead; and who could restore my soul to life but he only that is the good Shepherd, and gave his life for his sheep, which no shepherd ever did but he. St. Peter laid down his life, but he gave not his life, for he would perhaps have kept it if he might; and he laid it not down either as a shepherd for his sheep, but as a sheep rather for his shepherd; but this Shepherd gave his life for his sheep,¹ gave it, *quia oportuit* indeed, because it was necessary he should give it; but yet, *quia voluit* too, because he would give it; for if it had not been voluntary, it could not have been acceptable; and if not acceptable, never certainly have served for a ransom; and if not ransoming, no restoring.

But is it not said the Shepherd was smitten and the sheep were scattered? and what was his smiting but the giving his life? and had he not done better to have kept his life, than, leaving it, to leave his sheep to scattering? O my soul, though they were scattered for a time, yet it was but to be gathered together again with the greater joy; for though he left his life, yet he left not his sheep, but had a care of them even in death; for he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again; and as he laid it down for his sheep's ransom, so he took it up for their justification.

Every shepherd knows that sheep are subject to many infirmities, and knows many infirmities to which they are

¹ John x. 11, 15—18.

subject, and therefore is never without his box of tar, as the best remedy in cases of danger; but if the danger pass his tar-box, and touch upon the life, he then gives them over, and lets nature work. But the Lord is a Shepherd of another nature, above the power of nature. He restoreth the soul when the life is in danger; he hath ways of curing which no shepherd knows of but himself; and if other helps fail, he need but to say, *Volo, sis sanus*—I will, be thou whole,¹ and without any tar-box it is a present remedy. And may I not now justly say, The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want?

And yet perhaps there will be want for all this, for is it enough that he restore my soul and then leave me? What is it to restore my soul but to put it *in statu quo prius*—in the state it was made at first, which was after the image of God in holiness and righteousness; and if I could not continue in this state when made in it, how shall I continue in it when restored to it? He will therefore supply this want too, for having restored my soul in righteousness, *he will lead me in the paths of righteousness*, that though, left to myself, I took a wrong guide and went astray, yet when he leads me that is the way itself, I may be sure I cannot possibly go out of the way.

But alas, O Lord, these paths of righteousness have a long time so little been frequented, that all prints of a path are almost clean worn out, that it is a hard matter now but to find where the paths lie; and if we can find them, yet they are so narrow and so full of rubs that without special assistance it is an impossible thing not to fall or go astray. Even some angels, and those no mean ones, were not able to go right in these paths of righteousness,² but for want of leading went awry and perished. Oh therefore, thou the great Shepherd of my soul, as thou art pleased of thy grace to lead me into them, so vouchsafe with thy grace to lead me in them; for though in themselves they be paths of righteousness, yet to me they will be but paths of error, if thou vouchsafe not as well to lead me in them as into them. Oh, the

¹ Matt. viii. 3: "I will, be thou clean;" also Mark i. 41, Luke v. 13.

² Jude 6.

comfortable paths of righteousness,—the very paths in which Enoch walked with God,¹ and which, walked in as they should be, will bring us to a better Paradise than that of our first parents. For if God lead us in these paths, these paths will lead us to the place where the goats shall be put on the left hand and the sheep be taken on the right,² that now I am certainly come to the highest cause of my glorying to say, The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want; for at his right hand is the fulness of joy for evermore.³

But why is it that this great Shepherd will do these great things for me? Is it because he finds me to be a sounder sheep and to have fewer blemishes upon me than some other? Alas, no; for I am nothing but blemishes and unsoundness all over; but he will do it for his name's sake; for seeing he hath taken upon him the name of a good Shepherd, he will discharge his part, whatever his sheep be. It is not their being bad sheep that can make him leave being a good Shepherd; but he will be good, and maintain the credit of his name, in spite of all their badness; and though no benefit come to them of it, yet there shall glory accrue to him by it, and his name shall nevertheless be magnified and extolled.

But now, O my soul, though I can say I shall not want, yet can I say I shall not fear? for is not fear an inseparable companion of mortality? and can I then choose but fear that know myself to be mortal, and know also what the condition is of being mortal? Not only that I may die, but that I must die; and not only must one day, but may this day—alas, this very minute! I fear indeed when I consider my own frailty; but when I consider that the Lord is my Shepherd, I then am armed against all fear—against this fear of death itself. He that makes me to walk in green pastures, and in paths of righteousness, and keeps me from want, he also leads me by the hand as I walk, and keeps me from fear; *Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil*⁴ [ver. 4]. Though I be brought to never

¹ Gen. v. 24. ² Matt. xxv. 33. ³ Ps. xvi. 11: "In thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore." ⁴ Ps. xxiii. 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

so great extremity,—though brought as low as the valley of death,—though brought as near to death as the shadow to the body,—though brought to walk as a ghost amongst the dead, yet I will fear no evil. The shadow of death may perhaps be far enough from it, for all our life is but the shadow of death; but the valley of the shadow must needs be close to death, as being the very entrance to it; yet if I were brought to this door of death—if brought within the door and compassed about with death, yet for all this, for all that can be said or done, I will fear no evil. Will you not—will you not fear evil, when the evil is so imminent and the danger so great? Is the face of death no more terrible but that you dare look upon it without fear? Though it be the reproach of the wicked to fear where there is no cause of fear,¹ yet not to fear where there is cause can be no commendation in the godly. And why then will David speak thus, more like a desperate man than one that were well advised? No doubt David will give good reason for that he speaks. As it were desperateness not to fear where there is imminent danger, so it were cowardice to fear where there is imminent comfort. Lay then the comfort to the danger, and you will easily excuse David for fearing no evil. You have seen the danger, now hear the comfort: The Lord, my Shepherd, *is with me*, for he is never absent from his flock; *his rod and his staff they comfort me*; and may they not justly comfort me, when with them he is able to recover a sheep, though falling down the steepest precipice, or though already in the wolf's mouth, or in the paws of the lion. Indeed, if I had not my Shepherd with me, or if my Shepherd had not his instruments with him, I might justly then be in fear of evil; but what evil can I fear now, when I have my Shepherd, and my Shepherd his instruments—his rod and his staff, both instruments of comfort; and not only of comfort, but of encouragement; both instruments of preserving.

But is it well understood what his rod and his staff mean? for they may as well be instruments of correcting as defending; and if of defending, there is then just cause they should

¹ Ps. liiii. 5: "There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was."

be comforts ; but if of correcting, what comforts can they be? for what comfort can it be to be corrected? O my soul, great comfort to me, that know the nature of this Shepherd as I do; for do not I know that whom he loves he corrects;¹ and, therefore, whom he corrects it is a certain argument that he loves? Indeed, if the rod and the staff were in the hands of an enemy, I should then fear them as instruments for my evil; but being in his hands that is my Shepherd, now they are but as my own weapons put into an abler hand, that can better manage them for my good than I could do myself. Could Moses with his rod fetch water out of a rock,² and shall not God with his rod bring comfort out of trouble? Could Jacob with his staff pass over Jordan, and return enriched with herds of cattle,³ and shall not God's staff make me pass over the Jordan of this world, and bring me home with troops of joy? Shall not his rod, though it wound me, comfort me, when I know he wounds but to the end he may apply a plaister? Shall not his staff, though it beat me, comfort me, when it is but to beat the dust out of me, that am nothing but dust? But, most of all, must not his rod needs comfort me, when it is his rod that makes me lie down in green pastures? Must not his staff needs comfort me, when it his staff that keeps me right in the paths of righteousness? O sweet rod, how can I choose but kiss thee! dear staff, but embrace thee! seeing it is long⁴ of you that his green pastures and his paths of righteousness do me any good; for they would certainly do me hurt; his green pastures would pamper up my flesh too much, his paths of righteousness would puff up my spirits too much, if his rod and his staff were not used as moderators. And if you think this strange, that the paths of righteousness should puff up the spirits, remember St. Paul, to whom there was given a thorn in the flesh, lest his walking in the paths of righteousness should puff him up.⁵ But if the rod and the staff, in these senses, may not be sufficient comfort to take away all cause of fear, at least there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,⁶

¹ Heb. xii. 6: "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." ² Exod. xvii. 6. ³ Gen. xxxii. 10. ⁴ Because. ⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 7. ⁶ Isa. xi. 1.

(indeed, to David in particular a special comfort,) that will certainly be sufficient against all fear, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death; for this rod as a mountain shall fill up all valleys,¹ and as the substance shall fulfil all shadows,² and as the true life shall "swallow up death in victory."³ And is there not a staff that will do as much? the staff upon which Jacob leaned when he was a-dying?⁴ when he was indeed in the valley of the shadow of death? O my soul, having this staff of Jacob to lean upon, this rod of the stem of Jesse to be my comfort, I shall make myself unworthy of protection if I should fear any evil, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death. For why should I fear death, which is but the parting of the soul from the body, seeing I cannot come to God with them both at once, but they must first be parted one from another? My soul cannot come to the light of life if my body be not first in the shadow of death; indeed but in the shadow, for the substance of death can never take hold upon it, if my soul be gone before to take possession of the light. Oh then vouchsafe, O God, to bring my soul first, and after it my body, out of the shadow of death, into the light of life; and then I shall have cause, just cause to say, and to glory in saying, *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

But if it be doubted still how it can be that God's rod and his staff should be comforts to the godly, then mark the issue, and see what follows upon his rod and his staff: *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over* [ver. 5]; for this is a sure rule with God, that his chastening always ends in cherishing: if he strike with his rod, and perhaps breaks the head with his staff, he gives oil presently to anoint it, and to make it whole again. If he make me to keep fasting-day to-day, he allows me a feast for it to-morrow, and then my cup shall run over.

Hitherto God hath vouchsafed to be a Shepherd, and David hath been his sheep; now God will be a Conqueror,

¹ Isa. xl. 4: "Every valley shall be exalted." ² Col. ii. 17: "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ." ³ Isa. xxv. 8. ⁴ Heb. xi. 21.

and David shall be a king. Now, God as a Conqueror will bestow favours on his friends, and disgraces upon his enemies; and therefore now the scene alters: where it was before in the field, it is now within doors; and where David before spake in the third person, he speaks now in the second: *Thou* preparest a table before me; and this is to feast his friends: In the presence of mine enemies; and this is to confound his enemies. To prepare a table before him is itself a favour; but the greatness of the favour is in this, that a table is prepared before him, in the presence of his enemies; for as there is no such joy of prosperity to the godly as when their enemies see the prosperity they are in,—it being a kind of revenge that God takes upon their enemies in their behalf,—so there is no such tragedy to the wicked as to be made spectators of the prosperity of the godly, it being the greatest affront that can be to their expectation to see them advanced whom they both hated and despised. Could Haman have had a greater affliction than to see Mordecai advanced, and himself forced to be an instrument in his advancing?¹ *Videbunt quem transfixerunt*—They shall see him whom they pierced, shall be one of the miseries, and perhaps one of the greatest in hell itself.

And now is David a king, and as a king hath honour and plenty: Thou anointest my head with oil, this is his honour; My cup runneth over, this is his plenty; that where he said before, The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want; he may as justly say now, The Lord is my rewarder, I shall abound.

But is it not that in the person of David here, there is a reference to Christ himself, seeing it is all verified in him that is spoken here? He that hungered so long, till Satan thought he could have eaten stones,² hath now a table prepared before him,—a table where the godly shall sit, and eat with him in his kingdom.⁴ He that had enemies insulting over him, hath now all his enemies made his footstool;⁵ Sin and Death, Satan and his members, lie prostrate under him. He that had his head pricked with thorns,

¹ Esth. vi. 11, 12. ² Rev. i. 7: "Every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him." ³ Matt. iv. 3. ⁴ Luke xxii. 30. ⁵ Heb. x. 13.

hath now his head anointed with oil, with the oil of gladness above his fellows.¹ He that thirsted, and could get but vinegar to drink,² hath now such plenty that his cup runneth over: all power is given him both in heaven and earth.³ At least in the person of David there will be relation to all the godly: now Lazarus, that could not get so much as crumbs from Dives' table,⁴ shall have a table himself prepared before him; now Dives, that fared deliciously every day, shall be glad to stand waiting at Lazarus' table⁵ for a drop of water; that the godly may well be content to be in penury awhile, seeing they shall have a table ere long prepared before them; they may well be content to let their enemies be masters awhile, seeing they shall have them ere long to be waiters upon them; they may well be content to hang down their heads for awhile, seeing their heads ere long shall be anointed with oil; they may well be content to have hard measure for a time, seeing the time will be shortly that their cup shall run over. And now, O my soul, will not all this serve to comfort thee in this vale of misery? Art thou so besotted on things present, as to have no consideration, to make no valuation of things to come, and to come so shortly,—so shortly all, that they are put in the present tense, as if they were come already?

But if David cannot overrule thee as a king, let him at least persuade thee as a prophet; for now you shall have him a prophet and a votary; and this is his prophecy: *Surely mercy and goodness shall follow me all the days of my life*; ⁶ and this is his vow: *I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever* [ver. 6].

But is David's prophecy like to be true? will mercy and goodness follow him all the days of his life? O my soul, it was true in David; it shall be true in all the godly; for whom God loveth, he loveth to the end;⁷ and mercy and goodness shall follow them all the days of their life,—mercy to commiserate, and goodness to relieve; mercy to bear

¹ Heb. i. 9. ² John xix. 29, 30. ³ Matt. xxviii. 18. ⁴ Luke xvi. 21: "Desiring to be fed with the crumbs," etc. ⁵ Luke xvi. 24. ⁶ Auth. Vers., "Goodness and mercy." ⁷ Jer. xxxi. 3: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

with infirmities, and goodness to supply wants; mercy to be an assistant in adversity, and goodness to be a govern-ness in prosperity. Alas, O Lord, if thy mercy should not follow me, thy justice would; if thy goodness should not follow me, thy vengeance would; and then one that were no prophet might easily foretell the miserable estate I should be in, as now that mercy and goodness follow me, one that is no prophet may easily tell the happy condition I shall be in. Although this perhaps be not so much a prophecy as a faith in David, at least [it is] a prophecy which all the godly may make to themselves by faith, to be assured of the mercy and goodness of God; and not to follow them for a time, and then give over, but to follow them all the days of their life. But what! no longer than all the days of their life, and then leave them? No, my soul, but all the days of that life, that shall never leave them. Oh the comfortable doctrine of faith! far more comfortable than heathen philosophy ever knew, for that went no further than *Ante obitum nemo* [Before his death no man (should be called happy)], as though no man could be happy till his death, where by this it appears that men may be happy while they live; for if a man be then happy, when the mercy and goodness of God follow him, as certainly a greater happiness there cannot be: then seeing they surely follow the godly all the days of their life, surely a godly man is happy while he lives. But then the sureness is long¹ of the mercy, and not of the man; for it seems he would go far enough from it if mercy did not follow him; but now that he is followed by mercy and goodness, he cannot go so fast from them but they will overtake him and make him happy. O merciful God, so frame my heart that I may not fly from thy mercy, and put it to follow me; at least let it so follow me that it may overtake me, for then I shall have the happiness to be able to keep my vow, that I will dwell in thy house for ever; but rather I shall have the favour, as an effect of thy mercy, that I shall dwell in thy house for ever. For

¹ Because.

if this be a vow, it is a strange one, where all the benefit is to him that makes the vow, and none at all to whom it is made; for what is it to God whether I dwell in his house or no? such vowers God may have enough. O my soul, to vow to dwell in God's house is to vow to be his servant; and to be his servant is to serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life;¹ and though this service be no benefit to God, as indeed no more is anything I can do, for my goodness extendeth not to him, yet the vow to be his servant being well performed, will be more acceptable to him than if I should vow as Jephtha did, to sacrifice his only daughter.²

But we need not stand to justify David's vow, for it seems not so much a vow of David to God as a favour of God to David, that when his mercy hath followed him all the days of his life, he will take him afterwards to live with himself; and though his body for a time be cast out of doors, yet his soul shall presently be received into his house, there to dwell with him and his angels, not as a servant, but as a son; seeing none but sons abide in the house for ever,³ which in the person of David is no less the portion and may be as well the comfort of all the godly, and is but the expressing of that, in a higher strain, which was said at first in a lower style: *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

¹ Luke i. 74, 75.² Judg. xi. 31, 34, 35.³ John viii. 35.

The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2. When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will* I be confident. 4. One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. 5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. 6. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. 7. Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8. *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. 9. Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. 12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. 13. *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.—PSALM xxvii. (Auth. Ver.)

MEDITATIONS

UPON

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH PSALM.

LIGHT which makes all things visible was the first made of all visible things;¹ and whether God did it for our example or no, I know not, but ever since, in imitation of this manner of God's proceeding, the first thing we do when we intend to do anything is to get us light. Indeed light is not only a director, but a comforter; and nothing naturally strikes so much terror as darkness, for when we are in the dark, not only we are apt to take into our fancies all frightful objects, but we know not how to take our steps for fear of walls and thresholds. It is every one's case to have the sun for his light, but it is not every one's happiness to have God for his light; and, alas, if I should trust to the sun for light, I should be left in darkness every day, at least at night. But God is a sun that never sets;² he is light himself, he is light itself;³ and therefore it is good trusting to God for light, for so I shall be sure neither day nor night to be left in darkness.⁴ O thou great Creator of light, thou light of all creatures, vouchsafe to shine upon me, and to lighten my darkness,⁵ that neither any objects of terror may make me to tremble, nor any thresholds of error may make me to stumble, but that I may walk securely in the confidence of this, *The Lord is my light*⁶ [ver. 1]; for of what then, *of whom now, should I be afraid?*

¹ Gen. i. 3. ² Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Isa. lx. 20. ³ 1 John i. 5. ⁴ John xii. 46: "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."
⁵ 2 Sam. xxii. 29. ⁶ Ps. xxvii. 1: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

But is it enough that God be my light? what if I myself be blind? what good then will his light do me? It is true; and therefore David stays not here, but *Deus illuminatio mea*,¹ God is my enlightening too. He is both my light and my sight; my light by which to see, and my sight with which to see; my light to make walls and thresholds visible, and my sight to make me able to avoid them. If it were not for light, I should be always in the dark; if it were not for sight, I should be dark myself. No illumination without both; and never both, but only from God. There is one, indeed, who hath gotten him a name, to be called Lucifer [light-bringer],² as though it were he that brought us light, when God knows but for him we should have had no darkness. Yet he pretends to both, both to light and to enlightening; but, alas, his light is but imposture, his enlightening but illusion; for as he can transform himself into an angel of light,³ so he can transform the light itself, and make it seem light when it is indeed dark; and therefore his light can never make walls and thresholds to be truly visible, and as little can his enlightening make us able to avoid them. For this was tried in our first parents, who upon his enlightening had their eyes opened indeed, but opened to see good and evil,⁴ not to distinguish good from evil, and therefore could not enable them, cannot us, to avoid the evil. But as they that follow his light do stumble and fall at the threshold of error, so they that are led by his enlightening do run their heads against the walls of impiety: no avoiding of walls and thresholds, no shunning the snares of Satan, the illusions of this Lucifer, but only by saying, if truly saying, *Deus illuminatio mea*, God is my enlightening, and then we may safely infer, of what, of whom, should I be afraid?

Indeed, David might well say, *Deus illuminatio mea*, God is my enlightening, seeing God had enlightened him, not only to see, but to be a seer, which is a prophet; but what is this to us, who are far from any such enlightening, to see as prophets? O my soul, it is enough for us that Christ

¹ This is the Vulgate rendering of the opening words of this Psalm. ² Isa. xiv. 12.
³ 2 Cor. xi. 14. ⁴ Gen. iii. 5.

is the great seer in whose light we shall see light; ¹ and though David were of the Jews, and we be of the Gentiles, yet as Christ was the glory of his people Israel, so he is a light to lighten the Gentiles; ² and therefore *Deus illuminatio mea*—God is my enlightening, as fit for us to say as it was for David.

But doth God's enlightening serve only for a safeguard against walls and thresholds? Alas, the light of the sun and the enlightening of Nature would serve to do this, and what need we then to seek any other? O my soul, there are spiritual walls and thresholds which no sun can make us see, which Nature herself is not able to see; only God's enlightening hath the influence to do it. There is a wall of sin, the partition wall between God and us, ³ the wall that bars us from having access to God; and this wall the natural man sees not, neither can see; illumination only makes it visible. There is a threshold of pride in the heart of man, a swelling of self-love that lies in the way we are to pass, and is a cause of stumbling if not avoided; and this threshold the natural man sees not, neither can see: only God's illumination makes able to see it. And many other walls and thresholds there are which without illumination can never be seen, and not seen can never be avoided, and not avoided are cause of falling into endless perdition. And as illumination makes us to see these sights of terror, so it makes us to see also sights of comfort: it makes us see death lie dead before us, and swallowed up in victory; ⁴ it makes us see the powers of hell astonished, as not able to endure the lustre of this light; it makes us see the doors of heaven open, into which by virtue of this light we have means to enter; it makes us see him that is invisible, ⁵ God himself that is our enlightening, in whose presence is the fulness of joy for evermore; ⁶ and of whom then, of what now, should I be afraid?

These indeed be comfortable sights, but what comfort for me to see them if I be not sure I shall enjoy them? and how can I be any more sure to enjoy them than the angels that fell? ⁷ For they had illumination in a greater measure than

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 9. ² Luke ii. 32. ³ Eph. ii. 14: "The middle wall of partition."

⁴ Isa. xxv. 8. ⁵ Heb. xi. 27. ⁶ Ps. xvi. 11 ⁷ Jude 6.

I can hope to have it, and yet for all their illumination they stumbled at the threshold of pride, and ran their heads against the wall of sin, and utterly lost, alas, have lost for ever all benefit of all these comfortable sights. All this is true, and therefore David stays not here neither, but *Deus illuminatio mea, et salus mea*,—God is my enlightening, and my salvation too; and this he was not to the angels that fell: he left them at illumination, never conducted them to salvation, for if he had done this their illumination had never been turned into darkness; either they had not stumbled at all, or at least not so stumbled as to fall.¹ If God were only my illumination, I should by that light go to *Video meliora proboque* [I see and approve the better], but should presently follow it with *deteriora sequor* [I follow the worse]; but when he is my salvation too, this makes me break off at *deteriora sequor*; and where God was heard to say, *Perditio tua ex te, O Israel*,² Thy destruction is from thyself, O Israel; now to hear him say, *Ego autem salus tua*, but I am thy salvation. If my illumination reflected upon myself to make me seem bright in my own eyes, as though I had something which I had not received, then indeed I should be in the case of the angels that fell, for so did they; but now that my illumination reflects upon God, and makes me see all goodness to be originally in him,—none in myself but what he is pleased to impart or impute unto me,—now illumination becomes a step to salvation; and as they are free indeed³ whom the Spirit frees, so they are safe indeed whom God saves; and of what then, of whom now, should I be afraid?

But though God be my salvation, yet this perhaps may be only in the life to come; and if it be no more but so, I may do ill enough in this present life for all his salvation in the next; and have I not cause then to be afraid? To free thee therefore of this scruple, David stays not here neither; but, God is my salvation and *the strength of my life* too; not only of my life to come, which will be strong of itself, but of my present life, which hath no strength but in him. Or rather, seeing

¹ Rom. xi. 11: "Have they stumbled that they should fall?" ² Hosea xiii. 9: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." ³ John viii. 36: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

godliness hath the promise of both lives, both of this life and the life to come,¹ the first shall be first served ; and then, if God be the strength of my present life, there shall be in it no present weakness ; and if no weakness, there need be no fear ; and of what then, of whom now, should I be afraid ?

But though God's strength be sufficient to defend me if I had no enemies² [ver. 2], or if I were to fight but a single combat, yet can it be sufficient to preserve me when an army of enemies assault me at once ? and can I choose but fear when I know myself unable to resist ? O my soul, take heed thou be not in the number of those to whom it was said, What fear ye, O ye of little faith ?³ For what can an army do against the arm of God ? what can all might do against him that is almighty ? Have my enemies any strength but what they have from God ? and can they have any strength from him against me, when he employs his strength against them for me ? No, my soul, *though an host encamp against me, though war be made upon me*⁴ [ver. 3], yet as long as God is the strength of my life, it is neither their multitude nor their malice that can hurt me ; but rather their very malice is the means their multitude cannot hurt me, for malice hinders illumination, and makes them they cannot see their way, that when they came upon me and thought they had me sure enough, even then I was sure enough from their having ; for he that is the strength of my life had laid a block in their way, which for want of illumination they saw not, at which they stumbled and fell.

But yet it is a grievous thing to have cannibals for one's enemies ; and such my enemies seem to be : they seek not more to destroy me than devour me ; they came upon me to eat up my flesh as if I had been their shambles ; it is not enough they could kill me, but they could find in their hearts to eat me ; they are not satisfied with procuring my death, if they be not themselves actors in it ; it is not enough for them to have my blood, unless their own hands be

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 8. ² Ps. xxvii. 2 : "When the wicked, *even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*" ³ Matt. viii. 26 : "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith." ⁴ Ps. xxvii. 4 : "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear : though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

imbrued in it; indeed there is no such dainty dish to a malicious stomach as the flesh of an enemy; it goes down without chewing, and they swallow it up whole like cormorants. But though malice have a ravenous stomach, yet she hath but slow digestion; though her teeth be sharp, yet her feet are lame, at least apt to stumble; and this made well for David, for when his enemies came upon him to eat up his flesh, because they came upon the feet of malice they stumbled and fell.¹ A man may stumble, and yet not fall; but to stumble and fall withal is the proper stumbling of the wicked, and especially of the maliciously wicked; and such, it seems, was the stumbling of David's enemies, because his enemies were such; and such I doubt not shall be the stumbling of my enemies, because mine are such; and of what then, of whom now, should I be afraid?

But to the end I may have some exercise for my illumination, that it stand not idle, and may have some testimony for my salvation, that it grow not doubtful, there is *one thing I have desired of the LORD, and that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his holy temple*² [ver. 4]. This beholding of God's beauty will be a continual exercise for my illumination, and this enquiring in God's holy temple will give me assurance of my salvation.

It were very hard, if David making but one request to God, that God should deny him; for hath he not bidden us to ask, and we should have?³ and could David ask less than to ask but one thing? No, my soul, God denied it not to David, nor will deny it to thee, nor to any other that shall ask it in faith, and specially if he ask it to so good an end as David doth here, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his holy temple.

But seeing David would make but one request to God, why would he not make a greater? for, alas, what a poor

¹ Ps. xxvii. 2. ² Ps. xxvii. 4: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." (A.V.) ³ Matt. vii. 7.

request is this, to desire to dwell in God's house? and what to do? but only to see? and to see what? but only a beauty, a fading thing; at most but to enquire; and what is enquiring but only to hear news, a vain fancy? and what cause in any of these why David should make it his request to God? But mark, O my soul, what goes with it; take altogether, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his holy temple; and now tell me if there be, tell me if there can be, any greater request to be made, any greater cause to be earnest about it? For though worldly beauty be a fading thing, yet the beauty of the Lord shall continue when the world itself shall fade away; and though enquiring after news be a vain fancy, yet to enquire in God's temple is the way to learn there is no new thing under the sun,¹ and there it was that Solomon learned that all is vanity.² Indeed, this one thing that David desires is in effect that *unum necessarium*³ [one thing needful] that Christ speaks of in the Gospel, which Mary made choice of there as David doth here; and I may say it is that precious jewel which the rich merchant sold all he had to buy,⁴ and had his bargain commended by Christ himself. Oh how happy were we if we could bound our desires within the compass of things necessary; for all our misery grows from this, that our desires have no certain dwelling, but wander and range about from one object to another like vagabonds from place to place; and no help there will be for it till our desire arrive at that which is the best; for as long as there is any better to be had, the desire will never leave desiring, and where is that best to be had but in him only that is only good,⁵ in him indeed that is the only good; and seeing there can be no happiness till the desire be settled, and the desire will never be settled till we come at God, therefore no means so likely to make us happy as to dwell in God's house, for there we are sure we shall be with him; and once with him, never have desire to anything besides him.⁶

There are other houses which, in worldly considerations and to worldly minds, may seem as convenient, and perhaps

¹ Eccles. i. 9. ² Eccles. i. 2. ³ Luke x. 42. ⁴ Matt. xiii. 46. ⁵ Luke xviii. 19. ⁶ Ps. lxxiii. 25: "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

be more profitable to dwell in, than this house of God; but that which makes me so desirous to dwell here rather than anywhere else, is partly for the prospect, that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and partly for instruction, that I may enquire in his holy temple. For there is not such a prospect again in the world as this: not on the mount where Christ was showed all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them;¹ nor such another place for instruction as here: not all the schools of philosophers, not all the oracles of the heathen, in any degree to be compared with it.

And what then is this beauty of God which David is so desirous to behold? what this house of God, in which he desires to dwell? There is a beauty of God in his creatures most glorious indeed, and most worthy of beholding, but yet this needs no dwelling in God's house to see it; we may see it as well dwelling anywhere else; but there is a beauty of God in himself, a beauty which, if once we see, we shall never be willing to take our eyes off; a beauty which the more we see the more we shall see cause to desire to see it; a beauty which, without special illumination, neither the eyes of men are able to behold, nor the tongues of angels to express; and this beauty is nowhere to be seen but in God's house, and not there neither but by dwelling in it. It is not for every one that comes in as a stranger to see this beauty; they must be dwellers in it, continual and constant frequenters of it, or they are never like to be admitted to behold it. There is, indeed, in all the creatures of God, in some more eminently, a certain tincture² of this beauty, and is perhaps that which deceives us in the estimating of our happiness, because we take tincture for substance, and fix ourselves upon that which is made but only for a passage. For tinctures, though they please for a time, yet they soon wear out and decay; no solidness nor durableness but in the substance itself, and no substance of beauty but only in God: and therefore the truest happiness, indeed all true happiness, is only the beholding of this beauty. And if any man doubt of this, because seeing is but the satisfaction of one sense,

¹ Mat. iv. 8.

² A colouring, stain or dye.

and happiness gives satisfaction at least to all the senses, let him then hear what David in another place says: *Videte et gustate, quam suavis est Dominus*,—See and taste how sweet the Lord is.¹ For in this seeing, not only the tasting, but all the senses are united—at least the pleasures of all the senses are comprised; and the rather if we consider that beholding hath a pre-eminence above seeing, for where seeing may be *in transitu* [in passing] only, beholding implies a permanence, and a fixing our eyes upon it, and such is the seeing that is the essential sense of happiness.

And what then is this house of God in which David desires to dwell? Hath God any other house than heaven? and would David dwell in heaven whilst he is dwelling upon earth? Will nothing serve his turn but to ask God for impossibilities? Indeed heaven is God's throne, but heaven and earth both are full of the majesty of his glory,² and therefore God hath a house on earth too, a house dedicate to the honour of his name; and David justly makes his prayer for this house because indeed it is the house of prayer,³ and no rent paid for dwelling in it but only prayer: oh then make me able, O God, to pay thee this rent, and I shall never doubt of continuing thy tenant in this house, to behold thy beauty, and to enquire in thy holy temple.

But why should David make it a suit to God to dwell in his house, seeing God leaves the doors open, that every one may come and dwell in it that will? O my soul, it is not simply to dwell in it, but so to dwell in it that he may see God's beauty? and this cannot be seen without illumination, and no illumination but of God's donation. For indeed this dwelling is a spiritual living, a donative⁴ only in God's gift; and justly therefore David makes it his suit to have his induction,⁵ but an induction only while we live here; no perfect possession till another life, but he that seeks not his induction here must never look for possession hereafter.

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 8: "O taste and see that the LORD is good." ² Te Deum; cf. Isa. vi. 3: The whole earth is full of his glory." ³ Matt. xxi. 13. ⁴ "A donative, a largesse or benevolence bestowed upon the soldiers by the Roman emperors; it is now used for a dole, gift, or present made by a prince or nobleman. (Bailey's Dict.)" ⁵ "Induction (in law) putting a clerk in possession of his church, by leading him into it, and delivering him the keys." (Bailey's Dict.)

As to behold the beauty of God is one great benefit of dwelling in God's house, so it is another no less to enquire in his holy temple: as that beholding gives a satisfaction to our eyes, so this enquiry to our minds. When David saw the prosperity of the wicked, he was so amazed that he knew not what to make of it till he entered into God's holy temple and enquired;¹ and there he presently learned what God's meaning is in it, and why he suffers it to be so. What knowledge so necessary as the knowledge of sin? yet St. Paul confesseth he had not known what sin is but for the law;² and where is the law to be learned but enquiring in God's holy temple? and, indeed, if there be any scruple of conscience, if any doubtfulness of mind, if any difficulty of question concerning either God or ourselves, either the life present or the life to come, by enquiring in God's holy temple, it is presently cleared and resolved; for there are the oracles kept which serve to instruct, to teach, to reprove, that the man of God may be perfect in every good work.³

And amongst all the great mysteries which are learned by enquiring in God's holy temple, this is one of special comfort to me, that when I am in trouble, if his house that I dwell in be not sufficient to defend me, *He will hide me in his own pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle will he hide me; he will set me upon a rock*⁴ [ver. 5]; that one way or other he will be sure, and I may be sure, he will set me in safety.

But how can God hide me in his pavilion, which lies open to all men, and where every man may enter and find me? He will then, rather than fail, hide me in the secret of his tabernacle, which is shut against all men, and where none enters but himself. But yet his tabernacle may be burnt with fire, may be blown up with powder, blown down with wind; and what safety then in the secret of his tabernacle? He will then, if that fail, set me upon a rock,—and a rock is subject to none of these,—that so at least neither fire, nor sword, nor tempest of wind may prevail against me. Or is

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17: "When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end." ² Rom. vii. 7.
³ 2 Tim. iii. 16. ⁴ Ps. xxvii. 5: "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

it that, being once admitted to dwell in God's house, I shall have not only the protection of a servant, for his *tegere* [hiding] is *protegere* [protection], but the advancement also of a favourite to be set upon a rock, for this, as it is a safety, is no less an honour? Or is it that, lest mine enemies should think it were done for fear of them that he hides me, he will set me upon a rock, as it were in defiance; and though some may be so bold to enter the secret of his tabernacle, yet none will be so desperate to venture upon a rock, against which all they can do is but to dash themselves in pieces,¹ and to hasten their own ruin?

And now, O my soul, how canst thou doubt of thy being in safety, having the three great fortresses of God for thy defence: his general providence, which is his pavilion; then his special mercy, which is the secret of his tabernacle; then the mediation of Christ, who is the Rock, upon which, when thou art set, neither the raging of the sea nor the blustering of the wind need to fright thee; for though they roar against thee, yet they cannot hurt thee;² and of whom then, of what now, should I be afraid?

For being set upon this rock, *My head shall be lifted up above mine enemies round about me*³ [ver. 6]. Though my feet may be in the water, yet my head shall be above water;⁴ I shall be in no danger, though perhaps in some trouble; and in no trouble neither but such as while my head is lifted up I may freely laugh at and despise; and the rather for that, though my enemies be so many as to be round about me, yet they are so mean as to be all below me,—not mean in themselves, but mean through him that hath lifted up my head above them. If mine enemies were but low, it were no great matter to be higher than they; but to have my head lifted up above them who carry their heads so high as to think none their equals, this must needs be as well to me a cause of joy, as in thee, O God, an effect of power. In thy lifting up my head, I regard not so much the honour as the

¹ Matt. xxi. 44: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." ² Matt. vii. 25. ³ Ps. xxvii. 6: "And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing praises unto the LORD." ⁴ Isa. xliii. 2: "They shall not overflow thee."

relation to my enemies; for whether it be lifted up little or much, it is all one to me so long as it be above my enemies: their pitch is my proportion; for the mark of my aim is not superiority, but security; not to shine in other men's eyes, but not to have mine own put out.

There may be many causes of joy to a man in trouble, but none so great as this, to have his head lifted up above his enemies; for though to take revenge of an enemy be the delight only of a cruel nature, yet to be able to take revenge is a joy to the mildest nature, but yet a joy that must be made a sacrifice; not to grow insolent and proud upon it, but as to receive the power with humility, so to use it with mildness, and, most of all, to ascribe the glory to whom it belongs.

There was a time, O God, when thou didst lift up mine enemies' heads above me, and even then I offered thee a sacrifice too, but it was a sorrowful sacrifice—a sacrifice of sorrow; but when thou shalt lift up my head above mine enemies, I will then offer thee a joyful sacrifice, a sacrifice of joy; and it shall not be a silent joy, as though I sought to smother it, by which no glory would come unto thee, but it shall be a singing joy, and the song shall be of thy praises, as showing me to joy more in thy lifting me up than in my being lift up; more for thy glory than for my own advancement; but sing I shall for both: I shall sing to express my joy, and I shall sing to extol thy praises.

But why is David so suddenly turned from singing to crying, that he should fall so presently to say, *Hear me, O LORD, when I cry with my voice*¹ [ver. 7]? Is it that he finds God not well pleased with his singing, and therefore means to try what he can do with crying? Or is it that he thinks himself better at expressing sorrow than joy, and therefore hopes his crying may be heard, though his singing be not? Or is it, indeed, that singing and crying both are little enough to make a sacrifice to God? Alas! they are both of them too little to make an acceptable sacrifice, without God's mercy; and therefore David trusts not to them alone,

¹ Ps. xxvii. 7: "Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me."

but is glad to join God's mercy with them: Have mercy also upon me, O God, and answer me. It is a great mercy in God to hear us, but a greater mercy to answer us; and therefore to require his answer requires a more special invocation of his mercy, and the rather in hope to have a merciful answer; for, alas, if he should answer, and not in mercy, such an answer would be worse than silence.

But how can I doubt of God's answering me when I speak to him, who have myself answered him when he spake to me? For when thou saidst, *Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, I will seek* [ver. 8]. And for my heart to say it, is more than for my voice to cry it; for no crying of the voice makes so loud a sound in the ears of God as the saying of the heart, [so] that to use the terms properly, I might rather say, I cry it with my heart, and but say it with my voice.

But is this all the answer I shall have from God, that I should seek his face? Alas, O Lord, thy great favourite Moses could never obtain more than to see thy back parts,¹ and how then can I hope to see thy face? and if I cannot hope to see it, why wouldst thou have me spend time to seek it? But is it not all one, in the phrase of the law, to seek God's face, as in the phrase of the gospel to seek God's kingdom? and therefore as God saith here, *Seek ye my face*, so Christ saith there, *Seek God's kingdom*;² at least, if they be not both one, they are both sought one way, both sought by following God's commandments, for his commandments, if we follow them well, will both bring us to his kingdom, and to see his face.

Or is it not perhaps, in a plain literal sense, that to seek God's face is in our prayers and meditations to settle and fix the eyes of our minds wholly upon God, and, as it were, to look him in the face, wherein oh what infinite odds³ there is between the angels and us for magnifying of God; for they behold his face, and can see it visibly, where all that we can do towards it is only by the strength of imagination, which God knows is but weak, very weak in us,—weak in itself,

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 23.² Matt. vi. 23.³ Difference.

and weaker for want of intention; but if we could see his face as the angels do, O my soul, we should see in it, not only infinite causes for magnifying his name, but infinite sweetness for pleasing our own senses. For if the beauty of a carnal face be so admirable, so pleasing, as that no earthly thing may be compared to it, what ecstasy of admiration, what transcendency of pleasure must need be in the beauty of a spiritual face, and especially that face in which the fulness of all beauty resideth bodily!¹ And have I not cause then to seek this face? O merciful God, grant me so to seek it that I may find it;² for though this be not the place for finding it, yet this is the place for seeking it; and he that seeks it not here, he that seeks it not now, is never like to find it in another place, never like to find it hereafter.

But why am I so hasty to promise God to seek his face, as though it were in my own power to seek it at my pleasure? Alas! how can I choose but promise it, when God requires it? and how can I think, when he requires it, but that he will enable me—at least, not hinder me—to perform it? and yet I promise not performance, but will; and will I suppose I may safely promise, seeing will is present with me,³ and can never be absent from me.

But when I seek thy face, vouchsafe, O God, *not to hide thy face from me*⁴ [ver. 9]; for to what purpose should I seek it, if I cannot find it? and what hope of finding it, if thou be bent to hide it? Alas, O Lord, to bid me seek it, and then go presently and hide it from me, what were this but to mock me, as the Jews mocked Christ?—blindfold him, and strike him, and then bid him tell who struck him?⁵ and, indeed, how should I seek it if I have not light to seek it by? and what light to seek it by but the light of thy countenance?⁶ and what light of thy countenance if thou hide away thy face? To bid me to seek thy face, and then to hide thy face from me, were a kind of derision;

¹ Col. ii. 9: "All the fulness of the Godhead bodily." ² Matt. vii. 7. ³ Rom. vii. 18: "To will is present with me." ⁴ Ps. xxvii. 9: "Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." ⁵ Matt. xxvi. 67, 68. ⁶ Ps. iv. 6.

and I hope, O God, thou wilt not use me so unkindly,—set me about a work scarce possible to be done, and then take from me all possible means of doing it. Alas, O Lord, all the encouragement I have to seek it is the hope I have thou wilt not hide it. Oh, therefore, hide not thy face from me, O God; for if thou hide thy face from me, what can I think but that thou art angry? and if indeed thou be angry, yet use me at least as a servant: put me not away in thine anger; for though I have committed many heinous faults against thee, yet may I not repent and amend them all, if thou but please not to be so hasty with me? What though my sins have made thee angry, wilt thou therefore presently turn me away? will no less punishment serve to appease thy displeasure but to turn me presently out of service? mayest thou not in so doing do that in anger which thou wilt have cause perhaps to be sorry for afterwards? wilt thou not leave thyself unprovided of servants to wait upon thee? For where are any such servants to be found, that some time or other will not give thee cause to be angry? If thou entertain stars to serve thee, is there not impurity in the stars?¹ If entertain angels to serve thee, didst thou not find folly in the angels?² Hast thou not promised to consider man, that he is but dust?³ and shall anger make thee to forget that promise? Hath not mercy the highest seat in thine ark?⁴ and shall anger be able to put her from her seat? Thou hast been my helper heretofore,⁵ and why didst thou help me but because I needed thy assistance? and may I not with thy assistance now return from my evil way, if thou be pleased not to be so hasty to turn me away? By thy helping me then, thou didst express thy loving me then; and why then should I fear thou wilt now forsake me? for whom thou lovest, thou lovest to the end;⁶ not to the end, and then [it] ends, but to the end that shall never end. Shall the heathen have cause, have colour of cause, to upbraid thee with inconstancy? that whom thou helpest at one time, thou forsakest at another? Or canst thou turn me away in anger, and then help me in mercy when thou

¹ Job xiv. 15. ² Job iv. 18. ³ Ps. ciii. 14. * Exod. xxvi. 34. ⁵ 1 Sam. xvii. 12. ⁶ John xiii. 1.

hast done? Canst thou so soon change from mercy to anger, and from anger again to mercy, that we should never know in what temper to find thee? No, my soul, far be it from thee to have such thoughts; but the truth is, God's ways are not discerned, not discernible by us; they are past our finding out.¹ We know nothing at any time what it is he doeth; less why, and least of all how, he doeth it. Both the substance and the circumstance of all his actions is to us an *abyssus* [a great deep]; we know nothing of all his ways but this, that all his ways are mercy and truth;² nothing of his condition but this, that in him there is no change nor shadow of change.³

It is indeed the nature of all living creatures, though never so tender of their young ones, yet when they are grown to a ripeness of age and strength to turn them off to shift for themselves; and even a father and a mother, as tender as they are, have yet somewhat of this common nature in them⁴ [ver. 10]; for while their children are young, they lead them by the hand; but when they are grown up, they leave them to their own legs; and if they chance to fall, let them rise as they can; but God even then takes his children up, for he knows of what they are made; he knows their strength must as well be supported as their weakness be assisted; he knows they must as well be taken up when they fall as be held up when they stand; and therefore, though the tenderness of a father be great, of a mother perhaps greater, yet no comparison to be made with the tenderness of God. And seeing God is never without tenderness, why should I be ever without hope? and not hope as well to be delivered from trouble as others to be preserved in safety? O my soul, much rather; for seeing all things in this world are subject to change, is not that hope more like to succeed which hopes for a change than that which hopes for a continuance?

But seeing the way of thy tenderness is past our finding out, oh therefore do thou, O God, *teach me thy way, and*

¹ Rom. xi. 33. ² Ps. xxv. 10. ³ Jas. i. 17: "No variableness, neither shadow of turning."
⁴ Ps. xxvii. 10: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up."

lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies¹ [ver. 11] Teach me thy way: how it can stand with tenderness to thy children, to suffer them to be afflicted, when thou sufferest the wicked to live in prosperity;² to make martyrs of thy servants, when the wicked flourish and live at ease;³ how it can stand with thy tenderness to take away thy servants in the midst of their days,⁴ oftentimes in the beginning, when thou sufferest the wicked of the world to run out the full races of long lives; why thou ledest the godly in paths of temptations, when thou ledest the wicked in paths of security. But if these ways of thine be too hard for me to learn, or if thy pleasure be not to reveal them as yet, at least, O God, lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. If it were not for mine enemies, I would never make this suit unto thee, but would leave it to thee to lead me in what paths thou pleasest; but having the eyes of so many enemies upon me, if thou shouldst lead me now in a rugged path, where I might chance to stumble or fall, would not my enemies triumph at it, as at a victory? for they mark every step I take, to watch what advantage they can find against me; and if they should find me tripping never so little, I were sure to be made the anvil of their malice, to be beaten upon without either pity or compassion. But how great soever their malice be, I know they can do nothing without leave. Thou only, O God, hast an absolute power over me; my enemies none, but by thy permission; and I hope thou wilt retain thy power in thine own hands; at least, not make my enemies thy delegates. To thy will I willingly submit myself; but *deliver me not over to the will of my enemies*⁵ [ver. 12]; for thy will, when most severe, is yet with compassion; but their will, when most gentle, is always with cruelty. And I speak not this upon a bare suspicion, but I have evident proofs for what I say; for *false witnesses are risen up against me; and such as breathe out cruelty*. I desired indeed to be led in a plain path,

¹ Ps. xxvii. 11: "Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies." ² Ps. lxxiii. 3. ³ Ps. xcii. 7; cf. cxxiii. 4. ⁴ Ps. cii. 24. ⁵ Ps. xxvii. 12: "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies; for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."

to the end I might walk upright both before God and men,¹ that so I might give my enemies no cause of offence, do nothing whereof I might be justly accused; but, alas, what good hath my integrity done me? for so great is my enemies' malice against me, that when they cannot charge me truly, they accuse me falsely; and because they would not be seen in it themselves, they suborn witnesses; and because one witness would not be sufficient, many; and lest their witnesses should be apt to relent, they have gotten such as breathe out cruelty; such as make cruelty their living, and trade, I may say, in no wares but cruel. Though I have a thousand witnesses of my innocency—my own conscience, yet these witnesses will not be heard in the courts of the world. Alas, no; I know one, an innocent indeed, who had greater witnesses than these, the witnesses of his pious and wonderful and wonderful pious works; yet neither would these be taken for witnesses of his innocency; but in the courts of the world he was condemned as guilty.

O my soul, *I had* utterly *fainted* under this burden if it had not been for one thing,—*if I had not believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living*² [ver. 13]. The only hope of this hath kept me from fainting; and how could it choose, being a cordial made up of three sovereign ingredients—a hope to see, and to see the goodness of God, and the goodness of God in the land of the living?—three such ingredients that he must be one of a very faint heart whom such a cordial will not keep from fainting.

But what ingredient of comfort is a hope to see? for do I not see now as well as I am like to do hereafter? Were not our first parents' eyes opened in Paradise? and can we hope to see better than they saw there? and do not our eyes stand as open as theirs still? O my soul, the opening of their eyes, then, hath made us see the worse ever since. We see now but as in a glass,³ rather appearances of things than things themselves; we see nothing now but colours, and colours are

¹ Ps. xxv. 21: "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." ² Ps. xxvii. 13: "*I had fainted* unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." ³ 1 Cor. xiii. 12: "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now, I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

deceitful, and no trusting to them. The light I hope for is to see as I am seen; a sight not subject to either dimness or dazzling; a sight that discerneth not only colours but substances; and is not the hope of such a sight a comfortable ingredient to keep from fainting?

But yet what good is it to see goodness? for we see many good things which yet we are never the better for seeing. But is it not true here, *videte et gustate* [see and taste]?¹ for such our seeing shall be, *videbimus et gustabimus*, our seeing shall be a tasting, our tasting an enjoying; and enjoying is not properly of anything but in which there is joy; and where there is joy, must there not needs be comfort?

But yet what more goodness of God can we hope to see hereafter than now? for can there be a greater goodness of God to be seen than this, that he makes the sun to shine, the rain to fall, upon both just and unjust?² We see indeed now a great goodness of God, but we see it mingled with much badness of men, and may I not say with some badness of his too? for is there any evil in the city, and God hath not done it?³ But the goodness of God which I hope to see is a goodness like to garbled⁴ spice, without any mixture at all of refuse stuff amongst it; a goodness not mingled with either evil of men or evil to men, but pure and impermixed⁵ as God himself is. The goodness of God which we see now is a goodness in effects, but there is a goodness in God which is as the cause; not as having goodness, but as being goodness; not only as imparting itself to us, but as communicating itself with us; and this goodness we shall then see, though now we cannot. Have philosophers conceived that if virtue could be seen with the eyes, *mirabiles excitaret amores sui*, it would stir up in us a wonderful love [of herself]; and will not the goodness of God, when seen with our eyes, stir up in our hearts a wonderful joy? and is not the hope of such a joy a strong cordial to keep from fainting?

But why in the land of the living? for is not the world in which we now live the land of the living? Are there not in the water living fishes? in the air living birds? on the earth

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 8. ² Matt. v. 45. ³ Amos iii. 6. ⁴ "Garble, to cleanse from dross and dirt; commonly used of spices." (Bailey's Dict.) ⁵ Unmixed.

living trees, living beasts, living men? and what can be thought of more than these to make a land of the living? Alas! what land of the living is this in which there are more dead than living, more under ground than are above it, where the earth is fuller of graves than houses, where life lies trembling under the hand of death, and where death hath power to tyrannize over life? No, my soul, there only is the land of the living where there are none but the living; where there is a Church, not militant, but triumphant; a Church, indeed, but no churchyard, because none dead, nor none that can die; where life is not passive, nor death active; where life sits crowned, and where death is swallowed up in victory.¹ And now make up a compound of these ingredients. Take first a hope of seeing, which is enjoying; then the goodness of God, not a quality, but a substance; then the land of the living, where there is no dying; and now say if such a cordial must not needs be strong, of necessity be effectual, to keep from fainting? Oh therefore, my soul, be sure to provide thee good store of this cordial, that if at any time thou be oppressed with either multitude or malice, if at any time false witnesses be risen up against thee, if enemies at any time come upon thee to eat up thy flesh, thou mayest have this cordial in a readiness, and be able to say, Do the worst you can, I fear you not, for I believe to see the goodness of God in the land of the living. This not only will keep thee from fainting, but will fill thy spirits with ecstasy of joy, for it is grounded upon a principle of comfort delivered by St. Paul, The afflictions of this life are not worthy of the glory that shall be revealed.² And what is this glory but to see the goodness of God? and where to be revealed but in the land of the living?

ut all this yet is but the hope of a cordial, at most but a cordial of hope; but when will the cordial itself that is hoped for be had? May I not stay so long waiting for it that I may be weary with waiting and faint with weariness, and then the cordial will come too late? No, my soul, *Wait on the LORD*;

¹ Isa. xxv. 8. ² Rom. viii. 18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

be of good courage, and he shall give thee strength¹ [ver. 14]; for as none is so worthy to be waited on as God, so nothing is so worthy to be waited for as this cordial; and never fear weariness by long waiting for it, so long as thou waitest upon God for it; for God that gives power to the cordial to keep thee from fainting, will give power to thy waiting to keep it from weariness. Only be sure to have a good heart, and God will not fail to supply it with spirits. Do thou but only bring wood to the sacrifice, and God will send fire from heaven to kindle it.²

But how happens it that David should give so good counsel to others, and yet follow it so ill himself? for he confesseth of himself in another place that he is dejected and bowed down;³ and can it stand with courage to be dejected? But is it not that to be dejected is a passive infirmity, to be courageous an active virtue? and there is no contradiction to be passively weak and actively strong, both at once. Or is it not, indeed, rather that when he confesseth himself to be dejected, he looks upon his sin? and sin will deject any that hath but eyes and is able to see it; but when he counsels to be courageous, he looks upon God; and God is ready to give strength to any that hath but a heart, and is able to take it. As, therefore, I said before, so I say again, Wait on the LORD, which can never be too much taught, because never enough be learned—never be too much said, because never be enough done.

¹ Ps. xxvii. 14: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." ² 1 Kings xviii. 33—38. ³ Ps. xxxviii. 6: "I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly."

I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. 2. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. 3. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. 5. For his anger *endureth but a moment*; in his favour *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning. 6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled. 8. I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication. 9. What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? 10. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper. 11. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12. To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.—PSALM xxx.

MEDITATIONS AND DISQUISITIONS

UPON

THE THIRTIETH PSALM.

IT seems to be a course in nature for hosannas always to precede alleluias;¹ and therefore the exordiums of David's Psalms are commonly thus: Have mercy upon me, O God; hear my prayer, O Lord; rebuke me not in thine anger;² or some such form of hosanna; but in this Psalm, contrary to his custom, he makes his *exordium* [beginning] of an alleluia, *I will extol thee, O God*³ [ver. 1]. And why is this done? Is it out of devotion that he might get beforehand, and begin with God in praises, before God should begin with him in benefits? O my soul, the showers of God's blessings are so continually poured down upon us, that it is impossible we should ever get beforehand with God in alleluias. Although, therefore, he begin with an alleluia, yet it is because God hath prevented him in his hosanna. He will extol God, but it is because God hath lifted him up. God's praise, indeed, is put in the present tense, but it is because his benefit is in the preterperfect tense: *I will extol thee, O God; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.*

But if David will extol God, how will he do it? for to do it unworthily, it were better to be left undone; and who is able to extol God worthily? He will therefore, perhaps,

¹ *Hosannas*, prayers for mercy; *Hallelujahs*, ascriptions of praise. ² Ps. vi. 1, li. 1, etc. ³ Ps. xxx. 1: "I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me."

call all the creatures of God to assist him, and say, Praise the Lord, all ye his angels ; praise him, all his hosts ; praise ye him, sun and moon ; praise him, all ye stars of light : let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.¹ But if it be expected he must extol him himself, and not look for help from others, he will then extol him in his exaltation, and say, Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.² Or he will extol him in his own humility, by kneeling and falling down before him ; he will extol him in his singularity, and say, There is no other God in heaven or in earth, but only thou, O God ;³ or he will extol him in his plurality, and say, Thou, O God, art wonderful in thy being—three persons and one God, blessed for ever. And if to extol him with sayings will not serve, he will then extol him with works, that men, seeing his good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.⁴ And if neither words nor works will be sufficient, he will then extol him with his silence and his wonder, leaving that for thought which cannot be expressed, and leaving that for astonishment which cannot be conceived.

But why is it that David will thus extol God? Is it that he may return a thankfulness answerable to the benefit ; return it in the same kind, and answer it, as it were, in its own language? He will therefore extol God, which is a kind of lifting God up, because God hath lifted him up, which is a kind of extolling of him. For as our extolling of God is the highest work of our thankfulness, so God's lifting us up is the greatest benefit of his goodness. We are thankful to God, and ought to be, for his other benefits, even for casting us down ; but we use not to extol him but for lifting us up. For naturally, indeed, we are all of us desirous to be lifted up, to be set aloft, and to be high in the world ; for this pleaseth the eyes, that they may see the more ; and pleaseth the whole body, that it may the more be seen ; but this is not the lifting up that David means, but to be lifted up out of danger, and out of the reach of the arm of his enemies. O my soul, let this be thy comfort, that although thy enemies be many and great, yet they are not more thy enemies than

¹ Ps. cxlviii. 1—3 ; cl. 6. ² Ps. lvii. 5. ³ Deut. iv. 39 : "The LORD he is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath : there is none else." ⁴ Matt. v. 16.

they are God's slaves, and can go no further than the length of their chain, which is seldom so long to reach to triumphing. Satan was a bitter enemy to Job, and had certainly defeated him utterly if God had not held him short in his chain;¹ and though link after link he eked out his chain to a great length, yet he could never make it reach so far as to a triumph; for it is not properly a triumph but when *dux duci arma detrahit*—when one general disarms another; and this could never be done to Job, for he kept on his armour still,—his helmet of faith, and his breastplate of righteousness;² he never let it go off from him, that there could be no cause for Satan to triumph. Men commonly are not satisfied unless themselves can triumph over their enemies; but it is enough for me, O Lord, that thou suffer not my enemies to triumph over me, for I aim not at glory, but at safety; I might then aim at glory if I were the assailant, but now that I am only the assailed, what can I more desire than safety, and to be out of the reach of all my enemies? and such safety, without any glory, may well give contentment, seeing of all the miseries that can befall a man in this wretched world, there is none greater, none so great, as to fall into the hands of enemies, whose malice, like the fire of hell, is commonly unquenchable. Let a friend strike me, and it shall be a balm to my head;³ but to be stricken by an enemy, who can endure it? The striking of a friend is out of love, and intends amendment; but the blows of an enemy are out of malice, and tend to ruin. It troubles me not that my enemies rejoice, so their rejoicing have no relation to me. It troubled not Samson so much to have his eyes put out, as to be brought out before his enemies to be the laughingstock for them to rejoice at.⁴

But why will David speak thus: Thou hast not made my enemies to rejoice over me; as though it were God that made our enemies to rejoice over us, and not their own spitefulness and malice? Is it that permission is in God a kind of action, and therefore he may justly be said to do that which he suffers to be done? or is it that in his anger

¹ Job i. 12; ii. 6.² Eph. vi. 14—17.³ Ps. cxli. 5.⁴ Judg. xvi. 21—25.

he makes our enemies the executioners of his justice,¹ and punisheth our neglect of rejoicing in him with giving them power to rejoice over us? and so their rejoicing is not more in us his judgment, than it is in them his act and operation.

But what enemies do we talk of all this while? Worldly minds have no fear but of worldly enemies, and from such, perhaps, worldly friends may free them; but the spiritual man fears rather spiritual enemies; and who can free them from such, but only thou, O God, that art the God of spirits?² O merciful God, let not spiritual enemies have the victory over me, and I make no great reckoning of other enemies triumphing. Alas! I know that worldly enemies can never triumph over me if spiritual enemies get not first the victory.

And now, O my soul, if God have done this for me, have lifted me up above these enemies, above these enemies of both kinds, have I not a double cause to extol him for it, and to praise his name? And yet I may say I extol him not more for doing it, than for his readiness in doing it: *For I cried unto him, and he healed me*³ [ver. 2]; I no sooner cried, but he heard me; he no sooner heard me, but he healed me; my suit was no sooner made than granted; my disease as soon cured as discovered. He kept me not languishing, by drawing out his cure in length, but he applied a present remedy, and prevented⁴ hope with haste. As, therefore, I extolled him before for his love in lifting me up above my enemies, so I must extol him now for his compassion in being moved to do it for my only crying to him. I used no intercessor but my own voice, and he healed me; and for God to be moved with the cry of a wretched sinner, and so to be moved as presently to heal him, is it not a just cause to extol him, and say, O the wonderful bowels of compassion that are in God?

To be lifted up for any place is an act of power; but the lower the place is, it is the greater act of mercy; and can there be a lower place than the grave,—at least, than the grave of the soul? and for this low place was David lifted up, as ye may hear himself say: *Thou, O LORD, hast brought*

¹ Ps. xvii. 13. ² Numb. xvi. 22; xxvii. 16. ³ Ps. xxx. 2: "O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me." ⁴ Anticipated.

up my soul from the grave; thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down into the pit¹ [ver. 3]. But is not this a strange speech in David, as though there were a grave of the soul, as there is of the body? for if there be not, how then is it true that God hath brought up his soul from the grave? Is it, perhaps, that he calls it the soul, which is but the cementing of the body and life together? or that he calls it the grave of the soul, when it is in the lowest estate of vivifying the body? Whatever it be, it shows a great mercy in God, and a great power of that mercy, to raise him up that was brought so low, and to keep him from falling into the pit, that was fallen already to the pit's brink. The truth is, that as sin is the death of the soul, so continuance in sin is the grave of the soul; and in this grave of continuance did David's soul lie a long time (alas! the shortest time in this case is long), till God, by his quickening Spirit, restored him again to the life of grace, that he had just cause to say, Thou, O Lord, hast brought up my soul from the grave, and hast kept me alive, that I should not go down into the pit. Oh, how many there are that have bodies walking above-ground, when their souls are lying in the grave? that are lusty and strong in the natural life, when in the spiritual life they are dead and buried? yet so long as they lie not buried above four days,² so long as they continue not in sin so long, till it have brought the soul into an absolute corruption, there is example in Lazarus; and where there is example there is hope they may be raised again to life, and be kept from falling into the pit of perdition. And now, O my soul, though God have not lifted thee up to as high a place, yet seeing he hath lifted thee up from as low a place as he did David, hast thou not as just cause as he to say, I will extol thee, O God, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not suffered my enemies, sin and death, to triumph over me? And here I find myself so oppressed with joy, that I am not able to express it without assistance; and what assistance can I look for but from the saints of God? Oh, therefore,

¹ Ps. xxx. 3: "O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit." ² John xi. 39, 43, 44.

Sing unto the Lord, all ye saints of his ; give thanks unto him at the remembrance of his holiness [ver. 4]. It is not enough to praise him, if ye do not sing his praises ; for it must be done with cheerfulness and exultation ; and it is not enough to sing, if ye do not praise him ; for your joy must be in him and for him,—in his goodness, and for his glory.

If it were to sing of another thing, I should require the whole choir of God's creatures to join in the singing ; but now that it is to sing of God's holiness, what should profane voices do in the concert ? None but saints are fit to sing of holiness, and specially of God's holiness, but most specially with songs of holiness. Oh therefore sing to the Lord, all ye saints of his,¹ and let your songs be more of his praises than of your own thankfulness ; and let your own thankfulness not be so much for the benefits which you have received, as for the holiness with which they are bestowed ; for God gives not his benefits, as the world useth to do,² out of any corrupt affection, or with any corrupt intention, but there is a holiness in his giving as well as in his gifts ; and seeing the cherubim and seraphim do continually cry to God, Holy, holy, holy,³ you that are his saints may well afford to sing to God at the remembrance of his holiness.

But what holiness can there be in anger ? and is there not anger in God sometimes ? and will not this then be a cause rather of weeping to think of his anger, than of singing at the remembrance of his holiness ? O my soul, this need be no cause to break off the singing, *For his anger endureth but a moment*⁴ [ver. 5] ; and even anger itself is in God a holiness ; it is none of the things that are natural and permanent in God ; it is but forced upon him by the violence of sin ; and as forced as it is, it stays not with him ; it is but as a wind that passeth ; *dum oritur moritur*,—it dies in the birth. Nothing lives, and is permanent in God, but only his favour and his love ; and therefore, *Though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.* And

¹ Ps. xxx. 4 : " Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." ² John xiv. 27. ³ Te Deum ; cf. Isa. vi. 3 ; Rev. iv. 8. ⁴ Ps. xxx. 5 : " For his anger endureth but a moment ; in his favour is life : weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

seeing our life is of this condition, that heaviness sometimes must as well be had as joy, it is happy for us they are so disposed that heaviness comes but in the evening, when we may sleep it out, and when our senses are apt to be tied up from feeling it; but joy cometh in the morning, when all our senses are waking to entertain it. What is the evening but the end of the day? and what is the evening of our life but the end of our days? and in this evening indeed there is commonly heaviness,—weeping for parting of friends that have lived together; but this heaviness is removed as soon as morning comes; for what is the morning but when the sun riseth again? and what is our morning but when we shall rise again? and as when this morning comes there will be a day that shall have no more evening,¹ so when this joy comes all tears shall be wiped from our eyes,² and there shall be no more weeping.³ Indeed, all our great joys have ever come in the morning: it was a joy that came in the morning at the birth of Christ; it was a joy that came in the morning at the resurrection of Christ;⁴ it was a joy that came in the morning at the descending of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles;⁵ and these joys were then so great that they have made us feasts ever since (our Christmas, our Easter, and our Whitsuntide); yet these joys had their heaviness preceding: the joy of Christ's birth had the heaviness of his mother's flight;⁶ the joy of Christ's resurrection had the heaviness for his passion; the joy of the descending of the Holy Ghost, the heaviness for Christ's departing; but these heavinesses were so presently followed with joys that it hath made this aphorism⁷ be found true still, Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. And now, O my soul, what need it trouble thee to have heaviness in the evening, so long as thou art sure to have joy in the morning? what need it trouble thee to be weeping for a time, when thou art sure of rejoicing when time shall be no more?

Hitherto I have been busy about singing God's praises for lifting me up, which hath been his work; now I must

¹ Rev. xxi. 25, xxii. 5. ² Rev. vii. 17. ³ Rev. xxi. 4. ⁴ Luke xxiv. 1.
⁵ Acts ii. 1—4, 15. ⁶ Query slight. ⁷ Aphorism, a general maxim or rule.

leave singing, and come to saying, to speak of my own work: *And I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved* [ver. 6], but, alas, if my singing were no better than my saying, it had been better for me to have held my peace in both, for what a saying is this to say, I shall never be moved? Is there any mountain so strong² [ver. 7] that it cannot be moved? and if no mountain, how any man? but this is the insolent language of prosperity, to give over crying to God, and fall a-boasting of itself. Alas! prosperity hath neither good tongue nor good eyes: as it made David say he should never be moved, so it made him think it enough that God by his favour had *made his mountain strong*; but as for the maintaining it strong, to arrogate that to himself, when God knows, if once we leave depending upon God, and arrogate anything to ourselves, our mountain will soon be turned into a valley,³ and our strength will go from us, as it did from Samson when his hair was cut off;⁴ and this makes David say now, *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*; for as it is the favour of God that makes our mountain strong, and our mountain being strong we are kept from trouble, so it is the hiding of God's face that makes our mountain weak; and our mountain being weak we are presently troubled; but rather, indeed, if God do not as well maintain our mountain strong as make it strong, we shall quickly bring our mountain to a molehill, we shall quickly either fall ourselves from our mountain, or have our mountain to fall upon us.

We see the earth hath no comfort but in the sun; and therefore if the sun be removed, the earth presently puts on blacks, is pinched with cold, and covered with darkness. That which the sun is to the earth, thy face, O God, is to me; and what marvel then, when thou hidest thy face, if I be left as a disconsolate earth in trouble and mourning? God useth not to hide his face from any that depend upon him, and therefore as long as I put my trust and confidence

¹ Ps. xxx. 6: "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved." ² Ps. xxx. 7: "LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." ³ Isa. xl. 4: "Every mountain and hill shall be made low." ⁴ Judg. xvi. 19.

in him, he was to me as a strong mountain; I enjoyed his favour and the light of his countenance; but as soon as I left depending upon him, and trusted to my own strength, my mountain was suddenly turned into a valley, and I was left, alas, in a vale of misery. Oh therefore, my soul, notwithstanding any prosperity whatsoever, do thou depend upon God for thy mountain, both for making it strong and for maintaining it strong, and never be moved to say thou shalt never be moved; for to be immovable is a privilege of God himself, and of God alone, and is not communicable to any creature. It is a false saying in any estate to say, I shall never be moved; but in prosperity, falsest of all; for he that is in prosperity stands in a slippery place,¹ and such a place is not capable of stability. What is prosperity but an earthly thing? and can anything that is earthly be secure from moving when the body of the earth itself is moved? O my soul, the consideration of this, alas! the feeling of this, hath made me leave both singing and saying, and fall to my crying again: *I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication* [ver. 8]. Indeed, crying is the voice of a suppliant, and the fittest voice for a supplication; but yet why should David tell God of his crying to him, and say, I cried to thee, O Lord, as though God knew it not, without his telling it? No doubt, God knew of his crying, for how else did he hear it? and of his supplication, for how else could he grant it? and therefore it seems he tells it not so much to God as to us, that we may take notice with what sacrifices God is pleased; for as there are divers sacrifices that are acceptable to God, so each of them, in the due time, is the fittest and most acceptable: singing fittest after a benefit obtained, and crying fittest for obtaining a benefit; alleluias fittest when we are in triumph, hosannas fittest when we are in distress. And therefore, being at the present in peril of his life, and delivered as it were into the hands of death, the sacrifice he offers now is a supplication, which yet seems not so much a supplication as an expostulation: *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit?*

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 3, 18.

Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? [ver. 9.] If I go down into the pit, shall I not be turned into dust? and is dust good for anything but to be food for the serpent?¹ May I not do thee better service above ground than under it? Alas, I shall be there but in the company of worms²—poor silly things that are not capable of knowing thee. I am here in the society of reasonable creatures, with whom I may join in extolling thy praises. Hast thou not breathed into me the breath of life,³ and wilt thou draw in thy breath so quickly again, and leave me but dust, as thou foundest me at first? Though the service I can do thee be not great, yet it is more than dust can do. Hath dust a tongue, or a voice, or any instruments of life for the declaring of thy truth? and why then wilt thou make a divorce of parts which thou hast joined together of purpose for that purpose? If I desired life for any end of my own, thou hadst just cause then to make an end of my life; but now that I desire it to do thee service, why wilt thou diminish the number of thy servants, and not leave enough for the service thou hast to do? Can any number be sufficient to praise thee? Can there ever be mouths enough to declare thy truth? and may not I make one—a sinful one I know, but yet one in the number, if thou but please to spare me for descending into the pit? But what pit? I mean not the pit where the apostate angels are: I know they descended not, but fell; and I know the pit they fell into is a pit of blasphemy: the pit I fear descending into is but a pit of silence, and yet in one thing is worse than theirs; for they in their pit retain their substance still, but I in this shall lose my very being; at least, the *quantitas continua* [coherent mass] of my body shall be turned into the *quantitas discreta* [scattered mass] of dust; and the frame compacted of all the elements dissolved, I shall remain nothing but as it were a few crumbs of earth, and what can earth do when it is not assisted with fire and water? Oh therefore *Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper [ver. 10]*; for if thou lend me not thine ear, how can I hope

¹ Gen. iii. 14; Isa. lxx. 25.² Isa. xiv. 11.³ Gen. ii. 7.

thou wilt show me mercy? and if thou have not mercy upon me, how can I hope thou wilt be my helper? Hear me, O God, while I am in a place where I may be heard, for if once I be descended into the pit, I shall quite then be out of all hearing. Have mercy upon me while I am capable of mercy; for if once I be turned into dust, what mercy can I look for? Be thou my helper, O God, now that I am in a state to be helped; for if my blood in which my life consists be once shed, what good then will thy help do me? I place God's mercy in the midst here because it must serve to both the other—both to make God to hear me, and to make him to help me; and God's mercy can do both; it can make him to hear me though I were silent, and can make him to help me though I were dust. But though God's mercy can do it, am I sure it will do it? O my soul, his mercy hath done it already; for it is the work of his mercy that he hath *turned my mourning into dancing*, that he hath *put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness*¹ [ver. 11]. O wonderful conversion! the very same miracle, I may say, that Christ wrought at the marriage in Cana; for to turn mourning into dancing, what is it but to turn water into wine?² To have turned my mourning but into comfort had been a great work and a great favour; but to turn my mourning into dancing, the extremity of sorrow into extremity of joy, who could do this but thou only, O God, with whom, as no miracles are wonders, so no extremities are limits? Mourning is not properly but for one that is dead; and, indeed, so near being dead was I that I might well be said to mourn for my own death: not unlike the swan, if it be true that she sings her own elegy; and now to have my mourning turned into dancing, the drooping act for death be turned into the most lively act of life, what is it but the miracle, as it were, of resurrection and ascension both at once? at least from the lowest stair³ of misery to be raised to the highest of happiness; and not *gradatim*, by degrees and steps, but *per saltum* [by a bound], by a motion more swift than the fiery chariot that carried up Elijah into

¹ Ps. xxx. 11: "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." ² John ii. 8, 9. ³ Degree.

heaven;¹ and so the change not more wonderful than the suddenness,—mourning turned into dancing, a wonderful change; and done, as it were, in the turning of a hand, as wonderful a suddenness.

And now, to make me fit for dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; for indeed, if I had kept on my sackcloth still, I should have made but a heavy dancer; but now that my sackcloth is off, and I am girded with gladness, I shall leap as light as Abraham did to see thy day.²

I put on sackcloth when I was a mourner, but now that I am to be a dancer, I am girded with gladness; and if I mourned before to think of God's anger, may I not justly dance now, to think of his favour? If I put on sackcloth before, as sorrowing for my sin, may I not justly now be girded with gladness, as rejoicing in my Saviour? For though it be God's mercy that hath done this for me, yet it is his mercy in Christ my Saviour, without whom his mercy alone would never have done it. He would never have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness, but for his sake, and through his means, that was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.³ My sackcloth was but a loose garment about me, which might easily be put off at pleasure; but my gladness is girt about me to be fast and sure, and cannot leave me though it would; at least, none shall be able to take it from me.

And now, though this be spoken here in the case of David, yet it may be conceived as in type for all the godly: if they mourn and lie in sackcloth now, yet they shall ere long be girded with gladness, and dance for joy. But what dancing? Not like that of Herodias' daughter, for which Herod allowed her to ask half his kingdom;⁴ but like that of David before the ark,⁵ for which God, without asking, will give us a whole kingdom. And when shall the time be? Alas! it cannot be long, for they shall not go out of Egypt into Canaan, as the old Israelites did, by the tedious

¹ 2 Kings ii. 11. ² John viii. 56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day." Vulg., "*exultavit*," leaped for joy. ³ Ps. xlv. 7; Heb. i. 9. ⁴ Mark vi. 22, 23. ⁵ 2 Sam. vi. 4.

passages of a troublesome wilderness,¹ but their mourning shall be turned into dancing, a conversion as sudden as when Moses' leprous hand was turned to be sound again, by putting it only in his bosom.²

But to what end is it that God hath done this for me? It may be thought, because he hath turned my mourning into dancing, and hath girded me with gladness, that he hath done it to this end, that I might live in jollity, and spend my time with Belshazzar³ in revelling and feasting; but there is no such matter; he hath done it *to this end, that my glory may sing praise unto him, and not be silent*⁴ [ver. 12]; to this end, that not only I may praise him, but may sing his praises, and not only that I, but that my glory may sing them; and, alas, what glory have I? doth not all glory belong to God? Indeed so it is; my glory then sings his praises when I ascribe to him all praise and glory; my glory then sings his praises when I praise him with all I have to glory in, with all the faculties and powers of my soul and body, those especially in which I was made after his image, for this is my glory.

If this, then, be the end that God intends, shall I be so ungrateful to cross his intentions? if he have given me a tongue and a voice to serve him, shall I hold my peace, and be silent in his service? if he have turned my mourning into dancing, shall I be sullen, and slow to sing his praises? Alas! my dancing can never be kindly⁵ without music; and what music so fit for it, as singing? and what singing so fit as to the ditty of his prayers? O my soul, seeing God hath procured thee liberty to dance, thou mayest well afford to find the music; and yet neither my dancing shall hearken to the music, nor my singing shall look toward the dancing, but my singing and my dancing both shall be addressed and directed to God alone. Shall my heart be so set upon my joy as to make me forget the author of my joy? No, O God; my joy hath so sure a foundation,⁶ that I can never be unmindful of the founder: I will give thanks

¹ Exod. xiii. 18. ² Exod. iv. 7. ³ Dan. v. 1-4. ⁴ Ps. xxx. 12; "To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever" ⁵ Natural. ⁶ Isa. xxviii. 16.

to thee, O Lord my God, for ever. Not for a time which will cease ; not as long as the sun and moon endure,¹ which shall not always endure ; not as long as I have breath in my body ; no, my soul, but as long as thou thyself hast being,² which being breathed into me by God, shall never cease ; shall always endure ; shall be for ever.

When I extolled God, I had relation to his omnipotence ; when I sung his praises, to his mercy ; and now that I give him thanks for ever, to his eternity ; that now I may conclude, and say, O almighty, most merciful, and ever-living God, to thee be ascribed all honour, praise, and glory, world without end.

¹ Ps. lxxii. 5.

² Ps. civ. 33 ; cxlvi. 2.

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I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually be in my mouth. 2. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the bumble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad. 3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. 6. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8. O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him. 9. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him. 10. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*. 11. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12. What man *is he that* desireth life, and loveth *many* days, that he may see good? 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. 15. The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry. 16. The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17. *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18. The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19. Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.—
PSALM xxxiv. (Auth. Ver.)

MEDITATIONS

UPON THE

THIRTY-FOURTH PSALM OF DAVID.

A LAS! what a vow is this that David makes here¹ [ver. 1], a vow which he is sure beforehand he cannot keep; for is it possible for any man to *bless God at all times*? Is there not a time of pain and misery, in which Job's wife persuaded him to curse God and die?² And can cursing of God stand with blessing of God? O my soul, I take not my measure of blessing God from the last of that wicked woman. It is not pain, it is not misery, it is not extremity of pain or misery, that shall make me to break my vow in blessing of God; but if it be thought so great a matter to bless God in misery, I will stretch my vow yet further, for I will bless him for misery; and I may truly say, if it were not for pain and misery, I should want one special motive for blessing of God.

But yet there is a time of sleep which is a tribute due to nature; and is it possible to pay the tribute of sleep to nature, and the tribute of blessing to God, both at once? If then sleep be of necessity so oftentimes, how can blessing of God be performed at all times? O my soul, when our waking is terminated with blessing of God, that blessing is in force till we wake again; for as in what place the tree falleth, there it lieth;³ so in what state the soul goes to rest, in that state it resteth. If my soul say to God, I will

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 1: "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." ² Job ii. 9. ³ Eccles. xi. 3.

lay me down to sleep, for it is thou, Lord, only that sustainest me,¹ my soul shall have it returned from God. Thus the Lord giveth his beloved sleep.²

But if thus, perhaps, be made good the continuance of blessing God, yet in what consists the work of blessing him? Is it only in thought, or only in a good intention? No, my soul; his praise shall continually be in my mouth; for though the heart indeed be the fountain of blessing him, yet out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;³ and therefore it shall not be cloistered up in the cells of silence, but it shall have vent, and be brought into the light, that if it be not said that men seeing my good works, it may at least be said that men hearing my good words, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.⁴ But do I not by this fall again upon my old difficulty? for if it seemed impossible before to bless God at all times, may it not justly seem as impossible now, that his praise should *continually be in my mouth*? It may perhaps be true of the angels, in whose mouths we know of nothing there is continually; but Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;⁵ but to be verified of the mouths of men seems a thing impossible, for is there not a necessity of speaking many things besides God's praises? Yet nothing must be spoken but either his praise or to his praise, or else we break our vow. And how, then, is this riddle to be expounded? Is it not as St. Paul expounds it: Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do else, let all be done to the praise and glory of God.⁶ And if all we do may be done to the praise of God, then certainly all we speak may be spoken to the praise of God; and indeed, seeing he never ceaseth to send forth continually his blessings, with what reason can we cease to set forth continually his praises?

But when I make this vow to bless God at all times, I make it not presuming upon any ability in myself: alas, I know my own weakness, and how unready I am to any

¹ Ps. iii. 5: "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the LORD sustained me."
² Ps. cxxvii. 2. ³ Matt. xii. 34. ⁴ Matt. v. 16. ⁵ Te Deum; cf. Rev. iv. 8.
⁶ 1 Cor. x. 31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

goodness; *but my soul maketh her boast in the Lord*¹ [ver. 2]. My confidence is that he who hath given me the resolution to will it, will give me also the power to perform it; that he who hath begun the work will also finish it;² and being so good an architect as he is, will not lay a foundation, but will as well also set on the roof. If I should boast in myself, I should do wrong to God; but if I boast not in God, I do wrong to myself: seeing God is a strength to none but to them that make him their strength; and none make him their strength but they that make their boast of him. It is a hard matter to bring boasting and humility to meet together in one subject, between which there is so natural an antipathy: yet here it is done,—for this I may say is the humble boasting, where a vain man may glory without vain-glory, where a weak agent may presume without presumption; not like the boasting of the Pharisee, so hateful in the eyes of God, so offensive in the ears of the humble:³ for the *humble can hear this boasting, and be glad*, which they would never do if it were not conformable to the rules of humility. Can any boasting be greater than to say, I can do all things? yet in this boasting there is humility, when I add, In him that comforteth me;⁴ for though God like not of boasting, yet he likes of this boasting, which arrogates nothing to ourselves, but ascribes all to him: and seeing my soul boasteth herself of God, I doubt not but as the humble hear it, and be glad, so God sees it, and is pleased, and accepts my boasting as a sacrifice of humility.

But to what end is it that my boasting tends? Is it to set forth my own worthiness, and to vaunt of my abilities? Is it to tread in the steps of Lucifer,⁵ or to walk in the way of the Pharisee?⁶ God forbid; the humble then would not be glad to hear my boasting. No, my soul, it is to magnify the Lord: oh, therefore, *magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together* [ver. 3]; for, alas, what am I to magnify his name myself alone, if I have not

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 2: "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." ² Phil. i. 6. ³ Luke xviii. 11. ⁴ Phil. iv. 13. ⁵ Isa. xiv. 12. ⁶ Luke xviii. 11.

company to help me? All I can do, and all the humble can do, is but to say, Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name give the glory,¹ which is rather a vilifying of ourselves than a magnifying of him. They must be creatures of a better metal that can serve, and yet cannot serve, to magnify him as they should: and it is not the work of a few; all the millions of millions, in heaven and earth, have enough to do, and more than enough, to exalt his name. Oh therefore, ye blessed spirits of heaven, do you magnify the Lord;² but take me with you in your company, that though I add nothing to the weight of the work, yet I may add one to the number of the workmen in magnifying his name. We that are dwellers on the earth³ can exalt his name no higher than the heavens; and there you that be inhabitants of heaven must take it, and exalt it higher; and so between us all we shall make a shift to exalt him to his true elevation, for his glory is above the heavens.⁴ But if, perhaps, you think scorn of our company, as being men of polluted lips,⁵ and therefore not worthy to be of your concert, yet the humble will make a concert by themselves, and will not, indeed cannot be, kept from exalting his name, for our humility is his exaltation; and then we raise him up to the height of his throne when we cast ourselves down as low as his footstool; that it is but a diverse expressing of the same thing, in substance, whether we say, Let us exalt the name of the Lord; or, Let us fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.⁶

David is not wont to use exclamations but upon special occasion. If he use one here, and say, O magnify the Lord, we may know that to magnify his name is a thing of great importance: indeed, so great, that all things besides it—at least, all things without it—are nothing but vanity.⁷ Oh, then, all you that be exalted in heaven, and all you that be humble in the earth,—and lest any be left out where all are too few, oh all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord; praise him, and magnify him for ever: for *I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears*

¹ Ps. cxv. 1. ² Ps. cxlviii. 2. ³ Ps. cxlviii. 7, 11—13. ⁴ Ps. cxliii. 4.
⁵ Isa. vi. 5. ⁶ Ps. xciv. 6. ⁷ Eccles. i. 2.

[ver. 4]. To seek, and upon seeking to be heard, is a great favour; but to be heard, and upon hearing to be delivered from all fears, is a favour that deserves magnifying in the highest degree.

But why is it that I sought him? Is it not because I had lost him before? And why should I seek to get him again, and would not keep him when I had him? O my soul, *Carendo magis quam fruendo*—We know the goodness of things more by wanting them than by enjoying them; though I could not see what happiness it was to have him, yet I see what misery it is to want him; and yet in this I account myself happy that I have sought him while he was within hearing; for, alas, if I had stayed from seeking him till he had been out of hearing, what hope could I have had of ever recovering him?

But oh the tender mercies of God, that hath not suffered me to put off my seeking him so long; for, O my soul, it is no less his mercy that I seek him than that he hears me; my desire is not more to have him than his to be had, for how else could he have heard me as soon as I sought him, but that he stood listening, as it were, when I would seek him? And he heard me not as one that were indifferent whether he heard me or no, but he gave me audience with no less intention to grant my suit than attention to know it; for hear the success of my seeking him, see the fruit of his hearing me: he delivered me from all my fears. To have delivered me from all my troubles had been a great favour, but a far greater to deliver me from all my fears; for where that would have freed me from present evil, this secures me from evil to come; that now I enjoy not only tranquillity, but security, a privilege only of the godly. The wicked may be free from trouble, but can they be free from fear? No; God knows, though they be not in trouble like other men,¹ yet they live in more fear than other men. Guiltiness of mind, or mind of the world, never suffers them to be secure: though they be free sometimes from the fit of an ague, yet they are never without a grudging; and (if I

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 5.

may use the expression of poets) though they feel not always the whip of Tisiphone,¹ yet they feel always her terrors; and seeing the Lord hath done this for me, hath delivered me from all my fears, have I not cause, just cause to magnify him and exalt his name?

But is God's mercy confined only to me, and not extended as well to others? Yes, my soul, *Deus omnibus idem* [God is the same to all]; God is good to all, his mercy is over all his works;² not only over them as being above them all, but over them as extended to them all, for other as well as I *looked unto him, and were lightened*³ [ver. 5]. But should it not be rather said, God looked to them, and they were lightened, than to say, They looked to God, and were lightened? For God is light,⁴ and when the light looks to us we are sure to be lightened; but we that are [in] darkness may look to the light, and yet continue in darkness still; but is it not that the influence of God's favour descends upon the godly in a kind of correspondence to their service: if they cry, they shall be heard;⁵ if they mourn, they shall be comforted;⁶ if they humble themselves, they shall be exalted;⁷ so here, because they looked to God, they were lightened. Indeed light is the proper inheritance of the godly,⁸ as being the children of light,⁹ which though they cannot deserve, yet they may expect; and have they not reason then to look to him in whom it is, and from whom it must come? They little deserve to be lightened that will not look to him that is their light: if it may be had for a look, and they will not do that, they worthily deserve to be kept in darkness. It is true all would be lightened, but all take not the right course; they look not the right way. There are some that look to the stars to be lightened,¹⁰ because the stars indeed are glorious bodies, and give light to the world; and these are such as attribute all to chance and fortune; and there are some, and these the worst some, that look to Lucifer to be lightened,¹¹ because they think he bears not his name for

¹ One of the Furies, avengers of crime. ² Ps. cxlv. 9. ³ Ps. xxxiv. 5: "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." ⁴ 1 John i. 5. ⁵ Ps. cxlv. 18. ⁶ Matt. v. 4. ⁷ Matt. xxiii. 12. ⁸ Ps. xcvi. 11. ⁹ Eph. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 5. ¹⁰ Astrologers. ¹¹ They that consult familiar spirits.

nought, and these are such as light them candles of impiety, and by impiety; but these are delusions and impostures; the way to be truly lightened indeed is to look to God, for he is the Father of lights,¹ and as there is nothing with him, so there comes nothing from him, but only light. O then, my soul, look to God, and he will lighten thee; look to him with the eye of faith, and the light of his countenance shall shine upon thee.

But though the children of the world be wiser in their generation than the children of light,² yet in this the godly are the wiser, for they looked to God and were lightened, and *their faces were not ashamed*. But may we not say then, the more shame for them? for is it not true which is said, that nothing belongs to us but confusion and shame of face?³ may we not be ashamed to show our faces to God, being so foul and filthy as they are, seeing he endures nothing that is unclean? O my soul, as they that looked to the brazen serpent were presently healed,⁴ so they that look to God are presently lightened, for though looking to the material sun be a cause to stain and tan the face, yet looking to the Sun of Righteousness⁵ is a means to cleanse it and make it amiable; and why then should they be ashamed? Is it any shame to show our sores to our physician, or any shame to show our faults to our confessor? No more is it any shame to show our faces to God, though never so foul and so full of stains, seeing he is the true Physician that only can cure us; he the true Confessor that only can absolve us.

But who were they that are lightened? Perhaps *Pauci quos æquus amavit* [Some few whom the just (Jupiter) has loved], some few that were in his favour; perhaps rich men that could offer him hecatombs, and plentiful sacrifices. No, my soul, *The poor man cried, and he heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles*⁶ [ver. 6]; for God is no accepter of persons; he neither regards the legs of the strong, nor the faces of the beautiful, nor the wealth of the rich; but who-

¹ Jas. i. 17. ² Luke xvi. 8. ³ Dan. ix. 7, 8. ⁴ Numb. xxi. 9. ⁵ Mal. iv. 2. ⁶ Ps. xxxiv. 6: "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

soever they be that look to him and fear him, they are sure to taste of his mercy and goodness.

But though the poor man cried, are we sure he cried to God? He might cry out of sense of his misery, and what were this to move God to hear? O my soul, any crying of the godly is a music with which God is pleased, or at least is moved. If it be a crying out of sense of misery, God is moved with it in his mercy; if a crying out of devotion, God is pleased with it in his justice. O then, my soul, rather never cry than not cry to God, for by crying to him thou gettest, I may say, two strings to thy bow, both his mercy and his justice; and were it not folly to leave out one where thou mayest have both? But though we know not what the poor man's crying was, yet we see what God's hearing was, for, hearing him, he saved him from all his troubles; and who would not cry, to be so heard? The world may think it a strange course in the poor man to cry to God to deliver him from his troubles, being so far off from him; but how far was he from him when he heard him? If he were so near to him that he might hear him, he could not be so far from him but he might help him. O my soul, let the world think their pleasure, let them study, and plot, and cast about how to bring their purposes to pass; do thou cry to God to deliver thee from thy troubles; for if thou cry, thou mayest be sure he will hear thee; and if he hear, thou needest not doubt but he will help thee. But yet mistake not the meaning when it is said that God saved him from all his troubles; as though, because he was a poor man, that therefore he was presently made rich; or if he were in pain, that he had presently ease; for God goes not always the ordinary way of physicians, to cure cold diseases with hot medicines: his ways of deliverance are oftentimes spiritual; and so Job might be said to be delivered from all his troubles when God gave him patience to endure his troubles; but specially Lazarus might be said to be delivered from his troubles when he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.¹

¹ Luke xvi. 22.

And here it falls out fitly to mention angels: for *the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them* [ver. 7]. We little think we have a continual guard about us, and less we think that we have a whole camp for our guard, but least of all that it is a camp of angels. Oh how safe should we think ourselves if this were so! O my soul, this is so, and yet we think ourselves not safe enough; and may it not then be justly said, What doubt ye of, O ye of little faith? ¹ But how can we think there be angels to guard us when we scarce think there be any angels? for if there be, they must be creatures of God, and then certainly creatures of a most excellent nature; and would Moses then have left them out in his catalogue of creatures where he reckons them all up? ² Indeed for this very reason, because they are creatures of a most excellent nature, hath Moses left them out; for he speaks but of material creatures in this material world, of which number the angels are none. But we may think, perhaps, there are none because we can see none, as though we can see a thing that is invisible: shall we therefore think we have no souls because we cannot see our souls? We live now by faith, ³ and not by sight, and therefore can neither see souls nor angels; we shall then see both, when we shall live by sight, and not by faith. Alas! if we believe no more than we see, we seem not to live by faith neither, for faith believes that which it cannot see. Oh, therefore, my soul, to make it appear thou livest, and that thou livest by faith, let this be an article of thy creed, that the angels encamp and pitch their tents about thee; that if at any time thou be assaulted, if assaulted by enemies, if by an army of enemies, thou mayest have recourse to the confidence of this guard, and never tremble for any alarm, seeing there are more with us than are against us.

But how can the godly think they have a guard about them, when it is for princes only to have a guard, and the godly for the most part are but private men? O my soul, this is a guard that attends no less the poorest man than the greatest prince, and attends him with as much carefulness as if he were a prince.

¹ Matt. viii. 26; xiv. 31.² Gen. i., ii.; cf. Exod. xx. 11.³ Rom. i. 17.

But if there be angels to attend the godly, why do they not defend them? why do they suffer them to be so molested, so afflicted as they are? for who are in such troubles, who groan under such afflictions as the godly? And would this be so if that were so? Would they be so oppressed if they had angels to relieve them? O my soul, thou little considerest the infinite benefits that the godly receive by the ministry of angels. If perhaps they suffer troubles of the body, do they not escape far greater of the soul? If they endure perhaps some momentary afflictions, do they not avoid afflictions that would be everlasting? Is there not an army of malignant spirits to assault them, and could they be safe from tearing in pieces if there were not a camp of angels to assist them? But though the angels be a guard to the whole man, both body and soul, yet being creatures spiritual and invisible, they are chiefly a guard to the invisible and spiritual part, which is the soul. The body they know must go to the earth, and therefore, though a part, is the least part of their care: it is the soul they chiefly wait upon, because it is the soul they chiefly wait for; for they stand waiting for the soul when it shall leave the body, that they may take it and carry it into Abraham's bosom;¹ for till then they break not up their camp.

And now, O my soul, seeing the angels are so beneficial and so good unto us, *Oh taste and see how good the Lord is*² [ver. 8]; for by the goodness we find in the angels, we may take a taste of the goodness that is in God. If it be a great goodness in the angels to encamp about us, how great is his goodness that gives it them in charge? for the angels would not do it if God did not command them; alas, they could not do it if God did not enable them. Oh, then, taste and see how good the Lord is; not how good the angels are, though they be good, and exceeding good in their kind as ministers; yet what is this to the goodness of God, who is the fountain of goodness to the angels themselves?

Oh, then, taste and see how good the Lord is; for taste

¹ Luke xvi. 22. ² Ps. xxxiv. 8: "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

him we may, but we can but taste him while we live here : we shall not have a full comprehension of him till we come to see as we are seen, when we shall need no more encamping of angels round about us.

Oh, then, taste and see how good the Lord is. But how can we taste him that is not bodily? how see him that is not visible? Not him, indeed, but his goodness; and not his goodness neither in itself, but in its effects; and not in its effects neither, as they shall be, but as they are, which, God knows, is but a small part of that they shall be.

Oh, then, taste and see how good the Lord is. If you would but taste him, you would never take pleasure in other meat; if you would but see him, you would never delight in other object. O my soul, if thou couldst but taste the sweetness, if but see the goodness that is in God, it would make thee fall into a greater ecstasy than that of St. Peter at the sight of Christ's glory in the Mount;¹ at least, it would wean thee from all the pleasures that the taste or the sight can minister to thee in this vain world; for, alas, what are the pleasures of the taste to the sweetness that is in God, but as bitter aloes to the sweetest honey? What are the delights that pass by the senses to the delight in God that passeth all understanding? May I not justly say now, *Blessed is the man that trusteth in him*; for he that trusteth in God, and he only, is like to be admitted to taste the sweetness and to see the goodness that is in God, which only are the things that can make us blessed. What is it to trust in God but to depend wholly upon him, and to put all our confidence in him? To trust in the world, is to lean upon a broken reed; to trust in ourselves, is to lean upon a shadow: only to trust in God is the true *terra firma* [firm earth] where the angels pitch their tents, and where, if we fix ourselves, the gates of hell can never prevail against us.² What preserved Jonah in the whale's belly,³ what Daniel in the lions' den,⁴ but only their trust in God? O then, my soul, do thou also trust in God, and he will be the same God to thee, the same safeguard in thy dangers, as he was to

¹ Luke ix. 32, 33.² Matt. xvi. 13.³ Jonah i. 17.⁴ Dan. vi. 22.

Jonah and to Daniel; but yet let thy trusting in him be such as that thou presume not, for there are certain bounds that must not be passed. It is as dangerous to go too far in trusting him as to be too short; and as it is faith that puts us on for coming too short, so it is fear that keeps us off from going too far: *O therefore fear the LORD, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him* [ver. 9]. Verily, a strong motive to make us fear God, seeing he that fears him shall want nothing; and yet the motive not so strong but the reason as apparent, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;¹ and wisdom, I may say, is the godly man's purveyor; and what marvel then if he want nothing that hath so cunning a purveyor as wisdom to keep him from want: but then it must be from want of things that are good, for to want other things is no disparagement to wisdom's purveyance. O that men would understand how to distinguish between things that are truly good indeed, and things that but only seem good! We should then have a better world than we have, and men would never complain of want when they have but too much, never be so earnest for supply of things that, truly considered, are but merely superfluous. If, therefore, one that fears God be in any want, we may know that the thing he wants is not good; for if it were good, he should not want it: it may perhaps be good in itself, but not good for him; and if not good for him, he cannot be truly said to want it, because indeed he were better without it.

But is fear a thing of such force to supply our wants? One would rather think that boldness and courage should supply them. No, my soul, for what creature so courageous as the lion? *Yet the young lions do lack, and suffer hunger*² [ver. 10]. Whether they be young lions as depending upon the provision of their parents, or young in the strength of their youth that can provide for themselves, yet they sometimes lack and suffer hunger; for, indeed, strength of body is not the best purveyor. No, my soul, nothing but wisdom makes the true purveyance, and no wisdom without the fear

¹ Prov. ix. 10. ² Ps. xxxiv. 10: "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."

of the Lord, and therefore none but they that fear the Lord, can be free from want.

But is not this a fearful doctrine, that either we must fear or else we must want? Were it not as good to want as to have our wants supplied by fear? Is not the remedy worse than the disease? Alas, this is but the objection of children, either children in years or children in understanding, who know not what fear it is I mean, and therefore, *Come, ye children, and hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD* [ver. 11]. It is not a fear that you need be afraid of; it is a fear that will free you from all other fears; it is a fear that is active, where all other fears are passive. It is a fear that works in love, and who would not love such a fear? It is a fear that is joined with joy,—a fear not to offend, but a joy for not offending. It is a fear not so much of God's justice as of his mercy, for there is mercy with him that he may be feared. It is not a fear that will shorten your life, but be a means to prolong it; but then it must not be a bare speculative fear, but you must put it in practice; and these may be the rules: *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile; depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it* [ver. 12, 13, 14]. Long life was once promised before to them that honour their parents,² and here it is promised again to them that love their neighbours; for these rules are as the whole body of moral philosophy, and are therefore delivered in six parts, like the six commandments of the second table, which only concern our duty to neighbours, and in all of them the quality of chief predominance, and which keeps them all in tune, is fear. Keep thy tongue from evil, for fear of the evil that may ensue; and thy lips from speaking guile, for fear lest thy guile be discovered to thy shame. Depart from evil, for fear of infecting; and do good, for fear of repenting. Seek peace, for fear of wanting it; and pursue it, for fear of losing it. The two first precepts are the duty of words, for words must first be regulated before works can be actuated; and

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 12, 13, 14: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." ² Exod. xx. 12.

they are both negative. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile; for it is not required of the tongue to be eloquent, or of the lips to deliver oracles. It is enough in the tongue if it be not irreverent to superiors, nor detracting from equals. It is enough in the lips if they be not charms to deceive, nor equivocations to delude.

The other precepts are the duty of works, and they are four, where the precepts of words were but two, because we must be more in works than in words; and they are all affirmative, for it is against the nature of a work to be in the negative, for so working should be no better than idleness: the two former are general, as general as good and evil; that if we meet with anything that is evil, our part is to depart; for there is no demurring upon evil, no dallying with baits, lest staying, we be stayed as Eve was;¹ therefore depart from evil. If we meet with anything that is good, our work is to fall a-working; for virtue consists in action, and is not so proper to be talked of as to be done. We never read of any reward for good words only, but all reward is only for good works: Because thou hast done this,² saith God to Abraham. Therefore do good. The two last precepts are special, whether we call them special as being particular, or as being excellent, for so is peace. It is the legacy that was left us by Christ,³ and who would lose Christ's legacy for want of seeking it? Therefore seek peace, and pursue it; but not pursue peace, for this were to make war upon peace; but pursue the seeking of peace; for though it be said, Seek, and ye shall find,⁴ yet it is not said how long we must seek before we shall find; if therefore, seeking peace, you find it not at first, pursue the seeking it, and you shall find it at last. Agree with thine adversary while thou art in the way;⁵ this is to seek peace; leave thine offering at the altar, and go first and be reconciled;⁶ this is to pursue it. Or perhaps the counsel that St. Paul gives to Timothy may express it plainer: Be instant in season and out of season.⁷ To be instant in season, is to seek peace; to be instant out of season, is to pursue it. Indeed, if a man

¹ Gen. iii. 2. ² Gen. xxii. 16. ³ John xiv. 27. ⁴ Matt. vii. 7 ⁵ Matt. v. 25. ⁶ Matt. v. 24. ⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

desire long life, and to see good days, he must have a special care of peace; whether it be peace in the humours, or peace in the passions; whether peace with God, or peace with men: they are all prolongers of life; and life is never shortened or disquieted but for want of peace in one of these; and therefore that you may not be to seek of long life, seek peace, and pursue it.

And now, O my soul, is there not great cause that the fear of the Lord should animate all our words and works, when so great a majesty as the eye of God is looking upon them, when so sacred an auditory as the ears of God are hearkening to them? For *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry* [ver. 15]; and can any man be so without shame as to be without fear, when he is the spectacle which God is pleased to look upon, the speaker which he vouchsafes to hearken to? But, O my soul, as it cannot but make thee fear, so it cannot but make thee joy; for what greater honour than to be the object of God's eyes and ears? What though the world regard thee not, as long as God regards thee? What are the eyes and ears of the world but eyes and ears of scorn, or else of envy,—of scorn when in adversity, and of envy in prosperity? But the eyes of the Lord are righteous eyes, and are therefore upon the righteous; his ears are ears of compassion, and therefore are open to their cry. But are not the eyes of the Lord as well upon the wicked? and what privilege then is this to the righteous? No, my soul, his eyes are upon the righteous, but they are against the wicked; and not only his eyes, but his whole face, is against them, to cut off their remembrance from the earth [ver. 16]. O my soul, as thou considerest with joy the great force that is in righteousness, which draws the eyes and opens the ears of God, so consider with trembling the great force that is in sin, which not only turns away his eyes, and stops his ears, but makes him to bend his whole face in fury; that if his favours of looking upon us and hearkening to us cannot win us to fear him out of love, at least the bending his face

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 16: "The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

against us in anger may force us to fear him out of terror ; for he bends not his face to make a show only, as though he did but set a face upon it ; but it is to cut off the very remembrance of them that do evil from the earth.

But may not the wicked erect tombs and monuments that will preserve their remembrance for many ages, perhaps as long as the earth shall endure ? and how then is their remembrance cut off from the earth ? But from what earth ? is it not meant from the land of the living ?¹ that in this may be seen the different condition between the godly and the wicked ? for as it is said here that the remembrance of the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, so it is said in another place of the godly that they shall be had in everlasting remembrance ;² and where is any everlasting remembrance to be had but in the land of the living ? Indeed, to have their remembrance cut off in this earth is not worthy of God's threatening : it is the cutting off from the land of the living which is the blotting them out of the book of life ;³ that is a work worthy of God's setting his face against them, and this may well be called a cutting off, not only because it shall come suddenly upon them, but because they are never like to be heard, alas ! never like to be heard of any more, which can never be the condition of the godly, for they can never be so out of remembrance but that they shall be always heard of God : For *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles*⁴ [ver. 17].

But how is it like to be true that the godly shall never be forgotten, when they seem to be forgotten already while they live ? for how else should it happen that they are more in trouble,⁵ in more trouble than other men, but that God hath cast them out of his remembrance ? O my soul, their very being in trouble is a certain argument that God remembers them : if he had not remembered Job and his righteousness,⁶ he would never have given Satan so much leave as he did to trouble him. For indeed, though troubles be judgments to the wicked, and are as the first blows to cut off their remem-

¹ Ps. xxvii. 13 ; cxlii. 5. ² Ps. cxii. 6. ³ Rev. iii. 5. ⁴ Ps. xxxiv. 17 : " *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*"

⁵ Ps. lxxiii. 5 : " *They (the wicked) are not in trouble as other men.*" ⁶ Job i. 3.

brance from the earth, yet they are but trials to the godly, and do but serve to make their remembrance be the fresher. Do we not see how trees are nipped with frost and cold, and not so much as a leaf left hanging upon them, scarce so much as life remaining in them? but is it not to renew in them the fresher springing, and to make way for fruits in a greater plenty? And such are the troubles of the godly: they end in deliverance; and though they be bitter for the present, yet they make the joys afterward to taste the sweeter. And what marvel if God hear the cry of the righteous, being so nigh unto them as he is? For *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart* [ver. 18]; not broken with envy, as many are; not broken with despair, as some are; but broken with sense of their sin, as the righteous are; for this only is the broken heart to which God is nigh, and he is not nigh it in vain. No, my soul, it is good having God to be our neighbour, for he saves all them to whom he is nigh; he *saves all them that be of a contrite and humble heart*: the lower they are in their own eyes, the higher they are in his; and when their heart is broken with sense of their sin, he makes it whole again with supply of his grace. It is true, *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers them out of all*² [ver. 19]. For the righteous have many enemies, and therefore must needs have many troubles; but their troubles are not troublesome, because they have the Lord for their deliverer;³ if it be sickness, he makes their bed in their sickness;⁴ if it be hunger, he fills the hungry with good things, when he sends the rich empty away;⁵ if it be death itself, *Domini, Domini sunt exitus mortis*,—the issues of death are all in God's hands;⁶ and all this while, though their heart be broken, yet their bones are whole still. They may have thorns in the flesh, but not a bone of theirs is broken⁷ [ver. 20]; for one of their bones is faith, which though it may be shaken, yet it cannot be broken. Another of their bones is hope, which though it

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 18: "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." ² Ps. xxxiv. 19: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." ³ 2 Sam. xxii. 2; Ps. xviii. 2. ⁴ Ps. xli. 3. ⁵ Luke i. 53. ⁶ Ps. lxxviii. 20. ⁷ Ps. xxxiv. 20: "He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken."

may be battered, yet it cannot be broken; and patience is a bone which may be vexed, but can never be broken; for in all of them the Lord hath a hand: he upholds the righteous¹ that they cannot fall; he strengthens them that they cannot faint; and as long as their bones be whole, they are able to stand upright, and shrink not from any burden that either the flesh or the world can lay upon them. And though David in this have an eye perhaps upon Christ, of whom indeed there was not a bone broken,² yet what is spoken of the head may not incongruously be applied to the members; and in the soundness of Christ's bones, the bones of the godly are kept from breaking. But the troubles of the wicked are of another nature, for *Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate* [ver. 21]. Their hearts perhaps are broken too; but because they are not broken with sense of their sin, but with spite and malice to the righteous, there shall be none to make them whole, but their own evil shall be their own destruction; and having none to deliver them, they shall be left desolate and without all hope of help. But shall not the wicked then have this good by being desolate, that as they have none to help them, so they have none to hurt them? Alas! it needs not; they do it fast enough themselves; for sin is a recoiling poison, it turns violently back upon them that commit it; and it may be truly said of every wicked man that he is *felo de se*—a murderer of himself. Though righteousness of itself doth not save the righteous, but they need a Saviour besides, yet wickedness of itself destroys the wicked, they need no other destroyer: *Perditio tua ex te, O Israel*,—Thy destruction is from thyself, O Israel.³

And, O my soul, what great examples there are to verify this saying, *They that hate the righteous shall be desolate!* When Cain hated the righteous Abel, was he not thereupon made desolate, and became a vagabond,⁴ forsaken both of God and Man? but in a higher degree, when the wicked Jews hated Christ the righteous, was there not a voice heard as of angels, saying, *Migremus hinc*—Let us depart from this place,⁵

¹ Ps. xxxvii. 17. ² John xix. 36. ³ Hos. xiii. 9. ⁴ Gen. iv. 12. ⁵ A traditional incident said to have preceded the destruction of the temple.

and thereupon left them desolate, without prince or prophet, without temple or altar, to this day? You may say perhaps that Cain might easily be made desolate, having killed his brother in a time when there was no more in the whole world but that one family; but how can the wicked be made desolate now, when *totus mundus in maligno est positus*¹ [the whole world lieth in wickedness], when all the world is full of them, and no beasts so herd together as they do? But is it not that desolateness consists not so much in want of company as in want of comfort? was Job the less desolate for having company, of whom to say, Miserable comforters are ye all?² much less shall the wicked be the less desolate for having company of whom to say, Miserable tormentors are ye all; for, alas, all their company shall be either companions in their torments, or companions their tormentors, which can never be the case of the godly; for though they be not so perfect not to have their faults, yet they are so happy not to have them imputed; for being God's servants, *He will redeem them*³ [ver. 22]; though they be taken captive, yet he will not suffer them to continue captives; but rather than not redeem them, he will give his only Son to be their ransom.⁴

But yet how can the godly choose but be desolate, when the whole world scarce affords enough to make a company? and where then can company be had to keep them from being desolate? O my soul, they have angels to pitch their tents about them while they live here, and hereafter they shall come to be citizens in the New Jerusalem,⁵ where they shall have company enough—priests and patriarchs, prophets and apostles, martyrs and confessors, blessed virgins, and chiefly the Blessed Virgin; but, above all, where they shall see the blessed face of God, whose only sight is able, whose sight is only able to keep from being desolate; and then at least I shall be as able to perform my vow as now I am ready to make it: I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

¹ 1 John v. 19. ² Job xvi. 2. ³ Ps. xxxiv. 22: "The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." ⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 6; John iii. 16. ⁵ Rev. xxi. and xxii.

How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. 3. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. 4. Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. 5. Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee; in whose heart *are* the ways *of* them. 6. *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. 7. They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God. 8. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 10. For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11. For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12. O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.—PSALM lxxxiv.

MEDITATIONS

UPON

THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM OF DAVID.

WHEN we cannot express the greatness of a thing in direct terms, we are fain to fly to wonder ; and so doth David here, because he cannot express sufficiently how amiable the tabernacles of the Lord are ; he therefore falls to wondering, and helps himself with a question, *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!* [ver. 1]. But is not David's wondering itself wonderful, that the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts should be so wonderfully amiable ? Is it not a wonder they should be amiable at all ? For are not his tabernacles tents of war, and is there anything in war that can be amiable ? If he had said, How terrible are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, his wonder had been with some congruity, for the Lord of hosts is terrible in all his works ;¹ but to say, How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, seems to imply a contradiction, for though they may be amiable as they are tabernacles, yet they must needs be terrible as they are tabernacles of the Lord of hosts ; and when this terribleness hath made an abatement in their amiableness, what place will be left for wonder to give cause to say, How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ? But if he had said, How terrible are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, though it might have been wonderful in the degree, yet it could not be wonderful in the kind ; for what wonder

¹ Ps. lxxvi. 3 : " Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works ! "

is it if the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts be terrible? But when he saith, How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, this is not only wonderful in the degree, but in the kind much more. For what can be more wonderful than that, being tabernacles of the Lord of hosts, they should be amiable, and so amiable as to be wondered at? But is it not that God is in himself so amiable that all things of his, even his terrors themselves, are amiable?—his tabernacles and his tents, his sword and his spear, his darts and his arrows—all amiable; terrible, no doubt, to his enemies, but amiable—wonderful amiable—to all that love and fear him; and great reason they should be so, seeing they are all in their defence and for their safeguard. Though they be tabernacles of the Lord of hosts to the wicked, yet they are courts of the Prince of Peace¹ to the godly, and this makes my soul to long for the courts of the Lord² [ver. 2]. For I desire indeed to be a courtier, yet not as I am now; God knows I am very unfit for it; but because God's courts are such, they make any one fit that but comes into them: they receive not men fit, but make them fit; and he that was before but a shrub in Baca,³ as soon as he comes into the courts of the Lord, is presently made a cedar in Lebanon.

Indeed, if his tabernacles be so wonderful amiable, they must needs be as wonderful attractive, for there is no such adamant⁴ as amiableness—nothing that so powerfully attracts and draws all hearts unto it. And to know the measure of their amiableness by the power of their attracting, you need but look upon my soul; *for my soul longeth and even fainteth for the courts of the LORD*, which it would never do if it were not for their wonderful amiableness, that attracts and draws it by a kind of violence—indeed by a kind violence—unto them.

Every amiableness is not so great to make a longing, nor

¹ Isa. ix. 6. ² Ps. lxxxiv. 2: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." ³ Baca (ver. 6), weeping, has been translated by a mulberry bush; see 2 Sam. v. 23, 24, where the plural noun, בְּעֵינַיִם *bechaim* (A.V. mulberry trees), is the name of a certain tree so called from its *weeping*, i.e. distilling . . . (a plant) similar to the balsam-tree, and distilling white tears of a pungent acrid taste. (Robinson's Gesenius's Heb. Lex. s. v.)

⁴ Properly diamond,—here, of course, the magnet.

every longing so great to make a fainting, nor every fainting so great to make the soul to faint. Oh, then, consider how great this amiableness is, which makes my soul not only to long, but to faint with longing; and blame me not for fainting, as though it were my own fault that would not restrain my longing; for seeing his tabernacles are of infinite amiableness, they must needs work in me an infinite delighting, and that delighting an infinite longing; and what restraint can there be of that which is infinite? No, alas, my fainting is but answerable to my longing, and my longing but answerable to the amiableness. If I had the offer made me which was made to Christ, to enjoy all the kingdoms of the earth,¹ but with condition to want the courts of the Lord, this want would bring to my soul a greater grief than that enjoying would give it contentment; for seeing his tabernacles are so amiable where he is Lord of Hosts, how amiable must they needs be where he is Prince of Peace? and Prince of Peace he is in his courts, though in his camp he be Lord of Hosts.

And that you may know it is not the weakness of my soul that it faints with longing (for indeed weak spirits are apt to faint upon every light occasion), but that it is the very operation of the wonderful attractive power that is in the amiableness of his courts, see my heart, and my flesh also, how they are drawn to long after the Lord, which they would never do if it were not for some wonderful amiableness that is in him; for you may well think it must be an adamant of a wonderful attractive power that can draw these heavy irons of my heart and my flesh unto it; for indeed, though my soul have a longing for the courts of the Lord, yet my body perhaps could be content to want them. There are courts in the world that might please my body as well, perhaps better than these; but God forbid—God forbid I should be one to have my soul and body divided while they are united—to have my soul run one way and my body another. No, I am none of those; but as soon as my soul longed for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh fell a-longing for the living God. As my soul longed for the place, so my heart

¹ Matt. iv. 8, 9.

and my flesh for the person ; for my heart and my flesh are of a duller apprehension ; they must have a present enjoying of that they long for, or they cannot be satisfied ; but my soul is of a clearer sight, and knows if it can but come to the place where he is, it shall be sure withal to enjoy his presence, and with his presence his person. The soul indeed is a spiritual substance, and therefore it is natural to the soul to long after spiritual things ; but the flesh is an earthly substance, and therefore it is natural to the flesh to long after earthly things ; and as long as these two are linked in the body together, they will always be working upon one another—always seeking to draw each other to their party ; and if the soul can draw the flesh to go her spiritual way, then all is well ; it is as it should be ; but if the flesh draw the soul to go her earthly way, then all is out of order ; there will be no longing for the courts of the Lord, for they are spiritual, and are never longed for but where the soul is predominant and hath the leading. And this is the order in David's longing : first his soul begins to long for the courts of the Lord, and this is yet but a single cord ; but then comes in the heart and the flesh too, and make it a cord of three that is impossible to be broken.¹ Indeed the courts of the Lord are so exceeding amiable, that it is impossible but every soul must needs long after them ; but yet every soul considers not what belongs to this longing, but as Baalam longed to die the death of the righteous,² yet was loth to live the life of the righteous,³ so there are many that long for the courts of the Lord, but are loth to live the life of such courtiers. They that be in kings' houses wear silk and soft raiment,⁴ because so it is fit for the honour of the place ; and they that will be in the courts of the Lord must likewise wear raiment that is fit for the holiness of the place. They must be clothed with the soft raiment of meekness and humility ;⁵ they must put on the robe of righteousness⁶ and the garment of sincerity ; or because they are courts of the Lord of Hosts, their clothing must rather be in armour, as St. Paul expresseth it ; they must

¹ Eccles. iv. 12. ² Numb. xxiii. 10. ³ Numb. xxxi. 7, 8, 16. ⁴ Matt. xi. 8
⁵ 1 Pet. v. 5. ⁶ Isa. lxi. 10.

take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit;¹ and if they come thus clothed and thus armed, they may justly then be said to long for the courts of the Lord; but if they wear not these garments, their longing will prove but a false conception, and they shall hear it said, Friend, what makest thou here without a wedding garment?²

If my God were as the gods of the heathen, that have bodies, but live not, that have ears, but hear not,³ my heart and my flesh would then never cry after him that could not hear them; but now that he is a living God, and hath ears to hear, how can they now forbear to cry after him, that cannot be without him? for, alas, if he should leave them, what would become of them? what would my heart be but as a dead corpse, and what would my flesh be but as the coffin?

Thou affordest, O Lord, thy meanest creatures their places of rest and pleasure: *The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young*⁴ [ver. 3]; and wilt thou not afford me to enjoy thine altars, the only places of rest and pleasure to my soul? Alas, O Lord, if thou wilt not afford me thine altars for places of pleasure, at least afford them to me for places of devotion, that if I cannot make them a nest for my young ones, my humble meditations and my penitent submissions, at least I may offer upon them the sacrifices of prayer, of praise, and thanksgiving.⁵

I knew before, by thy courts, thou wert a king; and now I know, by thine altars, thou art a God; that confidently now I can say, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God; that if I feared thee before as Lord of Hosts, I honour thee more now as my King, and adore thee more yet as my God, which as they are to thee the tender⁶ of my dutifulness, so they are no less to me the means of my blessed-

¹ Eph. vi. 14—17. ² Matt. xxii. 12: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" ³ Ps. cxxxv. 15—17. ⁴ Ps. lxxxiv. 3: "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God." ⁵ Ps. cvii. 22; Jer. xvii. 26. ⁶ Offer.

ness ; for *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house : they will still be praising thee* [ver. 4].

But, alas, how happens this? There were tabernacles before, as belonging to a Lord ; and courts, as belonging to a King ; and altars, as belonging to a God ; and now to be but a house, as belonging to a private man? and so all this great rising to end in a fall? No, my soul, it is no fall ; it is an aggregation rather of all the other, for where his tabernacles did but serve to show his power, his courts but to show his majesty, his altars but to show his deity, his house serves to show them all, for in his house there will be still praising him, and his praise and glory is the sum of all. Or is it, that to dwell in God's house is a kind of appropriating him to ourselves, seeing his tabernacles and his courts lie open to strangers, his house open to none but his servants, and seeing [that] in the nearness to God, and conversing with him, consists all true blessedness ; therefore, Blessed are they that dwell in his house. But how dwell in it? Not to look in sometimes, as we pass by ; or to stay in it a time, as we do at an inn ; but to be constant abiders in it day and night, as to which we have devoted ourselves, and vowed our service.

But it may be doubted, when David saith, Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, what dwelling it is he means ; whether dwelling in it as tenants or as servants ; for if as tenants, it is like there is some rent to be paid, and there is small blessedness in paying of rent : it would be a more blessed thing if they could dwell in his house and pay him no rent. If as servants, it is like there is some work to be done, and there is small blessedness in working : it would be a more blessed thing if they could be his servants, and do no work ; and how then comes any blessedness in by dwelling in his house? Indeed, take it either way, let them dwell in his house as tenants, or as servants, and they shall be blessed ; let them have rent to pay as tenants, let them have work to do as servants, and yet they shall be blessed ; and that which may seem most strange, the rent and the work, which seem to hinder their blessedness, is the very thing that makes them be blessed ; for

they are both but one thing, both but praising of God; and praising of God is the only thing that, whether they be tenants or servants, whether bond or free, will make them be blessed.

And yet there is a dwelling that hath not yet been thought of—a dwelling, indeed, that makes the true blessedness; and it is, to dwell in God's house neither as tenants nor yet as servants, but as sons; for neither tenants nor servants abide in the house for ever; only the son abideth for ever;¹ and therefore, though the house of God seem a meaner title than his tabernacles and his courts, yet to us it is the more comfortable title, seeing it makes us to be sons, which neither his tabernacles nor his courts can do.

But how appears it to be true that they who dwell in God's house will always be praising him, seeing it is but seldom seen that servants be so forward to praise their masters? O my soul, it is not so much the good dispositions of the servants, as the infinite worthiness of the master, that makes them to praise him, for when they see the admirable economy of his government, when they see how sweetly he disposeth all things in weight and measure,² when they find him to use them more like children than servants; what heart can be so ungrateful as not to praise him? and seeing by dwelling in God's house they see these things continually, therefore they that dwell in his house will always be praising him.

But is it not a strange reason of blessedness to say they are blessed because they are still praising him? To be praised themselves, might perhaps be some blessedness, but what blessedness can it be to praise another? Indeed if that other were but such another as ourselves, it could be none; but when that other is such as that there is not such another, or rather not another at all, to praise such a one certainly must needs be blessedness, or there can be none; and such a one is God; for, alas, what are we, but that in him we live, and move, and have our being;³ He only is all in all.⁴ O my soul, if it were not for praising of God,

¹ John viii. 35.² Wisd. xi. 20; Eccclus. xlii. 7.³ Acts xvii. 28.⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 28.

there had never been created such a thing as praise; at least we may justly say that God and praise are as truly relatives¹ as any that are found in either art or nature.

You may say, then, it is like to be an easy matter to be blessed, if there go no more to blessedness but praising of God. Mark therefore how David speaks: They will be still praising him. It is not enough to praise him; it must be a praising him still, before it will make a blessedness; and though to praise God be an easy matter, yet to praise him still will be found a busy work; indeed, to flesh and blood a miserable work; for if I be still praising him, what time shall I have for any pleasure? O my soul, if thou make it not thy pleasure—thy chief, thy only pleasure—to be praising him, thou art not like in haste to come to blessedness. And marvel not that David speaks thus under the law, when St. Paul under the gospel saith as much: Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do else, let all be done to the glory and praise of God.² And, indeed, how can I doubt of attaining to blessedness by praising of God, when it is praising of God that makes the angels in heaven blessed? for the seeing of God would never make them blessed, if, seeing him, they did not praise him; and praising him would never make them blessed, if they did not praise him continually, crying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;³ for as we praise God here on earth with saying, O Lord God of Hosts, because here he fighteth for us against our enemies, so we shall praise him in heaven with saying, O Lord God of Sabaoth,⁴ because there he will give us rest from our enemies.

But if it be thought that praising of God will not be enough to make blessedness, or not to make blessedness enough, at least take this with it, and it will surely be enough: *Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart his ways are*⁵ [ver. 5]; for though our praising of God, being our own work, must needs be too weak to

¹ Correlates. ² 1 Cor. x. 31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." ³ Te Deum; cf. Rev. iv. 8. ⁴ Query, *Sabbath*, i.e., rest. ⁵ Ps. lxxxiv. 5: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them."

make a blessedness, yet when our strength is in God, this makes it his work, and then our blessedness hath a sure foundation. When we trust to our own strength for blessedness, we are often deceived, indeed as often as always; but when our strength is in God, we may rest secure; our blessedness is upon a rock, and cannot be shaken.¹ But then God's ways must be in our hearts; for what way hath his strength to the heart, if his ways be not in the heart? That's their place, if we look for strength from him. Are we not in a continual fight against sin; and have we any strength to fight but only in him? and will he take it well to be placed in a wing? No, my soul, he will strengthen us no longer than he is placed in the heart of the battle; that's his place, if we look to be strengthened in him.

It is not enough that God's ways be known if they be not walked in, nor walked in if not embraced; and it is not enough to embrace them with the arms, which is oftentimes feigned, and but only complimentary; they must be embraced with the two arms of the heart, integrity and sincerity: integrity will embrace them all, sincerity will embrace no other. Though God's ways be many, yet they must all go into one heart; if any be left out, the rest will not tarry; though they must be in singleness of heart, yet they must not be single in the heart: they are fruits that grow in clusters, not one by one.

There are many that have God's ways in their mouths—can talk holily and make sermons of godliness, though they be no preachers; but because they draw near to God with their lips and their hearts are far from him,² they are like to have but the Pharisee's entertainment, not so well justified as the publican.³ There are many that have God's ways in their hands; they give alms plentifully, they distribute their bread to the poor liberally, but because their left hand knows what their right hand doth, they have their reward already.⁴ They that have God's ways in their hearts, they only are in the right way to blessedness, and no rubs of the world can turn them out of the way; for when God's ways

¹ Ps. xxvii. 5.² Isa. xxix. 13.³ Luke xviii. 14.⁴ Matt. vi. 2, 3.

are in the heart together, they lend assistance to one another ; for *passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools* [ver. 6]. That which seemed an impediment turns to a furtherance ; at least, no misery can be so great, no estate so barren, but a godly heart can make it a well out of which to draw forth water of comfort—either water to cleanse, and make it a way to repentance, or water to cool, and make it a way to patience, or water to moisten, and make it a way of growing in grace ; and if the well happen to be dry, and afford no water from below, yet the rain shall fill their pools, and supply them with water from above ; if natural forces be not sufficient, there shall be supernatural graces added to assist them ; that though troubles of the world seem rubs in the way to blessedness, yet in truth they are none ; they hinder not arriving at the mark we aim at ; they hinder us not from being made members of Zion ; they hinder us not from approaching the presence of God : no, my soul, they are rather helps, for by this means we go from strength to strength¹ [ver. 7], from strength of patience to strength of hope, from strength of hope to strength of faith, from strength of faith to strength of vision ; and then will be accomplished that which David speaks here : Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart his ways are.

If my strength were not in God, I should not dare to call upon him, being Lord of hosts ; but now that my strength is in him, and that I know he is Lord of Hosts for me, and not against me,—a shield to me,² a sword only to my enemies,—now I have confidence to say, *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer : give ear, O God of Jacob* [ver. 8] ; for as I doubt not but he will hear me, though he be Lord of hosts, so I have much more confidence he will give ear unto me, being the God of Jacob ; for he hath made a covenant with Jacob and with his posterity for ever,³ that he will be their God, and they shall be his people,⁴ of which number it is my happiness that I am one ; not after the flesh, which

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 7 : "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." ² Ps. xxxiii. 20. ³ Gen. xxviii. 13—15. ⁴ Jer. xi. 4 ; Rev. xxi. 3.

profiteth nothing,¹ but according to faith, the only thing that makes the true Israelite.²

But yet what good will it do me that God hear my prayer, and give ear unto it, if he be still averse and turn away his face? Oh, therefore, *Behold, O LORD, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed*³ [ver. 9]; for I shall never come to look upon thy face if thou vouchsafe not first to look upon mine: if thou afford me not as well the benefit of thine eyes to look upon me, as the favour of thine ears to hear me, I shall be left only to a bare expectation, but never come to the happiness of fruition; but when thou vouchsafest to look upon my face, that look of thine hath an influence of all true blessedness, and makes me find what a happiness it is to have the God of Jacob for my shield.

But it should seem that this prayer belongs only to David, —or at least to kings who, like David, are the Lord's anointed; and what is it then to us that are private persons? It is true, indeed, that kings are the Lord's anointed in a special manner, but yet every child of God is his anointed too; for why else is it said of Christ that he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,⁴ if it be not that his fellows (meaning the children of God) be anointed too? Anointed, no doubt, with the oil of grace, but to be anointed with the oil of gladness is the very thing I pray for here, the very thing that makes me long so much for the courts of the Lord. *For one day in his courts is better than a thousand*⁵ [ver. 10]. It is not so much the length of time as the measure of joy that makes the blessedness; or is it that one day which shall never end, as the day is in God's courts, is better than a thousand which have an end, as all the days of this world are? If he had said, One day in his courts is as good as a thousand, though this had been a mighty odds, yet it had been but a thousand to one—there had at least been some proportion; but when he saith, One day in his courts is better than a thousand, this seems to

¹ John vi. 63. ² Rom. ix. 6—8. ³ Ps. lxxxiv. 9: "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." ⁴ Ps. xlv. 7. ⁵ Ps. lxxxiv. 10: "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

exceed all possibility of comparison, and leaves no place for any proportion. Indeed, one day in his courts gives seisin¹ of eternity, where a thousand that are spent anywhere else are but steps of mortality. If I be but one day in his courts, I shall see that which will be a joy unto me all the days of my life; where if I be a thousand in any other courts, I shall see nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit,² that which will grieve me to think of as often as I remember it. And as it is true in respect of time, so it is no less true in respect of place; for *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* But is it such a disparagement to be a doorkeeper? What was the angel with the flaming sword but the doorkeeper of Paradise?³ and is there not a conceit that St. Peter is the doorkeeper of heaven?⁴ which, though it be a vain conceit, yet it may lead us to this congruous interpretation of David's speech, to conceive as if he said that he had rather be St. Peter in the house of God than be Annas or Caiaphas in the court of Herod.⁵ Indeed, in the sense that Christ is a door,⁶ David may well be content to be a doorkeeper; and though in God's house there be many mansions,⁷ yet, seeing all of them are glorious, even the doorkeeper's place is not without its glory. But if you think the office to be mean, consider then whose officer he is; for even a doorkeeper is an officer in God's house, and God never displaceth his officers unless it be to advance them to a higher; where in the courts of princes the greatest officers are oftentimes displaced—turned off often with disgrace. However it be, it shows not only the great glory of God's house, but the great humility of David's heart, and that he is not of the ambitious humour of the mother of Zebedee's sons, whom no place would serve for her sons but to have one of them sit at his right hand, the other at his left.⁸ O gracious God, grant me but a doorkeeper's place in thy house, and I will never aspire after any higher room: not that I desire to let in and keep

¹ Seisin (in fact) is an actual taking possession in person; seisin (in law) is when something is done which the law accounts a seisin. (Bailey's Dict.) ² Eccles. i. 14. ³ Gen. iii. 24: "Cherubims and a flaming sword," etc. ⁴ Matt. xvi. 18. ⁵ John xviii. 13, 24, 28. ⁶ John x. 9. ⁷ John xiv. 2. ⁸ Matt. xx. 21.

out whom I please, but that I may thereby have liberty to walk in thy house, and to enjoy thy presence, in whose presence is the fulness of joy for evermore.¹ What are the tents of wickedness but like caves that have no light, and like vineyards that have no fences? and is there any comparison to be made between such tents and the meanest place in the house of God, where God not only affordeth light, but is himself the light; ² not only is a defender, but the defence itself? ³ *For the LORD is a sun and a shield: the LORD will give grace and glory*⁴ [ver. 11]. I had heard before that *in sole posuit tabernaculum suum*⁵ [in the sun hath he set his tabernacle]. God hath placed his tabernacle in the sun, but I never knew he was himself a sun till now: but what sun?—not the sun that is but the child of light, but the Sun who is the father of lights; ⁶ not the sun that was not till three days after it was light,⁷ but the Sun that was before ever any light was made; not the sun which the heathen commit idolatry in worshipping,⁸ but the Sun whom it is idolatry not to worship. Oh that the heathen would all worship this Sun: it should not then be said, *Plures adorant solem orientem quam occidentem*—that more worship the sun rising than setting; for this Sun, once risen, never sets again; once shining, is never anymore eclipsed. Oh then vouchsafe, O God, if thou be a sun, to lighten my darkness; if a shield, to protect my weakness: if thou be a sun, warm my soul with the beams of devotion; if a shield, defend my soul from the blows of temptation: if thou be a sun, oh shine upon me with the light of thy countenance; if a shield, oh stand between me and the assaults of Satan; for, alas, O Lord, I am darkness and weakness, the anvil of temptations, the very butt of Satan, if thou be not a sun and a shield unto me. O my soul, God will do more than this: he will give grace and glory—grace to be a shield unto us, and glory to be a sun unto us; he will give grace to prevent us, and glory to follow us; grace to walk uprightly, and glory if

¹ Ps. xvi. 11. ² Rev. xxi. 23. ³ Ps. lix. 9, 17. ⁴ Ps. lxxxiv. 11: "For the LORD God is a sun and a shield: the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." ⁵ Ps. xix. 4: "In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." (Quoted from the Vulgate.) ⁶ Jas. i. 17. ⁷ Gen. i. 5, 14—19. ⁸ Deut. iv. 15, 17; Job xxxi. 26—28.

walking uprightly; grace for a foundation to glory, and glory for a crown to grace; and if these things be not enough, he will do more yet. Do thou but walk uprightly, and what good things soever there are in God's gift they shall all be given thee, for no good thing will God withhold from them that live uprightly.

But how is this true, when God oftentimes withholds riches, and honours, and health of body from men, though they walk never so uprightly? We may therefore know that honours, and riches, and bodily strength are none of God's good things; they are of the number of things indifferent, which God bestows promiscuously upon the just and unjust, as the rain to fall, and the sun to shine.¹ The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost,² in this life; fruition of God's presence, and vision of his blessed face, in the next; and these good things God never bestows upon the wicked, never withholds from the godly; and all are cast up in one sum, where it is said, *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi videbunt Deum*—Blessed are the pure of heart (and such are only they that walk uprightly), for they shall see God.³ But is walking uprightly such a matter with God that it should be so rewarded? Is it not more pleasing to God to see us go stooping than walking upright, seeing stooping is the gait of humility, than which there is nothing to God more pleasing? It is, no doubt, a hard matter to stoop and go upright, both at once; yet both must be done, and both indeed are done, are done at once by every one that is godly. But when I say they are done both at once, I mean not of the body: I know two such postures in the body, both at once, are impossible; but the soul can do it,—the soul can stoop and go upright both at once; for then doth the soul walk upright before God when it stoops in humility before God and men.

And what remains now for David to do but to bring in the conclusion upon the premises, seeing the Lord of Hosts, though his name be dreadful, yet his nature is lovely; seeing he is a sun to cherish and a shield to defend; seeing he

¹ Matt. v. 45.² Rom. xiv. 17.³ Matt. v. 8.

gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly: therefore blessed are all they that put their trust in him¹ [ver. 12].

And what remains now for us to do but to receive this conclusion of David as an absolute demonstration, and thereupon to walk uprightly, and to put our whole trust and confidence in God, through the merits of his Son Christ Jesus; for then we are sure, we are in a sure way, of attaining to blessedness, to eternal blessedness; that after this we may leave our wondering, yet continue our admiring: How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of Hosts!

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 12. "O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. 2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. 6. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. 8. The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9. He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. 10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13. Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust. 15. *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17. But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; 18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. 19. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20. Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21. Bless ye the LORD, all *ye* his hosts; *ye* ministers of his, that do his pleasure. 22. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.—
PSALM ciii. (Auth. Ver.)

MEDITATIONS

UPON THE

HUNDRED AND THIRD PSALM OF DAVID.

BLESS the Lord, O my soul¹ [ver. 1]. Oh how well they are fitted! for what work so fit for my soul as this? Who so fit for this work as my soul? My body, God knows, is gross and heavy, and very unfit for so sublime a work. No, my soul, it is thou must do it; and, indeed, what hast thou else to do? it is the very work for which thou wert made; and oh that thou wert as fit to do the work as the work is fit for thee to do. But, alas, I fear that by coming into this body of earth, thou art become in a manner earthy, at least hast lost a great part of thy abilities, and wilt never be able to go through with this great work thyself alone. If to bless the Lord were no more but to say, Lord, Lord!² like to them that cried, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!³ then my tongue alone would be sufficient for it, and I should not need to trouble any other about it; but to bless the Lord is an eminent work, and requires not only many but very able agents to perform it; and therefore, my soul, when thou goest about it, go not alone; but take with thee *all that is within me*,—all the forces in my whole magazine: whether it be my heart or my spirits, whether my will or my affections, whether my understanding or my memory, take them all with thee, and bless the Lord.

And of them all make use first of my memory: *Forget not all his benefits*⁴ [ver. 2], for to remember his benefits is

¹ Ps. ciii. 1: "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bleſs* his holy name." ² Matt. vii. 22. ³ Jer. vii. 4. ⁴ Ps. ciii. 2: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

indeed a principal part of blessing him. And the sooner thou goest about it, the better thou art likely to perform it; for forgetfulness is a thing that grows soon upon us, and nothing sooner than forgetting of benefits. Our memories are very apt to retain injuries, but very unapt for retaining of benefits; for as long as we remember a benefit, we seem to stand upon the rack of an obligation to requite it. And who is not willing to come off a rack, by any means he can? and then rather by forgetting a benefit than by requiting it? and perhaps we think it a kind of payment if we can but forget we owe it. But, O my soul, consider that God expects no retaliation of us; he looks for no requiting at our hands. Alas! he knows we are not able. He takes it in good part if but only we remember his benefits; and should we not be most ungrateful, they being so great and so many as they are, if we should not afford him so much as the remembering them? But as to forget all his benefits were a wonderful forgetfulness, so to forget none at all were as wonderful a memory; for what memory can be so vast not to forget some when they be so many? indeed, so many that they cannot be numbered. And what then, O my soul, wilt thou do in this case? If thou canst not choose but forget some of his benefits, yet forget not all his benefits; if thou canst not remember all, at least remember some. Forget not it is he that *forgiveth all thy sins*; it is he that *healeth all thy infirmities*¹ [ver. 3]. Remember but these, and they will always minister matter enough to keep thee in work for blessing his name. For to forgive all my sins, O my grievous, my manifold sins, that I know not whether they be more or more grievous, whether their number or their greatness be the greater, is it not a benefit that may justly claim a prime place in my memory? If it were but only to be favourable in punishing my sins, it were a benefit worth remembering; but to blot my sins clean out, and absolutely to forgive them, and that freely, without any desert of mine,—alas, without any possibility of deserving, this is a benefit that no lethargy²

¹ Ps. ciii. 3: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."

² Lethargy, a disease caused by cold phlegmatic humours oppressing the brain, so that the person can do nothing but sleep. (Bailey's Dict.)

can forget, indeed a benefit that deserves remembering in the highest degree. And yet, perhaps, to forgive all my sins, not a greater benefit than to heal all my infirmities (this being the chief work of his grace, as that of his mercy), for seeing my sins, many of them, and upon the matter all of them, be sins of infirmity (for even wilfulness and presumption are of infirmity), by healing my infirmities he prevents me of sinning; and is it not as great a benefit to keep me from committing sins as to forgive my sins when I have committed them? But, O my soul, meddle not with this high point of heraldry, to discuss which is the greater of God's mercy or his grace. They are both an *abyssus* [a great deep]. It is work enough for thee, and for all that is within me, to bless him for both; and for both indeed thou hast just cause to bless him, seeing it is by the virtue of both that thou art able to bless him. If it were not for his mercy, thou wouldst want the material cause of blessing him; if it were not for his grace, the efficient; but now that there is a concurrence of both together, now that both he forgiveth all thy sins in his mercy, and healeth all thy infirmities by his grace, now, O my soul, what would it argue but extreme ungratefulness, far exceeding a forgetfulness both in thee and all that is within me, if thou shouldst not bless his name? For, O my soul, consider the multitude of infirmities to which thou art subject. Thou hast many suggestions of the flesh, and thou art apt to consent and yield unto them, and strivest not against them by earnest prayer and holy meditations: this is an infirmity.¹ In thy prayers to God, thy thoughts are often wandering, and thou thinkest of other matters far unworthy of that great majesty to whom thou prayest; or if not so, yet thou art quickly weary, thy spirits are drowsy in it, and thou hadst rather be doing of something else: this is an infirmity. And, indeed, thou hast infirmities in all thy senses. In thy seeing, thou canst see a mote in thy brother's eye, and canst not see a beam in thine own eye.² In thy smelling, thou thinkest, *Suavis odor lucri ex re qualibet*—that the savour of gain is sweet

¹ Ps. lxxvii. 10.² Matt. vii. 3.

from whencesoever it rise. In thy hearing, thou art gladder to hear profane and idle discourses than such as be serious and holy. These are infirmities; and, O my soul, if I should cut thee up into as many parts as an anatomist, and examine the infirmities of every part, should I not have cause, just cause, to cry out with St. Paul, O wretch that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin?¹ who shall heal me of all these infirmities? For whether we call them sins, and then God forgives them, or call them infirmities, and then he heals them, they are to us all one benefit; in God, all one kindness; that as either of them is well worth remembering, so for both of them we have just cause to bless him, and to praise his name.

But, O my soul. as thou rememberest these things, that both he forgiveth all thy sins and healeth all thy infirmities, so remember also their consequences too, for upon these there are great matters depending, as worthy to be remembered as the things themselves. For, alas, my soul, thou wert by sin come to be mortal, and the sentence of *Morte moricris* [dying thou shalt die]² was passed upon thee; but now, by forgiving thy sins, this sentence is reversed; by healing thy infirmities, *thy life is redeemed*³ [ver. 4]; it is taken out of the hands of the destroyer, and put into the hands of a Redeemer, and a Redeemer not only from captivity, but from destruction; for captivity takes away but only thy liberty, but destruction would take away thy very being; and can it be thou shouldst not keep that in memory which is itself the cause that thou hast a memory? for what memory couldst thou have if thou hadst not a being? and what being couldst thou have if thou wert destroyed? and destroyed thou shouldst be if thou wert not redeemed; and redeemed thou canst not be unless thy sins be forgiven. This, no doubt, is a consequence never to be forgotten; and yet perhaps there is a consequence behind of greater consequence than this; for this, my soul, gives thy life but only a duration, but there is a consequence a-coming that will give it an exaltation,

¹ Rom. vii. 24: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" ² Gen. ii. 17: "Thou shalt surely die," quoted from the Vulgate. ³ Ps. ciii. 4: "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

for *He crowns thee with lovingkindness and with tender mercies.* To be made a king is an eminent favour, but to be made a king from being a captive, where not only the *quo* [the end] is so considerable, but the *unde* [the origin] more, this is indeed a supereminent favour, and hardly capable of expressing. And this is thy case, for where before thou hadst fetters upon thy feet, thou hast now a crown upon thy head, and not a crown gotten by violence and worn with fear, but He crowns thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. His kindness would have made a crown good enough for thy wearing, but his lovingkindness makes it a crown worthy of his giving. And if there be doubt that his mercies alone may not be ready enough to bestow this crown upon thee, yet of the readiness of his tender mercies there can be no doubt; there can indeed be no doubt, seeing his lovingkindness and his tender mercies are the crown itself which he bestows. For, O my soul, when I speak of a crown, thou must not fancy to thyself such a crown as kings of the earth wear, for Christ professed plainly that his kingdom is not of this world,¹ and therefore neither must thine be; but consider the extent of God's lovingkindness and of his tender mercies, and thou wilt find a better crown laid up for thee² than all the kingdoms of the earth put together can afford. O gracious God, grant me the crown of thy lovingkindness and tender mercies, and all other crowns I willingly lay down at the foot of thy throne, with the four-and-twenty elders.³ This only is the crown to which my soul aspires, for only this crown makes sin and death to be my subjects—rebellious sin that can never be brought into subjection but only by this crown, O God, of thy lovingkindness and tender mercies. These indeed are consequences most worthy to be remembered, but yet perhaps not apt to be remembered, for are they not of too high a strain? and what the understanding doth not well apprehend, the memory doth not easily retain; he will therefore descend to benefits of a lower rank, *He satisfieth thy mouth with good things, and renews thy youth like the eagle's*⁴

¹ John xviii. 36. ² 2 Tim. iv. 8. ³ Rev. iv. 10. ⁴ Ps. ciii. 5: "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

[ver. 5]. This, no doubt, is apt to be remembered, because it falls within the compass of sense, for who is not sensible of good things, and specially when they be good things for the mouth? for all the labour of man is for the mouth;¹ all that the hands work for, and all that the feet toil about, is all but for the mouth; so long as we may have green pastures and still waters,² so long as we may have meat and drinks, not only to satisfy hunger, but to please the palate, we care not greatly for anything else. But, O my soul, these are not the good things that are here meant; and yet even this perhaps were worth the caring for if it might continue; but, alas, the days will come when I shall say, I have no pleasure in them;³ the time will come when my mouth will lose its taste, and what good then will these good things of the mouth do me? No, my soul, no fear here of old age; no fear of defect by reason of years, for thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's; there shall be no loosening here of the silver cord, no breaking of the golden bowl,⁴ but as the eagle by mewing⁵ her feathers, renews her youth, so thou, my soul, by mewing thy feathers, which is by casting off this frail tabernacle of thy flesh,⁶ shalt perpetually be kept, by the powerful hand of God, in a state of vigour. Indeed the life we live now is the greatest part no life, for childhood is scarce come to it, and old age is almost past it, no time properly remaining to life but only the short time of youth; but the life that God hath in store for them that fear him, not only shall be always, but shall be always youth, and no defect of age shall be able to take hold upon it.

But may we not now begin anew, and conceive rather that when David calls upon his soul to bless the Lord, and not to forget all his benefits, he means he would have it to remember all his benefits; and therefore he presently falls to reckon them all up himself; not *singula generum*, but *genera singulorum*; not all in particular, but the general heads under which all the particulars are comprehended. And he begins with forgiveness of sins, because this is the foundation, this is that which reconciles us to God, and which makes us

Eccles. vi. 7. ² Ps. xxiii. 2. ³ Eccles. xii. 1 ⁴ Eccles. xii. 6. ⁵ Mew,
to moult or cast the feathers. ⁶ 2 Cor. v. 1—4.

capable of all his other benefits. But, alas, what good will his forgiving my sins do me, if he stay there and go no further? for shall I not be committing of new sins continually, and so God shall be always forgiving, and never the nearer?—never the nearer, unless he be always forgiving. To help this, therefore, his next benefit is the healing all my infirmities; for this takes away that aptness to sin to which we are all of us by nature so prone and subject. But, alas, what good will both these benefits do me if he yet stay here, and go no further, seeing I am now a captive and already condemned to die the death? for should not my case be like to theirs who upon the scaffold ask the king forgiveness, and when he forgives them, yet they are put to death nevertheless. His next benefit therefore is a remedy for this; for He redeemeth thy life from destruction; he not only frees thee from captivity, but preserves thee from perishing. But, alas, what good yet will all these do me, if he should yet stay here, and go no further? for when my sins be forgiven, when my infirmities healed, when my life redeemed, yet what am I more by all this than as it were an *abrasa tabula* [a cleaned tablet] at most? what have I more to take joy in than every other ordinary creature? He will now therefore *coronidem imponere* [add a concluding flourish], give a benefit that shall perfect all; for He crowns thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; whatsoever is within the compass of his lovingkindness, whatsoever within the extent of his tender mercies, he will not only make thee capable of it, but will freely bestow it all upon thee. And who can deny but this now is a perfect inventory of all the benefits for which the soul hath cause to bless the Lord—to bless him in respect of itself? though there are other benefits indeed to the body for which the soul must bless him too; for, alas, the body is not able, not able of itself without the soul; and they are soon reckoned, for they may be reduced to these two, sustentation and renovation; for He satisfieth thy mouth with good things, and thy youth is renewed like the eagle's; as much as to say, Thou shalt have the happiness of the epicure¹ and

¹ A disciple of Epicurus, who placed the chief good, *summum bonum*, in happiness.

of the stoic,¹ both at once; at least, there shall be no fear of hunger and thirst, no drooping with age nor ruins of time.

And now, O my soul, let not my being in trouble, and oppressed with sorrows, make thee doubt of the truth of these things; for besides these benefits, *The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed* [ver. 6]; righteousness to them and judgment for them; for as it is righteous with God that his servants who are here oppressed should hereafter be comforted, and be made partakers of all these benefits,² so it is his judgment to the wicked, who are their oppressors, that they should feel hereafter the full measure of God's wrath, as it were in their revenge. And this righteousness and this judgment he not only deliberateth and determineth, he not only promiseth to the godly, and threatens to the wicked, and then leaves them undone, but he is perfect in all his ways, he is truly real, and puts them most assuredly in execution; at least, he executes them *per se* or *per alium* [by another], either by himself or by his angels, for indeed this part of his judgment, which is inflicting of punishment, is not properly in God *opus suum* [his own work], and therefore no marvel if he leave it to be done by angels, as he did at Sodom;³ but though the ministry be theirs, yet the execution is his; all the power is only from him.

And although the executing his righteousness and his judgment be *inter arcana sua* [among his secret things]—things hidden from us, at which we may stand amazed, but can never understand them, yet he hath oftentimes revealed them to his servants the prophets, and specially to his servant Moses; for *He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts to the children of Israel* [ver. 7]. For when Moses went up to the Mount Sinai, and tarried there with God the space of forty days,⁴ we may well think that God in that time revealed many secrets to him, and particularly made known his ways,—not only his ways in which he would have us to walk, but his ways in which he walks himself, and the course he holds in

¹ Stoics, followers of Zeno, who held that a wise man should be free from all passions, being moved by neither joy nor grief. ² 2 Cor. i. 7: "As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." ³ Gen. xix. 13. ⁴ Exod. xxiv. 18; xxxiv. 28.

the economy and government of worldly affairs; why he suffers the wicked to prosper, and why the godly to be oppressed. These ways of his he made known to Moses; to the children of Israel, only his acts. He showed them his wonders upon Pharaoh,¹ and that was his judgment; and he showed them his wonderful favours to themselves in the wilderness, and that was his righteousness; but he showed them not his way, and the course he held in them. They saw only the events of things; they saw not the reasons of them, as Moses did; no more do we; nor is it fit we should. It is enough for us, enough for our comfort, that we know this of God in general, that *he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and full of compassion*² [ver. 8]. Not that any slowness is in God, but his slowness is his patience, and his patience is out of compassion; for, alas, if God were as ready to anger as we are ready to provoke him to anger, we had long ere this been turned to dust, and utterly consumed.

O my soul, here are four properties spoken of to be in God, and are all so necessary that we could not miss one of them? If he were not merciful, we could hope for no pardon; and if he were no more but merciful, we could hope for no more but pardon; but when, besides his being merciful, he is also gracious, this gives us a further hope—a hope of a donative; and then it will not be what we are worthy to receive, but what it is fit for him to give. If he were not slow to anger, we could expect no patience; and if he were but only slow to anger, we could expect no more but patience; but when, besides his slowness to anger, he is also full of compassion, this makes us expect he will be the good Samaritan, and not only bind up our wounds, but take care also for our further curing.³ What though he chide and be angry for a time: it is but our being patient awhile with him, as he a long time hath been patient with us: *For he will not be always chiding, neither will he keep his anger for ever* [ver. 9]. No, my soul, consider the rule of Nature, that *Nullum violentum est diuturnum* [Nothing violent is lasting], and you will find it true in

¹ Neh. ix. 10. ² Ps. ciii. 8: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." ³ Luke x. 34, 35.

the God of Nature. Mercy and compassion are kindly and natural in God, and therefore these will continue, and never leave him; but chiding and anger are things, I may say, violent and not natural in him, and therefore it cannot be that these should last or continue long with him. Certainly it is as displeasing to God to chide as it is to us to be chidden, and so little he likes of anger that he rids his hands of it as fast as he can; he is not so slow in coming to it but he is as quick in getting from it; for chiding is a bar to mercy, and anger an impediment to compassion; and nothing is so distasteful to God as that any block should lie in the way of his mercy, or that the liberty of his compassion should have any cause of restraint; and then, we may be sure, he will not himself lay a block in the way with chiding, nor be a cause to restrain his compassion by keeping his anger. And we may the better be persuaded of this, in that which is to come, for by taking notice of that which is past; *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, neither rewarded us according to our iniquities* [ver. 10]. Though he have chidden, yet he hath not stricken; or if he have stricken, yet his blows have not been great—not so great to do us any hurt; for there is mercy in his very anger; and though we keep ourselves within no bounds of sinning, yet he keeps his anger within the bounds of mercy. Alas, O Lord, if thou shouldst deal with me after my sins, as I have used no measure in my sinning, so thou shouldst use no measure in my punishing; and what, then, could I expect to befall me but utterly to perish?

But why is it that God hath not dealt with us after our sins? Is it not because he hath dealt with another after our sins?—another who took our sins upon him, of whom it is said that God chastened him in his fierce wrath;¹ and why did he chasten him but for our sins? O gracious God, thou art too just to take revenge twice for the same faults; and therefore, having turned thy fierce wrath upon him, thou wilt not turn it upon us too; but having rewarded him according to our iniquities, thou wilt now reward us according to his merits. O dear Jesus, let not thy painful sufferings

¹ Cf. Ps. lxxxviii. 16: "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off."

be made frustrate by my sinful doings; but so mediate between God and my sins, that he may turn away his angry countenance from me, and look upon me only with the eye of his mercy. And, O my soul, how canst thou doubt of this, when *as high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him*¹ [ver. 11]; and who would wish for a greater mercy to be in God than this? But yet the distance between earth and heaven, though great, and indeed very admirably great, is but a limited distance; and is there, then, a limitation and a boundary of God's mercy? May I not as truly say, As low as hell is beneath the earth, so great is my sin in the sight of God? And how, then, am I sure that God's mercy is any greater than my sins? and if not greater, how can it pardon them? O my soul, though the height of heaven be limited, yet God's mercy hath no limitation, for his mercy is above all his works,² and therefore above heaven, the work of his hands. Or if he seem to set a limitation to God's mercy, is it not perhaps because there is some sin that is not capable of his mercy? for sin against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.³ But, O my soul, though God's mercy be without limitation, yet let it not make thee the bolder to sin; for though it be so great, yet it is so great to none but to them that fear him, for to them that fear him not it is not so great; alas, it is not great at all; alas, it will be none at all. But if thou fear him (and to fear him is to fear to sin), then thy sin can never be so great but that God's mercy, which is as high as heaven, will bring thee to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

But if you think this distance of height from earth to heaven not sufficiently to express the greatness of God's mercy, then take the distance of length from east to west; for *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our sins from us*⁴ [ver. 12]; that if the east and the west can never come to meet together, no more shall our sins be ever

¹ Ps. ciii. 11: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." ² Ps. cxlv. 9: "His tender mercies are over all his works." ³ Matt. xii. 31, 32. ⁴ Ps. ciii. 12: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

able to come against us in the sight of God. But, alas, this gives not so good satisfaction as the other; for though the distance from east to west be vast indeed to us, as to which our sight cannot reach, though we should use all the perspective glasses of the world, yet what is this to God, who can as easily see from east to west as if they were hard by and close together? But is it not that all God's mercy to us is only in Christ? and may we not, then, conceive that these distances are represented by the manner of Christ's hanging upon the cross, where his feet and his head seem to point from earth to heaven, and the stretching out his hands seems to point from east to west? But though relation to Christ be not the ground of these expressions, yet it cannot be doubted but that they sufficiently express the greatness of God's mercy, seeing they are the greatest distances that human apprehension is capable to conceive.

But if you be not satisfied with these expressings from distances of place, then take an expressing from the affection of nature: *For as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him*¹ [ver. 13]. And now let any that is a father examine his own bowels how much he pities his children, and then say if God's pity to them that fear him be not in a very high degree. Certainly if any name could express a greater pity than the name of a father, Christ would never have taught us to use this name in making our prayers.² And who could be so fit to make this comparison as David, who gave a testimony of it in himself by making his moan: O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son;³ that now it seems God's pity is matched, and this example reacheth home to express the greatness of God's pity to the full. No, my soul, it is too short yet; for though the pity of a father may reach to be willing to die for his child, yet God's pity reacheth further; not only to be willing to die, but to die indeed; and not only for a child, but for his enemies; for when we were enemies, even then did Christ, very God, die for us;⁴ that God's pity holds the supremacy still, and cannot

¹ Ps. ciii. 13: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." ² Matt. vi. 9. ³ 2 Sam. xviii. 33. ⁴ Rom. v. 10.

indeed be matched : alas, it cannot be expressed by anything that is in man.

But though there may be comparison in the tenderness of their pities, yet in the ability there can be none ; for a father pities oftentimes a child, when he cannot help him ; but God's pity is always active and powerful, and never without relieving ; that though it be commonly said, It is better to be envied than pitied ; yet here it is not so ; but it is a far happier thing to be pitied of God than to be envied of men.

But whom is it that God pities?—only them that fear him ; and, indeed, fear is a thing that deserves to be pitied, for it makes the joints to tremble, and puts the spirits in amazement. But, O my soul, it is not such a fear that is here meant ; but this fear is all one, I may say, with love, and differs but in the object ; for looking upon God's justice we fear him, and looking upon his mercy we love him, although we love him for his justice too, and we fear him for his mercy too ; for as there is mercy with him that he may be feared,¹ so there is justice with him that he may be loved.

But why is it that God pities them that fear him ? Indeed he hath cause enough to pity them ; for *he considers of what we are framed ; he remembers that we are but dust* ² [ver. 14]. And, alas, what is there in dust to help itself, if God in mercy take not pity upon it ? When God looks down upon us, and sees how foul we are grown, whom he created clean, hath he not cause to fall a-chiding, and to be angry ? yet when he considers of what we are framed, and that we are but dust, this is some cause, again, to make him leave his chiding, and not to keep his anger for ever ; that we may truly say, Our miseries are our happiness ; for if it be our misery that we are framed of so mean a matter as dust, it is our happiness that we have the meanness of our matter for God to take into his consideration ; and perhaps this was it, at least one circumstance, that made so ill for the angels that fell,³ that God could find no excuse of their sin in their

¹ Ps. cxxx. 4 : " But *there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*"

² Ps. ciii. 14 : " For he knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that *we are dust.*"

³ Jude 6.

matter: the more he considered of what they were framed, the more he found he had cause to be angry; and therefore no marvel if his anger to them continue for ever.

But this is every one's case to be framed of dust, and why then should God pity some more than others, seeing they be equally of dust, all? Is it not that he is the less angry, indeed, for that they are but dust; but yet he pities them not for being dust, but for being dust and fearing him? for if they fear him not, he never pities them, but lets them go on in their pride, at least in their security, and make what they can of their dust; for they reckon upon great matters from their dust, and think they can improve it to a great height; but, alas, what can they make of it but to come *to be grass*¹ [ver. 15], at most to get up to be a flower, a poor fading thing, that whether you gather it, or let it grow, whether the sun shine upon it, or the *wind blow upon it, it quickly withers*² [ver. 16], and, once withered, becomes a pitiful sight to be seen, a loathsome thing to be smelt,—that where all the grace of it consisted in the two senses of sight and smelling, it is now offensive to both, and is no longer carried in the hand or worn in the bosom? Alas, it is scarce thought worthy to have a place upon the dunghill. And, indeed, what could more be looked for of dust, being so light a thing as it is, that if the wind but pass over it, if you but blow upon it, it is presently scattered and gone, and the place where it was, will know it no more? And such is man: his flourishing is but as a flower, as quickly withered as a flower, and as soon cropped off from his stalk as a flower; and, alas, what good is in a flourishing that ends in a withering? what happiness in pleasures that have no continuance? O my soul, if thou wert thyself a transitory thing, and wert not to continue, thou mightst justly then look after transitory pleasures, and such as have no continuance; but seeing thou art a substance perpetual and immortal, oh therefore look after pleasures like thyself, pleasures that may last, and never come

¹ Ps. ciii. 15: "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field so he flourisheth." ² Ps. ciii. 16: "For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

to the last, that may last and be durable, and not leave thee to the misery of *Fuit Ilium, et ingens gloria teucrorum* [Troy has had its day, and the vast glory of the Trojans]; for *Fuisse felicem miserrimum est* [It is sad indeed to have been happy],—to have been happy, and not to be, to have flourished, and now to be withered, is the greatest misery in the world; and the greater, for that once plucked off from his stalk, once taken from the earth, the earth will never know him any more: alas, it will scarce take notice that ever such a one there was; and the notice it takes [will be] but *in specie* [in a general way]; neither, not *in individuo* [personally]; some, perhaps, as of a man; none, as of this man; or rather, some as of a name; none, as of a man. Or is it rather that man, turned once to dust, his place will know him no more, for how should it know one from another when they are all so like? How know Dives from Lazarus, when they have both the same face, seeing Death hath but one copy to draw all her pictures by. Or is it rather that man once turned to dust, is blown about with every wind from place to place; and what knows the place, when dust falls upon it, whether it be the dust of a prince or of a peasant, whether of a man or of a beast? And must not man then be needs very miserable, when time and place, the two best helps of life, do both forsake him? for what help can he have of time, when his days are but as grass? what help of place, when his place denies him, and will not know him? But oh how vain a thing is man, to forget not only the very matter of which he is made, but the very condition under which he is made; and so to forget it, that God must be fain to remember him of it; but much the vainer, that being remembered of it never so often, yet he regards it never the more, but contenting himself to be fading grass, at most a fading flower, never seeks to improve his dust to that true solidness which nothing but the fear of God is able to procure, nothing but the pity in God is able to effect.

But now at last, if neither the distances of place nor the affection of nature can make you sufficiently conceive the greatness of God's mercy, then take an expressing in plain

terms, and this will certainly make you conceive it ; for *his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him*¹ [ver. 17]. It is from everlasting, for it began to be before the foundations of the world were laid ; and it is to everlasting, for it will continue to be when the frame of the world shall be dissolved ; that now, O my soul, there can be no fear of the greatness of God's mercy : all the fear now is of thine own fear ; for although God's mercy be so everlasting, yet it is so but to them that fear him ; for if thou *fear him* not, and *keep* not *his commandments*² [ver. 18], then his mercy to thee is neither from everlasting nor to everlasting ; but if thou fear him, and keep his commandments, then his mercy to thee is both ; and not only to thee, as though God's mercy were only a personal benefit, and should end with thyself, but it shall be continued to thy children's children, *et natis natorum, et qui nascentur ab illis* [and to children's children, and to those that are born of them], to thy whole posterity. O my soul, what an inheritance is this to purchase to our children ! at least, if it be not an absolute inheritance, yet it is so sure an entail, that nothing but the want of fearing God can cut it off.

And, indeed, why else hath God *prepared his throne in heaven*³ [ver. 19], but to the end the godly may be assured that, though they be now oppressed on earth, yet thither they shall come at last to be with him in joy—to be there in joy for having obeyed him, when the wicked shall be left behind to bewail their miseries for not obeying him. For though his throne be prepared only in heaven, *yet his kingdom ruleth over all*,—over all, both man and beast, both the godly and the wicked, both blessed angels and damned spirits ; and because his kingdom ruleth over all, therefore all shall serve him, and shall serve him indeed with fear ; yet there shall be a difference, for the godly shall serve him

¹ Ps. ciii. 17 : " But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." ² Ps. ciii. 18 : " To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." ³ Ps. ciii. 19 : The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens ; and his kingdom ruleth over all."

with fear and joy, where the wicked shall serve him with fear and trembling.¹

And now, seeing God hath prepared his throne in heaven, therefore, O *ye his angels*² [ver. 20], inhabitants of heaven, that obey his commandments by the freedom of your will, do you begin first, and praise his name, for you excel in strength, and are best able to do it. And seeing his kingdom ruleth over all, therefore, *all ye his hosts*³ [ver. 21], his other creatures that obey his commandments too, though not by will, yet by instinct, do you second the angels in praising his name. And then thou, *my soul*⁴ [ver. 22], that partakest of both the natures, *do thou also, and with thee also the souls of all the godly, join with them in his praises*, that so at least there may be a concert of three to bless and praise him who is a Trinity in unity, three persons and one God, to be blessed and praised for ever and ever. But to be blessed and praised as by all the persons of his kingdom, so in all the places of his dominion, which are heaven, and earth, and hell—a triplicity, too, for even hell is a place within his dominion. And for praising him in heaven, the angels will be sure enough to look to that; and for praising him in hell, let the wicked and the damned spirits look to that at their peril; but for praising him on earth, thou, my soul, and the souls of all the godly, will undertake to do that—at least, will pray continually to him that sitteth upon the throne to be enabled to do it; and when all these shall fail, or lest they should fail, when heaven and earth shall pass away, when time and place shall be no more, yet his praise shall be continued still by his own works, which are his glory and his power, his infiniteness and his eternity; but above all, which is above all his works, the works of his infinite and everlasting mercy.

¹ Ps. ii. 11. ² Ps. ciii. 20: "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." ³ Ps. ciii. 21:

"Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure."

⁴ Ps. ciii. 22: "Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul."

I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications. 2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. 4. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. 5. Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful. 6. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling. 9. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. 10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: 11. I said in my haste, All men *are* liars. 12. What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me? 13. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. 14. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. 15. Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints. 16. O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. 17. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. 19. In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.—PSALM cxvi. (Auth. Ver.)

MEDITATIONS

UPON THE

HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH PSALM.

BUT how can David say so peremptorily, I will love the Lord¹ [ver. 1], as though it were in his own power to love whom he list? Indeed, nothing is so voluntary as love, that it seems to be the extremity of the will, for then we are said to love a thing when the will is inclined and violently bent upon it; and yet, I know not how, there seems nothing more constrained than love, for we oftentimes love a thing which we would fain we could forbear to love, but that we are drawn to love it by a kind of violence in the object; and therefore David may well say, I will love the Lord, seeing both the causes of love are here met—a propension² in the will, and an excellency in the object.

Man, indeed, is naturally a loving creature, but doth not always place his love aright; his love is then best placed when it is placed upon the best object, and what is that best object but God? If he place it upon beauty, that fadeth; if upon riches, they perish; if upon honour, that vanisheth; if upon life, that wasteth: but all these are in God, not only in eminency, but in continuance. In him is beauty that never fadeth; in him riches that never perish; in him honour that never vanisheth; in him life that never wasteth; and therefore as the truest object of love, as the dearest object of my love, I will love the Lord.

¹ Ps. cxvi. 1: "I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications." ² Inclination, readiness, proneness.

But though all these eminences be in God, yet they would be no cause for man to love him if they had not a relation to man ; for what cause of love where there can be expected no effects of love ? But seeing there is in them not only a relation, but a propension—not only they are ready to be imparted, but are imparted with readiness, what man is he that will forbear to say, that can forbear to say, I love the Lord ? And if all men will forbear to say it, yet I will say it ; for He hath heard my voice and my supplication,—no doubt a just cause, or rather indeed, to a natural man, the only cause for loving of God. For of fearing him, of praising him, of worshipping him, of magnifying him, there are other causes ; but of loving him, no cause so proper as his loving of us,¹ and the benefits which he bestows upon us ; for love is so reciprocal a thing, that we should hardly love God himself but for his love to us—at least, for our opinion of his love to us ; and we should hardly have an opinion of his love, if we had not a feeling of his benefits ; for what love can we think is borne us by them that are able to do us good and do it not ? But when we have a feeling of their benefits, and find they do us good, then we are easily persuaded of their love ; and being so persuaded, who can choose but say, as David doth here, I love the Lord, for he hath heard my voice and my supplication ?

But do we love God but for his benefits only ? and if it were not for his benefits, should we not love him ? Indeed, to love God as we ought, is not to love him for aught, but for himself only, without any consideration had at all of his benefits ; but such lovers we are of our own good, that we should scarce love ourselves but for the good we are ready to do ourselves ; and if we love God in the like degree, we think it, perhaps, to be love enough for him. But, O my soul, this is just the devil's love,—I mean such love as the devil thought to be in Job : Doth Job love God for nought ?² He hoped he did not, though he knew he should, and therefore was never in quiet till it might be tried ; and if he had found it so, he would quickly have made Job leave loving of

¹ 1 John iv. 19.² Job i. 9.

God, and fall to loving of him. But the hedge which God had set about Job¹ was not a hedge of prosperity, as Satan supposed, but a hedge of grace; and therefore, with all his fiery trials, he could never get other words from Job but such as these: Shall we receive good at God's hands, and shall we not receive evil?² Yes, O Lord, though thou kill me, yet will I love thee.³ Thus Job did, and thus should we do; but God knows there is not such a man again as Job was upon the face of the earth.⁴ For, alas, we are commonly but of the classes or form of which St. John speaks: We love God because God loved us first;⁵ and it were well if we would do but so, how much soever Satan slights it and seeks to disgrace it. Or is it, perhaps, that David speaks in the curiosity of this distinction, that we do not *amare Deum* [love God from feeling], but for his benefits; but we may *diligere Deum* [love God with reverence], without any consideration of his benefits had at all; and in this sense a natural man may *amare Deum*, but none but the spiritual man *diligere Deum*. But, O my soul, do thou endeavour to be of Job's form, to love God without distinction; and whether he hear thy voice or hear it not, whether he grant thy supplication or grant it not, yet to love him, and to love with *amando* and with *diligendo* [with affection and with reverence], and with any another devotion of love that can be expressed or conceived. For it is, indeed, no true love of God if we love him for anything but for himself, if we love ourselves but only for him, as it seems both Moses⁶ and St. Paul⁷ did, who for the love of God left all care of themselves, and were contented to have been (if they might have been) even *anathemas* [cursed].

But is this such a benefit to us that God hears us? Is his hearing our voice such an argument of his love? Alas! he may hear us, and we never the better: he may hear our voice, and yet his love to us perhaps but little, for who will not give a man the hearing though he love him not at all? With men perhaps it may be so, but not with God, for his

¹ Job i. 10. ² Job ii. 10. ³ Job xiii. 15: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."
⁴ Job i. 8. ⁵ 1 John iv. 19. ⁶ Exod. xxxii. 32: "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin . . . ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book."
⁷ Rom. ix. 3: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren."

hearing is not only voluntary, but reserved; *non omnibus dormit* [he does not sleep for every one's advantage];¹ his ears are not open to every one's cry; indeed to hear us is in God so great a favour that he may well be counted his favourite whom he vouchsafes to hear; and the rather for that his hearing is always operative and with a purpose of helping, that if he hear my voice I may be sure he means to grant my supplication, or rather, perhaps, in David's manner of expressing, in God's manner of proceeding, to hear my voice is no less in effect than to grant my supplication.

And now *because he hath inclined his ear to hear me, I will therefore call upon him as long as I live*² [ver. 2], that if it be expected I should call upon any other, it must be when I am dead, for as long as I live I have vowed to call upon God. But will this be well done? May I not in so doing do more than I shall have thanks for perhaps for my labour? Is this the requital that God shall have for his kindness in hearing me, that now he shall have a customer of me, and never be in quiet for my continual running to him and calling upon him? Doth God get anything by my calling upon him that I should make it a vow, as though in calling upon him, I did him a pleasure? O my soul, that God might indeed have a customer of me in praying, although I confess I should not be so bold to call upon him so continually if his own commanding me did not make it a duty, for hath not God bid me call upon him when I am in trouble?³ and is there any time that I am not in trouble as long as I live in this vale of misery? and then can there be any time as long as I live that I must not call upon him? For shall God bid me, and shall I not do it? shall God incline his ear, and stand listening to hear, and shall I hold my peace for the nonce that he may have nothing to hear? or shall I waive calling upon God, who I know both can and will hear me, and call upon some other who I know not whether they can or no? Is prayer worth anything if it be not in faith? and can there be faith where there is uncertainty? O my soul, this is a great secret, which we

¹ A strangely inappropriate quotation. ² Ps. cxvi. 2: "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." ³ Ps. l. 15.

should perhaps have never known if God himself had not revealed it to us, that to call upon him is not a trouble to him, but a pleasure; not in us a presumption, but a duty; though it be our suit, yet it is his service: it is indeed both our suit and service; and though his glory be not the more by it, yet his glory is the more manifested by it; and as he is a jealous God,¹ so of nothing so much as of his glory,—his glory he will not communicate with any other;² anything else perhaps, but not his glory; and this is all the glory he can have from us, that we acknowledge our own weakness, and his power; that we call upon him, not only as one that is able to help us, but as the only one that is able to help us, for else we satisfy not his jealousy; and if it be a true rule in philosophy, *Frustra fit per plura, quod fieri potest per pauciora* [That is vainly done by many means that can be effected by few]; it is no less true in divinity: it is in vain to call upon any other for relief but God alone, if God alone be able and willing to relieve us. Either, therefore, we must say that God is not able, or not willing to help us; or else confess it at least a great vanity to call for help to any other.

But if God's benefits be the motive to love him, why are not his afflictions as well a motive not to love him? For is there any evil in the city, and God hath not done it?³ No, my soul, the reason is not like; his benefits are all gratuitous, and come gratis from him; his afflictions are, as it were, violent, and come forcibly from him; his afflictions are punishments or chastisements duly deserved; but his benefits are not wages or rewards that are justly merited, and therefore we cannot so justly say that crosses and afflictions are cast upon us by God, as that they are drawn upon us by our own sin; for sorrows and pains are as the echoes, I may say, of sin; and according as this calls, so they answer: if sins be but light, there is like to be heard but a light reflex of sorrows; but if they be crying sins, heinous and loud, what marvel if the echoes be answerable, and that the sorrows of death compass us about, and the pains of hell take hold upon us⁴ [ver. 3].

¹ Exod. xx. 5. ² Isa. xlii. 8, xlviii. 11. ³ Amos iii. 6. ⁴ Ps. cxvi. 3: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow."

But if it be doubted by what means afflictions and crosses do happen to us, yet it cannot be doubted by what means they must be removed from us, seeing there is none able to roll away the grave-stone of our sins but only God;¹ and therefore no means to remove afflictions but only his mercy; and no means of this means but to call upon him. Do physicians use to come to a patient unless they be called? and why then should we look that God, the great Physician of our souls, should come to help us if we call not upon him? upon him, O my soul, and upon no other; for of his power and will to help me I cannot doubt; of others I may; for the sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell took hold upon me; and can I doubt of his power that hath delivered me from these? or can I think of any other that could deliver me from these, but only he? Could any deliver me from the sorrows of death but he only who triumphed over death?² Could any free me from the pains of hell, but he only who put hell itself to pain, and cast death and hell into the lake of fire?³ and shall I call upon any other to deliver me, but upon him only who I am well assured is able to deliver me? No, my soul, but to leave no time for calling upon any other; *I will call upon God as long as I live*,—not for a day, or a month, but all the days of my life, even as long as I live. And how long will that be? Alas! how long can it be, seeing the sorrows of death have already compassed me about, and the pains of hell have taken hold upon me? For what are the sorrows of death but sorrows like those of Rachel,⁴ that would not be comforted because they were not? What are the pains of hell but pains caused by guiltiness of sin that deserves hell,—pains not more in sense of torment than despair of remedy? What is it for the sorrows of death to compass me about but as it were to besiege me? and was it ever known, where they once besieged, that ever they did raise their siege? Was it ever known, where the pains of hell did once take hold, that ever they did let go their hold? and, alas, in this extremity of distress, in this gulf of despair, what hope could David pos-

¹ Mark xvi. 3.² 2 Tim. i. 10.³ Rev. xx. 14.⁴ Jer. xxxi. 15; Matt. ii. 18.

sibly have that ever he should be delivered? O my soul, the hope of Abraham; *in spe contra spem credidit* [against hope he believed in hope].¹ He believed against all credibility, he hoped against all possibility,—against all possibility indeed in the course of nature, against all credibility in the eye of reason; and therefore he makes his moan to one above the reach both of nature and reason: *O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul*² [ver. 4]; a short prayer for so great a suit; and yet as short as it was it prevailed; that if we wondered before at the power of God, we may wonder now at the power of prayer, that can prevail with God for obtaining of that which in nature is impossible, and to reason seems incredible.

There are many short prayers recorded in the scriptures, of which we may note especially three: this of David here, O Lord, deliver my soul; and that of the publican in the gospel, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner;³ and that of the thief upon the cross, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,⁴—all three short, yet all three prevalent, that we may know it is not the multiplicity of words or the length of prayers that prevails with God, but the fervency of spirit and the devotion of the heart. Yet lest it should be taken as a restraint of longer prayers, and especially lest it should be a scandal to the prayer which Christ taught us, and is much longer, we may observe withal that each of these prayers is but of one petition in Christ's prayer; for to say, O Lord, deliver my soul, is no more, nor fully so much, as to say, Deliver us from evil; and to say, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, is no more, nor fully so much, as to say, Forgive us our trespasses; and to say, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, is no more, nor so much, as to say, Thy kingdom come.⁵

But seeing David with his short prayer prevailed with God to deliver his soul, why should I despair of the like success of my prayers to be delivered from my troubles? O my soul, I should not despair of the like success as David had, if I could but pray with the like spirit as David did;

¹ Rom. iv. 18. ² Ps. cxvi. 4: "Then called I upon the name of the LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." ³ Luke xviii. 13: "God be merciful to me a sinner." ⁴ L. xxiii. 42. ⁵ Matt. vi. 9—13.

oh therefore, thou great God, that didst inspire David's heart with a spirit of zeal, which made his prayers not only acceptable, but effectual, vouchsafe also to kindle in my heart a fire of devotion, that my prayers may ascend unto thee like the sacrifice of Abel;¹ so acceptable, that they may be accepted; so accepted, that they may be effectual, and may make me to sing this alleluia of David, I will love the Lord, for he hath heard my voice and my supplication.

And now, O my soul, methinks I see the Lord as it were inclining his ear unto me; and I seem to feel an access of force in my confidence of his goodness, for indeed *the LORD is gracious and righteous; yea, our God is merciful*² [ver. 5]. He is gracious in hearing, he is righteous in judging, he is merciful in pardoning; and how then can I doubt of his will to help me? He is righteous to reward according to deserts; he is gracious to reward above deserts; yea, he is merciful to reward without deserts; and how then can I doubt of his will to help me? He is gracious, and this shows his bounty; he is righteous, and this shows his justice; yea, he is merciful, and this shows his love; and how then can I doubt of his will to help me? If he were not gracious, I could not hope he would hear me; if he were not righteous, I could not depend upon his promise; if he were not merciful, I could not expect his pardon; but now that he is gracious, and righteous,—yea, and merciful too, how can I doubt of his will to help me?

But are there no others that are gracious, and righteous, and merciful, as well as he? Are not the saints and angels in heaven? They are so, no doubt, but not as well as he: God forbid we should once have such a thought; they are gracious, and righteous, and merciful by participation only; and only by having, as it were, some beams imparted to them; but to be gracious as the Fountain of grace,³ to be righteous as the Sun of righteousness,⁴ to be merciful as the Author of mercy,⁵ there is none, there is none at all, neither saint nor angel, that is so, but only God; and there-

¹ Gen. iv. 4. ² Ps. cxvi. 5: "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." ³ Jer. ii. 13, xvii. 13: "Fountain of living waters." ⁴ Mal. iv. 2.
⁵ Heb. v. 9: "Author of eternal salvation."

fore of God's power and will to help me—of his, and of his only—I can only be assured. And if I err in simplicity, yet *the LORD preserveth the simple*¹ [ver. 6]; he takes not advantage of errors, where there is a good intention; yet not a good intention only where the truth is manifest and revealed, for then should Uzzah² have been preserved; but in matters obscure, and not plainly revealed, there to serve God in simplicity of heart, this falls within the compass of God's mercy, and such he takes into his protection. He gives them perhaps some resentment of their errors by worldly crosses, but yet he denies them not his assistance; and this I can speak of my own experience, for I was brought low, and yet he helped me: I was brought low, and in trouble, by the just provocation of my sins; but because I sinned not in presumption, but in simplicity, at least by infirmity, the Lord hath had mercy on me and preserved me. Or, *I was brought low, and he helped me*: for then is the time of help, when we are brought low; and therefore God, who doth all things in due time, when I was brought low, then he helped me. Wherefore, O my soul, let it never trouble thee how low soever thou be brought; for when thy state is at the lowest, then is God's assistance at the nearest, that we may truly say, God's ways are not as the ways of the world;³ for in the world, when a man is brought low, he is commonly trampled upon; and nothing is heard then but Down with him, down to the ground; but with God it is otherwise, for his property is to raise up them that fall, and when they are brought low, then to help them.⁴ That it is no such hard case for a man to be brought low, may I not rather say his case is happy? for is it not better to be brought low, and have God to help him, than to be set aloft, and left to help himself? At least, O my body, this may be a comfort to thee; for thou art sure to be brought low, as low as the grave, which is low indeed; yet there thou mayest rest in hope,⁵ for even there the Lord will not leave to help thee.

Or is it that he was brought low, was humbled in spirit, to

¹ Ps. cxvi. 6: "The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me." ² Sam. vi. 6, 7. ³ Isa. lv. 8. ⁴ Ps. cxlv. 14: "The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down." ⁵ Ps. xvi. 9.

seem vile in his own eyes, and then God helped him? For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.¹

Now therefore, *O my soul, return to thy rest, for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee* [ver. 7]. Now, my soul, let it be no longer said, Why art thou so heavy, and why art thou disquieted within me? for the Lord hath exceeded the bounds of mercifulness with his bountifulness: not only in mercy he hath forgiven my sins, but as if my sins had been merits, he hath made me also to taste of his bounty. He hath dealt indeed most bountifully with thee, for where thou didst make suit but for one thing, he hath granted thee three. Thou didst ask to have my soul delivered, and he hath delivered mine eyes and my feet besides⁴ [ver. 8], and with a deliverance in each of them the greatest that could be, for what greater deliverance to my soul than to be delivered from death? What greater deliverance to mine eyes than to be delivered from tears? What to my feet than to be delivered from falling? that if now, O my soul, thou return not to thy rest, thou wilt show thyself to be most insatiable, seeing thou hast not only more than thou didst ask, but as much indeed as was possible to be asked.

But can my soul die? and if not, what bounty is it then to deliver my soul from that to which it is not subject? The soul indeed, though immortal, hath yet her ways of dying. It is one kind of death to the soul to be parted from the body, but the truest kind is to be parted from God; and from both these kinds of death he hath delivered my soul: from the first, by delivering me from a dangerous sickness that threatened a dissolution of my soul and body; from the other, by delivering me from the guilt of sin that threatened a separation from the favour of God; and are not these bounties to give my soul just cause of returning to her rest? It is true, it is the imperfection of life that is subject to sickness, and sickness draws mortality after it; but this imperfection is not here, for *he hath delivered my soul from*

¹ Jas. iv. 6. ² Ps. cxvi. 7: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee" ³ Ps. xlii. 5, 11, xliii. 5: "Why art thou cast down," etc. ⁴ Ps. cxvi. 8: "For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling"

death, and what is this but to have perfect health? yet it is the imperfection of health that it is subject to crosses, and crosses are the cause of tears; but neither hath this imperfection any place here, for *he hath delivered mine eyes from tears*; and what is this but to have perfect joy? yet it is the imperfection of joy that it useth not to continue, as it is said of the prosperity of the wicked, They are set in slippery places,¹ and are apt to fall; but neither is this imperfection found here, for *he hath delivered my feet from falling*; and what is this but to be assured of continuance? If then thou hast such health, such joy, such stability,—health not subject to sickness, joy not capable of sorrow, stability not obnoxious to falling,—how canst thou, O my soul, how canst thou choose but pacify thy unquietness, and return to thy rest? But, alas, the rest thou canst return to now is but a type of that true rest when thou shalt rest from thy labours, and when thy works that now go with thee shall then follow thee.² Thou hast now but one day of rest for six days of labour,³ but then thou shalt have an eternal Sabbath,⁴ without any days of labour to disquiet it.

But though this rest cannot now be had whilst thou dwellest in a restless body, and thy body in a restless world, yet there is a rest that is worth the having, and may only, my soul, be called thy rest,—the rest which consists in the peace of conscience; and to this rest thou mayest well return, seeing not only thou art at peace with God, as being justified by his grace, but thou art in his favour also, as having dealt so bountifully with thee. And when thou returnest to this rest, to the end thou mayest have some exercise to thy rest, that thy resting make thee not restive, *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living* [ver. 9]. For now that my feet are delivered from falling, how can I better employ them than in walking? Were they delivered from falling, to the end they should stand still and be idle? No, my soul, but to encourage me to walk; and where is so good walking as in the land of the living? Alas! what walking is it in the

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 18. ² Rev. xiv. 13. ³ Exod. xx. 9; Deut. v. 13. ⁴ Heb. iv. 9: "There remaineth therefore a rest (Gr. *σαββατισμός*, a *keeping of Sabbath*) to the people of God."

winter, when all things seem dead, when the very grass lies buried under ground, and scarce anything that hath life in it to be seen? but then is the pleasant walking when Nature spreads her green carpet to walk upon; and then it is a land of the living, when the trees show they live by bringing forth, if not fruits, at least leaves; when the valleys show they live by bringing forth, if not sweet flowers to delight the smell, at least fresh grass to please the eyes. But is this the walking in the land of the living that David means? O my soul, to walk in the land of the living is to walk in the paths of righteousness,¹ for there is no such death to the soul as sin; no such cause of tears to the eyes as guiltiness of conscience; no such falling of the feet as to fall from God; and therefore, to say the truth, the soul can never return to its rest if we walk not withal in the paths of righteousness; and we cannot well say whether this rest be a cause of the walk, or the walking be a cause of the resting; but this we may say, they are certainly companions one to the other, which is in effect but this, that justification can never be without sanctification; peace of conscience, and godliness of life, can never be one without the other. Or is it, perhaps, that David means that land of the living where Enoch² and Elijah³ are living with the living God? But if he mean so, how can he speak so confidently, and say, I will walk in the land of the living, as though he could come to walk there by his own strength or at his own pleasure? He therefore gives his reason: *I believed, and therefore I spake*⁴ [ver. 10], for the voice of faith is strong, and speaks with confidence; and because in faith he believed that he shall come to walk in the land of the living, therefore with confidence he speaks it: I will walk in the land of the living; and perhaps to signify that he shall not walk there against his will, but that he endeavours and useth the best means he can that he may walk there. For indeed if we endeavour not to walk here, with Enoch and Elijah, in the paths of righteousness, we shall never come to walk with God in the land of the living.

¹ Ps. xxiii. 3. ² Heb. xi. 5; Gen. v. 24. ³ 2 Kings ii. 11. ⁴ Ps. cxvi. 10: "I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted."

But though I had spoken thus, and thus confidently, yet I found myself in trouble and affliction still, which made me say in my haste, *All men are liars*¹ [ver. 11]. In my haste indeed, for I thought not of one man who was far from being a liar, and in whose mouth was found no guile.²

It seems that to give the lie was not so heinous an offence in David's time as it is in these days, for else how durst he have spoken such words that all men are liars, which is no less than to give the lie to the whole world? And yet no man. I think, will challenge him for saying so, no more than challenge St. John for saying that all men are sinners.³ And indeed how should any man avoid being a liar, seeing the very being man is itself a lie; not only a vanity, and put in the balance is less than vanity, but a very lie, promising great matters, and is able to do just nothing; as Christ saith, Without me ye can do nothing;⁴ and so Christ seems to come in, as it were, to be David's second, and to make his word good, that all men be liars. And now let the world do its worst, and take the lie how it will; for David, having Christ on his side, will always be able to make his part good against all the world, for Christ hath overcome the world.⁵

But though all men may be said to be liars, yet not all men in all things, for then David himself should be a liar in this: but all men perhaps in something or other, at some time or other, in some kind or other; absolute truth not found in any man, but in that man only who was not man only, for if he had been but so it had not perhaps been found in him neither, seeing absolute truth and deity are as relatives never found to be asunder.

But in what thing is it that all men should be liars? Indeed, in this, for one, to think that God regards not nor loves not them whom he suffers to be afflicted; for we may rather think he loves them most whom he suffers to be most afflicted; and we may truly say, he would never

¹ Ps. cxvi. 11: "I said in my haste, All men are liars." ² 1 Pet. ii. 22: "Neither was guile found in his mouth." Cf. Ps. xxxvii. 2. ³ 1 John v. 19: "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Rom. iii. 23: "All men have sinned." ⁴ John xv. 5. ⁵ John xvi. 33.

have suffered his servant Job to be afflicted so exceeding cruelly if he had not loved him exceeding tenderly;¹ for there is nothing lost by suffering afflictions; no, my soul, they do but serve to make up the greater weight of glory,² when it shall be revealed.

But let his afflictions be what they can be, yet I will always acknowledge they can never be in any degree so great as his benefits; and oh that I could think of something that I might *render to him for all his benefits*³ [ver. 12]; for shall I receive so great, so infinite benefits from him, and shall I render nothing to him by way of gratefulness? But, alas, what have I to render? all my rendering to him will be but taking more from him, for all I can do is but *to take the cup of salvation and call upon his name*⁴ [ver. 13]; and what rendering is there in this taking? If I could take the cup of tribulation, and drink it off, for his sake, this perhaps might be a rendering of some value; but this, God knows, is no work for me to do. It was his work who said, Can ye drink of the cup of which I shall drink?⁵ Indeed, he drank of the cup of tribulation, to the end that we might take the cup of salvation, but then in taking it we must call upon his name—upon his name, and upon no other's; for else we shall make it a cup of condemnation, seeing there is no name under heaven in which we may be saved, but only the name of Jesus.⁶

Yet it may be some rendering to the Lord if I pay my vows, and do, as it were, my penance openly: I will therefore pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people⁷ [ver. 14]. But might he not pay his vows as well in his closet, between God and himself, as to do it publicly? No, my soul, it serves not his turn—indeed, not God's turn, but he must pay them in the presence of all his people; yet not to the end he should be applauded for a just prayer; for though he pay them, yet he can never pay them to the full; but to the

¹ Heb. xii. 6. ² 2 Cor. iv. 17. ³ Ps. cxvi. 12: "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" ⁴ Ps. cxvi. 13: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD." ⁵ Matt. xx. 22; Mark x. 33. ⁶ Acts iv. 12. ⁷ Ps. cxvi. 14: "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people."

end that men, seeing his good works, may glorify God by his example;¹ and the rather, perhaps, for that David was a king, and the king's example prevails much with the people, to make them pay their vows to God; but most of all, that by this means David's piety may not be barren, but may make a breed of piety in the people also, which may be one mystical reason why it was counted a curse in Israel to be barren; for he that pays not his vows to God in the presence of his people, may well be said to be barren in Israel, seeing he begets no children to God by his example. And perhaps, also, the vows which David means here, was the doing of some mean things unfit in show for the dignity of a king, as when it was thought a base thing in him to dance before the ark, he then vowed he would be baser yet;² and in this case, to pay his vows before the people becomes a matter of necessity, for as there is no honour to a man whilst he is by himself alone, so there is no shame to a man but before people; and therefore to show that he is not ashamed to do anything how mean soever, so it may tend to the glorifying of God, he will pay his vows in the presence of all his people; and he will do it though it cost him his life, for if he die for it he knows that *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints* [ver. 15].

But that which is precious is commonly desired; and doth God then desire the death of his saints? He desires, no doubt, that death of his saints which is to die to sin,³ but for any other death of his saints, it is therefore said to be precious in his sight, because he lays it up with the greater carefulness; and for this it is there are such several mansions in God's house,⁴ that to them whose death is precious in his sight, he may assign the most glorious mansions. This indeed is the reward of martyrdom; and the encouragement of martyrs, though their sufferings be most insufferable, their tortures most intolerable, yet this makes amends for all, that Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; for if it be so great a happiness to be acceptable in his sight, how great a happiness must it be to be precious in

¹ Matt. v. 16.² 2 Sam. vi. 16, 20—22.³ Rom. vi. 10, 11.⁴ John xiv. 2.

his sight? When God at the creation looked upon all his works, it is said he saw them to be all exceeding good;¹ but it is not said that any of them were precious in his sight; and how then comes death to be precious in his sight, that was none of his works, but is a destroyer of his works? Is it possible that a thing which destroys his creatures should have a title of more value in his sight than his creatures themselves? O my soul, this is one of the miracles of his saints, and perhaps one of those which Christ meant when he said to his apostles that greater miracles than he did, they should do themselves; for what greater miracle than this, that death, which of itself is a thing most vile in the sight of God, yet once embraced by his saints, as it were by their touch only, becomes precious in his sight? and to alter a thing from being vile to be precious, is it not a greater miracle than to turn water into wine?² Indeed so it is: death doth not damnify³ his saints, but his saints do dignify death; death takes nothing away from his saints' happiness, but his saints add lustre to death's vileness; and it is happy for death that ever it met with any of God's saints, for there was no way for it else in the world to be ever had in any account. But why say I, in the world? for it is of no account in the world for all this. It is but only in the sight of God; but indeed this only is all in all; for to be precious in God's sight is more to be prized than the world itself; for when the world shall pass away, and all the glory of it be laid in the dust, then shall trophies be erected for the death of his saints; and when all monuments of the world shall be utterly defaced, and all records quite razed out, yet the death of his saints shall stand registered still, in fair red letters, in the calendar of heaven; for if there be glory laid up for them that die in the Lord, much more shall they be glorified that die for the Lord.

I have wondered oftentimes why God will suffer his saints to die: I mean not the death natural; for I know, *statutum est omnibus semel mori* [it is appointed unto all men once to die],⁴ but the death that is by violence, and with torture;

¹ Gen. i. 31.² John ii. 9.³ Injure, inflict loss upon.⁴ Heb. ix. 27.

for who could endure to see them he loves so cruelly handled? But now I see the reason of it; for Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; and what marvel then if he suffer his saints to die when by dying they are wrought and made fit jewels to be set in his cabinet? for as God hath a bottle which he fills up with the tears of his saints,¹ so I may say he hath a cabinet which he decks up with the deaths of his saints; and, O my soul, if thou couldst but comprehend what a glory it is to serve for a jewel in the decking up of God's cabinet, thou wouldst never wonder why he suffers his saints to be put to death, though with never so great torments, for it is but the same which St. Paul saith, The afflictions of this life are not worthy of the glory that shall be revealed.²

But if you will have a glass to view the extent of this preciousness, and plainly to see how precious in the sight of God the death of his saints is, then look upon the revenge that is taken for it, for there is nothing that God takes so much to heart, and of which he takes so sharp revenge, as the death of his saints. To touch them, is to touch the apple of his eye;³ and if the punishment of Cain⁴ be not thought sufficient to make it appear, at least the complaint of Christ against Jerusalem will be sufficient: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets!⁵ and it is thought by some that the destruction of Jerusalem was the rather hastened to revenge the death of James who was called the Just; but howsoever, this we know, it was therefore executed to revenge the death of Jesus, who was truly the Just; and may we not well take notice that the death was exceeding precious when the revenge that was taken was so exceeding furious? But why speak I of death, when I may yet do God good service in life; and if the death of his saints be precious in his sight, certainly the life of his servants is not unregarded; for whether we die, we die to the Lord; or whether we live, we live to the Lord;⁶ and though in this life we cannot expect the reward of saints, yet in this life we may claim the respect of servants, and in

¹ Ps. lvi. 8. ² Rom. viii. 18. ³ Zech. ii. 8. ⁴ Gen. iv. 11, 12. ⁵ Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34. ⁶ Rom. xiv. 8.

this I claim an interest myself; for *truly, O LORD, I am thy servant*¹ [ver. 16]; and oh that I could serve thee so truly that I might hear thee say, *Euge, bone serve* [Well done, thou good servant];² for we are all very ready to profess ourselves thy servants, but very unready to do the service of our profession, and specially in these times when servant is grown to be a word of compliment rather than of truth; that to say, I am thy servant, is all one as to say, I am a hypocrite. But, O Lord, let it not be found so in me, not be thought so of me, for I am thy servant by a double right, (and oh that I could do thee double service!) as thou art the Lord of life, and as I am the son of thy handmaid: not of Hagar, but of Sarah; not of the bond-woman, but of the free;³ and therefore I serve thee, not in fear, but in love; or there fore in fear, because in love; and then is service best done when it is done in love; and in love indeed I am bound to serve thee; for *thou hast loosed my bonds*,—the bonds of death which compassed me about, by delivering me from a dangerous sickness, and restoring me to health, or in a higher kind. Thou hast loosed my bonds by freeing me from being a captive to be a servant; and which is more, from being a servant to be a son; and more than this yet, from being a son of thy handmaid, to be a son of thyself, and therefore indeed a son of thyself, because a son of thy handmaid, for what is thy handmaid but thy Church? and he that is not born of this handmaid, though he may have the general benefit of a servant, sustenance and protection, yet he can never have the special benefits of a son, freedom and inheritance.

Or thou hast loosed my bonds, thou hast freed me from the heavy yoke of the ceremonies of the law, and hast enfranchised me with the glorious liberty of the gospel; that where before thou didst require the sacrifice of servants, which was the blood of beasts; now thou acceptest the sacrifice of sons, which is prayer and thanksgiving: *I will therefore offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon*

¹ Ps. cxvi. 16: "O LORD, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." ² Matt. xxv. 21, 23. ³ Gal. iv. 22—26, 31.

thy name¹ [ver. 17]; for prayer and thanksgiving make both but one sacrifice; and seeing all sacrifice is due only to thee, therefore to thee only I will offer both my thanksgiving and my prayer. I could not make thanksgiving a sacrifice if prayer did not begin it; I could not make prayer a sacrifice if thanksgiving did not finish it. If there should be thanksgiving, and no prayer, the sacrifice would want a foot; if prayer, and no thanksgiving, it would want a head; for as the *basis* [foundation] is prayer, so the *coronis* [completion] is thanksgiving; although perhaps thanksgiving be but the act, and thankfulness the habit, and it is the habit that makes the sacrifice, because it must be *juge sacrificium*—a continual sacrifice, which the act cannot be.² And if there had been a word to express the habit of praying, as thankfulness doth of thanksgiving, perhaps St. Paul would have used it where he saith, Pray continually,³ for who can doubt but he means the habit of praying, and not the act? and where he saith, In all things give thanks⁴ (*εὐχαριστεῖτε*), it intends perhaps but this, In all things be thankful.

And what then shall the thankfulness or the thanksgiving be that I will offer to God for a sacrifice? O my soul, it shall be an acknowledging of his benefits, and of his only benefits; it shall be a proclaiming him to be my patron, and my only patron; it shall be an extolling him for his mercy in forgiving my sins, for his graciousness in healing all my infirmities, for his compassion in redeeming my soul from destruction, and for his bounty in crowning me with loving-kindness and tender mercies;⁵ it shall be indeed a vowing to him the whole service of all the faculties of my soul and body. And not to be done in a corner, as though I were not willing it should be known; nor before some few people only, as though I were loth too many should see it; but *I will pay my vows to him in the presence of all his people*⁶ [ver. 18], that young and old, rich and poor, high and low, may all be witnesses of my thankfulness: this, for

¹ Ps. cxvi. 17: "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the LORD." ² Heb. xiii. 15. ³ 1 Thess. v. 17: "Pray without ceasing." ⁴ 1 Thess. v. 18. ⁵ Ps. cxiii. 3, 4. ⁶ Ps. cxvi. 18: "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people."

the persons before whom it shall be done ; and t en for the place in which it shall be done : it shall be done *in the courts of the LORDS house*¹ [ver. 19] ; if any place be more conspicuous, more public than other, it shall be done there, it shall be done *in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem* ; that the fame of it may be spread, that the sound of it may equally go forth into all parts of the world, that as all thy people shall be beholders of my thankfulness, so all the world shall be admirers of thy goodness ; and as there is in heaven an alleluia of thy saints, so there shall be in earth an alleluia of thy servants, of which number, of both which numbers, my hope is to be one ; and that I may be sure to be one, O my soul, praise thou the Lord ; and because my own praising will be but a very small service, therefore mend it, my soul, by calling upon others, and saying, Praise ye the Lord.

¹ Ps. cxvi. 19 : " In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD."

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(*Vide* also footnote to pp. xxxvi. and xxxvii. of Memorial-Introduction

161^o for Lu. xxiii. 62—65. *read* Matt. xxvii. 29, 30, Mark xiv. 65.
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