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STUDIES  
IN THE  
PSALMS

Volume One (1-72)

JOSEPH BRYANT  
ROTHERHAM

(Translator of "The Emphasised Bible")

Paraphrase by

KENNETH N. TAYLOR

from the *Living Psalms And Proverbs*

Questions for Discussion by

DON DE WELT

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College Press, Joplin, Missouri

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# FOREWORD

The Author of these "Studies" did not live to see his work in print, and this volume is issued by his son.

It was very natural that the Translator of "The Emphasised Bible," and the Author of "Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews," should, in a period of unusual leisure at the close of a long life, turn his attention with renewed zest to a study of the Psalter. The immediate incentive to the work came from the Westminster Bible School. In his "Reminiscences," written in 1906, the Author says:—"It is very pleasant to me to avow that the impulse to make an attempt on the Psalms was lately received at Westminster Bible School, so ably conducted by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. . . . I could never have anticipated, during the quiet years of bygone labour on the Holy Scriptures, being spared to enjoy the profound satisfaction of hearing lectures so greatly to

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

my mind and so manifestly potent for good as these lectures on the Divine Library by Dr. Morgan. Long may this Bible School flourish, and far may its influence extend."

The Translator of "The Emphasised Bible" wrote out the whole of the Bible—portions of it several times over—with his own hand. Forty years' experience only confirmed his conviction, that there should be no such thing as finality in the work of Bible Translation and Revision, and in his pamphlet entitled "Our Sacred Books" he says:—

"Consider further that the world moves. Grammars are multiplied; dictionaries quarry in new directions; Palestine is re-explored; Assyrian and Egyptian Tablets are unearthed; more ancient scrolls are deciphered and collated. And all this means constantly accumulating gains making for revision. For what can be done ought to be done if the claims of truth are supreme.

"Consider further, many men, many minds; various gifts, a more effective army of occupation. The God of the Bible is not weary of bestowing His bounties, and He delights to make one relay of toilers helpful to another. This means much. For, as no two observers of nature ever see with the same eyes, so in the study of Hebrew and Greek no two students detect precisely the same cogencies and felicities.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Whatever translation of the Bible we prefer, and whether or not we compare therewith other versions, let us never forget that it is our duty and privilege to rise above all mere formalism even in Bible reading, and use all our powers to get at the heart of divine things. God's works and ways and thoughts so far as revealed in His Word—let these be the objects of our search and the subjects which engage our meditation; let us seek to turn these into realities, by looking at them from every side, and translating them into our own language and into our own thoughts. Let us try to get at the facts through the words, at the sense through the sounds. Let us guard against being rocked to sleep by the lullaby of unpenetrated sentences whose meaning we do not understand. Let us not dream that we can be made holy and safe by mere verbal charms."

## FOREWORD

The writer of these words was in some respects pre-eminently a man of the Grammar and Lexicon. He delighted in subtle shades of meaning sometimes only discoverable by microscopical research. He was fond of tracking words to their hiding-places. He had the instincts and patience of the hunter in following the trail, and he delighted to bring forth into the light of day his trophies of the chase. His trained memory readily recalled parallel passages and related incidents, and in these Psalm Studies the higher teaching of the New Testament is often brought to bear with good effect.

Many choice phrases, called from the works of modern scholars, and placed in the footnotes following the text, or referred to in the Expositions, bear witness to the Author's keen appreciation of the writings of others; but he was a man of independent mind, accustomed to draw his own conclusions after a careful first-hand investigation of all the available evidence. He occupied a somewhat unique position between scholarly experts on the one hand, and the average Bible student on the other, and in these "Studies," the needs of advanced students and the rights of the unlearned, have alike been conserved.

Special thanks are heartily tendered to Dr. J. W. Thirtle (whose own work on the Psalter is referred to by the Author in the following Preface) for kindly help in examining the proof-sheets. But for the exceptional clearness of the Author's handwriting, the printing of a work extending to upwards of eighteen hundred MS. pages, without his personal supervision, would not have been possible, and in accomplishing the task grateful reference should be made to the care bestowed upon it by the printers. It is recognized that both Managers and Staff (including the Author's friend, Mr. R. T. Hesketh), have taken special pains in carrying through an undertaking which makes unusual demands on typographical resources and technical skill.

The present writer is persuaded that "the further endeavour after accuracy," by a "diligent revision" of the text of these Sacred Lyrics, and the Freshness and Vigour of the Expositions, embodying as they do the garnered fruit of prolonged meditations and ripe experience, will be welcomed by Bible students, and will justify this addition to the literature of the Psalter.

J. G. R.

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Catford, London, S.E.

# PREFACE

The aim of this volume is to induce readers of *The Psalms* to become students. Any apprehension on my part of being deemed presumptuous in preparing it, has been held in abeyance by three considerations: first, that the wants of students are various; second, that the methods of teachers are diverse; and, third, that the *Psalms* themselves are inexhaustible. This last conclusion outweighs all others. Franz Delitzsch—himself one of the ablest of commentators on the *Psalms*—says: *The Psalms* “are inexhaustible; there always remains an undeciphered remnant; and therefore the business of exposition, although it has a progress, yet has no end.” Hence the hope that this further contribution will simply be judged on its merits.

It will be convenient if I at once state precisely what I have here attempted.

In the first place, I have reproduced the text of the *Psalms* which had already been given in “*The Emphasised Bible*”—of

## PREFACE

course, *diligently revised*; for it was not possible to refrain from embodying therein a further endeavour after accuracy. At the same time, I have deliberately retained in this rendering of the Psalms nearly as much as before of the Hebrew Emphatic Idiom, being, as I am, profoundly convinced of the possibility of putting into intelligible and forceful English more of the idiomatic felicity of the original than is commonly deemed consistent with the composition of classic English.

Especially where careful interpretation is the immediate end in view, is a correctly emphasised English text a clear gain for securing a true exposition.

Scholars will observe that, in the small reference-notes placed at the foot of the text, not only are they themselves conveniently reminded of critical results with which from ampler sources they are already familiar, but that those very notes, fragmentary as they may appear to the casual reader, do nevertheless furnish enticing stepping-stones for such as would hesitate to plunge into deeper critical waters; by a discrete use of which, therefore, the less thoroughly equipped student may be materially assisted.

Less venturesome readers—in fact, all who for want of time or self-reliance shrink from being too severely taxed—are requested to observe that the “Exposition” proper which follows the psalm has been as far as possible disencumbered of critical details, so as to render it, if not always quite easy reading, yet at least not so difficult as to impede the progress of sensible and candid lovers of the Psalms. Questions of authorship and subsequent adaptation have, indeed, here been rather freely discussed; but only under the confident persuasion that—based as they are on the broad grounds of circumstantial evidence such as confront most men in daily life—they can be made, not merely intelligible, but intensely interesting to average Bible students.

I have not shrunk from the labour and risks of trying to make my “Introduction” really introductory, by providing the reader with details and references calculated to smooth his path, and to suggest other methods, similar to those here actually pursued, by which he may add to the “Studies” of another further and still sweeter studies of his own.

It remains only to indicate the extent of my indebtedness to various critics in preparing this volume, and to express my gratitude if I have, by the Divine blessing, been enabled worthily to enter into their labours.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

To Dr. Ginsburg my obligations are ever growing, the longer I am spared to use his magnificent "Massoretico-Critical Hebrew Bible" with its precious footnotes, and to consult his invaluable "Introduction" to the same.

To Dr. Driver I am exceedingly grateful for his "Parallel Psalter," from the text, notes, and first glossary of which I have gleaned many suggestions of the greatest practical value.

To the Introductory volumes of Thrupp I owe several fruitful suggestions; and I am still more sensible of all kinds of assistance derived from the translations and commentaries of Perowne, Delitzsch, Kirkpatrick, and Briggs. To the last named, my obligations are peculiar. As may be gathered from my Introduction, Chapter II., I have often felt compelled to decline his over-rigid metrical principles and his over-daring resort to conjecture; at the same time his drastic methods have in several instances furnished relief from difficulties which no other critic has seemed able to surmount.

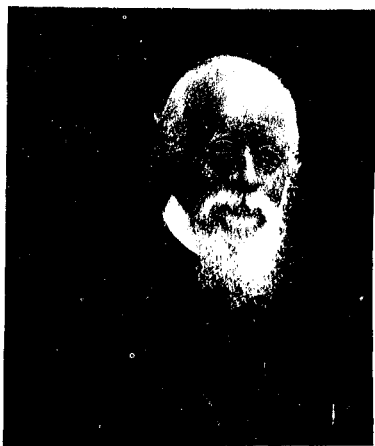
Next to Ginsburg, however, Dr. Thirtle would seem to have placed me under the deepest debt of gratitude, for having furnished a fresh view-point from which to study the origin and early history of the Psalms. I could not wait to see how he would weather the storm of disapprobation which his two works on "The Titles of the Psalms" and on "Old Testament Problems" were certain to provoke; and therefore laid myself under severe caution to beware of following him too implicitly, especially as the results at which he had arrived were so exceedingly acceptable to my prepossessions. But this I am bound in candour to acknowledge: that, in several instances, where I started the study of a psalm in doubt of Thirtle's view of its origin, I ended in a surprisingly complete agreement. Sooner or later, the weight of internal evidence generally brought me into unison with his conclusions. In a few matters as to which we at present may appear to differ, he will, I think, see that I am right. But when all of this nature is said that can be said, there remains in my mind the persuasion that it is mainly due to Dr. Thirtle that my recent studies in the Psalms became such a delightful discovery to me of traces of autobiographies, weaving themselves into the histories of both David and Hezekiah.

I am profoundly thankful to have been permitted to undertake and complete these "Studies In The Psalms".

JOSEPH BRYANT ROTHERHAM.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR



JOSEPH BRYANT ROTHERHAM

#### *About the author . . .*

Joseph Bryant Rotherham was born in New Buckenham, Norfolk, England in 1828. His father was a Wesleyan preacher. Mr. Rotherham followed in his father's footsteps, and in his young manhood was a Methodist preacher.

Because of his eager desire to learn and his transparent sincerity, he soon became dissatisfied with the Methodist form of baptism. In 1853 he was im-

mersed publicly by a Baptist minister. Because of opposition from his former friends, Mr. Rotherham became a preacher of the Particular Baptist Church. It was not long until he discovered that the purpose he saw for baptism as he read the New Testament, was not shared by his fellow Baptist preachers. On June 5, 1854, he wrote a letter to "The Ministers and Messengers of the Shropshire Baptist Association", in which he said "The fact is, I could not be comfortable to sit still and hear esteemed Christian brethren ill-spoken of, (and I take the liberty to think misrepresented) as I have done at some of our district meetings. I refer to brethren commonly known as Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same independent and fearless examination of the Word of God, which induced me to regard believers' immersion as the only scriptural baptism, has also led me to the conclusion that on the design of this ordinance the views of these brethren are far clearer and more scriptural than those commonly entertained by Baptists, whether General or Particular."

From that date forward he labored for a restoration of primitive Christianity. For fourteen years he was engaged in evangelistic work in Wales and Scotland.

J. B. Rotherham was a Greek and Hebrew scholar recognized on both sides of the Atlantic. He contributed many articles to the British MILLENNIAL HARBINGER. His greatest work was THE EMPHASISED BIBLE: this monumental work of a great number of years, contains a new translation of the entire Bible with a unique type of marking to indicate just what emphasis is found in the original language. By following such markings, the reading of the Bible in English will be given the same emphasis as indicated in the Greek or Hebrew.

His work on Psalms was begun when he was past seventy and was given his undivided attention until its completion shortly before his death. R. B. Rotherham passed from this life to the next in 1910.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS



# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PSALMS AS LITERATURE

The Psalms, whether as a section of our Bible or as an independent book (conveniently named the Psalter), are related to all literature by certain leading characteristics; such as authorship, transmission, multiplication, subject and object; and, like all other books, they have a peculiar history of their own.

The Psalter is obviously a book of Devotion, consisting of prayers and praises addressed to Jehovah the God of Israel, interspersed with personal and national reminiscences intended to promote the spirit of worship.

The Psalter is an ancient book, traceable backwards, through Latin, Greek and Syriac translations to the Hebrew in which it was first written.

The evidence of its antiquity is manifold and conclusive. Hebrew Bibles, containing The Psalms, began to be printed

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

towards the close of the fifteenth century. These were printed from manuscripts, technically called *codices*, some of which were written centuries before the invention of printing and are still preserved in the great libraries of the world. The exemplars from which existing codices were made, or the exemplars of those exemplars, were the standards from which the Ancient Versions were executed, as is known from the practical identity of the Text in those versions with the Text preserved in existing Hebrew copies. The New Testament itself, which had an independent existence and has come down to us through channels of its own, quotes from the Psalter as an already existing book, partly in its Hebrew form and partly in the Greek translation of it and the rest of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. The Septuagint was executed, in successive installments, during the interval between about B.C. 200 and the Christian Era.

The measure and kind of agreement between the Greek and the Hebrew clearly attest the priority of the latter; seeing that terms and idioms appear in the Greek which could only have been derived from the Hebrew, such as musical terms not understood by the Greek translators, and idioms native in Hebrew but foreign in Greek, which no Greek originators would have employed. We thus *know* that the Hebrew Bible is older than the Greek; and can affirm with confidence that the Psalms in particular were in existence at least two or three hundred years before Christ. At this point a new and very peculiar species of evidence comes in, carrying the witness to the antiquity of Hebrew Scriptures some centuries further back. The Hebrew Bible was gradually *transliterated* out of an old script, allied to the Samaritan, into the present square Hebrew letters. This process of transliteration, beginning about the time of Ezra the Scribe, took centuries to bring to completion. Traces of it can be detected by experts in transcription errors which could only arise by confounding with each other letters which were nearly alike in the old script but not in the new. This peculiar form of transcriptional evidence, accordingly, carries us back to a time considerably antedating that in which the Septuagint Version was brought into existence. The Hebrew Bible must have been extant before it could be transliterated into its present square Hebrew characters: which is as far back as we need at present go, inasmuch as we thus obtain a solid foundation on which further observations, specifically relating to the Psalms, can securely rest.

## THE PSALMS AS LITERATURE

Some of the observations now to follow apply equally to the Hebrew Bible as a whole as to the Psalter. Others have special or sole reference to the Psalms; hence it is left to the reader to widen out the application as he sees fit, and we can concentrate our attention on the book immediately before us.

Observation 1.—*The antiquity of the Psalter has given rise to an interesting and instructive History of Transmission.* We have the Psalms in our possession: how did we get them? by what steps have they come down to us? Let us work out the answer in both directions, backwards and forwards: first beginning with the present, and stepping backwards to the point of origin; and then starting with the origin of the Psalms, and coming down to the present time.

a. The Psalms have been translated into English: no matter now by whom.

b. Most English versions of the Psalter have been made from the *printed* Hebrew Text.

c. This Text is a transcript of previously existing *manuscript* copies.

d. The copying of ancient Hebrew manuscripts naturally became, in the course of centuries, a *fine art*, on which various classes of literary artists were engaged. They included the following,—still, for the present, working our way backwards:—

α. Manuscript correctors, named *nakdanim*.

β. Manuscript producers, or professional copyists.

γ. Massorites; or “hedgers,” custodians, guardians of the sacred text.

δ. Editors: as Ezra, the *sopher* or “scribe,” and his successors, the Sopherim.

ε. Authors; as David, Hezekiah, and their associates and helpers in authorship, such as Asaph, Jeduthun and others.

Throwing these now into the reverse or historical order, they stand as follows:—

A. AUTHORS, or original psalm-composers.

B. EDITORS, or authoritative collectors and care-takers.

C. MASSORITES—of whom more anon.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- D. COPYISTS, or professional transcribers and multipliers of copies.
- E. NAKDANIM, or professional inspectors and correctors of copies when made.

As it is important to have as clear notions as possible of these several functions, which to some extent overlap each other, it will not be superfluous to pass them again, and more deliberately, under review.

A. AUTHORS.—It should be remembered that the author of a psalm might employ an amanuensis to do the actual writing down of a composition at his master's dictation. Such an amanuensis, when serving a royal author, would naturally be, permanently or for the time, a "king's scribe": not an author, but the author's right-hand; not an editor, with an editor's right of control and modification, such as was afterwards conceded to the Sopherim as a class, but the mere scribal executor of the composer's wishes; although it would be too much to say that such king's scribe had *no* liberty as to small details, since it may very well have been that, as a confidential servant and a competent penman, he may have paid chief regard to his master's habits and known wishes, and may occasionally have saved his master from himself—in matters of inadvertence.

Still thinking primarily of the author of a psalm, it should be further remembered that he himself might, after composing a psalm, subsequently edit, modify and adapt his own composition to later circumstances. Indeed, it may be laid down as an axiom, which any good printing-office can verify: That if an author does not edit his own production, then someone else must do it for him. Doubtless, David thus edited some of his own early psalms, so as, for instance, to fit them for his ascension to the throne, or for his bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem; if not, indeed, also for subsequent use by his son Solomon on the anticipated occasion of the dedication of the Temple, for which we know that he otherwise made thoughtful and ample provision.

It is further worth bearing in mind that the author of some psalms may have suggested the composing of others. David, for example, had about him gifted and trusted men, competent and disposed to share the work of authorship along with their royal master. Such a helper in psalm-production would naturally come under classification as "king's seer," and such a coadjutor Asaph and other devout singers may well have been.

## THE PSALMS AS LITERATURE

Hezekiah clearly occupied a unique position as a Joint-Author of psalms; not only composing new psalms to suit new occasions; but overhauling, curtailing, changing and extending old psalms, to adapt them to altered circumstances. It would be foolish to blame him for this; since, as a practical man, he no doubt judged, of certain old psalms preserved in the Royal Library, that they must either be thus renovated, or else be left still in disuse so far as temple-worship was concerned. Besides, as a divinely taught man, he may have been conscious of no disability to render this important service to his own generation; while yet his reverence for his great ancestor may have moved him to retain David's name over a psalm wherever feasible. It may thus justifiably have come to pass that quite a number of Hezekiah's adaptations are still superscribed as "by David."

B. EDITORS.—Passing by the editorship of authors who were, and in so far as they were, their own editors, we come to Editors proper, such as Ezra and his successors. As to Ezra himself, perhaps we shall never know how much, under Divine goodness, we owe it to him that we have any preserved Old Testament at all. Moreover, his Divine commission is so generally accepted, that we are not likely to question the wisdom and authority of what he did, even though to him be largely remitted the question of the formation of the Old Testament canon. It is when we come to his successors, the Sopherim, as a class, that we shall probably be conscious of some serious questioning. Partly owing to our own dullness in grasping the necessities of the case, and partly due to our want of appreciation of our Heavenly Father's favour in watching over his own Written Word, we may quite possibly be rather surprised—not to say shocked—to learn how broadly and boldly the Sopherim interpreted their commission. However that may be, let us patiently hear what Dr. Ginsburg has to tell us respecting the work of the Sopherim, or line of professional Editors of the Sacred Text:—"In accepting their transliteration of the text into the present square characters, their division of it into separate words, verses and sections, their orally transmitted pronunciation of the consonants, which determines the sense of the Hebrew Scriptures, and their finally fixing the canon of the Old Testament, we already concede to these spiritual guides of the Jewish Church a divine authority which almost amounts to co-authorship."<sup>1</sup> It

1. G. Intro. 408.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

is clear, then, that we are not unduly exalting the office of the Sopherim, when we name them, distinctively, EDITORS. They were Editors with large editing functions. They were much more than mere copyists or revisers. They were almost co-authors—but not quite.

C. THE MASSORITES.—These “hedged about” the Sacred Text; and, in doing this, occupied a position peculiarly their own, in which they can have no modern successors. They stood between the Sopherim, whose oral decisions they received, and the ordinary professional copyists, on whom it devolved to carry those traditions into effect; as it then further devolved on the Nakdanim or “Massoretic annotators” to revise the codices which the copyists had made, and to see that the accepted traditions of the Sopherim had been scrupulously observed. It is of importance, as conducive to clearness, to bear in mind that the authoritative instructions of the Sopherim were *orally* handed down. It was the risks that attended this process that called into existence—first the Massorites and then the Nakdanim. The difference between these two classes was this: The Massorites “had to invent the graphic signs, to fix the pronunciation and the sense of the consonantal text, and formulate the Lists of correct readings in accordance with the authoritative traditions”; but “the functions of the Nakdanim were not to create, but strictly to conserve the Massoretic labours”: much as modern Press Correctors conserve modern Editorial labours! “They”—these Nakdanim—“revised the consonantal text produced by professional copyists (nearly resembling modern Compositors) and furnished it with the Massoretic vowel-signs and accents, as well as with the Massorahs, both Parva and Magna, as transmitted to them by the Massorites.”<sup>1</sup> By way of completeness it may here be added: That in the third century of our era, there were two recensions or *standards* of the Hebrew Text, known respectively as Eastern and Western, differing slightly from each other;<sup>2</sup> and, further, that in the early part of the tenth century, there were two rival Nakdanim or Massoretic Annotators, named Ben-Asher and Ben-Naphtali, whose recensions differed still less, inasmuch as these worthy men were merely rival *punctists*.<sup>3</sup> If this last circumstance had been heeded, scholars today would not have loosely asserted that our present Massoretic

1. G. Intro. 462.

2. G. Intro. 197.

3. G. Intro. 241.

## THE PSALMS AS LITERATURE

Text goes no further back than the tenth century—a statement which, though technically correct, yet is practically misleading. All the truth there is in it is: That the *present pointing* of the Massoretic Text goes no further back than the tenth century. The Massoretic Text itself, in its larger and more substantial features, must have been fixed more than a thousand years earlier, before the Septuagint Version was made.

The present section of our Introduction may be usefully condensed and restfully dismissed by the following approximate dates and divisions of labour:—

The *authorship* of the Psalms—excepting a very few psalms from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah and one or two from the time of the Maccabees—covered a period of about 300 years; namely from B.C. 1000 to B.C. 700: from David to Hezekiah.

The *editing* of the Psalms reached through a period of about 350 years: namely from B.C. 450 (Ezra) to B.C. 100.<sup>1</sup>

The *labours of the Massorites* covered a period of about 800 years; namely, from B.C. 100<sup>2</sup> to A.D. 700.<sup>3</sup>

Observation 2.—*The Psalter is not one Continuous Treatise, but a COLLECTION OF INDIVIDUAL PSALMS.* According to the division and enumeration current in the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English and other Psalters, there are 150 individual psalms. If, however, we accept Dr. Thirtle's suggestion, that it is only by taking the ancient *incorporated* Hebrew head-lines, such as "Psalm by David," and catch-words such as "Bless thou," "Praise ye Yah," etc., that we obtain any real and ancient marks of division; and if, as a consequence we amalgamate those between which there are no such dividing signs we still get 139 distinct psalms. It is not *the precise number* that for the moment attracts our attention, but the broad and undeniable fact that the Psalter is a Collection of Individual Psalms; whose individuality is in many cases so clearly marked by changes of both topic and tone, that a mere listener to several psalms, read continuously without formal notice by the reader of the transitions from one to another, could perceive that several complete wholes were being read in his hearing. The deeper student, who has shut himself up to one psalm at a time for continuous meditation, can strongly confirm this individualisation; even though, in the final

1. G. Intro. 408.
2. G. Intro. 421.
3. G. Intro. 462.

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result, he gains an ability to sit in judgment on formal blendings and partings, so as to wax bold to pronounce on their correctness, judging from internal evidence alone. Brushing aside such exceptions as are thus marked off for special criticism, it remains competent to him to say, that between this psalm and that there is sometimes a difference comparable to that between night and noon; and, even as between the various relieving brightnesses, some of them amount to no more than sudden gleams from openings in a railway tunnel, whereas others are like an emergence from among tunnels and rock into a spacious sunlit plain.

Observation 3.—*The Headlines of the Psalms have recently awakened fresh Interest, and their Due Discrimination is leading to Important Results.* Confining ourselves to the more obvious Headlines as (at present) grouped together at the commencement of the psalms that have them, we discover in them one, two, three or even four elements: *First*, a description of the following composition, as a "psalm," a "song," a "miktham" or a "maskil"; *secondly*, a personal name (apparently) of the author, as "by David," "Asaph," and others; *thirdly*, a statement of the occasion when a psalm was written, as "When he fled from Absalom his son"; and *fourthly*, what looks like a musical or liturgical instruction, as, "To the Chief Musician," "upon" such and such an instrument, or "for" such and such a choir, as the case may be. These headings had until quite recently been greatly neglected; some leading reproductions of the Psalms actually appearing entirely without them!

Of late, however, a fresh interest has been awakened in these Headings; so that they no longer are regarded as so much literary incumbrance, seldom trustworthy, and of little or no critical or practical value; but are being investigated with the keenest zest, and are already yielding results which bid fair to revolutionise critical psalm exegesis. This renewed interest is principally due to Dr. Thirtle, who has put forth two books of profound importance: the first on "*The Titles of the Psalms*," and the second on "*Old Testament Problems*." They concern us here chiefly by the distinction, which their author has seen his way to draw, between the strictly *literary* titles of the Psalms and the purely *musical* instructions. The former, he contends, should stand, where they do at present, as *superscribed* lines; and the latter should be moved into a new position as *subscribed* lines, generally, if not always, needing merely to be disentangled



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from the literary lines and placed in each case, by a very easy removal, to the *foot* of the immediately *foregoing* psalm. This may seem a very small matter; but on examination is found to lead to far-reaching results. Leaving those results to be (some of them) investigated a little further on, we can now return to our classification of the contents of the Headlines collectively viewed.

*First*, a description of the kind of composition which follows; as "psalm," "song," etc. The primary use of these, Dr. Thirtle submits, was to describe the kind of document thus distinguished from legal and historical manuscripts, ready for placing in the right department of the Royal Library. It was primarily a Librarian's mark, so attached for the purpose of orderly storage, and speedy reproduction when demanded. It does not especially concern us at present, except perhaps to observe that, when both "psalm" and "song" are inscribed over the same psalm, it becomes an interesting though nice question whether "psalm" was genus and "song" species, or *vice-versa*.

*Secondly*, the appearance of what seems to be an author's name. Dr. Thirtle suggests that the insertion of any of these things in a closely written scroll or tablet was not so easy and obvious an achievement as that it should now be lightly regarded as an afterthought and treated as a phenomenon of no value. Thus admonished, the present writer can only express his gratitude for the hint, and testify that, in paying due regard to it, he has been led to the results he little anticipated, the chief of which is that in no case does the name "David" appear without reason—every psalm thus distinguished is, he believes, either David's by original composition, or is an adaptation of a psalm, or fragment of a psalm of which David was the author. So confirmed did this impression little by little become as to impel to a narrow and jealous scrutiny in cases where sole Davidic authorship seemed very unlikely; with the result of arriving at the conclusion that David's co-author Hezekiah, *moved by fellowship in suffering*, has saved from oblivion some fragments from David's remorseful pen which no mere "king's scribe" would have presumed to drag forth to the light, and thus, in short, was originated the clear and confident impression that David's psalms, read partly *in* the lines and partly *between* the lines, contain a species of autobiography which it would have been an unspeakable loss to miss.

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*Thirdly*, as with the author's name, so with the avowed occasion of writing. Admonished by the respect felt to be due to these avowals of occasion, rather to *look for* the incidental element so rendered probable, than to *look askance*, the acknowledgement must again be made, that thereby an intenser interest in the compositions so introduced has uniformly been created. And probably the more frequent finding of David *when named*, has further conduced to a more frequent finding of Hezekiah when *not* named. The close scrutiny of internal evidence in the former case has probably led to much fuller and more fruitful finding of the anonymous author in the latter case. Of this, evidence must be sought in the Expositions that follow.

*Fourthly*, the disentangled musical instructions have been the incidental cause of other most attractive investigations; generally confirmatory of Dr. Thirtle's conclusions, but in a few instances stimulating fresh departures towards divergent yet sympathetic results. Chief among the confirmed results are (a) That, naturally, the words, "To the Chief Musician" should always go to the *foot* of the psalm to which they rightly belong; (b) That detailed musical directions, specifying any particular choir to which the rendering of a psalm is assigned, or the air in which a psalm should be rendered should *follow* and not *precede* the note of delivery to the care of "The Chief Musician." The observance of this rule has the remarkably happy effect of moving the Chief Musician's direction—"For the dove of the distant terebinths" to the foot of the psalm (55) containing the wish—"Would that I had pinions like a dove!" (c) Among fresh results, indirectly traceable to Dr. Thirtle's readjusting discovery, is the provision of *bass voices* to assist in the musical rendering of Ps. 45: respecting which Dr. Thirtle himself had expressed the opinion that maidens' *alone* could suitably render it,—an opinion which provoked instant dissent, as soon as the requirements of verses 16, 17 of that psalm were considered. Where then, were the needed male voices to come from? The modification of a line in the neighbourhood, whereby a company of *authors* was converted into a class of *singers*, ultimately settled this question to entire satisfaction. "The sons of korah" being—as was found on careful examination—a class of singers and not a company of psalm-writers, required to be transposed from the head of Ps. 46 to the foot of Ps. 45, and when so removed,—being, as was further discovered, a class of "patriarchs of song"—were both by voice

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(presumably) and especially by seniority and sex, admirably fitted to sustain in song the fatherly admonition contained in the specified verses—all the more completely seeing that the proposed moving up of this musical line would bring maidens along with the old men! The steps by which this conclusion was reached may be more suitably indicated in our Chapter III.—The Psalms as a Liturgy.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PSALMS AS LYRICS

Inasmuch as Lyrics are a species of poetry, we may perhaps usefully tarry on the genus before we advance to the species. It will be rendering a service to young and inexperienced readers of the Psalms to emphasise the elementary fact that first of all the Psalms are poetry. We can then all the better consider them as lyrical poetry, fitted for song and for instrumental accompaniment.

1. That the Psalms are poetry, will be a familiar thought to all who have observed how much fervour and passion there is in them; and how, as a consequence, they abound in figures of speech. It would be enough to leave this element in their composition to be felt, without being formally recognised, were it not that the untrained reader is apt either to make no allowance for poetical license, or else to give up sober interpretation as hopeless. To save him from such uncertainty and helplessness, it may be serviceable to remind him that a statement may be substantially true even when not literally exact; that figures of speech have a natural meaning of their own, and are current coin in literature; that a poet may be a prophet and teacher with a burden to deliver and solemnly lay on the hearts of those to whom he is sent; and that we cannot with impunity close our ears to his message merely because it is enlivened with metaphors or even clothed in allegory.

At this point we may strike in with a few detailed exemplifications of figurative language to be found in the Psalms: on which, however, we cannot tarry—the young student may safely be left to multiply examples and amplify them for himself.

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As to *allegory*: it is perhaps well that this figure of speech is not much employed in the Psalms, as undoubtedly it may easily be abused by the too luxuriant imagination of the reader. But, if an allegory is "a description of one thing under the image of another," then it is obvious that we have an allegory in Ps. 80, in which Israel is represented under the image of a Vine. If *climax* is "a rising like the steps of a ladder or stair," then we discover a very striking example of this in 40:1-3. If *irony* is "a mode of speech conveying the opposite of what is meant," then instances of this may be seen in 115, 135. "I am like a flourishing olive-tree in the house of God" (52:8) being a formal comparison, "they who are planted in the house of Jehovah" is an implied comparison, or a *metaphor*; and metaphors abound, as where the throat is called a sepulchre (5:9), the tongue is termed a weaver's loom (50:19), or righteousness and peace are said to kiss each other (85:10). *Metonymy*, or a change of name, is very frequent; as where Jehovah is termed "a crag," "a stronghold," "a rock," "a shield" (18:2). The rather similar figure of *synecdoche*, by which a part is made to comprehend the whole, is every now and then employed; as where "tongue" stands for the man who wickedly uses it (52:4). Of course *personification* abounds; as where lute and lyre are summoned to awake (57:8), or earth is said to be afraid (76:8), prayer is described as a worshipper (88:13), or the plain is said to exult, the trees of the forest to ring out their joy (96:12), and the streams to clap their hands (98:8). Of course, also, *hyperbole* is not infrequent, literally going beyond the truth, exaggeration; as where the joyful psalmist declares that he will awaken the dawn (57:8).

Halfway between figures of speech and lyrical measure stands that largely looming method of speech called parallelism which so abounds in the Psalms as to be worthy of special attention. It may perhaps be most simply explained as the saying of the same thing twice over in parallel ways. This definition, however, must be extended by the further statement, that parallelism includes a similarity of manner in saying different things which distinctly carry forward the thought: perhaps the two phrases, "parallel statements," and "parallel methods of statement," cover the ground—at least with sufficient adequacy for the present. A curious thing about Hebrew parallelism is, that,

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while it is of the greatest service to the expositor—and therefore also to the ordinary reader who takes care to observe and comprehend it—it is the despair of English metrical-versionists, who with one mouth declare that this it is which baffles them in the endeavour to preserve Hebrew parallelism intact under the restraints of English metre and rhyme. Perhaps, however, in the future they may succeed where in the past they have failed.

While we would beware of mapping out more ground than we can usefully cover, we cannot resist the temptation to endeavour to present the whole scheme of the various forms of Hebrew Parallelism in one view; and though we may not have much further use for some of the details, yet this synopsis, it is believed, will serve to refresh the memories of such readers as may have forgotten the distinction *e.g.*, between synonymous and synthetic parallelism—with which technical terms, and others similar, they may meet in the course of the following Expositions.

It may be said at the outset that the key to parallelism is the resolving of the solid Hebrew text into *lines*. Let any student, who cares to begin here, first look at the closely massed Hebrew text of (say) Bagster's Polyglot, and then survey the same text (substantially) as set forth in lines in Ginsburg's Hebrew Bible. He will not only be struck with the difference as attractive to the eye, but will be delighted to perceive what a large contribution has thereby been made towards the perception of the sense of the text. He may not, as he advances in critical culture, always remain satisfied with the length of the lines as set before him,—he may sometimes desire that a word be taken back from one line and attached to the previous, or *vice-versa*; or he may occasionally prefer that two lines be run on into one, whereas at other times he may prefer that the opposite method of rearrangement be followed by the breaking up of one line into two: all the same, the predominant feeling will be—that a promising start has been made on a path of progress.

Now it is the *interrelation* of the lines, as thus explained, which reveals different kinds of parallelism. These are due to the operation of the following simple principles; namely—repetition, variation, advancement, adornment, return, contrast, and reply. We must not be tempted to do more than refer to an example of each of these. But first let us see how they work out.

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Mere repetition	yields	a. emphatic parallelism
Repetition with variation	"	b. synonymous "
Mere advance	"	c. synthetic "
Repetition with advance	"	d. stairlike "
Repetition with adornment	"	e. emblematic "
Advance with contrast	"	f. antithetic "
Advance with return	"	g. introverted "
Appeal with reply	"	h. responsory "

### EXAMPLES

a. Emphatic—118:10-12	e. Emblematic—37:1, 2, 63:1
b. Synonymous—2:1, 2:3	f. Antithetic—1:6, 11:5
c. Synthetic—2:2	g. Introverted—80:10, 11
d. Stairlike—77:1, 11, 16	h. Responsory—115:9-11

2. That the Psalms are *lyric* poetry will appear as soon as the two features in them are observed—first, that they best appear in measured lines, and secondly that they are intrinsically fitted for song. “Lyric (from the Greek *lyra*, a lyre)” is “the name given to a certain species of poetry because it was originally accompanied by the music of that instrument. Lyric poetry concerns itself with the thoughts and emotions of the composer’s own mind, and outward things are regarded chiefly as they affect him in any way. Hence it is characterised as *subjective*, in contradistinction to epic poetry, which is *objective*. Purely lyrical pieces are, from their nature, shorter than epics. They fall into several divisions, the most typical of which is the *song*, which is again subdivided into *sacred* (hymns) and *secular* (love-songs, war-songs, etc.)” It will be seen from this, that, while most of the Psalms are strictly lyrical, some of them (such as 78, 105, 106), both by reason of their length and from the nature of their contents, approach the epic; though even these are sufficiently regular in their measure and devotional in their setting to cause them to differ but little, save in their length, from lyrical pieces; it being easy to conceive of them as chanted if not sung; whereas, on the other hand, the longest of all the psalms, the 119th, by reason of its intensely subjective character, is not at all an epic; rather is it a lyrical dirge—lyrical, because well measured off into lines and stanzas, and a dirge by reason of the lingering cadence of its lines and the pervading pensiveness of its strains. Call it what we may, it is a wonderful triumph of poetic art. Its very monotony becomes a devo-

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tional lullaby, subduing the troubled soul to rest; while at the same time, its microscopic and never-ending variations more and more please as the spirit of the worshipper becomes whetted to perceive their kaleidoscopic beauties.

### I. THE CREATION OF THE PSALMS AS LYRICS

The musical measuring of the Psalms grows upon us as we investigate it: on the one hand throwing us back on the inquiry—How far we are indebted to the experimental sounds of the instrument for suggesting the appropriate words; and, on the other hand, urging us forward to discover, if we can—How far the *sounds* were fixed, and the *words* pliable in their adaptation thereto; or the words were fixed, and demanded of the sounds the pliability needful to bring the words well out in song.

A. The *Musical Origin* of the Psalms.—There is more evidence than has received adequate attention, that but for the LYRE we might never have had LYRICS; in other words, that but for the art of sweeping the strings which we call *psallein* ("psalming") we might never have had in our hands the poetic products which we call *psalmoi* ("psalms"). It is, at least, significant of some profound connection between melody and inspiration, that, when the prophet Elisha was requested to give guidance to the two Kings of Israel and Judah, he felt his need of the service of a minstrel before he could give the desired reply (2 K. 3:15); and equally suggestive, that when, in a given instance (Ps. 49), the psalmist was being moved to ponder and pronounce upon one of the profounder mysteries of Providence, he should plainly enough indicate that he had more hope of unfolding his "enigma" by the help of his lyre than without its genial aid. And it is not without suggestiveness of a like kind that when the psalmist desired in his joy to awaken the dawn he felt impelled first to summon lute and lyre to awaken that they might assist him in bringing to the birth his rousing songs.

B. The *Musical Measurement* of the Psalms in relation to *Criticism*.—The further question, as to the precise relation, in measurement, of sounds and sense, has a newly awakened interest in Biblical Criticism as concentrated on the Psalms. So little is known as to the ancient Temple music, that we have to proceed very cautiously. But the actual question before us assumes the following interesting and practical form: How far was harp-

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playing in the East elastic, in its readiness to adapt itself to lines and stanzas of varying lengths; or how far were stanza and metrical arrangements so rigid and imperative as to warrant our bringing under suspicion—as interpolations and corruptions—such irregularities as made lines and stanzas longer or shorter than usual? From the best information we have been able to procure—including the testimony of a friend who has travelled frequently and extensively in harp-playing countries,—we conclude that harp-playing shows ready elasticity, in accommodating itself to more or fewer words; and, on the whole, we feel ourselves to be justified in concluding that we are not warranted in freely and forcibly expanding or contracting lines and stanzas *merely* because rigid uniformity in the measures might appear to demand such modifications. In a word, without independent *confirmatory* evidence, we are not justified in pronouncing present words to be superfluous or absent words to be demanded. If a word or a line is found not only in the Hebrew but also in the ancient versions, we ought to be very sure of the imperious character of adverse internal evidence before we omit them; and *vice-versa*. Subject to these conditions, however, sober criticism need occasion no slavish fears.

C. The *Musical Measurement* of the Psalms in relation to *Metre*.—After the setting up of the foregoing land-marks, we need have no hesitation in affirming the existence in the Psalms of the kind of measurement which, notwithstanding any irregularities in it, may best be described by the familiar term *Metre*. By this is meant, not the rigid metre of English hymns, but the less exact measurement of lines which is based upon the beats of word-groups instead of mere syllables. An example will make the difference clear. The following is taken from Cassell's *Bible Educator*, Vol. II, p. 341: "Let us take the opening of the sublime Song of Moses at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy;—

Give-ear, O-ye-heavens, and-I-will-speak;  
And-hear, O-earth, the-words-of-my-mouth.

"The hyphens are introduced to mark the phrases which represent one Hebrew term. The twofold symmetry of these lines must strike every ear. The second member is an echo of the first, both in thought and sound. And yet it is not a mere repetition of it. In the opposition of the earth to the sky, in the varied form of the prophet's appeal, where each term is different



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and yet makes a true balance to the corresponding term of the preceding line, we get all the charm of freshness and change. The dullest ear will perceive the rise and fall, the wave-like motion, which is essential to musical rhythm. Each sentence is contained in a line and ends with it. In other languages a fixed recurrence of feet or rhymed syllables would mark the conclusion of the verse. Here voice and sense pause together, and the ear is satisfied with this natural cadence, which is doubtless improved in the original by the equality of the words in the two parts of the verse."

In this example, two things will be observed: First, that the word-group beats are three to a line, rendering this a "trimeter" couplet; and second, that the equivalence of the sense in the two lines makes this a "synonymous" couplet—as to form, "trimeter"; as to sense, "synonymous." It may be seen in quotations from ancient Church writers in Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* that the "ancient trimeters" were still famous in sub-apostolic times. It is, in fact, the favorite measure employed in the Psalms; doubtless owing to the prevailing joyousness of the songs of Zion, and the ease with which this simple measure dances along in the expression of sacred gladness. From the "trimeters" as a starting-point, the reader can easily conceive how more stately tetrameters, and more pensive pentameters would be formed by the simple contrivance of running the word-groups into longer lines. It is, for example, partly by the lingering meditateness of Ps. 119 that any reader can easily see how the second half of Ps. 19 closely follows it.

## II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PSALMS AS LYRICS

(A) As our subsequent chapters will, in various ways, keep these characteristics well before us, we need not attempt more at present than to observe how far they are indicated by the descriptions which are found in superscribed lines. These may be arranged in the ascending order of their frequency.

- (1) *Tehillah*, "praise": title of 145—a psalm most worthy of the title, since it is purely and only "praise." From this, the whole book is named in Heb., *Tehillim*, "Praises."
- (2) *Shiggayon*, prob. "a discursive psalm" (title of Ps. 7), from *sh-g-h*, "to go astray." According to some: "a

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reel, a wild passionate song, with rapid changes of rhythm."—O.G.

- (3) *Tephillah*, "prayer," occurs 5 times, notably 90:1.
- (4) *Mikhtam*, possibly "tablet," 6 times.
- (5) *Maskil*, "instructive psalm," 13 times.
- (6) *Shir*, "song," 41 times.
- (7) *Mizmor*, "psalm," 57 times.

In 8 instances, the double description is prefixed—"a psalm, a song"; and, in 4 examples, the reverse—"a song, a psalm."

To these descriptive names we may add the catch-words, *bareki*, "bless thou," which commences 103, 104; and *hallelu*, "praise ye," which begins 18 psalms, namely:—105-107; 111-118; 135, 136; and 146-150. These are specified in full, as marking off the so-called "hallelujah" psalms, which we propose to call simply "hallels: selections from which are variously known as "the Egyptian Hallel" (113-118) and "the Great Hallel" (136).

It is obvious, therefore, that, for obtaining a general notion of the Psalms through this channel, the two chief names to consider are *shir*, "song," and *mizmor*, "psalm": to which can be added the "hallels," not as bearing a distinctive name, but by reason of their number and importance, and the facility with which they can be grouped. It should be remembered that a large number of psalms have no such descriptive headings.

SONG, Heb. *shir*, *shirah*, (Sep. *asma*): with which compare the verb *shir* (Sep. *aido*). The acceptable thing about "song" in this connection is, the clearness with which it connotes gladness; and thereby throws a bright gleam of joy across the entire Book of Psalms. If it were not enough to point to such examples as 28:7, 33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 2, 137:2, 3, 4 to shew that song-singing is at once a natural expression of joy and a signal for its renewed manifestation, we should still have the weighty testimony of the Proverbs (25:20) and the Prophets (Isa. 30:29, Amos 8:10) to set that simple matter at rest. Hence, because so many of the Psalms are strictly and properly "songs," we are warranted to expect a large element of thanksgiving, praise and expectation of blessing in the Psalter. It is observable that while we are frequently invited to "sing a new song," we are never called upon to sing a new psalm. Does this indicate that "songs" were

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more frequently *improvisations* than "psalms"; and, that after a song had been written and set to music it then became a psalm? We must not assume from this that a "song," as such, did not admit of musical accompaniment: the contrary is sufficiently shown by 21:13, 33:3, 68:4, 32, 105:2; 137:2, 3, cp. Isa. 23:16, Rev. 14:2, 3, 15:2, 3.

PSALM, Heb. *mizmor*, Sep. *psalmos*: cp. Heb. verb *zimmer* and Sep. *psallo*. "Psalm," unlike "song," does not necessarily carry with it the notion of joy, though it frequently does. It may be almost exclusively historical and hortatory: it may even be deeply penitential, and more or less mournful: yea, it may betray unbroken gloom, like 88, which, though a "psalm," is certainly no "song"; and we are glad by a readjustment of headlines to have been emboldened to remove the anomaly of so designating it. Another difference between "psalm" and "song" is, that whereas the latter does not in itself necessarily imply instrumental accompaniment, the former in "more exact usage" does. Thus Delitzsch says: "As Hupfeld has shown, *zimmer*, as being a direct onomatopoeic word, signifies, like *canere*, 'to make music' in the widest sense; the more exact usage of the language, however, distinguishes between *zimmer* and *shir* as 'to play' and 'to sing.' With *beth* (preposition) instrumental, *zimmer* signifies to sing with a musical accompaniment, and *zimrah* is occasionally, as in Amos 5:23, directly music, melody. Accordingly *mizmor* (= 'psalm) signifies technically, the piece of music, and *shir* . . . the words of the song" (Com. i 131, 132). Thus also Perowne (on Ps. 47:6, 7): "Make melody, or 'sing and play.' The word means both *to sing* and *to play*. The Sep., rightly, *psalate*." Kirkpatrick (Cambridge Bible) (same text): "The verb from which *mizmor* (= "psalm") is derived . . . appears originally to have meant *to make melody*, like the Lat. *canere*, but came to be applied specially to instrumental music, as distinguished from vocal music. *Mizmor* then means *a piece of music*, a song with instrumental accompaniment." The points of agreement which appear in these extracts should be noted. It is agreed that *zimmer* originally meant "to make melody," in the broadest sense; and it is then further agreed, that when *zimmer* was differentiated from *shir*, the former meant "to play" and the latter "to sing." Now it is the especial province of synonyms to differentiate; inasmuch as the broader meanings of words are thereby naturally shared with companion words set side by side with them for the purpose of bringing out the general sense.

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It is just at this point that a defect becomes observable in the Revised Version of the Psalms. The difference between *shir* and *zimmer* is not clearly and consistently maintained. The two words occur concurrently, as synonyms, in the following places:—21:13, 27:6, 57:7, 68:4, 68:30, 101:1, 104:33, 105:2, 108:1, 144:9. The attempt was made by the Revisers, in nine out of these ten instances, to mark the difference between *shir* and *zimmer* by translating the former "sing" and the latter "sing praises"; but the attempt must be pronounced feeble in the extreme, inasmuch as "singing" (alone, for *shir*) in all cases is nothing else than singing PRAISE. So that, just where it would appear that some addition or some advance ought to be made, no addition or advance is made; and the "yea" which the Revisers have thrown in only reveals how feeble the discrimination was felt to be. In one case, the first named above, (21:13), the Revisers' hearts failed them altogether, and as they could not say, "So will we sing and sing praise thy power," they dropped the word "sing" altogether out of their rendering of *zimmer*, and coined a special rendering, to which they have not adhered in any of the nine passages of the like kind which follow. This text should have been rendered: "So will we sing and harp thy power." And, though the urgency for a clearer distinction is not so keenly felt in all the examples given above, it may safely be affirmed, that in all of them the discrimination should have been maintained.

It is interesting to note the effect of this same discrimination when carried forward into the new Testament—as it clearly ought to be on the strength of the Septuagint, which is therein quoted and in which the Hebrew distinction between *shir* and *zimmer* faithfully reappears in their representatives *aido* and *psallo*. That effect will be, on the one hand, to make us content with the generic force of *psallo* in Rom. 15:9, 1 Cor. 14:15 and Jas. 5:13: whereas, on the other hand, it will compel the affirmation that, according to the established law governing the use of synonyms, the companion nouns—"psalms," "hymns," and "spiritual songs"—in Eph. 5:18 should be properly distinguished from each other; as in verse 19, also, the companion participles "singing" and "playing" should in like manner each receive its restricted or specific sense.

This brief study of *shir* and *zimmer*, "song" and "psalm," will further invest the whole problem of psalm-making and psalm-using with new interest. In particular, the reader will be prepared for the very large part which one "Exposition" has

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assigned to the voice just where musical accompaniments were most in evidence (150). As to psalm-creation, it is easily conceivable how the lone lyre may have helped some sorrowing penitent to pour out his lament before God, without thought at the time of the public employment of his penitential lay; and just as easily conceivable how, by himself in brighter days or by a sympathetic successor in the service of song, a fragment spotted with the tears of the originator may have been rescued from oblivion and fitted for Temple worship as a psalm. In such cases, the individual would be permitted to sing on throughout the history of his nation, and the nation for centuries be stirred to its depths by the perception, in its public songs, of those touches of nature which make the whole world kin.

3. Not only from the fitness of these lyrics to be sung to musical accompaniment, but also from the instructions conveyed by inscriptions to the Psalms, it may safely be inferred that the Psalms were ultimately intended to form a liturgy for Temple worship. Respecting this Liturgy a few things are of sufficient permanent interest to be worthy of note here: as—

(a) That David was, under Divine guidance, its originator (1 Ch. 28:11, 12, 19).

(b) That he appointed three leading singers, Asaph, Heman and Ethan (or Jeduthun): all Levites (1 Ch. 6).

(c) That under these leaders were ranged, in all probability, three choirs—a treble choir under Asaph, a mixed choir under Heman, and a bass choir (also called *shemivith* = “eighth” = “octave” = “bass”) under Ethan.

(d) That over these leaders and choirs was placed a “chief musician,” the first occupier of which important office was Chenaniah, who “used to give instructions, because skillful was he” (1 Ch. 15:22, 27).

(e) That “the sons of Korah” were certainly singers; probably forming the bass choir of Ethan, or as a senior class constituting an important part of the same, whose services were frequently in especial request, as the psalm-inscriptions abundantly show. The evidence of this arises partly from treating *korah* as an appellative (= “sons of baldness” = “patriarchs of song”) and partly from the fine results obtained by revising and slightly modifying Thirtle’s readjustment of the musical *sub*-scriptions as distinct from the literary *super*scriptions attached to the Psalms.

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(f) The revised readjustment above spoken of, when resolutely carried out, yields the following acceptable results:—it brings bass singers along with maidens to the foot of Ps. 45, where both classes are clearly needed; it rids Ps. 49 of any musical instruction, leaving it all the more probable that this sombre, philosophical psalm was intended rather for private use than for Temple-praise; and it brings “responsive dancings” to the foot of one of the few processional psalms (87) and the very one in the text of which “dancers” already appear. To exhibit here all the movements involved in working out these results would be too severe a tax to inflict on general readers; but the results themselves, in their own way, are of no small interest, and may provoke further useful research. (Cp. for “sons of korah” 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87, 88).

(g) The highest and most permanent lesson obtained by resolving these sacred lyrics into a liturgy is seen as soon as we confront the practical question as to the part taken by the people in joining in this form of public worship. Considering the limited number of copies of the psalms to be read, chanted, or sung by the Levites obtainable by worshippers in general, it is natural to conclude that the chief part taken by the people was to say “Amen” (106:48) to the readings and songs of the priests and of the choirs. That they were sometimes called upon to take a more active part is sufficiently evident from their being actually called upon to join (115:9-11, 135:19, 20; and this leads up to the conclusion that the pre-eminent response of the people was that which is appended to every verse of 136, and the meaning of which is expanded in our exposition of 150. Here we catch a glimpse of the Hebrew Liturgy at the precise angle of vision which shows to advantage its fitness to exert its most potent spiritual influence over the Hebrew nation. There are here to be considered—the import of this refrain as singling out the kindness of Jehovah from among all his other perfections; the actual, individual and collective attestation that Jehovah their God was worthy of this pre-eminent praise; and the solemn and memorable circumstances under which they thus proclaimed their undying faith, amid all the solemnities of sacrifice and all the charm and impressiveness of musically accompanied praise. Disobedience and formality might of course invade and counteract even such holy influences, yet the intrinsic fitness of such a

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liturgy must have been to exert a mighty power over the religious life of the nation by bringing the people into fellowship with a God deemed worthy of such adoration.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PSALMS AS A SUMMARY OF SACRED LEARNING

That the Sacred Learning which is summarized in the Book of Psalms is sublimated into Song, detracts but little from its practical utility; for figures of speech have a recognized meaning of their own, and parallelism conduces to ultimate precision when couplets are quoted rather than clauses. A proof-text from the Psalms is generally as effective as one taken from the Law or the Prophets. The temporal and personal colouring may, indeed, in some measure fade from a psalm when held under the microscope of logical analysis, and yet may leave an abiding outline of permanent teaching. Prayers and praises rise on rapid wing to heaven, but their didactic presuppositions are generally clear enough to lead the listener forwards into the learning of theological and psychological lessons which will be found worthy to abide with him as a scholar, after they have by their spiritual influence moved him to become a worshipper. The only question is, how to collect and fix the rays of light radiated from struggling and adoring souls. The simplest method will be, to place in alphabetical order a few leading words which will occasion references to such psalms and verses of psalms as treat of the word or topic named.

If this course should impart to the present chapter something of the unattractive features of index and concordance, this will need no apology when it is remembered that the primary intention of this Introduction is, not to induce the curious to *read* the Psalms, but to give practical assistance to such as, having many times read them, are at length eager to devote to them patient study.

AGES.—Probably the time has not yet come when, unaided, the English reader can readily perceive and remember the latitude with which the Hebrew word *'olam* is used throughout the O.T. Primarily derived from a stem which simply means *what*

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*is concealed*, this word, when applied to time, comes to denote concealed and so indefinite duration. By the force of modern usage, however, the English phrase "for ever" is apt to carry the ordinary mind beyond this, and when hardened by dogmatic theologians may be put to a strain it will not bear. Hence the present translator is not as yet prepared wholly to forego the circumlocutory rendering "age-abiding" or "to times age-abiding." Nevertheless he clearly perceives how heavy and cumbrous this translation is apt to become, especially in some connections. Impressed with the practical success of Dr. Weymouth's phrase, adopted for corresponding use in the N.T., "to the ages,"—this lighter and easier phrase has been cautiously employed in the present translation. The following examples will serve as a specimen of the effect of this idiomatic rendering:—5:11, 9:5-7, 10:16, 12:7, 15:5. The word occurs nearly 150 times throughout the Psalter; Ps. 145:13 is the chief instance in which the word is used in the plural, and definitely hardened into "ages" with "all" prefixed.

ANOINTED.—The Heb. word *mashiah* ("messiah," "christ," "anointed") occurs 10 times in the Psalms (namely in 2:2, 18:50, 20:6, 28:8, 84:9, 89:38, 51, 105:15, 132:10, 17); and about 30 times elsewhere in the O.T. *Christos* ("christ") is its uniform Greek (Septuagint) representative. Broadly it (or its verb) is used of priests (Lev. 4:3, 5, 16), prophets (1 K. 19:16), and kings (1 K. 1:34); and therefore it is not surprising that it should be especially employed of David and the heirs with him of the covenant of kingship announced by the prophet Nathan (2 S. 7). In several of the above references in the Psalter, the primary allusion is to the holder of the typical messiahship for the time being (as in 84:9), although in some cases the allusion is couched in such terms as to point onwards to THE Messiah ultimately to come in David's line. Outside the Psalter, one of the most beautiful and pathetic references to a typical Messiah is found in Lam. 4:20. In one of the above instances (105:15) the term "messiah" in the plural is used of the patriarchs, simply to signify their consecration to the office of speaking for God and to show the inviolability of their persons. The reference to THE Messiah himself in 2:2 is plain from the scope of the psalm. There are many references to the Messiah in the Psalms where this particular official name is not mentioned.



## PSALMS—SUMMARY OF SACRED LEARNING

EARTH.—“The earth” (Heb. *erez*) figures in the Psalms more largely than do “the heavens”; but does not severely tax the expositor. Still there are some interesting points about it demanding careful consideration: the chief of which is, whether the original word should be rendered “earth” or “land.” It all depends on the extent of the outlook; which may generally be gathered from the scope of the context, or from particular terms therein. The importance of the right determination may be seen in 37, in which the alternative “earth” “or land” is maintained throughout, and in the Exp. of 100, where conflicting considerations are weighed. The earth is regarded as resting on primeval waters (24:1, 136:6), to which poetic allusions may possibly be found (in 40:2). Nevertheless it is firmly and abidingly founded (104:5); though not beyond the possibility of destruction or change (102:25, 26). Perhaps with allusion to its primeval emergence from the wild waters of chaos it is said to have been “born” (90:2), and to this event dramatic reference is probably made (104:6, 8). Jehovah visits the earth with his bountiful showers (65:9); and, indeed, it is full of his goodness (33:5, 104:13, 24). To be wholly of earth is, however, a matter of reproach (10:18); and a prevailing tendency to earth may be ground for lamentation (44:25; cp. 119:25). As contrasted with its “lower parts” (doubtless synonymous with Hades, 63:9), the earth’s surface is styled “the land of the living” (116:9, 142:5). In a picture of surpassing beauty, Truth is depicted as springing like a vigorous growth out of earth (85:11): surely a prophetic word.

*The World* (Heb. *tebhel*: “perh. as orig. productive”—O.G.) forms an excellent synonym for “the earth.” It is to be found as follows:—9:8, 18:15, 19:4, 24:1, 33:8, 50:12, 77:18, 89:11, 90:2, 96:10, 13, 97:4, 98:7, 9.

HADES.—This word occurs 16 times in the following version of the Psalms; namely, 6:5, 9:17, 16:10, 18:5, 30:3, 31:17, 49:14, 14, 15, 55:5, 86:13, 88:3, 89:48, 116:3, 139:8, 141:7. It always stands for the Heb. *sheol*, a word which is found 65 times in the O.T., and of which in the Septuagint, *hades* is the Greek representative. Besides these 65 examples of the word in the O.T., there are 10 more in the N.T. in which “hades” occurs, in its own right, in the Greek original, still in the same sense as *sheol* in the Hebrew Bible. The great gain of employing the same word throughout the English Bible—whether as a transla-

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tion or as a reproduction of an original word—is, that it brings into line, to the English eye and ear, all the direct allusions by name to the subject of Hades; and, in all reason, 75 examples ought to enable every English student to judge for himself what Hades in the Bible means—whether place or state or both, and whether the same now as it ever has been, or more or less changed by the coming of the Messiah.

“Hades” is the under-world considered as the realm of the dead. It includes the grave (49:14, 141:7), but is wider, and deeper: wider, inasmuch as it embraces such dead as have received no burial (Gen. 37:33, 34, Jonah 2:2); and deeper, in that it is set in contrast with the heavens for height (Job 11:8, Amos 9:2). It is so far synonymous with both “death” and the “grave” that it may frequently be employed for either without serious change of meaning (*e.g.*, 6:5); and yet some things are affirmed of “hades” which cannot well be spoken of mere death or the grave—as, for example, “hades” has for inhabitants “shades” or “ghosts” (Heb. *repha'im*) (Job 25:6, Prov. 2:18, 9:18, 21:16, Isa. 14:9, 26:14, 19, Ps. 88:10), and is divisible into lower and higher (Deu. 32:22, Ps. 86:13), the lower hades being in one case pointedly expressed as “the well of the pit” (Ps. 55:23). It is undeniable that, before the coming of the Messiah, “hades” was invested with deep gloom, and caused, even in the minds of the godly, strong aversion, leading to earnest prayers to be saved from it and devout thanks for deliverance from the immediate prospect of entering it (18:4-6, 30:3, 116:1-6). Not always, it is true, was this aversion felt; and, in one remarkable case, Job (14:13) is heard crying out:—

Oh that in hades thou wouldst hide me!  
That thou wouldst keep me secret, until the turn of thine anger!  
That thou wouldst set for me a fixed time and remember me!

Notwithstanding such occasional sighing for “hades” as a relief,—not without some hope of deliverance,—the description of hades given by Dr. Driver in his Parallel Psalter (Glossary I., “*sheol*”) is scarcely too strong, when he says:—“The inhabitants of which pass a dim and shadowy existence, unworthy of the name of life, cut off from the memory and protecting help of God (Ps. 88:5), and where the voice of praise is for ever hushed (Ps. 6:5, 30:9, 88:10-12, 115:17, Is. 38:18).” At the same time it should be remembered, as against the extreme view that death ends all,

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that the very existence of such a place or state as hades is one of extreme significance. It seems expressly to wait some future development.

Turning now to the list of passages in the Psalms in which the "hades" is mentioned, and at once dismissing those in which the word appears as a mere synonym of "death" and "the grave," and so serve more for general impressiveness than for specific teaching,—what do we find?

Doubtless we may gather up several incidental lessons; such as the graphic way in which the bones of the hastily buried, or the unburied, are described in the last passage in the list as lying scattered about the mouth of hades—which sustains the position that hades includes the grave; and such as the basis furnished, by the existence of a lower hades and the well of the pit (55:15, 23), for the teaching of our Lord (in Lk. 16), that whatever may be the measure of unconsciousness generally experienced by the selfish and unsaved dead, yet that it is possible they may be *aroused* to an acute consciousness of pain and to remorseful memories and apprehensions. Rising, however, far above these incidental lessons, is the prospect opened up by at least two of these hadean passages in the Psalms of a Divine Victory over hades. One of these (49:15) is indeed general and theocratic rather than messianic; but it is positive in terms and highly inspiring: "God will do for me what with all your wealth ye rich men cannot do for yourselves, far less for each other: he will ransom my soul—my entire personality: out of the hand of Hades will he take me, as Enoch was taken according to the startling story in Genesis." On the whole this sudden outburst of promise looks towards transformation without dying rather than to actual resurrection. The other and earlier passage (16:10) just as strongly makes for resurrection after dying, inasmuch as the flesh so rests securely, that, although the body of the speaker should enter hades, yet should he not be abandoned to hades. This was either fulfilled in David or in one of David's line for whom prophetically he spake. Jesus of Nazareth, rising from the dead and ascending to the Father's right-hand, has, in beginning and pledge, abolished death and revolutionised hades: of the dwellers in which he has become Lord (Rom. 14:9) and of the keys of which he has taken possession (Rev. 1:18).

HEART.—"All scholars know that the Hebrew word commonly rendered 'heart' is used very largely to denote not so much the seat of the emotions as the seat of thought." So proclaims

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the Preface to the Standard American Revision; but there is still need of insistence in making more widely known among Bible readers this far-reaching fact, inasmuch as misapplications of Scripture are extensively prevalent, based on the erroneous assumption that, as in popular speech, so in the Bible, a strong contrast may be assumed to exist between the "heart" and the "head." The mischief done by this single error is enormous, seeing that the disparagement thereby cast upon the "understanding" in matters of religion is often pushed to such an extreme as to exaggerate the emotional element not only to an unscriptural but to a practically dangerous degree. Nevertheless, let the emotions receive their due; and let the article "Reins," below, be well considered.

HEAVENS.—"The heavens" (Heb. *shammayim*) hold a conspicuous place in the Psalms. Always plural in the Hebrew, probably owing to the primary conception of "height," and so "height above height," and generally "the heights," the word has in it enough of amplitude to include varying degrees of elevation; such as that in which winds blow (78:26) and birds fly (8:8, 79:2) and that in which moon, stars (8:3) and sun (19:4) appear; until it includes the dwelling-place of Jehovah himself (115:3; cp. 1 K. 8:30 ff.). The elevation of "the heavens" above the earth is sometimes expressed (103:11) and often implied (14:2=53:2, 102:19). "The heavens" were made by Jehovah (33:6, 96:5, 115:15, 121:2, 124:8, 134:3, 136:5, 146:6); and accordingly he is above them (57:5, 11=118:5 and 113:6) and so, in fact or in prayer, is his "glory" (113:4, 148:13). In some sense, Jehovah has reserved "the heavens" to himself, in contrast to the earth as the assigned portion of the sons of men (115:16); in some sense also, as would seem, man's dominion over the earth is to be used as a means of uplifting Jehovah's glory above "the heavens" (8:1 Exp.). Notwithstanding Jehovah's omniscience (139:7-10) and his peculiar rule in Zion (99:1, 2), his throne is emphatically in "the heavens" (2:4, 11:4, 103:19, 123:1): there his attendants wait upon him, and from thence his messengers go forth (103:20, 21). The heavens were made with understanding (136:5), are ancient (68:33—though Del. thinks this text refers to "primeval" heavens, "in their origin reaching further back than the terrestrial heavens of the second and fourth days of creation"), are holy (20:6; cp. Mt. 6:10), and are enduring (89:29), although they may ultimately perish (102:26—in view of which cp. Isa. 65:17). This brief

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survey invests with deepened interest the gathering of all things in heaven and earth under one head (Eph. 1:10), and their reconciliation (Col. 1:20), as also the prospect of a practical descent of heaven to earth (Rev. 21:3, 4).

*The Skies* (or "fleecy clouds"—Heb. *shahakim*) are an interesting synonym of "the heavens," chiefly because used to exalt man's conceptions of the Divine Government: see—18:11, 35:5, 57:10, 68:34, 77:17, 78:23, 89:6, 37, 108:4.

HOW HAPPY.—It is worthy of note that the first word in the Psalter is a word expressive of emotion, being "an exclamation: O the blessedness of so and so"—Del. "A less solemn expression than *Blessed*, without any explicit reference to God. To Heb. word is often rendered *Happy* in the A.V. (as Ps. 127:5, 144:15, 15, 146:1, Deut. 33:29, Job 5:17, Prov. 3:13, 14:21, 16:20, 28:14); and it ought for distinctness to be so rendered always"—Dr. It occurs in the Psalter 26 times:—1:1, 2:12, 32:1, 2, 33:12, 34:8, 40:4, 41:1, 65:4, 84:4, 5, 12, 89:15, 94:12, 106:3, 112:1, 119:1, 2, 127:5, 128:1, 2, 137:8, 9, 144:15, 15, 146:5.

HUMBLE(D).—A man may be outwardly humbled without becoming inwardly humble: which suggests how great a difference in moral value may exist between two words nearly identical in form. Just about as great a difference in meaning is found between the two Hebrew words '*anaw* and '*ani*, the former, according to Dr. Driver, is used "of one who humbles or submits himself voluntarily, esp. under the hand of God," and the latter signifies "one *humbled* involuntarily by external circumstances." Instead of going so far afield as to call the latter "poor," with Driver and others, the venture is made in the following translation to trust to the addition of the letter "d," which is quite significant to careful readers, and closely imitates the slender difference between the two Hebrew forms, at the same time it is well adapted to keep in mind the additional circumstance, well set forth by Driver when he further says: "nevertheless they do not differ greatly in application, especially in the Psalms, both being designations of the pious servants of Jehovah, the one term describing them from the point of view of their external condition, the other from that of their mental character or disposition." Incidentally, a lesson in various readings and in the inevitable risks of transmission, may be gleaned from the following initial examples of one of these words, which must show the dullest scholar how the inevitable happens in a case depending on the

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length of a down stroke, no miracle intervening to prevent it: namely, 9:12, 18, 10:12, 17. Moreover the decided difference in sense even where there is no diversity of application, will instruct learners to be careful how they read.

JEHOVAH.—The employment of this English form of the Memorial name (Exo. 3:18) in the present version of the Psalter does not arise from any misgiving as to the more correct pronunciation, as being Yahweh; but solely from practical evidence personally selected of the desirability of keeping in touch with the public ear and eye in a matter of this kind, in which the principal thing is the easy recognition of the Divine name intended; as to the *meaning* of which every reader can continue to judge according to the evidence before him. If the persistent use of the form Yahweh, only had the effect of keeping the English reader in mind of the almost certain significance of this gracious name as equivalent to "The Becoming One," then the price of novelty and difficulty of recognition would not be too great to pay. But as the chief evidence of the significance of the name consists not nearly so much in its pronunciation as in the completeness with which it meets all requirements—especially as explaining how the Memorial name was fitted to become such, and to be the pre-eminent covenant name that it confessedly is, it has been thought desirable to fall back on the form of the name more familiar (while perfectly acceptable) to the general Bible-reading public. For a more complete statement of the derivation and meaning of this name, reference may be made to the present writer's "Emphasised Bible," Introduction, Chapter IV. See further "General Reflections" at the close of Pss. 92-99 and "Exposition" of 102.

KINDNESS.—It will appear incredible to such as have chiefly regarded Jehovah as revealed in the terrors of Sinai or through his judgments on his enemies, that the noun for "kindness" occurs 127 times in the Psalms alone, generally as attributed to himself as one of his own attributes. Yet this is strictly correct. If "loving kindness" is in form simplified to "kindness" in order to bring it into line with the adjective "kind," and if we are content to conclude that "mercy," *when needed* (as it so often is), is involved in "kindness," and so consistently render the one Hebrew word *hesedh* by the one English word "kindness" thereby securing uniformity,—then all the impressiveness and significance of the constant recurrence of the word "kindness" throughout these "Songs of Zion" will be realised. No

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student worthy of the name will deem it superfluous that all the occurrences of this consoling and inspiring word are here set forth for convenient reference at any moment:—5:7, 6:4, 13:5, 17:7, 18:50, 21:7, 23:6, 25:6, 7, 10, 26:3, 31:6, 16, 21, 32:10, 33:5, 18, 22, 36:5, 7, 10, 40:10, 11, 42:8, 44:26, 48:9, 51:1, 52:7, 8, 57:3, 10, 59:10, 16, 17, 61:7, 62:12, 63:3, 66:20, 69:13, 16, 77:8, 85:7, 10, 86:5, 13, 15, 88:11, 89:1, 2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49, 90:14, 92:2, 94:18, 98:3, 100:5, 101:1, 103:4, 8, 11, 17, 106:1, 7, 45, 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43, 108:4, 109:12, 16, 21, 26, 115:1, 117:2, 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29, 119:41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159, 130:7, 136:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 138:2, 3, 141:5, 143:8, 12, 144:2, 145:8, 147:11. To observe the companion words with which this term is frequently and significantly paired, will add an additional interest to the study hereby furnished.

*Men of kindness* may be regarded by some as an awkward circumlocution for representing the companion word *hasidh*, closely related to the abstract noun *hesedh*, "kindness"; but in a version so literal as the present, and under pressure of the great desirability of revealing the relation between the two Hebrew words, some awkwardness may be forgiven. Among the various translations which have been put forward to represent *hasidh*, none could be more acceptable than the familiar term "godly" provided that term could be relied upon to suggest likeness to God in respect of his attribute of kindness. In any case, it seems extremely desirable to keep this suggestion well in evidence by the most effective means within our reach. Even then the precise phase of relationship between the men of kindness and the God of kindness would remain undetermined: whether as descriptive of such as are the especial objects of Jehovah's kindness, or of those who are honoured to be the representatives and reflectors of that kindness among men. Judging from the fact that some critics regard the word as of passive and others as of active formation, and that the evidence of usage leans about equally in either direction,—the probability is that *hasidh* is a middle term which has absorbed into itself both of these delightful conceptions, and so signifies those who at one and the same time receive and reflect the kindness of God. It is all the more desirable that a happy term should be found, already possessed of this amount of flexibility or by consent invested therewith, because of the evidence, which though slight seems sufficient, to show that the Levites, as a tribe, were

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the abiding official representatives of the kindness of Jehovah; and that from this appropriation the term was further used to denote the entire class of Ideal Israelites. The primary grounds for thinking of the Levites in this connection are discovered in the significant application of the term to Levi himself in Deu. 33:8, in the facility with which in Ps. 132:9, 16 the term would specify an especial class to accompany "priests" (which would naturally be Levites), and in the original calling of the tribe of Levi to be the representatives of all their brethren of the remaining tribes. With these elementary probabilities floating in the careful reader's mind, it is believed that he will be glad for a second series of references to be appended in which the *hasidhim* or men of kindness are mentioned in the Psalms:—4:3, 12:1, 16:10, 18:25, 30:4, 31:23, 32:6, 37:28, 43:1, 50:5, 52:9, 79:2, 85:8, 86:2, 89:19, 97:10, 116:15, 132:9, 16, 145:10, 17, 148:14, 149:1, 5, 9.

KINGDOM.—The Psalms are peculiarly rich in instruction as to the Coming Kingdom of God upon earth. The reader who will study in succession Psalms 2, 45, 72, 92-99, and 110,—first independently of the author's expositions, for the purpose of maturing a judgment of his own,—and then entering into a comparison with the views set forth by the writer of these Studies,—will probably not feel any need of an extended summary in this chapter. The chief things to bear in mind as preliminaries to a profitable investigation are: *First*, a clear apprehension of the vast difference between the physical and moral spheres of the Divine Government, in that, within the former realm, God speaks and it is done without fail, disobedience being an impossibility; whereas, within the latter—the moral—realm, the promulgation of Jehovah's will is always in fact, even if not in form, an appeal to created wills, calling for but not compelling obedience; and, *second*, that in point of fact Jehovah is always and unchangeably the absolutely rightful ruler of all the universe. There is always an abiding reign of God—whether of right in the moral world or of effectuating force in the natural world—which never begins, never lapses, never ends. Jehovah never abdicates the throne of his own essential supremacy. In regard of this, his reign never waits, never comes, never goes. The more clearly this is seen and the more firmly it is held, the more constant will be the perception that where undeniably such movements and changes are predicated, there some especial phase or form or manifestation of the Divine Kingdom must be intended.



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Thus David's throne, David's reign, David's Kingdom must be some conditioned form of Jehovah's own reign. So with the Messiah's Kingdom—whether considered as a continuation of David's or as its antitype—it must always be Jehovah's absolute reign only as conditioned and modified by the intervention of the Messiah. The only other caution which needs to be borne in mind, is formally treated of in the following exposition of Psalm 2, where it is pointed out that, according to the evidence undeniably present in the sacred text, Messiah's reign will combine the two principles of suasion and force. It only remains to add, that a careful discrimination between the Church and the Kingdom which has been scrupulously maintained throughout the following Expositions (cp. 45, 87, 102, 105), appears strongly to make for the awakening conclusion, that a goodly number of the Psalms are emphatically Songs of Messiah's Coming Kingdom which await the fulfillment of the necessary conditions to render them in deed and in truth fitted in all their length and breadth to be sung throughout the whole ransomed earth (cp. *e.g.* 66 & 92-99 and General Reflections). To see that only then can they be sung with conscious fitness of self-appropriation, is to discover exactly how they can even now be sung by faith.

REINS.—The Heb. *kelayoth*, “as seat of emotion and affection” (O.G.), has by no means received the attention from Bible readers which it deserves. The “reins” were “regarded by the Hebrews as the springs of *feeling*: hence, when it is said of God that He trieth (or seeth) the ‘hearts and reins’ it implies that he is cognisant of man's emotions and affections, not less than of his thoughts”—Dr. The word for “reins” is found in the following places in the Psalms: 7:9, 16:7, 26:2, 73:21, 139:13, with which Job 19:27, Prov. 23:16, Jer. 11:20, 12:2, 17:10, 22:12 may be usefully compared. See also “Heart.”

RIGHTEOUSNESS.—“Righteousness” is not only the love and practice of what is right—which may be distinguished as *ethical*; and the rightful righting of such as have been in the wrong—which may be named *evangelical*; but also the righting of the wronged by the punishment of those who have injured them—and this for convenience we term *vindictory* righteousness, a species of righteousness which—as towards those in whose behalf it is wrought—is synonymous with “kindness” and “salvation”; and which figures largely in the prophets, especially Isaiah and in the Psalms. From Isaiah may be selected, as good examples, 48:18 and 62:1; and, in the Psalms, the following

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places may be consulted:—22:31, 24:5, 31:1, 33:5, 35:28, 36:6, 10, 40:9, 10, 48:10, 65:5, 71:15, 85:10, 11, 94:14, 15, 98:2, 3, 103:6, 17, 111:7, 8, 119:40, 137, 138, 142, 132:9, 16 (cp. 2 Ch. 6:41), 143:1, 11, 145:7, 17.

In such connections as the above the word "judgment" itself assumes the meaning of *vindication*: 1:5, 35:28, 72:4, 103:6, 140:12, cp. Isa. 40:27, 49:4.

SELAH.—The precise significance of this word must be said to be still uncertain. That it generally implies a *pause* may safely be asserted; though the object of the pause remains obscure. That it practically serves as a musical *Nota bene*, and by an interlude of musical instruments makes impressive the fact or sentiment just uttered, is with some eminent scholars a favourite theory. The most ingenious and probable conclusion, drawn from actual usage, is that suggested by Dr. Bullinger in "Things to Come"; namely, that it virtually says: "Such being the case then note what follows;" and, to suggest as much without dogmatically affirming it, the symbolic device has here been adopted of a double "fist" with fingers pointing both ways, which may at least hold the place until more conclusive evidence has been secured. That the word is chiefly confined to old psalms suggests the doubt whether it was not originally a mere copyist's acknowledgement of some peculiarity in his exemplar now wholly and hopelessly lost in obscurity.

SOUL.—If the convenience of translators were the chief thing to be considered, it could be wished they might rely on the English word "soul" as the uniform rendering of the Hebrew word *nephesh*, and leave it to the English reader to discriminate between the divergent shades of meaning involved in the various usages. Whether "soul" stand for "principle of life" (as in 7:3) or as "principle or organ of feeling" (as in 6:3) the observant reader could soon judge; and he might not be long before waking up to the fact that, as Dr. Driver beautifully expresses it, "soul" is frequently used "as a pathetic circumlocution for the personal pronoun, esp. where it is desired to represent a person as vividly conscious of some emotion or experience whether pleasurable or painful, 3:1 ('that say of *my soul*' = 'that say *of me*,' but of 'me' represented as keenly sensible of what is said), 11:1, 25:13 ('his soul' = he himself, but depicting him as keenly sensible of the enjoyment described)." But when *nephesh* is freely used to convey the motion of *desire*, *appetite* or *greed*, then it seems desirable for a translation to say so plainly; since "Aha, our

## PSALMS—SUMMARY OF SACRED LEARNING

soul" (35:25), "Give me not over to the soul of my enemies" (27:12), are scarcely intelligible to the untrained English reader. It may be doubted whether Driver has given quite enough prominence to the simple idea of personality as filling the word "soul," though undoubtedly he recognises it. See our Exposition of 16:10; and cp. Eze. 18:4. Apart from any nice shades of meaning in the word "soul," the broad psychological fact remains that by means of it a man is solicited to exercise his marvellous capacity of projecting himself from himself, to view himself from without himself, and to address himself in the language of expostulation and exhortation; of which 42:5, 11, 43:5 and 103:1, 2, 22 (see Expositions) are memorable examples.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PSALMS AS A STIMULUS TO HOLY LIVING

Holy Living is here regarded as something more than righteous conduct; just as being is more than doing, and holiness goes beyond righteousness. Correct conduct in all its forms is necessarily included, but holy living has in it the vitality and the bloom which spring from communion with a holy God. To such living, the Psalms are, by experience, found to supply a mighty stimulus.

That they should do so, lies in the very nature of things. Not only do they emphasise character in a remarkably varied and persistently recurring way, but they set the sympathetic soul in pursuit of character by moving the deepest springs of desire and endeavour. They bring the soul into contact with God, in the highest and most spiritual acts of adoration, praise and prayer. To use the Psalms devoutly, is to come into the presence-chamber of the All-Holy. One has only to consider the proportion of direct address to Deity which the Psalms contain, to perceive the extent to which the man who sincerely uses them commits himself to sentiments of penitence, confidence, adoration, love, desire; so as to place himself under moral compulsion either to mean what he says, or to desist from saying it,—unless he would recklessly embark on the repugnant course of daring hypocrisy.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

It is not meant that a man cannot respectfully listen to prayers and praises in which he is not for the present prepared to commit himself by voluntary personal undertaking. Yet still, setting callous formalism aside as downright iniquity and mockery, the compelling power of devout compositions,—especially when voiced by worshippers believed to be sincere,—must ever be either sympathetically to join, or candidly to dissent and refrain. Supposing, however, the beginnings of faith and desire to be present in ever so feeble a degree, and the inclination be indulged to join in the devout utterance of the Psalms—then, what is the nature of the influence under which a man's mind consents to come? It must be—to become holy.

Is God himself holy? And is he, in psalms like these, directly addressed? To the first of these two vital questions an affirmative answer is here assumed—without argument. To the second, some fresh emphasis is sought to be given. At this point the appeal of necessity lies to experience. Thousands—myriads—now living—can attest that, to the best of their judgment when turned towards the witness of their own consciousness, there is such a thing as speaking directly to the Omniscient, in perfect confidence of being heard of Him. There is such a thing as communion with God. There is such a thing as doing that which these holy psalms are evermore doing. And it is a part of this consciousness that thereby is let in upon the worshipper's soul the mightiest stimulus to become—what the God addressed is—holy.

Nothing further claims admission into this Chapter, save to strengthen what has already, in brief, been expressed.

It is conceivable that the importance which the Psalter attaches to human character, should be obscured by the incidental nature of its enforcement and especially by the surpassing energy with which the influences fitted to bear on character are concentrated on the worshipper's mind. In other words, the grand mission of the psalmists seems to be, rather to display and illustrate the character which Jehovah already bears, than to enforce the character which his adorers are called upon to work out. Their songs of set purpose glorify God: incidentally, they educate man.

But their educative influence, when concentrated, is very strong. The first psalm—introductory to the whole collection—is devoted to character. The fifteenth, dramatically extols

## PSALMS—STIMULUS TO HOLY LIVING

character: so does the twenty-fourth, with still more brilliant scenic energy. The fifty-first, with bitter tears for failure, exactly enforces character—thorough, pure, influential. The seventy-second, in a quite unexpected way, extols character as exemplified in the person of its ideal King; and, out of many to name but one more, the extremely dramatic one-hundred-and-eighteenth in a remarkable manner sets character on the highest conceivable pedestal by opening the gate of Jehovah only to the righteous. If behind these direct and indirect encomiums on good character there be massed the strongly disapproving reflections with which the Psalter abounds on men of the stamp of Cush and Doeg and Ahithophel—to name no more of the throng of the cunning, the double-tongued, the ungrateful, the impious—it will in candour be confessed that the mighty moral influence of the Psalms is in favour of the noble, the trusty, the devout, the merciful, the God-like. And even if the execration of the Psalter on the perfidious and vile are sometimes carried to what in ourselves would be a culpable and un-Christ-like excess which we whole-heartedly deplore, nevertheless they reveal a passion for righteousness which, when refined, is of incalculable moral value.

We have alluded to the larger freedom of the Psalter in displaying the character of God than in prescribing the attributes needful to constitute godly men. And this, indeed, is one of the crowning glories of the Psalms. They extol God with a will. They are never tired of praising Him. They delight to effloresce on this ever-welcome theme. For example, they pile up epithets of delight and satisfaction in Jehovah (as witness Pss. 18:1-3, 144:1, 2); they echo and re-echo his most gracious Divine Name, (146:5-10); by the aid of a simple pronoun of reference, they unfurl clause after clause in his praise (103:3-5); they begrudge not to exhaust the whole alphabet to initial his sole doings and perfections (111, 145).

Not as a feeble, doubtful God, do the psalmists extol Jehovah. His character, in their esteem, is weighted with wisdom: it is nerved with moral energy. Their God is a good hater: he detests cruel men, and he abhors hypocrites. His pity does not blind his judgment. He searches men through and through, and sees them as they are. Those who have loved and served him, and walked in his ways, and then, alas! have sinned against him, are not here seen easily commending themselves to be received back into Divine favour. No! their repentance has to go down to the springs of their life; and their restoration has to be a re-creation.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Not otherwise can they have given back to them the joys of Jehovah's salvation.

When restored, or as already serving God with loyalty, they not only adore him, but they think of his presence with a holy passion of desire to be admitted thereto. The very blaze of holiness warms their craving to be with him. It was, then, not without amplest warrant that we said at the beginning of this chapter that the stimplating power of the Psalms to move to holy living is grounded in the very nature of things. Educatively, *that is* what the Psalms mean: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

It would not be frank—it would not be honest—in a Christian—to say that the Psalms perfectly meet every want. In truth, they create a demand for more than they supply. To express this abstract assertion in concrete form suggested by the Psalms themselves, how remarkable a thing it is that, whereas it is foretold of David (89:26) that he should do the very thing which Christians are always doing, namely call God "Father!", yet he never once does it. He well-nigh says this in hundreds of instances: adoration, admiration, affection, fond comparison—these are ever springing to his lips, ever drawing forth from his lyre the sweetest of sounds; and yet his inspired lips never well-over with the one decisive child's word in recognition of his Father. There is no "Abba Father" in the Psalms! Where direct address is so conspicuously dominant, where terms of direct address are so various and abundant, from "Shield" to "Sun," from "Shepherd" to "King,"—the omission is symptomatic. The Spirit of Sonship had not been bestowed: the Son himself had not arrived: the relationship itself, though founded and figured, had not been personally perfected; and so the adequate channel of utterance was not in existence:—hence the lack. But the Son—of David and of God—has come at length, personally realised the endearing relationship, received first for himself and then for us the Spirit of Sonship, and so—now—we cannot desist from the outcry for the utterance of which our inmost heart yearns, as, to David's Shield, Sun, Shepherd, King, even to Jehovah, we cry, "Abba! oh Father!" Henceforth the holiness of the Psalms acquires in our esteem a refinement of moral beauty it never before possessed, because now we view it as illumined by a Messianic light; and we are moved to its pursuit by a charm and a power which we gratefully acknowledge as reaching us through the mediation, through the death, resurrection and ascension into heavenly glory, of David's Son and Lord.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLES OF THE INDIVIDUAL PSALMS

#### PSALM

1. The Righteous Man and the Lawless contrasted.
2. The Messiah's Reign in Zion Assured.
3. Conspiracy, Confidence, Courage and Victory. Chief Conspirator left unnamed!
4. The Ideal Levite's Evening Prayer.
5. A Morning Prayer for Deliverance from Conspirators.
6. A Prayer for Deliverance from Sickness and Death.
7. One Wrongfully Accused commits his Vindication to the Righteous Judge of all the Earth.
8. Jehovah's Majesty Exalted by means of Man's Dominion.
9. 10. The Kingship of Jehovah in Zion finally triumphant over a League between the Nations and the Lawless One.
11. Faith's Brave Answer to the Counsels of Fear.
12. General Corruption, evidenced by Sins of the Tongue, impels to Prayer, and calls forth a Divine Answer.
13. A sorely-tried Believer in Jehovah Expostulates, Entreats, and ultimately Exults.
14. A vile Person's Testimony to Prevalent Wickedness, when Confirmed by Jehovah, occasions Warning and Prayer.
15. The Approved Citizen-Guest of Jehovah.
16. An Ideal Israelite's Triumph over Death.
17. One who is Righteous Prays, in Great Trouble, for Divine Deliverance and Manifestation.
18. David's Song of Deliverance.
19. Greater than the Glory of God in the Heavens, is the Grace of Jehovah in the Law.
20. To Prayer for a King in Distress, a Favourable Answer is Confidently Awaited.
21. Thanks for the King's Victory, and Confidence of Further Triumphs.
22. The Voice of a Forsaken Sufferer—Loudly Lamenting his Lot, Minutely Describing his Pain and Shame, without Reproaching God or Accusing Himself—is Suddenly Silenced (in Death); and then as suddenly is heard in a Strain of Triumph, in which Other Voices join, All celebrating the Praises of Jehovah as Sovereign Lord.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

23. The All-Sufficiency of Jehovah.
24. The Admission of Worshippers into the Presence of the Previously Admitted King.
25. An Alphabetical Psalm of Supplication.
26. An Ideal Levite's Prayer for Vindication by the Prolongation of his Life.
27. Trust and Prayer in the Hour of Danger.
28. Prayer turned into Praise.
29. Glory in the Temple and in the Tempest: Jehovah's Kingship of Judgment in the Past, and of Blessing in the Future.
30. A Song of Joy on Recovery from Sickness.
31. Fellowship in Suffering and Salvation.
32. 33. Felicitations to the Forgiven, and Examples of the Songs that they Sing.
34. An Alphabetical Psalm of Praise and Instruction.
35. Prayers against Open and Concealed Enemies, followed by Promises of Praise.
36. Oracles False and True, Prompting Prayer and Praise.
37. An Alphabetical Exhortation to Patience in Well-doing.
38. Prayer for Deliverance from Disease and from Enemies.
39. The Lament and Prayer of a Divinely-Stricken-One.
40. Three Stirring Reminiscences of King David's History.
41. Regretting that Enemies and Friends should Meanly Rejoice in his Sickness, the Psalmist nevertheless Perseveres in Prayer for Pardon and Recovery.
42. 43 A Debarred Worshipper Mastering his Sorrow.
44. Israel Suffers for God.
45. A Royal Marriage.
46. Trust in God, Joyfully Maintained in Face of Peril, Speedily Rewarded.
47. Israel Invites the Nations to Rejoice in the Universal Kingship of her God.
48. Jehovah Worthy to be Praised in his Holy City, whose History Rebounds to the Honour of her Shepherd-King, who will yet Lead Israel against Death.
49. Death and Redemption: Oppressed Saints Comforted, and Oppressors Rebuked.
50. Judgment on Israel Pronounced amid the solemnities of an Audible and Visible Divine Manifestation.



## DESCRIPTIVE TITLES

51. The Prayer of a Penitent.
52. Doeg the Edomite Denounced.
53. A Vile Person's Witness to Prevalent Wickedness, when Confirmed by Jehovah, occasions Warning and Prayer.
54. A Prayer prompted by the Hostile Action of the Ziphites.
55. A Bitter Complaint of the Treachery of an Intimate Friend.
56. A Song composed by David in Captivity.
57. A Reminiscence of David's Early Troubles when Pursued by Saul, subsequently adapted to Brighter Times.
58. A Significant Warning to Corrupt Judges.
59. The Beleagured Psalmist Prays for Rescue and Avenging.
60. An Outcry of Anguish, Expostulation, and Entreaty, under a Severe Reverse.
61. The Psalmist, in Banishment, Prays for Restoration.
62. Restful Resolution, Exposing the Treacherous and Encouraging the Timorous, traces both Power and Kindness to God the Judge of All.
63. A Banished Soul, Athirst for God, Anticipates Satisfaction and Vindication.
64. A Prayer against the Evil Tongues of Conspirators, who are Destroyed by their Own Weapon.
65. Israel's Temple-Song of Praise, on behalf of Herself and All Nations, chiefly in Grateful Acknowledgement of Seed-time and Harvest.
66. An Invitation to All the Earth to join in Israel's Song of Praise.
67. Prayer for Blessing on Israel as a Means of Blessing to all Nations.
68. Glimpses of Jehovah's Visible Reign over Israel and the Nations.
69. Pictures of Distress and Outcries for Deliverance, followed by Imprecations on Cruel Enemies, and by Promises of Praise.
70. 71. Prayer not to be forsaken in Old Age.
72. A People's Prayer for a Perfect King.
73. Temptation, arising from the Prosperity of the Lawless, Triumphantly Overcome.
74. Ruthless Injuries to the Sanctuary and Oppression in the Land by an Enemy, call forth Expostulation with God for his Quiescence.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

75. A Song, enshrining an Oracular Assurance of Equitable Judgment by the Judge of the Earth.
76. A Song of Triumph over a Divinely Smitten Foe.
77. Comfort in Distress obtained by the Study of a Song.
78. A Didactic Poem, Counselling the Reunion of the Tribes.
79. Invasion, Desecration, Demolition, Massacre and Derision call forth Lamentation, Expostulation, Petition and Pleading; and the Hope of Deliverance evokes a Promise of Perpetual Praise.
80. Prayer for the Flock and Vine of Israel.
81. A Mission-Song to be Sung to the Northern Tribes.
82. The Judgment of Unjust Judges.
83. An Appeal to God for Deliverance from an Impending Invasion.
84. The Longing of a Levite for the Habitations of Jehovah in Zion, with Inspiring Memories of a Past Pilgrimage and Exultant Joy in Renewed Service.
85. Praise, Prayer, and Prophecy lead up to the Reconciliation of Earth and Heaven.
86. Prayer of a Tried and Faithful Servant of Jehovah.
87. The Glorious Destiny of Zion as the Metropolis of the Nations.
88. The Anguished Cry of One Smitten and Forsaken.
89. The Covenant with David Contrasted with the Present Dishonour of David's Heir.
90. A Prayer against the Dominion of Death.
91. A Personal Application of the Foregoing Psalm.
- 92-97. A Service of Song for a Sabbath-Day.
92. Personal Song—Probably by a King.
93. Jehovah Proclaimed King.
94. Prayer for Vengeance on the Lawless.
95. Invitation—"O Come!" "Come In!" Warning—"Harden not your Hearts!"
96. The Land called upon to Sing to Jehovah, and to Proclaim his Kingship to the Nations.
97. Third Proclamation—Decisive Results, by way of Joy, Fear, Conviction, Shame, Homage, Thanks, Exhortation and Triumph.
98. 99. A shorter Service of Song (for a Sabbath Day).
100. Invitation to all the Earth to come In before Jehovah and Worship.

## DESCRIPTIVE TITLES

101. A King's Resolve to have a Pure House and Court and Royal City.
102. The Prayer of a Humbled One brings a Three-fold Answer of Peace.
103. Bless Jehovah, for he is Worthy.
104. A Creation Hymn.
105. A Hymn of Praise to Jehovah for giving Israel a Covenant-Land in which to observe his Law.
106. Humbled Israel Confessing her Sins as a Nation.
107. Examples of Men's Straits, leading to Prayer; and of Jehovah's Deliverances, calling for Praise.
108. Two Fragments of Earlier Psalms.
109. David, Rehearsing how his Enemies Cursed him, refers his Cause to Jehovah.
110. A Revelation—through David—to his Lord the Messiah.
111. Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of Jehovah.
112. Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of the Man who Revereth Jehovah.
113. A Song of Sublime Simplicity: reaching its Climax by Rejoicing with a Glad Mother.
114. A Passover Song.
115. Not for her own Glory, but for his, Israel moves herself to trust in Jehovah to show his superiority to Idols.
116. Individual Thanks for Deliverance from Peril of Death.
117. All Nations invited to Join in Israel's Tribute of Praise.
118. The Passover "Hosanna" Song.
119. Jehovah's Will in relation to Human Character and Conduct, as celebrated in Twenty-Two Alphabetical Stanzas, and by the aid of Eight Comprehensive Synonyms.
120. Peace *versus* War: First Step-Song.
121. Jehovah the true Helper and Keeper of Israel: Second Step-Song.
122. The Tribes Welcomed to the Passover: Third Step-Song.
123. The King's Response to the Injunction to Lift up his Eyes as High as Heaven: Fourth Step-Song.
124. Sudden and Complete Deliverance acknowledged as Jehovah's own Work: Fifth Step-Song.
125. Trust in Jehovah encouraged in presence of the Invader: Sixth Step-Song.
126. The Invader Gone—The First Sowing Begun: Seventh Step-Song.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

127. In Relief of Domestic and Civic Anxiety: Eighth Step-Song.
128. A Happy Home and a Prosperous Commonwealth: Ninth Step-Song.
129. Israel's Thanks for Past Deliverances, and Prayer for Continued Vindication: Tenth Step-Song.
130. Ransomed out of the Depths: Eleventh Step-Song.
131. The Sinking of Self in Seeking Israel's Welfare: Twelfth Step-Song.
132. The Davidic Dynasty Humbled and Exalted: Thirteenth Step-Song.
133. Brethren in Fellowship—a Charming Spectacle: Fourteenth Step-Song.
134. The Night-Service in the Temple: Fifteenth Step-Song.
135. A Call to Temple Worship.
136. A Second Call to Temple Worship, with Responses inserted.
137. A Returned Levite's Memories of Babylon, Apostrophe to Jerusalem, and Imprecations on Edom and Babylon.
138. A King's Public Thanks for Advancement in Royal Dignity.
139. An Individual submits himself to Jehovah's All-Searching Eye.
140. Deliverance from Slanderous and Violent Enemies, Implored and Expected.
141. A Temptation to Conspiracy Shunned.
142. Loud Outcries in a Cave Succeed Guarded Petitions at Court.
143. Continued Concealment in a Cave—its Grievances and its Gains.
144. From David's Psalms are selected Strains by one of his sons—emboldening him to plead for Deliverance from Foreigners.  
An Appendix anticipates Happy Times.
145. An Alphabetical Psalm in Praise of Jehovah's Greatness, Goodness, and Righteousness.
146. Twelve Reasons for Trusting in Jehovah.
147. Praise for the Restoration of Jerusalem, and for Israel's pre-eminence: with Grateful Recognition of Rain and of Spring.
148. Praise Invoked from all Creation.
149. A New Song for Israel, which others may NOT Sing.
150. An Expansion and Enforcement of the Public Reader's Invitation to the People to join in the Responses in the Temple Worship.

## TABLES

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## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### TABLE IV.—ABBREVIATIONS

Aram. : Aramean.

A.V. : Authorized version.

Br. : Briggs.

CMm. : Chief Musician's mark.

Cod. : Codex = written copy.

cp. : Compare.

Del. : Delitzsch.

Dr. : Driver.

ear. pt. ed. : Early printed edition of the Hebrew Bible.

G. Intro. : Ginsburg's Introduction to his Massoretico-Critical Bible.

Gn. : Ginsburg's notes in his Massoretico-Critical Hebrew Bible.

God = Elohim.

GOD = El.

**God** = Eloah.

Gt. : Ginsburg *thinks* (a guarded *opinion*).

Intro. : Introduction to this work.

J.P.S.V. : Jewish Publication (Society Version).

Kp. : Kirkpatrick.

Lm. : Librarian's mark.

mf. : More freely.

ml. : More literally.

M.T. : Massoretic Hebrew Text. (For "Massorites" see Intro., Chap. I.)

Nm. : No mark—whether Librarian's or Chief Musician's.

O.G. : Oxford Gesenius ("B.D.B.")

## TABLES

O.T.P.: Thirtle's "Old Testament Problems."

P.B.V.: Prayer Book version.

Per.: Perowne.

perh.: Perhaps.

P.R.I.: Public Reader's Invitation.

prob.: Probably.

Read: In margin of M.T.

R.V.: Revised version.

Sep.: Septuagint (early Greek version).

shd.: Should.

sp. vr.: Special various reading (sevir) in Gn.

Syr.: Syriac.

T.G.: Tregelles' Gesenius.

U.: Usually.

Vul.: Vulgate (Latin).

w.: with.

Written: In text of M.T.

☞☞: Sign for "Selah." See Intro., Chap. III., "Selah."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS



# THE PSALMS

## BOOK THE FIRST

### PSALM 1

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Righteous Man and the Lawless Contrasted.

#### ANALYSIS

The Righteous man Described—vers. 1-3: by what he Does Not—ver. 1; by what he Does—ver 2; and by what he is Like—ver. 3. The Lawless man described, as a Contrast, and by what he is Like—ver. 4; also by his Doom, negatively expressed—ver. 5. Jehovah's relation to the Two Ways—ver. 6.

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(Nm.)

- 1 How happy<sup>1</sup> the man—  
Who hath not walked in the counsel of the lawless,<sup>2</sup>  
and in the way of sinners hath not stood,  
and in the seat of scoffers hath not sat,<sup>3</sup>

1. Note that the Psalms open with a word of emotion. See Intro., Chap. III., "How happy."

2. "Cp. Isa. 13:11, 14:5. The use of *r-sh'* in allusion to Israelites implies disloyal association with the heathen, the impious outsiders (Ps. 25:5). The term is opposed to 'the righteous'; cp. Exod. 9:27, Hab. 1:4, 13, Prov. 3:33, 28:1-4, 12, 28, 29:2 (also cp. *hoi anomoi* in Macc. 2:24, 3:5, 6)"—Thirtle, O.T.P. 106.

3. Note tenses. "The perfects in ver. 1 describe what he all along has never done"—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 But rather in the law<sup>1</sup> of Jehovah is his delight,  
and in his law doth he talk with himself<sup>2</sup> day and night.  
3 So doth he become like a tree planted<sup>3</sup> beside channels of  
waters,  
that yieldeth its fruit in its season,  
whose leaf also doth not wither,—  
And whatsoever he doeth he causeth to prosper.<sup>4</sup>  
4 Not so the lawless!  
but rather as chaff which the wind driveth away.  
5 For this cause shall the lawless not rise in the vindication,<sup>5</sup>  
nor sinners enter into the congregation of the righteous.<sup>6</sup>  
6 For Jehovah does acknowledge<sup>7</sup> the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the lawless shall vanish.<sup>8</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 1

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow evil men's advice.  
who do not hang around with sinners, scoffing at the things of  
God:

2 But they delight in doing everything God wants them to,  
and day and night are always meditating on His laws and  
thinking about ways to follow Him more closely.

3 They are like trees along a river bank bearing luscious  
fruit each season without fail. Their leaves shall never wither,  
and all they do shall prosper.

4 But for sinners, what a different story! They blow away  
like chaff before the wind!

5 They are not safe on Judgment Day; they shall not stand  
among the godly.

6 For the Lord watches over all the plans and paths of  
godly men, but the paths of the godless lead to doom.

1. Or: "instruction." Cp. 19:7-14, 119 *passim*.

2. Heb. *hagah*; synonymous w. *siach*, "soliloquise." Note throughout.

3. So Dr., Per., Del., Carter, Leaser; but "transplanted"—O.G., Br.

4. Ver. evidently expanded in Jer. 17:8.

5. "That is, in the resurrection which takes place in the judgment, at  
the end of the age of the world"—Br. Cp. Isa. 26:14, 19, Lk. 14:14, 1  
Cor. 15.

6. Cp. 111:1.

7. Ml.: "know"; but sometimes, "know w. approval," "recognise,"  
"acknowledge." Cp. 37:18, Mt. 7:23, Rom. 8:29, 2 Tim. 2:19.

8. Ml.: "perish"; but when a *way* perishes, it "disappears"; leading  
to nowhere, it is "lost," is no longer a "way." Cp. 112:10.

## PSALM ONE

### EXPOSITION

This Psalm is a commendation of the godly life. It opens with an expression of admiration for the man who lives that life: which it proceeds to describe in a simple and engaging manner, by telling us what such a man avoids—what he delights in—and what he resembles. He avoids the downward course by not beginning it; he delights in *Jehovah's law*, and shows his pleasure in it by diligent study; and he thereby resembles *a tree planted* in a spot where it is well-watered. Each of these points is enlarged sufficiently to make it impressive. The man described avoids three things: he *walks not in the counsel of the lawless*—that is, he does not take the advice of those who care not how they live; he *stands not in the way of sinners*—in other words, he declines bad men as his companions; and he *sits not in the seat of scoffers*—he refuses to form one of a circle who spend their time and wit in ridiculing religion. The things to be avoided are thus presented in the form of a double climax: worse and worse companions, and more and more submission to their influence. The unprincipled may prepare you for the immoral, and the immoral for the contemptuous: you may take bad advice, then seek bad company, and at last scoff at all goodness. *Happy the man* who does none of these things! Thrice happy he who *has not begun to do them!*

But life cannot thrive on negations. He that would hate wickedness must love goodness. Now, as *the law*, or instruction, of *Jehovah*, the holy and loving God, affords guidance to a good and holy life, it follows that he who would shun evil will take so much pleasure in divine guidance that he will look out for it, learn it, linger over it. The laws of nature he will revere and observe; the laws of revelation he will welcome and obey. If he is so happy as to know Christ, he will find in him the spirit and sum of all law (1 Cor. 9:21). Christ will be the law of his being. As The Christ rejoiced that Jehovah's "law of righteousness was enshrined in his deepest affections" (40:8), so will Christ's follower make it his greatest joy to do his Master's will. The newspaper, the novel, will be less highly esteemed than the Bible. He may be compelled, or find it serviceable, to consult the first; he may be able to choose and utilise the second; but it is to the third that his mind will gravitate, from the third that he will store his memory, in the third that he will

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discover his songs of immortal hope; and though—not being an Oriental—he may not be heard literally *soliloquising* out of the Holy Scriptures, yet will he count every day lost in which he does not gain clearer insight into its wisdom, and will feel every wakeful night-hour soothed which lights up any of its great and precious promises.

His best life, thus thrives. He is like a well-planted *tree—transplanted* that it might be well-planted. He comes directly under the care of the Divine Husbandman, whose well-planned and well-watched irrigation keeps him constantly supplied with the *waters* of life through the *channels* of appropriate means conducive of spiritual growth and fruitfulness. *Seasonable fruit* is the glory of fruit-bearing trees: learning and liveliness in youth, steady work and sturdy endurance in middle life, patience and serene hope in old age as the better-land draws near—these are the fruits to be looked for in the garden of Jehovah. Everything is beautiful in its season (Ec. 3:11): yea, even the *leaf* that does *not wither*: the ornamental as well as the useful has place, and the ornamental conceals and shields the useful, as the *leaf* does the *fruit*; and so even beauty is not to be despised—especially that of modesty; even the leaf that hides the fruit may help its growth. But, as a man is better than a sheep (Mt. 12:12), so also is a man better than a “tree”: no tree being fit adequately to symbolise a “man, made in the image of God” (Jas. 3:9). Therefore the psalmist, returning from the man-like tree to the tree-like man, and leaving the tree behind, as unable to bear the weight of such a clause as *whatsoever he doeth*, says of the man with his multifarious capacities, of the man under Divine culture, who soliloquises day and night in the law of Jehovah,—*And whatsoever he doeth prospereth*; and so it does, sooner or later: if not during “the night when Weeping has come to lodge,” then “in the morning when Jubilation” appears (30:5): then shall we be made “glad according to the years Jehovah had humbled us—the years we had seen misfortune”; and discover that, after all, “the work of our hands had been established upon us” (90:15).

*Not so the lawless*: very much “not so”! Surprise, therefore, need not be felt that the Septuagint *repeats* the negative, both for feeling and for filling out the line: “Not so the ungodly, not so”; even though it must be confessed that the half line in

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Hebrew is still more effective, and more symmetrically answers to the half-line at the commencement of the psalm. *But rather as chaff which the wind driveth away*—as of no worth and no further account. *For this cause shall the lawless not rise in the vindication*; and, from the Old Testament, scarcely could we learn that they will rise at all: certainly not *in the vindication*, a well-sustained rendering, which anticipates the distinction made by our Lord when he spake of “the resurrection of the righteous” (Lk. 14:14). *Sinners shall not enter the congregation of the righteous*: whose way, life, character will NOT *vanish*, but continue evermore. *For Jehovah doth acknowledge*—know, approve, perpetuate—*the way of the righteous*; but *the way of the lawless shall vanish*—like a track lost in the waste, where no footsteps can make a path. “Only the way of the righteous is *derek olam* (“a way age-abiding”) (139:24), a way that issues in eternal life”—Del.

This psalm and the next are anonymous, and without any superscribed or subscribed lines. They are admirably adapted for the purpose they were manifestly intended to serve: namely, as introductory to the whole Book of Psalms—the former penned from a purely ethical point of view, and the latter from a national, Davidic, and Messianic standpoint. One or both of these psalms may have been placed here by Ezra; but each may have been first brought into use as introductory to a smaller and earlier collection. Though probably placed here by Ezra, this first psalm was almost certainly composed by Hezekiah, whose spirit it breathes—as may be seen by a comparison if it with the latter half of Ps. 19 and the whole of Ps. 119,—a conclusion confirmed by the fact that it was expanded by Jeremiah (17:8) and therefore must have already been in existence.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. By considering this whole Psalm give three reasons the godly are blessed or happy and three reasons the ungodly are not.
2. How can all men be thus divided?
3. Discuss the progression and culmination of sin.
4. Could Biblical examples be found and discussed which exemplify the three stages of ungodliness?
5. How shall we cultivate the capacity to “delight” in the law of God?

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6. What is involved in the act of meditating?
7. In what way is the godly man like a tree?
8. No fruit—or little fruit and withered leaves is an indication of a lack—what is it?
9. Many ungodly men prosper—how shall we account for this?
10. Since we are all sinners what comfort is there in God's knowledge of our ways?

## PSALM 2

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Messiah's Reign in Zion Assured.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A Conspiracy against Jehovah and His Anointed Foretold. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, Jehovah's Counter Proclamation. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, The Messiah's Claim to the Throne. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, Counsels of Peace.

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(Nm.)

- 1 Wherefore have nations consented together?<sup>1</sup>  
or should peoples keep muttering an empty thing?
- 2 The kings of earth take their stand,  
and grave men have sat in conclave together,<sup>2</sup>  
against Jehovah and against his Anointed One:—
- 3 "Let us tear apart their bands,  
and cast away from us their cords!"<sup>3</sup>
- 4 One enthroned in the heavens will laugh,  
my Sovereign Lord will mock at them;
- 5 Then will he speak to them in his anger,  
in in his wrath will dismay them:—

1. "So most probably from meaning of Heb. stem and context; 'rage'—A.V., R.V., J.P.S.V.,—'rage furiously'—P.B.V., 'tumultuously assemble'—R.V., Kirk., and so variously, most moderns, are not sustained by text or context"—Br.

2. "It is general rebellion against Jahve and His Anointed"—Del.

3. "They are, therefore, at the time of their rebellion subjects of Jahve and His Anointed"—Del.

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- 6 "Yet I have installed my king  
on Zion<sup>1</sup> my holy mountain,<sup>2</sup>  
let him tell my decree!"<sup>3</sup>
- 7 "Jehovah said to me:—  
'My Son art thou,  
I today have begotten thee:  
8 Ask of me and let me give—  
nations as thine inheritance,  
and as thy possession the ends of the earth:  
9 Thou shalt shepherd<sup>4</sup> them with a sceptre of iron,<sup>5</sup>  
as a potter's-vessel shalt thou dash them in pieces,'"
- 10 Now therefore ye kings show your prudence,  
be admonished ye judges of earth:  
11 Serve ye Jehovah with reverence,  
and exult with trembling:  
12 Kiss the Son,<sup>6</sup> lest he be angry,  
and ye perish on the way;  
for soon might be kindled his anger.  
How happy are all who take refuge in Him!

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 2

What fools<sup>7</sup> the nations are to rage against the Lord! How strange that men should try to outwit God!<sup>8</sup>

1. "Zion is mentioned as the royal seat of the Anointed One; there has he been installed, in order that he may reign there, and rule thence (110:2)"—Del.

2. "What is meant is the rising ground of the City of David (2 S. 5:7, 9, 1 K. 8:1), including Mount Moriah."—Del.

3. Thus, by two minute chances; by virtue of wh. this line is moved up from Stanza III. to Stanza II., giving it the position assigned to it in Sep.; "decree of Jehovah" is resolved into "my decree," the yod ( ), "my" having, it is assumed, been mistakenly regarded as the well-known abbreviation for "Jehovah"; thus clearing the sense, equalising the stanzas, and effectively introducing Messiah's declaration.

4. So it shd. be (w. Sept., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. "Rule as shepherd king over them, is more suited to the context of the sceptre, even if it be of iron; so 78:71, 72, cp. 28:9, 49:14, 80:1, 2 S. 5:2, 7:7, Jer. 3:15, Mi. 5:4, Eze. 37:24, Na. 3:18"—Br.

5. Cp. Rev. 12:5, 19:15.

6. So Del. w. strong defence. Others: "worship sincerely" (ml. "kiss purely"): but distinctly less satisfying to the context.

7. Implied; literally, "Why do the heathen rage?"

8. Literally, "meditate a vain thing."

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2 For a summit conference of the nations has been called to plot against the Lord and His Messiah, Christ the King.<sup>1</sup>

3 "Come, let us break His chains," they say, "and free ourselves from all this slavery to God."

4 But God in heaven merely laughs! He is amused by all their puny plans.

5 And then in fierce fury He rebukes them and fills them with fear.

6 For the Lord declares,<sup>2</sup> "This is the King of My choice, and I have enthroned Him in Jerusalem, My holy city."<sup>3</sup>

7 His chosen One replies,<sup>2</sup> "I will reveal the everlasting purposes of God, for the Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son. This is Your Coronation Day.'<sup>4</sup> Today I am giving You Your glory.'"

8 "Only ask, and I will give You all the nations of the world.

9 Rule them with an iron rod: smash them like clay pots!"

10 O kings and rulers of the earth, listen while there is time.

11 Serve the Lord with reverent fear; rejoice with trembling.

12 Fall down before His Son and kiss His feet<sup>2</sup> before His anger is roused and you perish. I am warning you—His wrath will soon begin. But, oh, the joys of those who put their trust in Him!

## EXPOSITION

This psalm is obviously and confessedly Messianic. The word *messiah* of course means "anointed"—whether applied to David, Hezekiah, or Jesus of Nazareth. On what level this psalm is Messianic, whether on the lower or the higher level, remains to be seen; but Messianic it is, on its surface and down into its deepest depths. To ascertain its scope it must be carefully and correctly interpreted; and this at once raises the whole question of the Interpretation of Prophecy in general, and the exegesis of Messianic Prophecy in particular.

It is here assumed that much Scripture prophecy is *typical*, and therefore *indirect*; that is to say, that it first points to a type as foreshadowing some person or thing greater than itself. But it is *not* here assumed that there is no such thing as *direct*

1. Literally, "His anointed."

2. Implied.

3. Literally, "Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

4. Literally, "This day have I begotten You."



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*prediction*, going straight to its mark without the intervention of a type: we do not know that, and must not take it for granted.

To apply these principles to this first Messianic psalm: let us by all means give preference to the supposition that this psalm is *typically* prophetic; and see whether that hypothesis will carry us satisfactorily through the whole psalm, doing justice to all its leading statements: statements in any case poetical, but not necessarily extravagant,—save, it may be, apparently so, when intended to go beyond the type to the antitype.

Now the most striking thing in this psalm is the concerted opposition of certain enemies to *Jehovah and his Anointed One*; and, next to that, the unique way in which that opposition is overthrown—by counter Divine Proclamation. Who is Jehovah's Anointed One? It is David, or Hezekiah, or Jesus of Nazareth? Whoever he is, Divine Sonship as well as Messiahship is attributed to him. Whoever he is, his destiny includes the dominion of the world.

Doubtless, David in his time and degree was Jehovah's Anointed One; but will the language of the psalm, as a whole, apply to him and find reasonable satisfaction in him? Or, if not in *him*, then in Hezekiah, or in both combined? But if the two combined—with any other scion of the royal house added to them—still fail to satisfy the outlook of the psalm,—then on what principle are we to be restrained from applying to Jesus of Nazareth the whole psalm, provided we can fairly show that it has been, or is now being, or will certainly yet be exhaustively fulfilled in him?

In point of fact, these two famous Hebrew monarchs do fit the terms of the psalm remarkably well—up to a point; and then completely fail to satisfy them. Both David and Hezekiah were triumphantly enthroned in Zion; both had enemies who were set aside or overthrown; and both had extensive dominion. Moreover, in a very singular way, both these kings answer to the statement, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee*. For the "day" referred to can scarcely be an ordinary birthday; seeing that, save in high ceremonial, it is not customary solemnly to accost children on the day of their birth. Hence the probability is, that the "day" alluded to here is the day on which something took place comparable to a birth, so as to make such a speech appropriate. Now, certainly it might look rather magiloquent to say of David, that on the day when Nathan the prophet (2 S. 7) revealed to him the royal destiny of his de-

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scendants, to whom He—Jehovah—would become a “Father,”—that, on that very day, Jehovah virtually said, “Thou art my son! this day, by my supreme decree, have I begotten thee to this sonly, regal office.” It may; and yet there is something remarkable in it. Still more remarkable, when the representation is transferred to Hezekiah, who was raised up from the very gates of death to be more firmly than ever seated as king on Jehovah’s holy mountain. This, in all candour, must be confessed, even though we hesitate to say with Thirtle, O.T.P. 142: “The new life that was given to Hezekiah, simultaneously with the discomfiture of the Assyrian host, justifies these remarkable words—words of resurrection.” They are indeed words *typical* of resurrection!

But, with all this frankly admitted, it must be maintained that these and other incidents in the Davidic House are simply beggared by the language of the psalm. It is questionable whether the opening scene of the psalm found more than a partial realisation in either of the lives we have so far been considering; but, in any case, neither David nor Hezekiah asked and received *universal dominion*—which, however, is writ large on the psalm, and cannot be erased by any legitimate plea of poetic license. Besides, we shall probably do well to guard against bulking out and hardening the type in order to make it as large as the language, fairly interpreted, appears to indicate: in other words we must beware of assuming that the Spirit of Prophecy could not easily carry away the psalmist’s mind far beyond any type that was within range of his vision. Let us use types as helps and not as hindrances. We need have no craving to *add* to the letters of the typical alphabet; but the free Spirit of God may well be expected sometimes to combine those letters in unprecedented forms, and so spell out revelations which have never before been divulged.

If these things are so, then we must beware of inferring that because a clearly foretold event did not happen in the type, therefore it will not be fulfilled in the antitype; or that, seeing it is attenuated to mere shadow in the type, therefore it has no further significance. For example, the appearance of the semblance of a New Birth which we have detected in the life of David, and the still more striking semblance of a New Birth easily seen in the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah, should not blind us to the comparative feebleness of the fulfillment on either

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of these lines. David himself was not declared Jehovah's Son by Nathan the prophet: neither did David, that we know of, ever say to Jehovah, in the gushing tide of the spirit of adoption, "Abba! Father!" It was, indeed, foretold that he should so address the Most High (89:26); but we have no record that he ever actually did so. In like manner, there are circumstances which obviously enfeeble the fulfillment of the psalm in Hezekiah, who, for example, was Jehovah's king in Zion for years before he passed under the shadow of death and resurrection: and who greatly as he loved Jehovah,—as he had much reason to love him,—yet never ventured to call him his Father, so far as the records show.

To go back from the centre of the psalm to its beginning, and remarking that it opens with the unmasking of a conspiracy between kings and nations against Jehovah and his Anointed,—why should we close our eyes to the plain fact, that the Assyrian invasion was not such a *conspiracy*, but merely one of the ordinary doings of an Oriental despot? Then, turning in the other direction from the centre of the psalm, and glancing forward to the *iron sceptre* that was to dash enemies to pieces *like potters' vessels*,—ought we not to be quite sure of our ground before—even under guise of high-flown poetry—we conclude such absoluteness of rule to have been here encouraged in either David or Hezekiah?

On all hands, then, we see abounding indications that a Greater than either David or Hezekiah is here. And therefore we point with confidence to that Greater One as the Hero of this psalm. The conspiracy of the Nations—though it may have been often attempted—has not yet been brought to a head; and, although the Heir to the Throne has appeared, and been saluted as Divine Son on the day of his literal Resurrection (Acts 13:30-32), yet has he not at present been installed on Jehovah's holy mount of Zion. When he is brought forth from his hiding-place in heaven (Col. 3:3, Acts 3:21) then *the kings and judges of the earth* will need *show* all their *prudence*; for, assuredly, the *iron sceptre* that will appear in his hand will be no meaningless symbol, but will stand for what it naturally means,—absolute, resistless physical force, which is far more fittingly entrusted to immortal hands than to mortal. Yes! this psalm is Messianic; but on the higher level. The astounding pledge already given by the literal resurrection of the Messiah from the dead, assures us that in due time the entire psalm, in all its length and breadth,

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will be amply fulfilled, not as mere grandiloquent speech, but in commensurate and therefore amazing facts.

We are indebted to Delitzsch for calling attention to the obvious but much overlooked circumstance, that those kings and counsellors who are discovered in rebellion when the psalm opens, have already come under obligation to Jehovah and to his Anointed One. They are already under the restraints of duty to Jehovah and to his Christ; since it is under those restraints that they turn restive, against those restraints that they rebel.

There is food for thought here. Indeed, we are so impressed with the possibility of framing out of this element in the psalm an *eirenicon* which may be welcomed by expositors who have differed among themselves as to the character and incidence of the Messiah's predicted kingdom, that we pause here just long enough to remind ourselves that, although Prophecy (if it have any definiteness in its inception) cannot need to await fulfillment before it takes on a reliable meaning, yet may most naturally and legitimately assume a clearer and yet clearer intention as fulfillment advances.

To apply this thought: It follows that, if Jesus of Nazareth is the Anointed One of this psalm; and if the day of his resurrection was the day of his being begotten to their Heirship of the Davidic dynasty; then it may be reasonably anticipated that, whether fulfillment has lingered or has greatly advanced since Jesus rose from the dead,—at least we ought to begin to see our way more and more clearly as to how to interpret the Messianic Prophecies as a class.

It is just at this point that Delitzsch's simple and obvious reminder flashes like a beacon-light across the troubled waters of Messianic Interpretation. The movements of our labouring oar are facilitated by the following encouraging considerations:— Since this psalm was written (*a*) other similar ones have been penned, such as—notably—that strictly cognate psalm, the 110th, which may be expected to throw light on this; (*b*) a part fulfillment of this psalm has confessedly been witnessed in the Messiah's Resurrection, and in the broad facts consequent on that outstanding event, such as his ascension to the right hand of God. (*c*) The notorious negative fact arrests our attention, that no one imagines that the Risen Messiah is now in any special sense reigning in and from Mount Zion in Palestine. Is it too much to hope that, by advancing on these lines, substantial progress in Messianic exegesis may be made?

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(a) The very first helpful suggestion actually comes from Ps. 110. There we discover a link missing from this second psalm—that is, if we have but opened our eyes to miss it here. Clear as a sunbeam, it is written in Ps. 2 that Jehovah's derision of the rebels there revealed simply consists in the announcement of an accomplished fact; which accomplished fact constitutes such a counter-movement to the conspiracy as to reduce it to ridicule—that, in a word, is how Jehovah in heaven *laughs* at this conspiracy: he has already taken a step which nullifies all the counsels of the grave men, all the stand of kings, all the gathering of the nations; he has already installed his King on Zion his holy mountain! The implication is: That Zion's King will make decisive work with the conspirators! And the further implication is: That the rebels little dreamed how Heaven was prepared to deride their plot. And yet all the while, beforehand, these selfsame conspirators had been bound by the *bands* and *corde*s of obligation to Jehovah and his Anointed One! How can this be explained?

Quite easily—taking Ps. 110 as our guide. It will be seen from our Exposition of that psalm, that we conclude its natural meaning to be, that the elevation of the Messiah to Jehovah's right hand in heaven out of the midst of his enemies, and his session above, run on until he descends to his centre of subduing activity on Mount Zion. That explains everything; inasmuch as the seat of honour at Jehovah's right hand is not a mere seat of honour, but a heavenly enthronement; David's lord is seated at Jehovah's right hand as jointly regnant with him. He is, as he himself expresses it (Rev. 3:21), sitting during all this waiting interval (Heb. 10:13) on his Father's throne. That fact unlocks the difficulty which just now appeared in the 2nd psalm. It is during the joint session of the Son with the Father in heaven that these kings, senators and nations were brought under those obligations to Jehovah and his Anointed One from which they ultimately desire to break loose.

All of which presents the current proclamation of the Gospel in a light which, if not new, is more widely illuminative than it has been deemed heretofore. It thus appears that the appointed current proclamation of "the Gospel of the Kingdom" of which we read in Mt. 24:14, not only serves as a testimony that earth's rightful King is coming, but by its intrinsic force, as news of salvation to men, binds kings, senators and nations with "bonds"

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and "cords" from which they can by no means escape. Men may hear the Gospel or they may forbear; but they can never be quite the same as if they had not heard it. These kings and nations must have heard the Gospel; they must have heard the story of Crucified Love and of Death-Vanquishing Power; and been admonished to amend their ways, and their laws—to reign in righteousness—to undo heavy burdens—to educate their subjects for the Immortal Life. As the result of Antichrist's seductions, however, they grow tired of these restraints, and they rebel. The conspiracy into which they enter comes to a head *before* the Divine Installation of a King in Zion is known. The announcement of that startling fact—that is how Jehovah will laugh at them. Well may they be admonished to beware, and show their prudence.

The discerning will not fail to perceive how essential a part is played in the above interpretation by the assumption that, in the Psalms, Zion means Zion—the earthly Zion, a part of and frequently synonymous with the historical city Jerusalem. It is on the strength of this assumption that, in the second psalm, it could be supposed that the same rebels as were aware of the Messiah's heavenly reign on the throne of the Father, and so had come under allegiance to Jehovah and his Anointed,—in that sense and to that degree,—were at the same time and up to that moment unaware that Jehovah had now recently installed his Christ on his holy hill of Zion. It is the absolute difference between the two enthronements which renders it possible for men to have been rendering nominal homage to the one, and yet be in absolute ignorance of the other. It is the sudden announcement of the earthly enthronement, which renders their conspiracy an object of Divine derision. Accustomed to do as they pleased in governing or misgoverning their subjects, fearless of eternal issues to be tried before an invisible throne, they are suddenly confronted by a counter Divine movement, evidently and utterly subversive of their rebellious schemes, with the prospect of their being called to account by this newly installed monarch who wields an iron scepture and holds a commission where necessary to dash his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel. In like manner, the same assumption—that Zion in the Old Testament means the earthly Zion—is vital to our exegesis of Ps. 110. It is that, and that only, which resolves ver. 1 of that psalm into an invitation to the Messiah to come

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out of the midst of his earthly enemies; and ver. 2 into a commission to return into their midst, for the purpose of demanding their submission.

Under these circumstances, it is manifestly desirable that each reader should confront this question for himself, and if possible once for all settle it:—Is the Zion of the Psalms practically identical with the historical city of Jerusalem? The highest court of appeal is the usage of the name in the very book we are seeking to interpret. The name “Zion” occurs in the following places in the Psalter, namely:—2:6, 9:11, 14, 14:7, 20:2, 48:2, 11, 12, 50:2, 51:18, 53:6, 65:1, 69:35, 74:2, 76:2, 78:68, 84:7, 87:2, 5, 97:8, 99:2, 102:13, 16, 21, 110:2, 125:1, 126:1, 128:5, 129:5, 132:13, 133:3, 134:3, 135:21, 137:1, 3, 146:10, 147:12, 149:2. It would be unreasonable to expect that all these examples should be demonstrative as to the point at issue: it will suffice, to render the appeal conclusive, that (a) there should be no instances where plainly “Zion” cannot be identical with the earthly Jerusalem; and (b) that there should be a large number in which an alleged reference to a heavenly Zion would bring the Holy Scriptures into ridicule. This reference to a “heavenly” Jerusalem is suggested by a few allusions in the New Testament which name a Jerusalem which is so distinguished: as to which it is obvious to remark that the very term “heavenly” presupposes an earthly Jerusalem to which a contrastive allusion is made; and further that such qualifying term is never found in the Old Testament. The Psalms, in particular, know nothing of a Zion or a Jerusalem in heaven. It would seem like an insult to readers of ordinary intelligence to remind them of such decisive phrases as “Go about Zion,” “wherein thou didst make thy habitation,” “and his lair in Zion hath been placed,” “Zion heard and was glad,” “Thou wilt arise and have compassion upon Zion,” “Jehovah hath built up Zion,” “turned the fortunes of Zion.” Plainly it is the earthly Zion that is intended; and it is fearlessly submitted that there is nothing demonstrative on the other side.

It will conduce to perfect fairness of exegesis, and at the same time lead on to a becoming conclusion to our present study, to call attention to an attractive hortatory element in this psalm which it would be a misfortune to overlook. There is a gracious, subduing light which falls back on the earlier portions of the psalm from the closing stanza, in which the poet is led to fill the part of a kindly monitor. In the opening verses the mutter-

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ings of enemies are heard; then comes Jehovah's counter-proclamation in tones of thunder, alarming in the last degree; the terror naturally caused by such a warning of wrath is seen to be abundantly justified when the Son rehearses his commission, which includes stern rule, in some cases at least issuing in utter destruction. Now, although it would be a very hasty exegesis to infer that none of the Son's enemies will relent, or relenting and suing for mercy will notwithstanding be destroyed; yet it is most acceptable to perceive in the poet's mind a yearning for the salvation of those who have been seen in imminent danger of rushing on to ruin. For *that* is clearly the spirit at work in the entire conclusion of the psalm; and when the peculiar perils of kings and senators are remembered—with few or none above them to represent and enforce Divine claims—it is especially grateful to us to recognise the wooing note which is directly addressed to them, entreating them to show prudence and accept of admonition. It reminds us of our own Scripture which assures us that God willeth all men to be saved—even though they are such as are “in eminent station,” wielding authority over us. But the Divine Father is, as our own Scriptures assure us, jealous of any withholding of worshipful honour from the Son of his Love; and we are therefore predisposed to value at its highest rendering the pointed appeal of Jehovah that such honour be accorded; and, moreover, to interpret the wrath looming against such as withhold it as the Father's wrath; and the refuge into which they are pronounced happy who flee as the refuge which, according to the whole tenor of the Psalms, Jehovah is ready to become to all who seek refuge in Him.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please read Acts 4:23-28 for an inspired interpretation and application of this psalm.
2. Just when and where have or will verses 3 through 5 be fulfilled?
3. Would it be possible to consider the church as “the kingdom” and therefore find all aspects of this psalm fulfilled in the present reign of the King of Kings?
4. Please offer an interpretation of verse 9 that is satisfactory to you.
5. There is a warning in verses 10 through 12; explain this warning in the context of the whole psalm.



## PSALM TWO

6. Consider this brief interpretation of this psalm by Harrison Matthews:

### WHY DO THE HEATHEN RAGE? Psalm 2

#### SETTING

David had lived among the heathen for ten long years (at Ziklag among the Philistines). Now Saul was dead and David had returned home. The heathen had dreamed of the utter destruction of Israel and now a new king had arisen, one who had lived among them. We can well imagine their confusion and consternation and even rage. How could they understand the tie that bound together the people of God?

This Psalm is David's cry of victory. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." How sweet was the victory. Blessed are all they that put their trust in the Lord.

#### THE RULERS TAKE COUNSEL TOGETHER vrs. 1-3

How often have the rulers of the earth taken counsel together to defeat the purposes of God? The kingdom of Israel was a constant source of irritation to the heathen nations round about. Its God was too strict. Its laws were too narrow. Its faith gave its men a zeal in battle that was almost fanatical. How could they counsel together to destroy this nation?

#### HE THAT SITTETH IN THE HEAVENS SHALL LAUGH vrs. 4-6

Try to see this through the eyes of David. How often had his faith cried out in previous years, but now he is seeing the workings of God's plan. He wasn't rejected of God at all. God sits in his heavens and has in derision those who would attempt to defeat his purposes. David had been promised the kingdom and now God had set him upon the holy hill of Zion.

#### THOU ART MY SON vrs. 7-9

This is the great declaration. The Lord hath said, "Thou art my son; ask and thou shalt receive." How the heart of David must have cried out in joy and happiness. He who had been so despised was now declared the son of God. You will see the promise of the Messiah in this passage.

#### BE INSTRUCTED vrs. 10-12

Be wise now; be instructed; serve the Lord with fear; rejoice with trembling. Can you think of any greater admonition than this? Has not our Lord said, "They shall all be taught of God"? Faith demands that David express his trust in the Lord. Blessed are all who put their trust in the Lord.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 3

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Conspiracy, Confidence, Courage and Victory.  
Chief Conspirator left Unnamed!

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, A Surprising Conspiracy. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Unshaken Confidence. Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, Calm Courage. A Monostich Relic of the Original Psalm—ver. 7a. Stanza IV., vers. 7b, c, 8, Final Victory.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David—

When he was fleeing from the face of Absalom his son.

- 1 Jehovah! how have mine adversaries multiplied!  
multitudes are rising against me!
- 2 multitudes are saying of my soul<sup>1</sup>—  
“There is no salvation for him in God!”<sup>2</sup>
- 3 But thou Jehovah are a shield about me,  
my glory and the lifter-up of my head.
- 4 With my voice to Jehovah I call,  
and he answereth me out of his holy mountain.
- 5 I laid me down—and slept,  
I awoke—for Jehovah still sustained me.
- 6 I will not be afraid of myriads of people—  
who round about have set themselves against me:—
- 7 Arise Jehovah! save me O my God!  
Surely<sup>3</sup> thou hast smitten all my foes on the cheek!<sup>4</sup>  
the teeth of the lawless hast thou broken in pieces!
- 8 To Jehovah belongeth salvation:  
On thy people (be) thy blessing!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) On stringed instruments.

1. Or: “my person.”

2. Sep.: “in his God.”

3. Or: “For”

4. Cp. 1 K. 22:24, Job 16:10, Lam. 3:30, Mi. 5:1.

PSALM THREE  
PARAPHRASE

PSALM 3

*A Psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom*

O Lord, so many are against me. So many seek to harm me. I have so many enemies.

2 So many say that God will never help me.

3 But Lord, You are my shield, my glory, and my only hope. You alone can lift my head, now bowed in shame.<sup>1</sup>

4 I cried out to the Lord, and He heard me from His Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

5 Then I lay down and slept in peace and woke up safely, for the Lord was watching over me.

6 And now, although ten thousand enemies surround me on every side, I am not afraid!

7 I will cry to Him, "Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God!" And He will slap them in the face, insulting<sup>3</sup> them and breaking off their teeth.

8 For salvation comes from God. What joys He gives to all His people.

EXPOSITION

This is the first psalm ascribed to David, and it well sustains Thirtle's theory of the joint-authorship of the Psalter; which maintains that Hezekiah freely utilised the work of his famous ancestor David, adapting it to the service of the Temple in his own day; but taking care, while himself remaining anonymous, to do homage to David whenever any material portion of a psalm had come down from the father of Hebrew Psalmody. To start with the assumption that this psalm was not at all from David, is not only to pay wanton disregard to the literary headline embodying a tradition which has come down from time immemorial, but is to miss the exquisite fitness between David's known circumstances and all the earlier portion of this psalm. On the other hand, to infer that David must have composed the whole of the psalm as it now stands, is to bring ourselves into trouble before we reach the end. With David in mind as author, all is well up to the stirring outcry which opens

1. Implied.

2. Literally, "from His holy mountain."

3. Implied.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

ver. 7; but then we get into perplexity; for the next line either announces a sudden victory (surely!) in which case it is incredible that no anxiety for the safety of Absalom should have been betrayed; or (with *ki* as "For") it brings up past deliverances as a plea for present rescue, of which allusion the language contains no trace, and it is extremely unlikely, to say the least, that the writer would come so near to the contradiction of pleading, "O save! for thou hast saved!" without inserting some little word determining the accomplished salvation to the past. This perplexity is removed the instant we detect here Hezekiah's adapting hand; since every line of the final stanza suits the overthrow of the Assyrians. David, in no case, could very well have written, "Thou has smitten all my foes," without adding, "heretofore;" whereas Hezekiah, on receiving news of Sennacherib's overthrow, could write in the conviction that he had no other enemies to fear; and, moreover, if there is any fitness in the word "lawless" (cp. 1:1, note) to point to foreigners, then that is the very work Hezekiah would be likely to employ.

Thus released from all embarrassment respecting authorship, we are in a position to appreciate to the full the encouraging, yea even inspiring, spectacle of lofty confidence with which the lately fallen but now spiritually restored monarch—the hero of so many triumphs and the singer of so many songs—now faces the sore chastisements which confront him in the thorny path of discipline which he must henceforth for a long time tread. God has had mercy upon him; has restored to him the joys of his salvation; has renewed to him the gift of his ennobling Spirit. He is inwardly a new man: has had granted to him Divine healing. Hence he is now again a strong man. He can by faith behold Jehovah about him as a *shield*. He stands erect: his Divine Supporter has lifted up his head. The God whose ark he has dutifully sent back to Jerusalem is already, as by angels' mouths, sending him answers of peace from his *holy mountain*. And, thus sustained, he soundly sleeps; and, refreshed, rises without fear to confront the *myriads* of Israel who have been led astray into rebellion.

We can imagine Hezekiah's muse poising itself on that outburst of supplication from the pen of his ancestor, *Arise, Jehovah! save me O my God!*—lingering over it, as still most suitable to himself ere yet Assyria's power in the land was broken; and perhaps wondering how much of the original closing stanza could be saved from oblivion: when further uncertainty was

## PSALM THREE

obviated by the decisive rebuke of the great Eastern Power; and two good lines remain to weave into his own climax. David first and then Hezekiah would be ready to own—

To Jehovah belongeth salvation;

and both alike—nobly caring for the flock of Jehovah's pasturing—would be prepared, with a full heart, to exclaim—

On thy people be thy blessing!

Thus we need not deny ourselves the pleasure of repeating the delightful words in which Ewald and Delitzsch unite to honour David:—

“As in olden times, he still bears his people upon a loving, interceding heart. He commiserates those who have been led astray, without being angry with them. Distinctions vanish altogether from his mind when he prays for the nation as a whole. The one concluding expression of the psalm—remarks Ewald—throws a bright light into the depths of his noble soul.”

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What evidence do we have of joint-authorship except the subjective internal evidence of a man by the name of Thirtle?
2. Consider the following explanation of this psalm:

LORD, HOW ARE THEY INCREASED THAT TROUBLE ME  
Psalm 3

#### THEME

David prays for salvation as he flees from his son, Absalom.

#### SETTING

Absalom has finally gained the hearts of the people and has led the rebellion of Israel against David. David flees from Jerusalem in all haste feeling that all is lost unless the Lord hears and delivers him. This Psalm expresses David's confidence that God will hear and save.

#### HOW ARE THEY INCREASED THAT TROUBLE ME vrs. 1-2

Although David had heard of the unrest of his people he was totally unprepared for the uprising. He knew that Absalom had won the hearts of many of his people but he didn't think that they would rebel against him. Wasn't he the Lord's

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

anointed? Hadn't he led them to many victories? How surprised he was to see the vast numbers that had arisen against him. Many were saying that God had forsaken him and pointing to David's sin and suffering as proof.

THOU ARE MY SHIELD vrs. 3-6

How often in the life of David had he found God his shield? He knew that God would protect him. After all, God was his glory. His one great desire was to glorify God. His deep repentance was his sincere declaration of his determination to glorify God in righteousness. Because he had placed himself in the hands of the Lord he could lie down and sleep unafraid. Let his enemies rage about him; God was his protector.

ARISE, O LORD, SAVE ME vrs. 7-8

How natural it was for this man of God to cry out, "Save me." He knew that the eyes of the Lord were over him, and he was sure that the ears of the Lord were opened unto his prayers. God was his saviour. He was so sure that God would save him that even as he cried he stated in the affirmative that God had smitten all his enemies. There was a simplicity and yet a fullness to David's faith that was amazing.

Harrison Mathews.

Isn't it just as sensible to approach the psalm from this view point as from the one suggested by Rotherham? Discuss.

## PSALM 4

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Ideal Levite's Evening Prayer.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, New Favour Sought in the Strength of Past Supplies. Stanza II., ver. 2, Expostulation addressed to Wealthy Worshippers, whose Taunts for the Poverty of his Office he had borne. Stanza III., ver. 2, The Levite magnifies his Office, and counts on his nearness to God to ensure an Answer to his Prayer. Stanzas IV. and V., vers. 4, 5, The Salutary Lessons which his Answer brings him. Stanza VI., ver. 6, A Shrewd Observation on a Prayer Frequently Heard in the Temple. Stanza VII., ver. 7, Grateful Praise

## PSALM FOUR

for Superior Spiritual Blessings. Stanza VIII., ver. 8, Resolve on speedy and contented Retirement to Rest.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David

- 1 When I call answer me O God of my right  
when in a strait thou didst make room for me,  
be gracious unto me and hear my prayer.
- 2 Ye sons of the great! how long shall my glory be a reproach,—  
while ye love emptiness while ye seek falsehood
- 3 Know then that Jehovah hath distinguished the man of kind-  
ness<sup>1</sup> as his own,—  
Jehovah will hear when I call unto him.
- 4 “Be deeply moved but do not sin,  
reflect in your hearts on your bed and be silent.
- 5 “Sacrifice ye sacrifices of righteousness,  
and direct your trust unto Jehovah.”
- 6 Multitudes are saying—  
“Who will let us see prosperity?  
lift up on us the light of thy face O Jehovah.”
- 7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart  
more than when their corn and their new wine have increased.
- 8 In peace at once will I lay me down and sleep,  
for thou Jehovah in seclusion  
in safety makest me dwell.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) As to Inheritances.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 4

O God, You have declared me perfect in Your eyes;<sup>2</sup> You have always cared for me in my distress; now hear me as I call again. Have mercy on me. Hear my prayer.

2 The Lord God asks, “Sons of men, will you forever turn My glory into shame by worshiping these silly idols, when every claim that’s made for them is false?”

3 Mark this well: The Lord has set apart the redeemed for Himself. Therefore He will listen to me and answer when I call to Him.

1. Cp. Intro., Chap. II., “Kindness.”

2. Literally, “God of my righteousness.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

4 Stand before the Lord in awe, and do not sin against Him. Lie quietly upon your bed in silent meditation.

5 Put your trust in the Lord, and offer Him pleasing sacrifices.

6 Many say that God will never help us. Prove them wrong, O Lord, by letting the light of Your face shine down upon us.

7 Yes, the gladness You have given me is far greater than the joys at harvest time as they gaze at their bountiful crops.

8 I will lie down in peace and sleep, for though I am alone, O Lord, You will keep me safely.

## EXPOSITION

The presumption is that David wrote this psalm, and that he intended it for evening worship; but on what occasion did he write it, and for whom? Did he write it for himself, when yet fleeing from Absalom, as some suppose; or did he write it for a Levite for ordinary evening worship, as the subscribed line suggests?

It is perhaps not an unnatural supposition that as David wrote the previous psalm, which, in fact, whether so intended or not, comes out well as a morning prayer; therefore he wrote this psalm also as an evening prayer, soon after, under similar circumstances, in fact while yet fleeing from before his rebellious son. Now while the grounds for such a conclusion are very slight, still, if the contents of the psalm had decidedly favoured it, we might have accepted it:—but do they? It is submitted that they do not; and the more obviously that this psalm on its own merits is fitted for evening worship, the more is that circumstance alone sufficient to account for its position here, quite apart from the precise circumstances that gave it birth.

Is it likely that David would compare his escape from Jerusalem to a deliverance from a narrow place into one of more ample room (ver. 1)? Is it likely that he would imply that Absalom's partizans were composed of the great men of the nation (ver. 2)? Is it likely that he would advise rebels on the march to reflect on their beds before further committing themselves (ver. 4)? Is it likely that, merely because the Levitical services were left going in Jerusalem, he would advise conspirators to sacrifice sacrifices of righteousness and trust in Jehovah (ver. 5)? And, finally, is it likely that he would represent Absalom's men as revelling in an abundance of *corn*



## PSALM FOUR

and new wine, while he, the rightful king, was acting the poor pilgrim, "beggar's staff" in hand (ver. 7)? The extreme unlikelihood that David would do any of these things, emboldens us to decline such an hypothesis of origin, even though sustained by all the eloquence of Professor Delitzsch.

As soon, however, as we entertain the other account of origin suggested, every step in our inquiry deepens our impression in its favour.

David, as we know, was in deepest sympathy with the Levites as a tribe; and after he discovered how he had neglected them in his first essay to bring up the ark to Jerusalem, he took care to assign them the place of honour to which their calling as a tribe entitled them. And when we see him dancing before the ark in a linen ephod we are led to regard him as a Levite in spirit, wanting only the name and the formal appointment. If, therefore, the Levites came to feel their need of an evening psalm, and revealed their want to David, we may be sure that they would readily secure the services of his harp and of his muse.

Turning now to the subscribed line of the psalm and discovering there words which, when properly deciphered and rendered, refer to *Inheritances*, we are at once reminded that Jehovah himself was the inheritance of the Tribe of Levi, and that he, by the bountiful provision which he made in the holy ritual connected with offerings and sacrifices, took care that this consecrated and peculiarly dependent tribe should not in vain look to him for their temporal supplies. (Cp. Num. 18:20-24, Deu. 10:9, 18:2, Josh. 13:14, 33, Ps. 132:9, 16.) We have only to add to this the great truth, attested by Num. 3:11, 13, 45, that the tribe of Levi was by express Divine appointment a representative tribe, in order to realise how certainly and how fully the Levites as a class were an *ideal* tribe. All the godly in Israel were, by calling, Jehovah's *hasidhim*, or *men of kindness*; but the Levites were officially this, and it was peculiarly their duty and privilege to keep all Israel in mind of this their high calling to represent among men the essential kindness of their God. If, therefore, we may assume that the two kinds of inheritance would naturally combine in one celebration,—namely the inheritance of the Levites in Israel, and the inheritance of Israel among the nations,—and one evening song would blend two such congenial memories, then nothing would

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

be more becoming than that the Levites should have and should sustain in the Temple service just such an anthem of praise as this.

The more narrowly we examine this psalm, so subscribed, the more admirably do we find it fitted for such a purpose.

The Levite proclaims that his *right* is in Jehovah, who has *made room* for him in Jerusalem, although he has given him no landed estate among his brethren of the other tribes. His peculiar position exposes him to especial trials; and, among them is his liability to be taunted for his poverty and dependence by the insolent rich. These are apt to turn the *glory* of his position into a *reproach*. He would, therefore, have such *lovers of emptiness*, such *seekers of falsehood*, know that the great principle of Divine *kindness* of which his tribe is the embodied representative has been *made wonderful* by Jehovah: who will assuredly now hearken to his evening prayer. Indeed he seems to be already possessed of an answer: counselling him *when deeply moved* by the taunts of the wealthy to beware of the sin of dissatisfaction and envy: let him, therefore, school his mind to contentment in the *silence* of the wakeful midnight hour, as he lies on his lonely *bed*; let him do his duty when *offering sacrifice* for himself and for the sins of his people; and so let him *direct his trust unto Jehovah*. To this answer, he gratefully responds. Having observed how *multitudes* in their prayers when offering their temple-gifts, appear with all their possessions, to be harassed by adversity and hoping for *better times*; having noticed also the *gladness* of his clients *when their corn and their new wine have increased*; he acknowledges that Jehovah has put *into his heart* a deeper and more lasting *joy* than any which the wealthy have experienced. Thus refreshed in spirit, *at peace* with God and with his fellow-men,—*he lays him down to sleep* in his temple-chamber,—*in seclusion* from the world—*apart*, it may be, from his loved ones in the distant Levitical city; but in conscious *safety* as he thus reposes under the very wings of the God of Israel. Thus concludes the Ideal Levite's evening psalm.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It will help us to think carefully of the possibilities of applying this psalm to David—and of the problems of doing so—Discuss the possible historical circumstances.

## PSALM FOUR AND FIVE

2. The larger help to us will be in the application of the psalm to our lives: (1) In verse one: what confidence for answered prayer is here found? (2) In verse two: just what is "the glory" of God? Why do men turn His glory into a reproach or shame?
3. "The Redeemed" or "the Man of Kindness" has been particularly distinguished or set aside by God—how so? See verse three.
4. In verse four the power for overcoming sin is revealed—what is it?
5. According to verse five not all sacrifices to God are pleasing—how is this true of us?
6. Are we to be concerned about the attitude toward God held by the multitudes among whom we live? See verse six and give an answer.
7. A constant awareness of solid satisfaction in the life and work we do is the greatest of human possessions, and it can be ours—see verse seven.
8. Sleep is one thing—there are pills for this—sleep in peace is something else what shall we take to produce this?

## PSALM 5

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Morning Prayer for Deliverance from Conspirators.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I, vers. 1-3, Petitions Pleaded to which an Answer is Awaited.  
Stanza II, vers. 4-6, Jehovah's Character Forbids the Success of the Rebels.  
Stanza III, vers. 7-9, The Petitioner's Privileged Position made a Plea for Guidance through Present Perils. Stanza IV, vers. 10-12, The Punishment of the Wicked will Restore the Confidence of the Righteous.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 To mine utterances give ear O Jehovah,  
understand thou my plaint:
- 2 Attend to the voice of my cry for help my King and my God,  
for unto thee do I pray,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 3 Jehovah in the morning shalt thou hear my voice,  
in the morning will I set in order for thee and keep watch.
- 4 For not a GOD finding pleasure in lawlessness art thou,  
there shall not sojourn with thee a doer of wrong:
- 5 Boasters shall not stand their ground before thine eyes,  
thou hatest all workers of iniquity:<sup>1</sup>
- 6 Thou wilt destroy the speakers of falsehood,  
the man of bloodshed and deceit Jehovah abhorreth.
- 7 But I in the abounding of thy kindness may enter thy house,  
I may bow down towards thy holy temple in reverence of  
thee.
- 8 Jehovah! lead me with thy righteousness because of my  
watching foes,  
make even before me thy way.
- 9 For there is in his mouth nothing steadfast—within them is  
a yawning gulf,  
an opened grave is their throat—their tongue they smooth.
- 10 Hold them guilty O God, let them fall by their own counsels,  
in the abounding of their transgressions thrust them out—  
for they have defied thee:
- 11 That all may rejoice who take refuge in thee—to the ages  
may ring out their joy,  
And do thou overshadow them that they may exult—who  
are lovers of thy name.
- 12 For thou thyself dost bless the righteous one,  
O Jehovah! as with an all-covering shield with favour dost  
thou encompass him.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) With stringed instruments.  
Over the male choir.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 5

O Lord, hear me praying; listen to my plea, O God my  
King, for I will never pray to anyone but You.

2 ? ? ? ? ?

3 Each morning I will look to You in heaven and lay my  
requests before You, praying earnestly.

4 I know You get no pleasure from wickedness and cannot  
tolerate the slightest sin.

1. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

## PSALM FIVE

5 Therefore proud sinners will not survive Your searching gaze; for how You hate their evil deeds.

6 You will destroy them for their lies; how You abhor all murder and deception.

7 But as for me, I will come into Your Temple protected by Your mercy and Your love; I will worship You with deepest awe.

8 Lord, lead me as You promised me You would; otherwise my enemies will conquer me. Tell me clearly what to do, which way to turn.

9 For they cannot speak one truthful word. Their hearts are filled to the brim with wickedness. Their suggestions are full of the stench of sin and death. Their tongues are filled with flatteries to gain their wicked ends.

10 O God, hold them responsible. Catch them in their own traps; let them fall beneath the weight of their own transgressions, for they rebel against You.

11 But make everyone rejoice who puts his trust in You. Keep them shouting for joy because You are defending them. Fill all who love You with Your happiness.

12 For You bless the godly man, O Lord; You protect him with Your shield of love.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm is attributed to David; and its contents well sustain the inscription—especially if we date its origin at the time when the rebellion of Absalom was being fomented by men who were yet maintaining the appearance of loyalty to the king, though really plotting against him.

The danger prompting the prayer was evidently most serious. It seems to have been caused by one chief offender, aided by associates: hence the alternation of the language between the leader and his followers—*his mouth, their tongue*, and the like. The character of these workers of mischief is described in unsparing terms. They are *lawless* men, patrons of *wrong*, guilty of *defying* Jehovah: *boastful*, yet *deceitful*; their language is fair, for *they smooth their tongue*, but their principles are foul: their transgressions abound, and at least one of their number is *a man of bloodshed and deceit*. They are plotters; with nefarious designs not yet avowed. Probably the perfidy of Ahithophel is already evident to the king, although he does not yet point to him so plainly as in later psalms.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

It is perfectly clear that the psalmist perceives himself to be aimed at by the conspirators: hence his prayer for Divine guidance *because of his watchful foes*.

It is further clear that the psalmist perceives the very government of Jehovah in Israel to be at stake, so that deliverance vouchsafed to the petitioner by bringing him out of this crisis will cause great joy to the godly men of the nation.

It is no objection to the Davidic authorship of this psalm that the writer appears to be animated by the Levitical spirit of consecration—so much so that we are tempted to ask whether he was not himself a Priest with the ordering of the sacrifices on the altar under his own charge. But this spirit and this lively interest in the Divinely appointed ritual, as we know, had found a remarkable embodiment in David himself, as the history indicates, and as these psalms are themselves beginning to reveal. Hence it is perfectly natural that the king should seem to count on his psalm being used in the next morning's worship, and that he should liken his prayer itself to an ordered sacrifice, promising himself that he will watch for a divine response.

The yet deeper element of instruction to be discovered in this psalm, is, the evidence it affords of spiritual restoration on the part of the king. If we are right in dating this psalm at the time when the fire of rebellion was already glowing in secret, then we know where we are, with reference to the antecedent event of David's deplorable fall. He is no longer under the spell of that spiritual paralysis which followed his transgression: he has humbled himself in the dust, has sought and found forgiveness, is once more in fellowship with his forgiving God. Hence, now again, Jehovah's cause is his own; and the spiritual well-being of those who love Him is near to his heart. Restored to fellowship with his holy God, he realises his covenant relation to Him who is carrying forward his vast plans for Redemption; and therefore anticipates abiding gladness to all who love Jehovah's name.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If we like David considered prayer as the first work of the day—how very different would be some of our days.
2. Discuss the practice and value of daily devotions. If possible commit the students to this holy practice.

## PSALM FIVE AND SIX

3. Does God indeed hate the evil deeds of sinners? How is this hatred expressed?
4. Did David believe he was going to receive some special treatment from Jehovah? What was it—how or why was it given?
5. Discuss the principle of self-destruction implicit within all steadfast sinning. Give examples—not the least of which is Absalom.

## PSALM 6

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer for Deliverance from Sickness and Death.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Prayer for Favour instead of Anger. Stanza II., vers. 4-7, For Life instead of Death. Stanza III., vers. 8-10, In the Strength of a Divine Answer, Mischief-makers are Dismissed.

(Lm.) Psalm—by David.

- 1 Jehovah! do not in thine anger correct me,  
nor in thy wrath chastise me;
- 2 Be gracious unto me Jehovah! for languishing am I,  
heal me Jehovah! for dismayed are my bones,—
- 3 yea my soul<sup>1</sup> is dismayed exceedingly;  
And thou Jehovah how long?
- 4 Oh return Jehovah rescue my soul,  
save me for Thy kindness' sake;
- 5 For in death there is no memorial of thee,  
in hades who can give thanks<sup>2</sup> unto thee?
- 6 I am weary with my sighing,  
I soak every night my couch,  
with my tears my bed I drench:
- 7 Shrivelled from vexation is mine eye,  
it hath aged, because of all mine adversaries.

1. The sphere in which various emotions . . . come into consciousness"  
—Dr. P. B. V. Glos. I. "Soul."

2. "Own or acknowledge publicly and openly"—Dr.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 8 Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity;<sup>1</sup>  
For Jehovah hath heard the voice of my weeping,  
9 Jehovah hath heard my supplication,—  
Jehovah doth accept my prayer:  
10 Shamed and sorely dismayed will be all my foes,  
they will turn back will be shamed in a moment.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 6

- No, Lord! Don't punish me in the heat of Your anger.  
2 Pity me, O Lord, for I am weak. Heal me, for my body  
is sick,  
3 And I am upset and disturbed. My mind is filled with  
apprehension and with gloom. Oh, restore me soon.  
4 Come, O Lord, and make me well. In Your kindness  
save me.  
5 For if I die I cannot give You glory by praising You.  
before my friends.<sup>2</sup>  
6 I am worn out with pain; every night my pillow is wet  
with tears.  
7 My eyes are growing old and dim with grief because of  
all my enemies.

\* \* \* \* \*

- 8 Go, leave me now, you men of evil deeds, for the Lord  
has heard my weeping  
9 And my pleading. He will answer all my prayers.  
10 All my enemies shall be suddenly dishonored, terror-  
stricken, and disgraced. God will turn them back in shame.

## EXPOSITION

This is the first of a series of psalms of profound importance in the inward and spiritual history of redemption; inasmuch as, among them, they disclose a fact never formally stated in David's history nor made obtrusive in his psalms. David's lamentable fall being in any case notorious, it has ever been a satisfaction to the spiritual-minded to be able to point to his penitential

1. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

2. Literally, "In the grave, who shall give You thanks?" Isaiah 57:1, 2 may indicate that Old Testament saints believed in a conscious and pleasant hereafter for those who love God.



## PSALM SIX

psalms as proof that, if he sinned wickedly, he repented very humbly and sincerely. Had it been otherwise, his eminence as a king and as a psalmist would have been a stumbling-block to the superficial and unwary. His penitential psalms, therefore, have been made none too prominent. They have served as a salutary warning to morally weak souls, who have been only too ready to stumble at David's great offence, if not also to extenuate their own errors under the specious cover of his example.

This invaluable lesson is susceptible of being all the more strongly enforced when the disclosure to which we have alluded becomes evident. It is, that before David repented, he had to be severely chastised. Not only was he soon after punished by the death of his child, the fruit of his illicit connection with Bathsheba; not only was he long held under chastisement by the various retributions in kind which for years served to remind him of his own guilt; but, as it would seem, even before the death of that child, he had to endure a severe infliction from the hand of his offended God, which smote him in his own person, disfigured his otherwise noble face, caused him excruciating and long protracted pain, compelled him to make midnight outcries of agony which spread consternation through his palace, not unattended by the aversion of some of the members of his household and the evil surmisings and whisperings of others. Indeed, it is tolerably clear that these whisperings reached the ears of his courtiers, some of whom were moved thereby into base though cloaked disloyalty.

The evidence of this comes out little by little, partly in the lines and partly between the lines, of the series of psalms of which that before us is the first. Attribute to David the psalms to which his name is prefixed—render them fearlessly and consistently—read them one after another with the apprehensiveness which the known circumstances of David's life are fitted to suggest, and the conclusion emerges, with a cogency which candour cannot resist, that the very punishment threatened on David's sons in the event of their transgressing (2 Sam. 27), actually fell on himself—and he, David, for a time, though perhaps none about him dare say it save with bated breath—became a leper! This explains many words and facts which are otherwise inexplicable.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

From this point of view, this sixth psalm falls into its place, as the first of a series which have liturgically and conveniently been called "penitential." In truth there is in this psalm no actual confession of sin—rather an awkward circumstance, one might think, considering the frankness which becomes avowed confession, but which is fully explained when we remember that the name "penitential" is in this case purely conventional, and that what we miss here we find explicit enough later on. Nevertheless, there is this convenience in the classification—that by bringing back to this psalm what we learn from subsequent evidence, we are rewarded by the discovery of a richer meaning in these words than we might otherwise have detected.

Well might David apprehend that his present pains were a token of Divine *displeasure*: well might he feel as though he were carrying in himself the sentence of *death*: well might he be quite unable, under the circumstances, to rise above the more gloomy views of *hades* which were current in his day (cp. Intro. Chap. III. "Hades"), intensified by the contrast between the silence of the underworld, as usually apprehended, and the musical and joyful *memorial* of *thanksgiving* now being daily rendered in Jerusalem under the fostering care of his own inventive genius: well might the discovered presence at his court of *adversaries* add to the bitterness of his shame that he could not conceal from them its visible as well as audible manifestations. And now to think that these adversaries to his person were plotting *mischief* to his throne and realm, on the assumption that his demise could not long be delayed,—this was perhaps the bitterest ingredient in his cup. From this point of view, the psalm before us becomes intensely dramatic.

The suddenness and completeness with which the scene changes, in the last stanza, would appear psychologically puzzling in the last degree, had the writer of the psalm been any other than David. No prophet with a message of peace comes on the scene; and yet the storm within is hushed in a moment. It is instant peace, which brings active power; the Divine healing simultaneously penetrates and pervades body and mind. Somehow, the petitioner knows in a moment that he is heard. His courage rises commensurately as in a kingly soul accustomed to command. *Depart*, says he, to the faithless cowards who were secretly gloating over his ignominious humiliation; and, with prophetic glance, he apprehends the completeness of their overthrow, rendered certain by his recovery.

## PSALM SIX

How is this? How has it come about? David KNEW, as his three-fold assurance, twice of the *hearing*, and then—with changed emphasis—of the *hearer* of his prayer—attests. How did he know?

He was a prophet. He had been long ago anointed with the Holy Spirit. His spirit had for years been responsive to God's Spirit. Full many a time had the Divine Artist's invisible fingers swept over the chords of his soul, calling forth music which he knew well had come from heaven. And, however obstinately slow he had been to perceive it, at length his loss of spiritual power had become to him too painfully evident. Hence, when just now he had exclaimed, *Oh return, Jehovah!* there was a conscious void, the refilling of which had behind it a background of experience which made it most real, most certain, most invigorating. Jehovah's restored presence was its own witness; and, once more, "Jehovah's word" of prophetic certainty "was on his tongue."

Hence this psalm fills us also with a chastened joy. We are instructed, that the spiritual life is no imaginary thing; that our Heavenly Father has efficacious means at his command whereby to make his absence felt when we willfully and persistently offend him; and again, at his command, when he would restore unto us the joy of his salvation. And though we are not prophets, and may not in some ways be as directly conscious of Divine activities upon our spirits as though we could pour forth prophetic strains admittedly given from above, yet is there a residuum of identity between the influences of the one Divine Spirit on all men in all ages. The Spirit of Jehovah is always and everywhere a holy spirit, both demanding and creating holiness where he dwells: demanding it in David, demanding it in ourselves. Hence psalms like these have a value that is perennial.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. David felt he richly deserved punishment—is this "guilt complex" a good thing? Discuss.
2. Does sin and guilt make a man sick? Specify some physical ailments produced by sin and guilt.
3. Why are some wicked sinners healthy and still other sinners happy?
4. There is no soundness of body and mind like that produced by a heart wholly committed to God through Christ—Discuss.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

5. Read Isaiah 57:1, 2 and see if you agree that it speaks of a happy life after death. Now read verse 5 of this psalm and discuss its meaning.
6. Are we to understand from verse 6 that David was weeping over his sin or because of pain?
7. Why be so overwhelmed with apprehension (as in verse 7) when our trust is in God? Discuss.
8. Why the sudden change of attitude in verse 8? We are not prophets—where can we find assurance?
9. Are we to propose a plan and ask God to approve it—or to seek God's plan and accept it? Discuss.
10. Show how David's enemies were defeated even as verse 10 indicates.

## PSALM 7

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

One Wrongfully Accused Commits his Vindication to the Righteous Judge of All the Earth.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-2, Appeal to Jehovah for Safety. Stanza II., vers. 3-5, False Accusations Indignantly Denied. Stanza III., vers. 6-11, The Interposition of Jehovah as Judge Invoked. Stanza IV., vers. 12, 13, The Divine Pursuer Lying in Wait for the Human Pursuer. Stanza V., vers. 14-16, The Author of Trouble brings it back on his Own Head. Stanza VI., ver. 17, A Refrain Couplet, Promising Praise.

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(Lm.) A Discursive Song—By David—  
Which he sang to Jehovah over the words of Cush the Benjamite.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Jehovah my God in thee have I taken refuge,  
save me from all who pursue me and deliver me:
- 2 Lest he<sup>2</sup> tear in pieces like a lion my soul,  
and there be no deliverer<sup>3</sup> to rescue.
- 3 Jehovah my God if I have done this,—  
if there be iniquity in my hands,—

1. Prob. a courtier in the court of Saul: incident otherwise unknown.

2. Prob. alluding to Saul himself.

3. So it shd be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.). Cp. Lam. 5:8—Gn.

PSALM SEVEN

- 4 if I have requited my friend with evil,—  
or despoiled<sup>1</sup> him who was mine enemy without cause
- 5 Let an enemy pursue my soul and overtake it,  
and tread to the earth my life,  
and my glory in the dust let him cause to dwell.
- 6 Oh arise Jehovah in thine anger,  
life up thyself against the furious outbursts of my foes,  
and awake for me!—justice hast thou commanded!
- 7 When the assembly of peoples gather round thee  
then above it on high oh sit enthroned!<sup>2</sup>
- 8 Jehovah judgeth peoples—do me justice<sup>3</sup> Jehovah,—  
according to my righteousness  
and according to mine integrity<sup>4</sup> upon me.
- 9 Let the wrong of lawless ones I pray come to an end,  
and wilt thou establish him who is righteous,—  
seeing that a trier of minds and motives<sup>5</sup> is God the righteous.
- 10 My shield is with God—saviour of the upright in heart:  
11 God is a righteous judge—a GOD who threateneth<sup>6</sup> every day.
- 12 If a man turn not  
His sword he whetteth,  
His bow hath he trodden and made ready,
- 13 and against him hath prepared the weapons of death,  
His arrows into burning ones he maketh.
- 14 Lo! he travaileth with trouble:  
yea he hath conceived mischief and brought forth delusion,
- 15 A pit he digged and deepened it,  
and then fell into the ditch he must needs make.
- 16 His mischief turneth back on his own head,  
and on his own crown his violence descendeth.
- 17 I will thank Jehovah according to his righteousness,  
and will celebrate in psalm the name of Jehovah Most High.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the Winepresses. The Feast of Tabernacles.

1. So it shd be (w. Aram. and Syr.).—Gn.

2. So Br. and others. M.T.: "return"—as Dr. and others.

3. Or: "vindicate me," as in 26:1, 43:1.

4. Or: "blamelessness," "whole-heartedness."

5. U.: "hearts and reins." "The reins are the seat of the emotions, just as the heart is the seat of the thoughts and the affections"—Del. Heart—"the organ of intellect": reins—"the organs of feeling"—Dr. Cp. Jer. 11:20, 12:2, 17:10, 20:12.

6. "If in the end God lets his anger break forth, He does so not without having previously threatened every day, viz. the goddess (cp. Isa. 66:14, Mal. 1:4)"—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 7

I am depending on You, O Lord my God, to save me from my persecutors.

2 Don't let them pounce upon me as a lion would and maul me and drag me away with no one to rescue me.

3 It would be different, Lord, if I were doing evil things—

4 If I were paying back evil for good or unjustly attacking those I dislike.

5 Then it would be right for You to let my enemies destroy me, crush me to the ground, and trample my life in the dust.

6 But Lord! Arise in anger against the anger of my enemies. . . Awake! Demand justice for me, Lord!

7, 8 Gather all peoples before You; sit high above them, judging their sins. But justify me publicly; establish my honor and truth before them all.

9 End all wickedness, O Lord, and bless all who truly worship God;<sup>1</sup> for You, the righteous God, look deep within the hearts of men and examine all their motives and their thoughts.

10 God is my shield; He will defend me. He saves those whose hearts and lives are true and right.<sup>2</sup>

11 God is a judge who is perfectly fair, and He is angry with the wicked every day.

12 Unless they repent, He will sharpen His sword and slay them. He has bent and strung His bow

13 And fitted it with deadly arrows made from shafts of fire.

14 The wicked man conceives an evil plot, labors with its dark details, and brings to birth his treachery and lies;

15 Let him fall into his own trap.

16 May the violence he plans for others boomerang upon himself; let him die.

17 Oh, how grateful and thankful I am to the Lord because He is so good. I will sing praise to the name of the Lord who is above all lords.

### EXPOSITION

As this psalm is avowedly *discursive*, we need not be over-solicitous about its framework of its precise line of thought. Nevertheless, in its author and its occasion, we may find fruitful

1. Literally, "the just."

2. Literally, "the upright in heart."

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suggestions wherewith to attempt our exposition. We have no subsidiary information respecting *Cush the Benjamite*, but may infer, with some probability, that his tribe is mentioned for the very purpose of suggesting that he was a partisan of King Saul. It is plain that he had slandered David to his royal master; and it is not difficult to make out the nature of the accusations he had made—with sufficient clearness, at least, to show how untrue they were, how base, and how hard to David's noble and sensitive nature to bear. Cush had, apparently, accused David of wrongfully retaining in *his own hands* spoils which belonged to the king; of *returning evil for the good* which Saul as his early friend had done him; and, in some way, of *taking toll* for his professed generosity in twice over sparing Saul's life. Not only were these accusations hard to bear, but in all probability David had no opportunity to defend himself, and was satisfied that he would now be heard even if admitted into Saul's presence. Under these circumstances his whole soul turns to Jehovah as his supreme Judge; and to him he pours out his complaint.

Probably this was the chief feature of the Psalm as David first wrote it; and was well and effectively closed by those concluding stanzas which picturesquely show how wrongdoers often prepare their own punishment. That he afterwards added to it, and greatly strengthened it, is a perfectly natural supposition; and this may have occasioned the irregularity of the composition, at the same time that it materially added to its permanent value.

It is so instructive to trace the ways in which Jehovah prepares his prophetic servants to receive and make known their messages, that we may be pardoned for surmising that David's subsequent discharge of the duties of judge of Israel, and his enlarged outlook on surrounding nations, which doubtless afforded him opportunities of perceiving how often the great ones of the earth suffered justice to their subjects to be trampled in the dust,—became the educative means of enabling David to grasp some of the deeper problems involved in Jehovah's judgeship over the individuals and nations of the earth.

Be this as it may, we are struck and impressed by the strong gleams of light which are here focused upon several portions of the judicial province pertaining to the Judge of all the earth. In the first place, we observe the Divine Judge's frequent *apparent unconcern* with the moral quality of the actions of men. In his holy wisdom, he, to some considerable extent, allows

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his human creatures to do as they please, even when they are rebelling against him. We may well believe that he does this, partly to suffer the wicked to work out what is in them in the exercise of their birthright of moral freedom, and partly to discipline the righteous in patience, courage and undying faith. But, whatever his reasons, the fact is undoubted; and the consequent trial to such as are earnestly trying to please God is such as sometimes to make it appear as though Jehovah were asleep. Hence the outcries of a psalm like this:—*Arise—lift up thyself—awake for me.* In the next place, this psalmist recognizes that in Jehovah there is and must be such a fund of *holy passion for righteousness* as to ensure not only that he must ultimately do right, but that there must be in him such a cumulative storage of anger with wrong-doing as to render natural and inevitable outbursts of wrath on fitting occasions: otherwise there would be something deficient in Jehovah's personal sanction of his own holy laws. David as judge in Israel would be able to feel this. Moreover, as he himself had been *commanded* to do right, as between man and man among his people; how could he afford to lose faith in Jehovah's own observance of the *justice* which he had *commanded* to those who judicially represented him among men? Amid the throngs that gathered around him in the gates of Jerusalem from day to day, David had learned the lesson that justice to the masses demands justice to individuals; and though Jehovah had *nations* to govern and judge, David was assured that his own individual case must pass under Divine recognition—he could not be lost in a crowd before God: *Jehovah judgeth peoples—do me justice*—the transition was easy. All the more is individual judgment demanded, that Jehovah is *a trier of minds and motives*, without which outward actions cannot be accurately weighed. It is probable that the slanders of Cush the Benjamite had brought this home to David's painful experience. There may have been a colourable element of truth in every fact alleged against David by his accuser, and yet the damaging suggestions grafted upon them have been most unjust and cruel. Hence the solace derived by David from his conscious *integrity*: hence his ultimate feeling of safety as *shielded by the Saviour of the upright in heart*. Whether with individuals or with nations, the processes of Divine government are preparatory, educative, transitional. It is right that liberty even to rebel should be granted for a time; and yet right that it should not be allowed to continue for ever: hence the prayer of the



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psalmist should find an echo in every upright heart—*Let the wrong of the lawless, I pray, come to an end.* Wherefore should it be perpetuated for ever? Then the lawless must forsake his way and the man of iniquity his thoughts. If he will not part with his iniquity by salvation, then he must perish with it in destruction; for the decree has gone forth. GOD, however, is a *righteous judge* in the large sense that giveth mercy every chance to triumph over judgment; and therefore he is an *EL*—a Mighty One—*who threateneth every day.* His anger is not manifested in punitive action every day, or else where would be the apparent unconcern which prompted the opening outcry of this very psalm? All the more, then, that the wrath of God against sin is not every day revealed in Divine action, must the Divine word which faithfully *threatens*, be sounded forth among men. The Divine method plainly is, that scope should be given for fear to prepare the way for love.

It may be admitted that there is some doubt as to the precise way in which the two concluding stanzas of this psalm follow up those which have preceded. But if we are right in concluding that the opening words of verse 12 refer to the *pursuer* of the early part of the psalm: *If he*—the offender—*turn not* from his evil ways; then *He*—the Divine Judge—*whetteth his sword*, etc.; that is, holdeth himself ready to stop the offender's wicked course by visiting him with sudden arrest and punishment:—if, we say, this be the onward course of the psalm, then two principles are evolved which are worthy of being laid side by side; namely that, while Jehovah is prepared himself to stop evil-doers; evil-doers are preparing their own destruction: *Their mischief returneth upon their own head.* Is it possible that this is how evil will at length be swept out of the universe? and that this is the reason why it is so long permitted? We may not precipitate the teaching of the psalms; but this at least is unquestionable; namely, that the cessation of moral evil in this psalm becomes an object of desire and prayer. How will it end? Is Jehovah preparing to destroy it, by permitting it to continue until it destroys itself? The question, thus presented, is perhaps too vague to arrest the student's mind. A preliminary question is needed:—Has moral evil a personal embodiment in one who is, par excellence, The Evil One? That question will recur in the next psalm.

The main tenor of this psalm being what it is, it must be regarded as a significant coincidence, that the musical line,—

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moved up from the head of the next psalm (where its appropriateness was not evident) to the foot of this, in conformity with Dr. Thirtle's readjustment of the psalm-titles,—should so fully vindicate its new position. "The Wine-presses," reminding us of the complete ingathering of the fruits of the year, serve at once directly to anticipate the closing of Jehovah's retributive dealings with men, and at the same time to lead on to such Scriptures as Isa. 63:1-6, Joel 3:12-17, and Rev. 19:15, where this solemn subject is more fully set forth.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are various ways God might use in saving us from our persecutors—mention three different examples.
2. There are various ways we can overcome evil with good—read the Sermon on the Mount—(Matthew 5-7) and discuss three of them.
3. Discuss two or three possible reasons for the delays in the judgments of God.
4. Are we to be perfectly confident that truth and justice will prevail in this life?
5. Sin has the seeds of self destruction in it. Show by two examples that this is true.

## PSALM 8

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Jehovah's Majesty Exalted by means of Man's Dominion.

### ANALYSIS

An Original Solo, vers. 3-8: Adapted to Temple Worship by Prelude and Refrain, vers. 1a, b, and 9, and by an Introductory Stanza, vers. 1c, 2.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 Jehovah our Sovereign Lord!  
how wonderful is thy name in all the earth!  
Because thy majesty hath been uplifted above<sup>1</sup> the heavens

1. So Sep.

## PSALM EIGHT

- 2 Out of the mouth of children and sucklings hast thou founded  
a stronghold,  
on account of thine adversaries,—  
to silence<sup>1</sup> foe and avenger.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 When I view thy heavens the work<sup>3</sup> of thy fingers,  
moon and stars which thou hast established
- 4 What was weak man that thou shouldst think of him,  
or the son of the earth-born that thou shouldst set him in  
charge;<sup>4</sup>
- 5 And shouldst make<sup>5</sup> him but little less than messengers  
divine,<sup>6</sup>  
yea with glory and state shouldst crown him;
- 6 Shouldest give him dominion over the works of thy hands,—  
all things shouldst have put under his feet:—
- 7 cattle small and large—all of them,—  
yea even the beasts of the field,—<sup>7</sup>
- 8 the bird of the heavens and the fishes of the sea,—  
whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
- 9 Jehovah our Sovereign Lord!  
how wonderful is thy name in all the earth!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) 'L M T H L B N = prob. "Maidens to a youth":  
pos. "concerning the death of the champion":  
pos. "concerning the white death = leprosy."

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 8

O Lord our God, the majesty and glory of Your name fills  
all the earth and overflows the heavens.

2 You have taught the little children to praise You perfectly.  
May their example shame and silence Your enemies!

3 When I look up into the night skies and see the work of  
Your fingers—the moon and the stars You have made—

1. Or: "destroy."

2. Cp. 44:16.

3. So the Eastern Massorites; but the Western (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.):  
"works" (pl.)—Gn.

4. Cp. Num. 3:10, 27:16, Jer. 49:19, 50:44.

5. For tense see Heb. of Job 7:18 and Ps. 144:3.

6. Heb. 'elohim: as in 82:1, 97:7.

7. Or: "plain."

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4 I cannot understand how You can bother with mere puny man, to pay any attention to him!

5 And yet You have made him only a little lower than the angels,<sup>1</sup> and placed a crown of glory and honor upon his head.

6 You have put him in charge of everything you made; everything is put under his authority:

7 All sheep and oxen, and wild animals too,

8 The birds and fish, and all the life in the sea.

9 O Jehovah, our Lord, the majesty and glory of Your name fills the earth.

## EXPOSITION

The reason for resolving the chief part of this psalm (vers. 3-8) into a Solo, is written upon its face, by the appearance of the personal pronoun *I*. From that point onward, the strain runs on breathlessly, as a single magnificent sentence, to the end, where the voice of the soloist is hushed in the renewed acclaim of the united congregation, in which, for a second time, the whole people adoringly address *Jehovah as our Sovereign Lord*. The introductory stanza (vers. 1c., 2), interposed between the prelude and the solo, is in any case special, and indeed remarkably unique: probably imparting to the whole psalm its deepest prophetic import.

In attributing the solo to David's early shepherd days, there is no need to overlook the analogical argument so beautifully put by Delitzsch, in favour of not dating the finished production of the psalm earlier than that momentous day on which the Spirit of Prophecy came upon the youthful harpist. "Just as the Gospels contain no discourses delivered by our Lord previous to his baptism in the Jordan, and the Canon of the New Testament contains no writings of the Apostles dating from the time before Pentecost, so the Canon of the Old Testament contains no Psalms of David that were composed by him prior to his anointing. Not till after he is the anointed of the God of Jacob does he become the sweet singer of Israel, upon whose tongue is the word of Jahve (2 Sam. 23:1, 2)." Already, therefore, even in this early psalm, may we regard its composer as "a prophet," carried away into things to come by the Holy Spirit of insight, foresight and wisdom.

1. Or, "only a little lower than God!"

## PSALM EIGHT

The Solo gives a night-view of the *heavens*, in their vastness stability and splendour; which would have made *weak man*, by contrast, seem small and evanescent, but for the recollection of his creation and destiny as revealed in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, with the great words of which the poet's mind was manifestly filled. Creation, seen in one of her most lovely moods, and the Creation Story, recalled in one of its most suggestive features, are, so to speak, the alphabet employed by the Illuminating Spirit to quicken the psalmist's mind. That the scene is a night-scene, naturally follows from the absence of the sun; and is confirmed by the fact that the blaze of the sun by day renders the heavens as a whole practically invisible; whereas, here, not only are the heavens scanned with lingering delight, but their minute and variegated beauties call forth admiration of the skill of the Divine Artist's *fingers*. Nevertheless, vastness is here, as the poet's eye sweeps the whole heavens; and permanence, as he recalls how many times he has gazed at the same spectacle, and his ancestors before him have been similarly delighted: and so his mind is carried back to the Creation Story, to realize how abiding are *moon and stars* which Jehovah has *established* in the heavens. The first effect of this midnight survey of the heavens is to make man appear *weak* and short-lived. *Because* I see this, or *when* I see it afresh, I am moved to exclaim—*What is weak man—what the son of the earth-born that thou shouldst remember him, visit him, set him in charge over this lower world?* And so, by the aid of the Creation Story, a reaction is induced in the poet's mind; and there come into view Man's capacity, charge, dignity, destiny. After all, such a responsible being cannot be wholly weak and short-lived.

Besides: to "weak man" succeeds *a son of man*, for Adam is not only an individual, but a race; and it is to the race, as such, that the charge to wield dominion is given: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it,—and have dominion." The earth is to be filled and subdued in order to the exercise of dominion. Therefore the commission is to the race; and this alone justifies the conclusion that the allusion to the first chapter of Genesis begins with verse 4 of our psalm, and not merely with verse 5 as some critics have thought.

With such a charge laid upon him, to rule inferior creatures, Man appears to be *little less than the messengers divine*, here termed in Hebrew *'elohim*, a word of wider applicability than our English word "God" when spelled with a capital initial; as will

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appear from an examination of Exo. 21:6, 22:8, 9, 28, and Ps. 82:1, 2, 6, 7. If, as appears from these passages, human judges, as representing the Divine Judge, could be called *'elohim*; much more may heavenly messengers have been so named in this place; and, to them, accordingly, we conclude that reference is here made.

Whether the *crowning* of Man *with glory and state*, when he was visited and installed into office, imports the bestowment on him of any visible splendour calculated to strike his animal subjects with reverence and challenge at once their submission, we are not plainly told; and yet the discovery of the "nakedness" which made man "ashamed" after his transgression may, not unnaturally, be deciphered as suggesting something more akin to an actual disrobing than the inner consciousness of disobedience alone.

It is probably of greater importance to connect with Man's commission to govern this lower world his possession of the Divine Image: "Let us make man in our image . . . and (qualified by that endowment) let him have dominion." It is the Image bestowed which qualifies for the Dominion assigned. This consideration ought probably to go a long way towards settling the question: Wherein consisted that Image? If we could only be content to derive our answer from the First of Genesis, that answer might stand thus: The Image of God in which man was created was his capacity to rule—his capacity to rule over and care for beings beneath himself. It cannot be denied that God possessed that capacity: that it was His glory and honour to know his subjects, to appraise their powers, to foresee their needs, and to provide with an unspeakably gracious goodwill (145:16) for the due and orderly satisfaction of every propensity with which he himself had endowed them. If so, it cannot be denied that the bestowment of the same capacity on man would render him God-like just to the degree to which he came to possess it. It is surely to some extent confirmatory of this, to note the seeming pride with which the psalmist lingers on the extent of Man's realm, in the several orders of which it is composed, and the several areas in which his subjects dwell. Indeed, the apparent inclusion of wild animals under the terms *beasts of the field* or *plain*, and the comprehension of *birds* and *fishes*, to say nothing of *the monsters of the deep*, as all placed under Man's dominion, go to show that so vast a kingdom needs a God-like king; and to raise the question, whether Man ought not

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to be able to wield a wider and more potent control over his subjects than he is now seen to possess. In any case, Man was originally majestically crowned; and if to any extent he has lost his dominion, it can scarcely be that he has lost it for ever. To assume that he has, would afford a poor prospect of *silencing* for ever the *foe and the avenger*.

This reference reminds us that Stanza I (vers. 1c, 2) now demands our patient attention. The attachment of the third line of the psalm to this stanza, as its introduction, is presumably correct; inasmuch as we can scarcely think that the prelude of the psalm and its final refrain were not meant to be identical. If so, the precise form which this third line should assume and the meaning it should bear, become all the more important when it is seen to be the very base on which the charming "child and suckling" stanza is made to rest. Critics are nearly agreed that some word or letter has gone wrong in this line; and we should be content implicitly to follow Dr. Ginsburg's lead in emending it by reference to Num. 27:20, save for the difficulty of seeing any comparison whatever between the putting by Moses of some of his majesty on Joshua and the putting by Jehovah of his majesty on the heavens. Under these circumstances, while gladly accepting the suggestion of Ginsburg and others by restoring the word *nathatta* out of the seemingly broken fragment *tenah* of the M.T., we would prefer to follow the Septuagint, which reads, as we think, with profound significance: *Because thy majesty hath been uplifted above the heavens*. The preciousness of the result, by heightening the prophetic significance of the whole psalm, must be our excuse for detaining the reader on a point so critical.

Advancing at once to the broad meaning of the introductory stanza when thus emended, we remark: That we are thus warranted in concluding, that it is in some way this very uplifting of Jehovah's majesty into the heavens, which makes way for the ministry of children; and that at least the ministry of children is to assist in *silencing the foe and avenger* whose existence is so singularly introduced into this psalm at its very head and front. It cannot be denied that he is here brought forward with a circumstantiality which is positively startling. For first there is a general reference to Jehovah's *adversaries*, as furnishing a reason for the Divine procedure of preparing the mighty ministry of children's praise, which praise is made the foundation of a bulwark which Jehovah rears in the midst

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of his foes. That is the general statement; which is then particularised by the more specific assertion of the result expected to follow from the testimony of infant voices. So that, in fact, we are here confronted with a *company of adversaries*; headed, as it would seem, by *one foe* in particular, who is not only a foe but an *avenger*, with vengeance in his heart; as though he had a wrong to redress, and injury real or supposed to resent by retaliation. Such is the natural and proper force and setting of the words. It is a conceivable state of things: a band of adversaries, with a champion foe and avenger at their head. Even as, in the early days of David—probably not far from the time when this psalm was written—the Philistines were “the adversaries” of Israel, and of Israel’s God, Jehovah; and then there stood forth, at the head of those adversaries, and in their name, a foe and avenger, by name Goliath: who, indeed, by a well-aimed blow from David’s sling was for ever *silenced* in death. This is not to say, that such an incident could by any means fill out the words before us; but only that we may do well to seize the words in their proper force and full significance. Jehovah has adversaries: at their head is a chieftain, who is determined, resentful and relentless. He is to be silenced. Children are to be employed to close his mouth. Their weapons will be their words. Jehovah founds a tower of strength in their words; which, presumably—as the Septuagint interprets—will be words of “praise.” Children praise Jehovah for his majesty. His majesty is seen in creation, on which and through which glimpses of it are seen. His name—that is the revelation of his power, wisdom, and goodness in creation—fills the whole earth. This revelation is already an objective reality: the moon-and-star-lit heavens are stretched forth over all the earth. Wherever the sons of the earth-born tread, they find above them the same eloquent heavens. The Maker of the stars above is the Creator of the flowers beneath. The tokens of God fill all the earth. But this objective revelation has not yet become subjective. The wonderful fact of Jehovah’s creatorship has not yet been translated into the worshipful feeling of adoration and gratitude in all the earth. Until this is realised, the very refrain of this psalm is unfulfilled prophecy. Jehovah does not receive back “the fullness of all the earth” as “his glory” (Isa. 6:3) so long as “man is vile.” Adversaries to Jehovah abound; his foe is at large; and his friends are much in the position of a beleaguered fortress.



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But the process of fulfillment has received an auspicious beginning. In one sense, Jehovah's glory was uplifted into the heavens when Man fell into disobedience. In another, and a redemptive sense, it is receiving a new and more wonderful elevation in Jesus as the Son of Man. This elevation was inaugurated by the resurrection, ascension and coronation in heaven of the Man Christ Jesus. And, on earth, *children* have begun to sing their hosannahs with new point and with adoring ecstasy. They not only know how to wonder at the stars, but they are learning from generation to generation to love the Man who died for them and rose again. By-and-by, when the Lord of Life has glorified his Suffering Assembly and presented it before the heavenly throne, the process of *uplifting Jehovah's majesty above the heavens* will be complete, and the whole earth will be filled with a bright reflection of his glory. The adversaries of Jehovah are doomed to defeat. Their Champion—the Adversary—the *Foe and Avenger* of this psalm—has met with his equal. But the process of silencing the Enemy is moral before it is physical. Hence the more than symbolic employment of infants' tongues to silence the Devil. The victory will be earned by Self-sacrificing Love before it is confirmed and consummated by expelling and destroying power. The Foe hates children; and has had good reason, ever since the promise came that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head. The child-spirit of humble and trustful love will yet finally and for ever *silence the Foe and Avenger*.

David may well have felt himself to have been a mere *child* when he went forth to meet Goliath; and his son Hezekiah must have been possessed of much of the childlike spirit, when he quietly rested in Jerusalem, waiting for the overthrow of Sennacherib. Whether the introductory stanza of this psalm was written by the one or the other of these psalmists, the Spirit of God has by its means turned this Shepherd's lay into a psalm as far-reaching as it is beautiful, dramatic and above all instructive as to the ways of Jehovah with men.

The possible concurrence of meanings decipherable in the musical instruction now moved to the foot of this psalm are so astounding as almost to pass belief: and we are quite content with the first named as abundantly sufficient. Those who are prepared for further cryptic meanings can discreetly ponder how much further they may wisely go.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the use of the word "glory" as in verse 1?
2. Discuss examples of how God chose the weak to confound the strong—the ignorant to confound the wise.
3. Are we to understand that man without the revelation of the spoken or written Word of God can by his own perception discover God's greatness and goodness? Cf. Rom. 1:20 ff.
4. By looking through a telescope man becomes smaller and of less and less importance—what can change this concept?
5. Are animals "naturally" afraid of man or does man need to earn his supremacy over animals—discuss. Remember: dominion over animals does not mean destruction of them.
6. Discuss in what manner God has created man just a little lower than angels.

PSALM 9, 10

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Kingship of Jehovah in Zion Finally Triumphant over a League between the Nations and the Lawless One.

ANALYSIS

These two psalms are bound together as originally one, chiefly by the remains of a set of Alphabetical Initials beginning the former psalm and extending into the latter, and by Coincidences of Language which cannot be regarded as accidental; and yet the feeling of the Compound Psalm so completely changes as to reveal Two Distinct Situations,—the one suited to the time of David after a decisive victory over his enemies, and the other strikingly fitted for Hezekiah's peculiar trials due to the Assyrian Invasion. For an attempt to trace these changes, see "Exposition." The Remains of the Alphabetical Acrostic are as follow: *aleph*, vers. 1, 2, four times; *beth*, ver. 3, once; *gimel*, ver. 5, once; *he*, ver. 6, once; *waw*, vers. 7, 8, 9, 10, four times; *zain*, ver. 11, once; *beth*, ver. 13, once; *tebh*, ver. 15, once; *yod*, ver. 17, once; *koph* (? for *kaph*), ver. 19, once; *lamed*, 10:1, once; *koph*, 10:12, once; *resh*, 10:14, once; *shin*, 10:15, once; *tau*, 10:17, once.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 I would fain thank Jehovah with all my heart,  
I would tell of all thy wondrous works:

## PSALM NINE AND TEN

- 2 I would rejoice and exult in thee,  
I would make melody of thy name<sup>1</sup> O Most High!
- 3 Because mine enemies turned back,—  
they stumbled and perished at thy presence:
- 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause,  
thou hast sat on a throne judging righteously.
- 5 Thou hast rebuked nations hast destroyed the lawless one,  
their name hast thou wiped out to the ages and beyond.
- 6 As for the enemy they have come to an end their ruins are  
perpetual,  
and as for the cities thou hast uprooted perished is their  
very memory.
- 7 But Jehovah to the ages holdeth his seat,  
he hath set up for judgment his throne;
- 8 And He himself will judge the world in righteousness,  
will minister judgment to the peoples in equity.<sup>2</sup>
- 9 So may Jehovah become a lofty retreat for the crushed one,<sup>3</sup>  
a lofty retreat for times of extremity:<sup>4</sup>
- 10 That they may trust in thee who know thy name,  
because thou didst not forsake them who were seeking after  
thee Jehovah!
- 11 Make melody<sup>5</sup> to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion,  
declare among the peoples his doings:
- 12 For he will exacteth satisfaction for shed blood of them had  
remembrance,  
he forgat not the outcry of humbled<sup>6</sup> ones:—
- 13 “Be gracious unto me Jehovah, see my humiliation from  
them who hate me,—  
my Uplifter out of the gates of death!
- 14 To the end I may tell of all thy praises,<sup>7</sup>—  
in the gates of the daughter of Zion let me exult in thy  
salvation.”
- 15 Nations have sunk down in the pit<sup>8</sup> they made,  
in the net which they hid hath been caught their own foot.

1. *Ml.*: “I would psalm thy name”=“celebrate in psalm” (singing and playing). See Intro. Chap. II., 2.

2. *Ml.*: “in straightnesses.” (Prob. intensive pl.)

3. “The oppressed”—*Del.*: “the down-trodden”—*Dr.*

4. *Ml.*: “Dearth.”

5. *Or.*: “psalm.”

6. So *written*: *read*, “humble.” Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Humble(d).”

7. Some *cod.* (w. 5 ear. pr. edns. [i Rabb.]): “praise” (sing.)—*Gn.*

8. *Or.*: “ditch.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 16 Jehovah hath made himself known justice hath he done,<sup>1</sup>  
by the work of his own hands is he striking down the lawless  
one.

Sololiquy.

- 17 Lawless ones shall turn back to hades,—  
all nations forgetters of God;  
18 For not perpetually shall the needy be forgotten,  
nor the expectation of humble<sup>2</sup> ones perish for ever.  
19 Oh arise Jehovah! let not mere man prevail,<sup>3</sup>  
let nations be judged before thy face:  
20 Set O Jehovah a Terror<sup>4</sup> for them,  
let nations know that mere men they are.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 9

O Lord, I will praise You with all my heart, and tell everyone about the marvelous things You do.

2 I will be glad, yes, filled with joy because of You. I will sing Your praises, O Lord God above all gods.<sup>5</sup>

3 My enemies will fall back and perish in Your presence;

4 You have vindicated me; You have endorsed my work, declaring from Your throne that it is good.<sup>6</sup>

5 You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked, blotting out their names for ever and ever.

6 O enemies of mine, you are doomed forever. The Lord will destroy your cities, even the memory of them will disappear.

7, 8 But the Lord lives on forever; He sits upon His throne to judge justly the nations of the world.

9 All who are oppressed may come to Him. He is a refuge for them in their times of trouble.

10 All those who know Your mercy, Lord, will count on You for help. For You have never yet forsaken those who trust in You.

1. Or: "maintained"—Del., Dr.

2. So written: read, "humbled"—Gn.

3. Or: "be defiant"—Del.

4. With other vowels: "a lawgiver."

5. Literally, "O Most High."

6. Literally, "You sit on the throne judging righteously."

## PSALM NINE AND TEN

11 Oh, sing out your praises to the God who lives in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Tell the world about His unforgettable deeds.

12 He who avenges murder has an open ear to those who cry to Him for justice. He does not ignore the prayers of men in trouble when they call to Him for help.

13 And now, O Lord, have mercy on me; see how I suffer at the hands of those who hate me. Lord, snatch me back from the jaws of death.

14 Save me, so that I can praise You publicly before all the people at Jerusalem's<sup>2</sup> gates and rejoice that You have rescued me.

15 The nations fall into the pitfalls they have dug for others; the trap they set has snapped on them.

16 The Lord is famous for the way He punishes the wicked in their own snares!<sup>3</sup>

17 The wicked shall be sent away to hell; this is the fate of all the nations forgetting the Lord.

18 For the needs of the needy shall not be ignored forever; the hopes of the poor shall not always be crushed.

19 O Lord, arise and judge and punish the nations! don't let them conquer You!

20 Make them tremble in fear; put the nations in their place until at last they know they are but puny men.

## PSALM 10

(Nm.)

- 1 Why Jehovah wilt thou stand in the distance?  
why wilt thou hide thyself in times of extremity
- 2 Through the pride of the lawless one the humbled one  
burneth,—  
let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.
- 3 For the lawless one hath boasted of the longing of his soul,  
and the robber hath contemned<sup>4</sup> Jehovah:

1. Literally, "in Zion."

2. Literally, "in the gates of the daughter of Zion."

3. The Hebrew text adds here: "Higgaion. Selah." The meanings of these words are not known.

4. "The primitive reading"—G. Intro. 365.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 4 The lawless one according to the loftiness of his look saith,  
 "He will not exact."  
 "No God here!" is in all his plots.
- 5 Firm are his ways at all times,  
 —on high are thy judgments out of his sight,—  
 as for all his adversaries he puffeth at them.
- 6 He hath said in his heart  
 "I shall not be shaken,  
 To generation after generation am I one  
 Who shall be in no misfortune."
- 7 Of cursing his mouth is full  
 and of deceits and oppression,  
 Under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.
- 8 He sitteth in the lurking places of villages,  
 in hiding places he slayeth the innocent one:  
 As for his eyes for the unfortunate are they on the watch.
- 9 He lieth in wait in the hiding-place like a lion in his thicket,<sup>1</sup>  
 he lieth in wait to capture the humbled one,—  
 He captureth the humbled one dragging him along in his net.
- 10 He croucheth he sinketh down,  
 and there fall into his claws the disheartened.<sup>2</sup>
- 11 He hath said in his heart  
 "GOD hath forgotten,"  
 "He hath veiled his face,"  
 "He hath never seen."
- 12 Oh arise Jehovah! do not neglect the crushed one,<sup>3</sup>—  
 do not forget the humbled<sup>4</sup> ones.
- 13 Wherefore hath the lawless one contemned God?  
 said in his heart "Thou wilt not exact"?
- 14 Thou hast seen!  
 for thou travail and vexation dost discern  
 to lay them in thine own hand:  
 Unto thee doth the unfortunate one give himself up,  
 to the fatherless thou thyself hast become a helper.
- 15 Shatter thou the arm of the lawless one,  
 and as for the wrongful wilt thou exact his lawlessness till  
 thou find it no more.<sup>5</sup>

1. So *Gt.* Cp. Jer. 4:7.

2. So written: to be read, "host of afflicted ones"—Gn.

3. So *Gt.*

4. So written: read "humble"—Gn.

5. "That it may vanish from before thee"—Del.

## PSALM NINE AND TEN

- 16 Jehovah is King to the ages and beyond,  
vanished are nations out of his land.  
17 The longing of humble<sup>1</sup> ones hast thou heard Jehovah!  
thou dost establish their heart dost make attentive thine ear:  
18 To vindicate the fatherless and the crushed,—  
that weak man of the earth may cause terror no more.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 10

Lord, why are You standing aloof and far away? Why do you hide when I need You the most?

2 Come and deal with all these proud and wicked men who viciously persecute the poor. Pour upon these men the evil they planned for others!

3 For these men brag of all their evil lusts; they revile God and congratulate those the Lord abhors, whose only goal in life is money.

4 These wicked men, so proud and haughty, seem to think that God is dead.<sup>2</sup> They wouldn't think of looking for Him!

5 Yet there is success in everything they do, and their enemies fall before them. They do not see Your punishment awaiting them.

6 They boast that neither God nor man can ever keep them down—somehow they'll find a way!

7 Their mouths are full of profanity and lies and fraud. They are always boasting of their evil plans.

8 They lurk in dark alleys of the city and murder passersby.

9 Like lions they crouch silently, waiting to pounce upon the poor. Like hunters they catch their victims in their traps.

10 The unfortunate are overwhelmed by their superior strength and fall beneath their blows.

11 "God isn't watching," they say to themselves; "He'll never know!"

12 O Lord, arise! O God, crush them! Don't forget the poor or anyone else in need.

1. Some cod. have "humbled." Others write: "humbled" but read humble"—Gn. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Humble(d)."

1. Literally, "that there is no God."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

13 Why do You let the wicked get away with this contempt for God? For they think that God will never call them to account.

14 Lord, You see what they are doing. You have noted each evil act. You know what trouble and grief they have caused. Now punish them. O Lord, the poor man trusts himself to You; You are known as the helper of the helpless.

15 Break the arms of these wicked men. Go after them until the last of them is destroyed.

16 The Lord is King forever and forever. Those who follow other gods shall be swept from His land.

17 Lord, You know the hopes of humble people. Surely You will hear their cries and comfort their hearts by helping them.

18 You will be with the orphans and all who are oppressed, so that mere earthly man will terrify them no longer.

## EXPOSITION

In all probability these two psalms were originally one, as may be inferred from the remains of an *alphabetical* structure beginning with Psalm 9 and ending with Psalm 10, and from coincidences of language and sentiment which cannot otherwise be easily explained. The probability is nearly as great that the interference with the original initial alphabet is due, not so much to accident, as to editorial adaptation to later circumstances. In short, the phenomena visible on the face of this compound psalm seem to be easily reconcilable by the hypothesis that it was originally composed by David after some signal overthrow of his enemies, and was afterwards adapted—very likely on two occasions—by Hezekiah, first soon after the Assyrians invaded his land, and then again, when their presence had for some time been permitted to continue. This hypothesis will account for the gradual subsidence of praise into prayer, and the increasing sense of urgency which is seen in the suppliant's petitions. It will also account for the disappearance of so many of the successive alphabetical initials; it being natural to think that in the perturbed state of things consequent on the presence of invaders in the land, Hezekiah would lack both time and inclination to preserve so refined and elaborate a literary result of a perfect alphabetical arrangement in the adapted psalm. The great inspiration of faith derivable from his illustrious ancestor's danger and de-



## PSALM NINE AND TEN

liverance, would be the attraction offered by the old carefully prepared composition: some abruptness and lack of finish in the new matter do but add to the verisimilitude of additions made under such disadvantageous circumstances.

The more fully we allow for changed circumstances as thus accounting for the damage visible on the surface of the psalm, the more firmly can we maintain its essential unity. The enemies of Israel are throughout foreigners: only, in David's day they were foreigners threatening the land, whereas in Hezekiah's time they were foreigners already encamped in the land and insolently treading down its *villages*. The *lawless one* would be the *robber*; the robber would be the God-defier (Rabshakeh) whose blasphemies are heard reproaching Jehovah the God of Israel (as in Isa. 36, 37). The *humbled one*, the *crushed one*, the *unfortunate one*, would, all through, be Israel, or Israel's suffering representatives.

When we have thus approximately ascertained the conditions under which this remarkable psalm was originated, our minds are set free to observe the outgoings of the Spirit of Prophecy working through the circumstances of the present into the future.

The overthrow of David's enemies was sufficiently decisive to furnish a thread of thought along which the psalmist's mind could easily be led to the contemplation of the overthrow of all Israel's enemies who should at any time rise up against her: he foresees *nations rebuked*, the *lawless one destroyed*, the *ruins of Israel's foes made perpetual*.

The re-establishment of David's own throne, brings in glimpses of the perpetuity and universal extension of Jehovah's reign out of Zion over all the earth; when *He himself should minister judgment to the peoples in equity*.

But even as his eye catches sight of this entrancing prospect, there seems to be borne in upon the singer the foreboding, that, as he himself had been led up to the throne of Israel along a path of sore trial and long waiting, so his people would yet have to be humiliated and *crushed*, and to pass through *times of extremity* before their destiny among the nations would be realised. This foreglimpse of such *times* in 9:9, 10 is so remarkable as to tempt us to think that here already we detect the revising and adapting hand of Hezekiah; until a comparison of this place with 10:1 causes us to reflect on the access of power to the psalm, if

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

we choose rather to think that there was really granted to David a foresight of "the times of trouble" through which Hezekiah had to pass; which would serve to invest the second allusion to such dark times with an experimental interest which otherwise it would not possess; as much as to say, in the second reference: "Alas! *the times of extremity*, of which thy servant David my father spake, are now upon me, but he desired that when such times should come thou wouldst prove a *lofty retreat*: wherefore, then, shouldst thou *stand in the distance* and suffer us to pass through such a *fiery trial* as this, whilst thou *hidest thy face*?"

Thus declining to yield to our first inclination to see in 9:9, 10 some other than David's hand, we are triumphantly borne along (still by David) through the jubilant call to praise found in 9:11, and the anticipation of Divine remembrance and vindication preserved in 9:12, past the parenthetically quoted *outcry of the humbled ones* set forth in 9:13, 14 up to a suitable Davidic climax in 9:15, 16, whereupon, after a significant *Soliloquy* and *Selah*-call to look backwards and forwards (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Selah"), and *mark well* the path by which we are travelling—way is made for Hezekiah's newly originating hand to put before us first his assurance, in 9:17, 18, that the present Assyrian enemy shall be overthrown, and then the strong plea that Jehovah will effect that overthrow:—the which prayer, however, not at once being answered, but the Assyrian occupancy of the land still dragging along its slow length, to the fearful devastation of the *villages*, further additions and modifications follow, which, while wholly unsuited to David's circumstances, depict to the life the ravages and the reproaches and the blasphemies of the robber Rabshakeh. And thus the present Tenth Psalm unfolds itself, with echoes, indeed, of the previous psalm, but modified by the sombre mutterings of present trouble: nevertheless, at length rising up to the very same climax as that which characterised Hezekiah's first addition at the end of the Ninth Psalm: the desired Divinely taught lesson in each being a lesson to the *nations*, to be enforced by Jehovah's ultimate deliverance of his people Israel.

It would not be wise to lay overmuch stress on the sevenfold occurrence of the expression *the lawless one*, in the singular number (9:5, 16, 10:2, 3, 4, 13, 15), as against the one occurrence of the plural number (9:17), as though that circumstance alone

## PSALM NINE AND TEN

would warrant the inference that here already we have references to "The Lawless One" of later prophecies. It is easy to conceive that, in every combination of nations against Israel, there has ever been some one turbulent spirit actively inciting the nations to rebel against Jehovah and his Anointed One. Nevertheless the appearance of such a lawless one in combination with what looks like a final assault by the nations on Israel's *land* is very suggestive, and should be borne in mind by the student of prophecy. All the more does the significance of this ebullition of evil become impressive, when it is observed how the heading-up of evil is converted into its death-knell.

On 10:15, 16 Delitzsch significantly observes: "The thought that God would take the wickedness of the wicked so completely out of the way that no trace of it remained, is supplemented by the thought that he would do this by means of a punitive judgment. It is not without deliberation, that, instead of employing the form of expression that is used elsewhere (37:36; Job 20:8), the psalmist still addresses his words to Jahve: that which can no longer be found, not merely by the eyes of man, but even by God Himself, has absolutely vanished from the sphere of that which actually exists. Such a conquest of evil is as certainly to be looked for, as that Jahve's universal kingship, which has been an essential element in the faith of God's people ever since the election and redemption of Israel (Ex. 15:18) cannot remain without a perfect and visible realisation. His absolute and eternal kingship must ultimately be exhibited in all the universality and endless duration predicted in Zech. 14:9, Dan. 7:14, Apoc. 11:15."

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There were several singular victories in David's life to which this 9th psalm might have application—discuss two of them.
2. Is it true that the Lord always gives deliverance to those who call on Him? Discuss.
3. How shall we account for the note or suggestion of vengeance which seems to be present in these psalms?
4. Are we to assume that the wicked men described in 10:3-11 have had opportunity to know the God they mock? Discuss.
5. Why do the poor—the humble and the orphans have a special claim on the interests of God?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

# PSALM 11

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Faith's Brave Answer to the Counsels of Fear.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza, vers. 1-3, Counsels of Despair, with an Expression of Surprise Refused. Antistanza, vers. 4-6, Confidence in Jehovah Triumphantly Affirmed. Refrain, ver. 7, The Righteous are Sure of Jehovah's Love and Long to Behold his Face.

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(Lm.)<sup>1</sup> By David.

- 1 In Jehovah have I taken refuge:  
how say ye to my soul,—<sup>2</sup>  
"Flee to a mountain like<sup>3</sup> a bird;
- 2 for lo! the lawless ones are treading the bow,  
they have fixed their arrow on the string,—  
to shoot in darkness at such as are upright in heart:—
- 3 When the buttresses are being torn down,<sup>4</sup>  
what can a righteous man do?"<sup>5</sup>
- 4 Jehovah is in his holy temple,—  
as for Jehovah in the heavens is his throne:  
His eyes behold the earth,<sup>6</sup>  
his eyelids try the sons of men:
- 5 Jehovah trieth a righteous man,  
but a lawless man and one who loveth violence his soul  
hateth:
- 6 Let him rain on such as are lawless live coals,<sup>7</sup>  
fire and brimstone and a burning wind are the portion of  
their cup.

1. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "Psalm"—Gn.

2. See Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

3. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

4. So Dr.

5. Or: "what hath a righteous man (ever) done?"

6. "The poor"—Sep. and Vul. Br. prefers "world" (w. Theodotion).

7. So Gt. (*peham*, instead of *pahim*, "bird traps," "snares.") Del. prefers "snares"—lightnings; "for the lightning that flashes from one point of the heavens and darts with a serpentine motion towards another may really be compared to a snare or noose that is thrown down from above."

## PSALM ELEVEN

7 For righteous is Jehovah righteous acts he loveth  
an upright one shall have vision of his face.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For the male choir.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 11

How dare you tell me, "Flee<sup>1</sup> to the mountains for safety,"  
when I am trusting in the Lord?

2 For the wicked have strung their bows, drawn their arrows  
tight against the bowstrings, and aimed from ambush at the  
people of God.

3 "Law and order have collapsed,"<sup>2</sup> we are told. "What can  
the righteous do but flee?"

4 But the Lord is still in His holy temple; He still rules from  
heaven. He closely watches everything that happens here on  
earth.

5 He puts the righteous and the wicked to the test; He hates  
those loving violence.

6 He will rain down fire and brimstone on the wicked and  
scorch them with His burning wind.

7 For God is good, and He loves goodness; the godly shall see  
His face.<sup>3</sup>

## EXPOSITION

It will be seen from the analysis that the structure of this psalm is of the simplest—a stanza, an antistanza, and a refrain. The first point of advantage, is to notice, that the timid advice beginning, *Flee to a mountain*, runs on to the end of the stanza: to see this, is to perceive what an evil case the psalmist's advisers consider he is in. He is as helpless as a little *bird* watched by *archers in ambush*—instant *flight* is his only hope of personal safety: and, as for public reasons for remaining at his post, they are gone: further resistance is useless, seeing that *the buttresses* of public justice and social order are one by one being torn down; and, with no redress available, what has a righteous man ever done under such circumstances or can he now hope to do? Such are the counsels of despair offered by the psalmist's timid friends,

1. Literally, "Flee as a bird."

2. Literally, "If the foundations have been torn down."

3. Or, "His face shines down in mercy and joy upon the good."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

—counsels which the psalmist's faith in Jehovah emboldens him to reject, with surprise that they should have been offered him.

Of the two sets of circumstances in which such advice might have been tendered to David—while he was at the court of Saul, and when the revolt of Absalom was coming to a head—the former seems the more probable, while his faith was yet undimmed and he was a stranger to distrust and vacillation.

It is well that, thus early, the heavenly *temple* should be near to the psalmist's faith. *Jehovah is in his holy temple* above, with his mighty hosts waiting to do his will. With stronger emphasis and greater explicitness, the psalmist repeats, *As for Jehovah, in the heavens is his throne*. The distance does not obstruct his vision, *His eyes behold the earth*. He is intently watching the conduct of the lawless men. *His eyelids*—fixed for steadfast gaze and narrow scrutiny—*test* the quality, course and tendency of the actions of *the sons of men*. He may delay the deliverance of *the righteous man*, but he is only *putting* him *to the test*; whereas *the lawless man* he hates with all the intensity of his holy affections. He has judgment in store for all such: like as when he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah! The language may be figurative, but the faith is sublime; and it keeps the persecuted hero at his post. Note also the course of instruction through which the psalm conducts us. The sight of Jehovah's throne in the heavens brings Jehovah himself all the nearer to the persecuted believer's extremity. Heaven is equally near to every scene of trial on earth. For the present, indeed we have need to localise Jehovah's presence; and in any case we must not lose hold of his personality. He is a God who hates, who loves; and the more we are assured that it is he who makes us *righteous*, the more shall we long for the beatific vision of his face.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What a grand example of complete reliance on God does David present! Is it ever the will of God to "flee to the mountains"? Discuss.
2. When the foundations of Democratic society are being torn down what can the righteous do? Discuss.
3. In what sense can we say God sees all and knows all? Does what He sees move Him to action?—what about God when 6 million Jews were being burned?

## PSALM ELEVEN AND TWELVE

4. Discuss David's areas of life in which this psalm might have application.
5. When we see Him "face to face" the dark things will be made plain—the inexplicable circumstances of life will have the easiest of explanations. Discuss a child-parent-teacher-student-relationship in which this is presently true—you might add scientist-layman.

## PSALM 12

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

General Corruption, Evidenced by Sin of the Tongue,  
Impels to Prayer and Calls Forth a Divine Answer.

### ANALYSIS

In Stanzas I. and II. (vers. 1-4), the Petitioner Describes the Prevalent Sins of the Tongue, and Prays for the Excision of the Offenders. In Stanzas III. and IV. (vers. 5-8), Jehovah's Answer is Announced and Amplified.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1<sup>1</sup> Oh save Jehovah! for the man of kindness is no more,  
for the faithful have ceased from among the sons of men:<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Unreality speak they every one with<sup>2</sup> his neighbour,  
with a flattering lip and a double mind do they speak.
- 3 May Jehovah cut off all flattering lips,  
the tongue that speaketh great things:
- 4 Them who have said "To our tongues we give strength,  
our lips are with us, who is our master?"
- 5 "Because of the spoiling of humbled ones because of the  
sighing of needy ones  
now will I arise" saith Jehovah:  
"I will place him in safety who panteth for it."<sup>3</sup>—
- 6 The promises of Jehovah are promises that are pure,  
silver smelted down in a furnace to the ground<sup>4</sup>—  
refined seven times.

1. Cp. Isa. 57:1, 2, Mi. 7:2.

2. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. ed., Sep., Vul.): "unto"—Gn.

3. "I will shine forth for him"—Br.

4. So Del. and similarly Dr. But Br. reads and renders the verse:  
"When thrust down to the earth he shall be purified seven times."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 7 Thou Jehovah wilt keep them,<sup>1</sup>  
wilt guard him<sup>2</sup> from this generation to the ages.  
8 On every side lawless ones march about,  
when worthlessness is exalted among the sons of men.<sup>3</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 12

Lord! Help! Godly men are fast disappearing. Where in all the world can dependable men be found?

2 Everyone deceives and flatters and lies. There is no sincerity left.

3, 4 But the Lord will not deal gently with people who act like that; He will destroy those proud liars who say, "We will lie to our hearts' content. Our lips are our own; who can stop us?"

5 The Lord replies, "I will arise and defend the oppressed, the poor, the needy. I will rescue them as they have longed for Me to do."

6 The Lord's promise is sure. He speaks no careless word; all He says is purest truth, like silver seven times refined.

7 O Lord, we know that You will forever preserve Your own from the reach of evil men,

8 Although they prowl on every side and vileness is praised throughout the land.

### EXPOSITION

It is difficult to reduce to writing the successive impressions made by the study of this psalm. Who wrote it? Again that becomes an absorbing question; simply because a candid and sympathetic investigation of the psalm itself insists upon a reconsideration of the *prima-facie* conclusion. It is inscribed to David; and we cannot lightly dismiss the presumption thence arising that he wrote it. Nevertheless the situation as a whole suggests another set of circumstances than any in which we know David to have been placed; and, inasmuch as we are learn-

1. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "us"—Gn.

2. Br. renders this verse:—

3. Though round about the wicked walk  
When thou risest up thou dost lightly  
esteem the sons of mankind.



## PSALM TWELVE

ing to perceive an element of adaptation in psalms which are still reverently attributed to David as original author, we may feel perfectly free to look those circumstances full in the face.

Now there is no denying that David at the court of Saul had ample occasion to lament the mischief made by tongues that were at once *flattering* and *false*; and so it is easy to conceive that the original draft and for a time the permanent form of this psalm as it came from David's pen began nearly as does the present recension of it.

All the same, the outlook, as it now stands in the very opening couplet, appears too broad to have come within David's early survey of *the sons of men*. It is not in the least likely that, in those early expectant days, such a pessimistic conclusion would have forced itself on David's mind.

Moreover, the desire that Jehovah would *cut off* all flattering lips seems premature while as yet the son of Jesse had not come to the throne; and when he could scarcely yet have felt such a sense of responsibility for the moral condition of the nation as would suggest such a prayer. Even when he had come to the throne the royal resolve to banish evil tongues from his court, and so discredit them to the nation, which we find in Psalm 101, much more commends itself than a sweeping prayer like this.

Still more conclusively in favour of a wholly different time is the underlying assumption which is seen in verse 5, which presupposes a whole class of *humbled* and *needy ones* for whose vindication Jehovah's interposition has been long delayed.

If these considerations were not forcible enough to carry our point,—who can imagine David, at any time of his reign, admitting not only that *lawless men* were *strutting about* in the land, but that worthlessness itself was exalted, not only amongst a rapidly growing faction, as in Absalom's days, but generally *amongst the sons of men*?

It is remarkable how thoroughly the hypothesis of a revision of the original psalm by King Hezekiah, more particularly in the early days of his reign, meets the difficulties above suggested, and provides a situation which responds to all the leading features of the psalm.

From the known infidelities and weaknesses of Hezekiah's father Ahaz, we might safely have inferred the consequent corruption of the morals of the people; which, in any case, is independently attested by the early chapters of Isaiah's prophecies. As if to make surety sure, the opening lament of this psalm is

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

almost verbally repeated by the two parallel passages referred to under the text above; namely Isa. 57:1 and Micah 7:2. That Micah was an early enough witness, will be universally conceded; and if the so-called Isaiah II. was no other than the familiar friend of our youth, Isaiah of Jerusalem, then we have a combination of evidence which no gainsaying can overthrow, that in or about the time of Hezekiah's early reign there was quite sufficient ground for the sweeping opening lament of this psalm.

Nor is it from these parallels alone that confirmation of a Hezekian adaptation comes. For the words *Now will I arise, saith Jehovah*, of verse 5, are a literal quotation from Isa. 33:10; and, once we are in that remarkable chapter, another coincidence meets us. The singular descent from the *humbled and needy ones* in general to one particular suppliant in peril of verse 5 of our psalm—*I will place him in safety*—is alone suggestive of Hezekiah; how much more so when, after Isaiah's beautiful description of the ideal King—so strikingly realised in Hezekiah,—he proceeds to say, "He the heights shall inhabit, a stronghold of crags shall be his refuge (his lofty retreat)" (Isa. 33:16)—that is indeed being *placed in safety!*

Even the variations in the reading and rendering of verse 6 of our psalm, rather embarrass with a wealth of allusions than cause us any perplexity. We may confess to a strong liking to the longer form of that verse presented by the Massoretic text, for several reasons: as, first, for the occurrence of the poetic word *'imrah*, which we render "promise" in Psalm 119, and of which Delitzsch here says: "The poetical *'imrah* serves especially as the designation of the divine words of promise which are so full of power," and, second, for the intrinsic beauty of the comparison of Jehovah's promises with *smelted silver*. And yet, after all, there is even a surpassing aptness of reference to Hezekiah himself in the shorter form preferred by Dr. Briggs, *When thrust down to the earth he shall be purified seven times*. Delitzsch rejoices in the longer form, and lovingly speaks of the "hexastich" as the gem of the psalm, whose brightness relieves the gloom of the psalm's Massoretic ending, which he cannot deny. Briggs delights himself with the shorter form, as bringing the whole psalm within four stanzas of four lines each!

Even yet our easily borne embarrassments are not at an end. The gloomy finish to the psalm is mildly defended by Delitzsch, as above intimated; Perowne regretfully admits it, remarking, "this return to gloom and doubt is, I believe, without

## PSALM TWELVE AND THIRTEEN

parallel at the conclusion of a psalm"; the which frank admission may prepare us for the drastic treatment of Briggs, who, by a new decipherment of the consonants, and in part leaning on the Septuagint and on verse 5, sets forth as the concluding couplet

Though round about the wicked walk,  
When thou risest up, thou dost lightly esteem the sons of  
mankind.

"This," says he, "gives an appropriate climax to the psalm."

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Upon what adequate basis are we to conclude that Hezekiah edited the psalms of David? Discuss.
2. If we conclude that there is a definite possibility that such editing took place—are we to believe that Hezekiah was divinely directed in his editing?—why did he edit?
3. Since some of our readers will not share Rotherham's explanation as including Hezekiah's editing—please relate this to the life of David and show how *all* the psalm can be related to David.
4. Please remember God lives in the eternal everlasting NOW—all the proud liars of David's day (and Hezekiah's day) are destroyed—God does NOT live in the time-space sequence called life—how does this help?

## PSALM 13

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Sorely Tried Believer in Jehovah Expostulates,  
Entreats, and Ultimately Exults.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Expostulation; Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Entreaty; Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, Exultation.

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(Lm.)—Psalm—by David

- 1 How long Jehovah—wilt thou forget me for ever?  
how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 how long must I lay up sorrow in my soul?<sup>1</sup>  
how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?  
3 Oh look well answer me, Jehovah my God!  
light thou up my eyes lest I sleep on into death,  
4 lest mine enemy say "I have prevailed over him,"  
and mine adversaries exult when I am shaken.  
5 But I in thy kindness do trust,—  
let my heart exult in thy salvation,  
6 let me sing to Jehovah because he hath dealt bountifully with  
me,  
and let me harp to the name of the Lord Most High.<sup>2</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 13

How long will You forget me, Lord? Forever? How long  
will You look the other way when I am in need?

2 How long must I be hiding daily anguish in my heart?  
How long shall my enemy have the upper hand?

3 Answer me, O Lord my God; give me light in my darkness  
lest I die.

4 Don't let my enemies say, "We have conquered him!"  
Don't let them gloat that I am down.

5 But I will always trust in You and in Your mercy and  
shall rejoice in Your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord because He has blessed me so richly.

## EXPOSITION

The keynote of Stanza I. of this psalm is, *How long?*—from which, indeed, we cannot safely infer that the present trial had lasted for many years; but only that, to the tried one, it seemed as if it would never end. Time, to our consciousness, is relative: under stress and strain, minutes seem hours; hours, days; days, as though they would drag on their slow length for ever. Such has been the feeling of the psalmist; but his half-formed thought is corrected ere he utters it—hence the broken construction of the first line. The very attempt to utter his complaint soothes

1. M.T.: "How long must I lay up designs in my soul, sorrow in my heart by day."

2. Line preserved in Sep. and Vul.

## PSALM THIRTEEN

his spirit, and he becomes measured and musical in the expression of his appeal to Jehovah his God, to whom his words reveal unmistakable nearness. We readily forgive his anthropomorphisms, for the sake of the vivid sense we thereby obtain of his accustomed personal fellowship with his God. We note the orderly progression of the singer's thought, as he passes from the Divine *mind* to the Divine *face* as its manifestation; then from Jehovah to himself; then from himself to his enemy. On our way through the stanza we note the fine phrase *lay up sorrow in my soul*: "the soul," or sensitive nature, which feels the sorrow caused by the trial; and includes the memory which stores it up, and renders the soul a treasure-house of experience. We also note the apt and characteristic restraint which in all probability points to King Saul as the *enemy*.

He who can thus remonstrate with Jehovah, can do more: he can ask his interposition. And so Stanza II. is prayer. It is more—it is argued prayer. It dares to tell Jehovah what will be the deplorable results of leaving the prayer unanswered. Two decisive petitions, *Oh look well* (or *Look around*) as if to take in the whole situation and *answer me*—in what way he does not indicate, for he is speaking to one who knows the actual facts, and knows, as well his own gracious purposes; and then we feel how the petitioner lays hold of Deity by the name of promise and its appropriating synonym, *Jehovah my God*. *Light thou up mine eyes*, he adds, seeking for the invigoration which will cause his eyes to gleam with new health and hope: *lest*—and this is the keynote of Stanza II., twice expressed and once implied. His apprehensions move outwards in enlarging circles; beginning with himself, he fears that answer deferred will mean death; then, thinking of his enemy, that answer deferred will mean his openly expressed boast; and, still further out from himself, that thereupon a whole chorus of adversaries will exult. The weight of these deprecations he leaves his divine Friend to estimate.

And now we come, in Stanza III., to the psychological problem of the psalm. Is it possible that the same singer can now thus early and thus suddenly mount from the depths of despair to so near an approach to exultation? We say "approach" advisedly; for, strictly construed, the language is still that of prayer. But it is easy to see that prayer is by this time

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

lit up with joyful anticipation. In the very act of saying *Let my heart exult*, he is letting his heart ascend to the altitude of joy. Here, again, we are delighted with the orderly evolution of thought: on the objective side, *kindness* brings *salvation*, salvation is crowned with *bountiful dealing*; and on the subjective side, *trust* produces *exultation*, exultation leads to *song*, song calls for the *harp*. We are thus well-pleased with the completeness, in spirit and in form, secured by accepting the additional line preserved by the Septuagint and Vulgate. Moreover, we are thus led to a critical preference of Briggs over Delitzsch, which, for once in a way, is not distasteful. The latter, severely following the Massoretic Text, resolves the psalm into three decreasing stanzas—five lines, four, three; and then temptingly says, “The five lines of lamentation and the four of supplication are now followed by three of joyous anticipation.” The leading characteristics—of “lamentation,” “supplication” and “joyous anticipation”—are a manifestly correct description of the psalm; but why “anticipation” should be less exuberant in language than “lamentation” and “supplication,” we do not clearly see, and, inasmuch as the shortening of the first stanza relieves the third question of the psalm of abnormal distinctions between “soul” and “heart,” as Briggs forcibly points out, and inasmuch as this emendation, together with the restoration of the last line from the old versions, levels the whole psalm into three equal stanzas, we—feeling that symmetry does count for something when sustained by other evidence—are constrained to say, Briggs has it.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm should be of real interest to all of us—for we have shared David’s dilemma—why does God seem remote during a period of pain?
2. Who was David’s enemy as described in this psalm?—In what particulars did he have the advantage of David?—What lesson is there in this for us?
3. Just how did David imagine God would answer his prayer for light in the midst of darkness?
4. What difference would it make if David’s enemies did gloat over his fall?
5. David had a change of heart in verses 5 and 6—what caused it?

## PSALM FOURTEEN

### PSALM 14

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Vile Person's Testimony to Prevalent Wickedness, when confirmed by Jehovah, occasions Warning and Prayer.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I. (ver. 1), An Impious Man revels in Wickedness. Stanzas II. and III. (vers. 2-3), His Testimony Confirmed by Jehovah. Stanzas IV. and V. (vers. 4-6), Warning against Present Iniquity drawn from History. Stanza VI. (ver. 7), Prayer for Israel's Salvation.

(Lm.) (Psalm)<sup>1</sup>—By David

- 1 Said a vile<sup>2</sup> person in his heart—"No God here!  
their conduct is corrupt their practice abominable there is  
no well-doer!"
- 2 Jehovah out of the heavens looked down over the sons of men,  
to see whether there was one that showed understanding in  
seeking after God:—
- 3 "The whole have turned aside drawn back<sup>3</sup> together become  
tainted,  
there is no well-doer, there is not so much as one!"
- 4 Have none of the workers of iniquity<sup>4</sup> learned anything?  
devourers of my people!  
they have devoured food, Jehovah have they not invoked!
- 5 There dreaded they a dread when God scattered them,
- 6 their plan was put to shame when Jehovah rejected them.
- 7 Oh that out of Zion were granted the salvation of Israel!  
When Jehovah restoreth the prosperity<sup>5</sup> of his people  
let Jacob exult let Israel be glad.

(Nm.)

1. So in one cod. (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn.
2. "Senseless"—Dr.
3. So Br., uniting the two verbs found, the one in 14:3, the other in 53:2.
4. So in substance Br., mainly following 53:5. M.T., here, more fully: "Because God is in the circle of the righteous man. The purpose of the humbled ye would put to shame because Jehovah is his refuge."
5. So Br., also O.G. 980, esp. Ps. 126:1, 4.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 14

That man is a fool who says to himself, "There is no God!" Anyone who talks like that is warped and evil and cannot really be a good person at all.

2 The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who are wise, who want to please God.

3 But no, all have strayed away; all are rotten with sin. Not one is good, not one!

4 They eat my people like bread and wouldn't think of praying! Don't they really know any better?

5 Terror shall grip them, for God is with those who love Him.

6 He is the refuge of the poor and humble when evil doers are oppressing them.

7 Oh, that the time of their rescue were already here; that God would come from Zion now to save His people. What gladness when the Lord has rescued Israel!

### EXPOSITION

This psalm is highly dramatic, and as such must be interpreted: a position of so much importance in this instance, that the reader should satisfy himself of its soundness at the outset of his study. Observe well the course of observation which the psalmist takes. He tells us that *a vile person*,—coming to a spot resembling Sodom and Gomorrah with no Lot in its midst, or the world before the flood without a Noah,—felicitates himself that *there is no God there*. Since he must have had some grounds for this conclusion, and no firmer ground can be imagined than his own observation of the conduct of the people; since, moreover, bad men are ready to believe evil against their fellows,—it seems natural, having no quotation marks to guide us, to carry on the thought of this vile person to the end of the sentence, and attribute to him the further mental observation: *Their conduct is corrupt—their practice abominable—there is no well-doer*. It is certainly a little surprising to find a vile person making to himself so frank and correctly expressed an admission. But even such an observer may not have forgotten the radical distinction between good and evil; and, in any case, as only his thoughts are reported, we are not bound to conclude that the vulgar slang in which he would half mask his conclusion,



## PSALM FOURTEEN

is here expressed with painful exactness. It is sufficient to conclude that here we have, correctly reported for us, the substance of his thought. And, clearly, the damaging and sweeping fact of wicked conduct to which his observations and enquiries have led him, abundantly justifies his first-expressed conclusion—*No God here!* The circumstance that he himself is a *vile person*, will excuse us if we surmise that it is with some satisfaction that he notes the absence of any thing to serve as a check on the indulgence of his own vile propensities. Here he can do as he likes. There are worse people than himself here. So he may think, little realising how vile he himself is. Thus interpreting, we get a bad man—in a bad neighbourhood—coming to a natural conclusion—and giving to himself a sufficient reason for it. In the dramatic spirit, we may picture a heavenly messenger during a visit to the place as overhearing the vile person's whisper, and as being so incensed to see how corruption breeds corruption, that he forthwith wings his way to the High Court in heaven to report what he has seen and heard. Whereupon—for so the poetic link of connection between the first and second stanza seems to forge itself—whereupon Jehovah looks down from heaven to see whether the evil has grown to these alarming dimensions.

Pausing here a moment to strengthen our exegesis of the first stanza, it is fair to say that if this account of the words *Their conduct is corrupt*, etc., be declined in favour of attributing them directly to the psalmist, then you arrive at the unacceptable conclusion, that he first says a thing imperfectly, and then says it effectively by means of a formal introduction and a more carefully graduated set of expressions. Is this likely in the case of a poet of such power as the writer of this psalm? Assuming then that in the charge of immoral conduct contained in the first stanza we have the sufficiently explicit and highly suggestive thought of the *vile person*, we can advance to the second and third stanzas with an eye open to see their moral elevation and crushing logical force.

The moral elevation of the second stanza consists in this: That JEHOVAH does not look down merely to see how bad the sons of men are, in the place reported upon,—but to discover whether there is no redeeming feature in the case, whether there is not at least one person, who with whatever failings, is at least *seeking after God!*

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The sad fact that there is not—*no! not even one Lot* in *this Sodom*—is there necessarily included in the verdict contained in the third stanza: the tremendous force of which is due partly to this implied inclusion—partly to the carefully graduated terms employed, *turned aside, drawn back, tainted, together tainted*—and partly to the endorsement of the villain's own word with a formal addition, *There is no well-doer, there is not so much as one!*

We are assuming that *Jehovah's* verdict relates to the same sphere of observation as the *vile person's*; and this we do in full view of the general phrase *the sons of men* whom *Jehovah* beholds: say, *the sons of men*—in the place referred to; *the sons of men* in general, as far as represented by these particular sons of men in this particular place. This is a correct dramatic limitation. To set this aside is to get into contextual difficulties of a most serious kind, and to have to face an incredible result. The chief contextual difficulties are, overlooking the circumstance that the context has an eye to the *devourers of Jehovah's people*, and the admission that *Jehovah* HAS a *people* to be devoured. If "the sons of men" here are simply and absolutely all the sons of men on the fact of all the earth at all times, then all minor distinctions are abolished, and all mankind without exception are swept into the all-devouring net of this hasty piece of cruel dogmatism! Besides, the appalling result is best described by saying simply—that IT IS NOT TRUE. It was not true of Sodom, as long as Lot was in it: it was not true of the antediluvian world, so long as Noah was in it. To apply the exclusive phrase *not so much as one* to spheres in which, under Divine guidance, the *one* can be found and named, is wantonly to trample underfoot the commonest laws of human speech, and needlessly and mischievously represent the Bible as contradicting itself. There may have been a spot where there was literally *not so much as one* exception; and, if that was at all symptomatic of the general moral corruption of a given age, it was quite enough for the psalmist to refer to it. That, therefore, is what we are entitled to assume is here done.

Stanza IV. now follows as an appropriate advance on what has gone before. The psalmist wishes to stay the marauding invasion begun by *devourers* of his *people*. What! he exclaims, have they *learned nothing* from the records of the past? Do they *not know* that high Heaven, too long provoked, may at length

## PSALM FOURTEEN

hurl down vengeance upon them? Incidentally hitting off their character as a combination of cruel greed and light-hearted irreverence, he describes them with keen irony. They do not say grace at a common meal: much less will they *devour Jehovah's people* with any reverence towards him!

Then, in Stanza V., he recurs to the historical precedent which—as to its sin—he has already described: let us not forget what we have learned about that character. In it were practical atheism, corrupt conduct, abominable practices—the very place for a debauchee to visit: like Sodom, but worse; like the old world, but worse. *THERE dreaded they a dread*—as they had much occasion; *when*, just as they were combining for a devouring expedition, *God scattered them*; just as they had perfected their scheme, *Their plan was put to shame, for Jehovah rejected them*. Have these present would-be *devourers of Jehovah's people* never heard of this? Let them beware!

It is no objection to this exegesis that the precise historical reference eludes us. Many a place besides Sodom may have been signally overthrown; and no wonder that it was overthrown, when there was found in it, by verdict of both earth and heaven,—*not so much as one well-doer*.

It must not be thought that the above interpretation gained an unfair advantage at the outset, by starting with a *villain* instead of a *fool*. Dr. Briggs well says: "The *Nabhal* is not a 'fool' in any of the meanings of this word, but a more aggressive personality: not *aphron*, *stultus*, *fool*, but *impudent*, *contumelious*, *shameless*, as *impudens* with the double sense of *immodest* and *impudent*." In truth, then, he is a *villian*; and under the name *vile person* is well described in Isaiah 32:5-7; from which it will be seen: That he is ignoble, over-bearing, injurious; he gives his mind to plans of mischief; calls things by wrong names; injures the helpless by cruel falsehoods, and misrepresents God. Hence, we were doing him no wrong by taking a hint from his character how to interpret his words: he is glad to find *no God here*, in the recognition of the people, to hamper him in indulging in his propensities; and he has the impudence to admit with satisfaction how *depraved* the people of the place are; and, as if he had made enquiries for the purpose of discovering that there was no good man to reprove him, he shamelessly congratulates himself on that fact—*There is no well-doer*.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Nor, again, have we taken an undue liberty in rendering *the villain's* opening exclamation relatively rather than abstractly or absolutely; as rather *No God here* than *No God at all*; seeing that the negative particle 'ayin, though confessedly strong, not only "denies existence absolutely," but "more commonly in a limited sense, *there is none here or at hand*" (O.G. p. 34).

It will be observed that the fifth stanza above (vers. 5, 6) has been given in a shorter form than that appearing in the M.T., as seen in A.V., R.V. That is due to Dr. Briggs' endeavour to harmonize the two psalms (14, 53); and the result, for its terseness and aptness, pleases well. But before we dismiss the longer form, it may be remarked how strongly it supports the protest offered above, against giving an absolutely universal application to the united verdicts of earth and heaven to human corruption; for, assuredly, it cannot be said both that "God *is* in the circle of the righteous" and that he is *not*; nor can such a circle, inclusive of the *humbled* who hath made Jehovah his refuge be wholly *tainted*. And thus both the context and the general consent of Scripture unite in opposing the ruthless endeavours of misguided men to harden drama into dogma, by representing all men, everywhere, as always and wholly depraved, beyond further advance in sin. The Bible does not teach that: least of all does the Apostle Paul, in the Third of Romans; for whom it was quite enough to take these damaging testimonies of the Hebrew Scriptures to human sinfulness as he found them, without reading into them a dogmatic universality they were never meant to bear; since his only object was to convince his Scripture-boasting Hebrew brethren that they as well as sinners from among the Gentiles had absolute need of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

With this fifth stanza (vers. 5, 6), Dr. Briggs thinks the original psalm came to an end; and it may have done so; yet it is difficult to agree with him. Not only the standing needs of congregational worship, but even poetic justice seems to demand a more hopeful conclusion to so strong a psalm. And in view of the would-be *devourers* of Jehovah's *people*, whom the fourth stanza brought into view, it is not easy to see how a more fitting conclusion than the present could have carried the psalm to a climax. *Oh that out of Zion were granted the salvation of Israel*: that would presuppose a Saviour in Zion whose saving power

## PSALM FOURTEEN

would go forth to the utmost bounds of the land, beating back every foe, and raising a defence against the further encroachments of practical atheism and moral degeneracy. When that is witnessed—*when Jehovah restoreth the prosperity of his people*—then *let Jacob exult, let Israel be glad*. The prophets of God must have good tidings to tell. There must be salt to stay corruption, light to scatter darkness. Now, in the present time, Jehovah has not only *looked down* from heaven, but has COME DOWN—“to seek and to save the lost.”

Without casting doubt on the primary Davidic authorship of this psalm, which at the first may have begun nearly as it does now, it is nevertheless fair to admit that most aptly may the allusion to *a vile person* at the outset be taken as an indignant reference to Rabshakeh (2 K. 18, 19; Isa. 36, 37): and who knows but that, among the cities of Judah which he took, he may have discovered “a sink of iniquity” in which could be found *not so much as one* to protest against his villainies. The Assyrians, at any rate, were *devourers* of Jehovah’s *people*, who little knew into whose hands they were about to fall. “The special circumstances of the city afforded ground for the additional verse”—Thirtle’s O.T.P., p. 112.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why designate the man as “a fool” who says “there is no God”? Is there a better form—? Rotherham seems to think so. Discuss.
2. Are we to imagine the entire world of mankind involved in the characterization of verses 2 and 3? Discuss the subject of total depravity.
3. Paul makes use of this psalm in Romans 3:9 ff—please read his evaluation and application before drawing any hasty conclusions.
4. It would seem from verse 4 that there are some righteous people in contrast to those who are about to devour them. How then can it be said “all have strayed away”?
5. Is the writer looking forward to the restoration of Israel to Zion or Jerusalem? If so at what period in David’s life does this psalm have meaning? Does it have a wider meaning?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 15

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Approved Citizen-Guest of Jehovah.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Worshippers Approaching the Holy City enquire What Kind of Persons may Enter and Dwell there. Stanza II., vers. 2-5, The Reply from Within specifies Ten Virtues, Assuring their Possessor of an Undisturbed Residence.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David

- 1 Jehovah! who shall be a guest in thy tent?  
who shall dwell in thy holy mountain?
- 2 He that walketh without blame in his righteousness,<sup>1</sup>  
and speaketh truth with his heart:
- 3 hath not played the spy on his neighbour,  
hath not done his friend a wrong;  
and a reproach hath not taken up against his intimate:<sup>2</sup>
- 4 despised in his eyes is the reprobate,<sup>3</sup>  
but them who revere Jehovah does he honour:  
he hath sworn to his friend and will not change,
- 5 his silver hat he not put out on interest;  
and a bribe against the innocent hath he not taken:—  
He that doeth these things shall not be shaken to the ages.

(Nm.)

#### PARAPHRASE

##### PSALM 15

Lord, who may go and find refuge and shelter in Your tabernacle up on Your holy hill?

1. So Br. M.T.: "He that walketh without blame and doeth what is right."

2. Or: "one near him."

3. "Who is displeasing in his own eyes, worthy of contempt"—Del.

## PSALM FIFTEEN

2 Anyone who refuses to slander others, does not listen to gossip, never harms his neighbor,

4 Speaks out against sin, criticizes those committing it, commends the faithful followers of the Lord, keeps a promise even if it ruins him,

5 Does not crush his debtors with high interest rates, and refuses to testify against the innocent despite the bribes offered him—such a man shall stand firm forever.

## EXPOSITION

This is an interesting psalm of instruction, valuable in its bearing on character. It is brightly dramatic. It places the inhabitants of Jerusalem in a beautiful light, as guests in Jehovah's house at the same time that they are dwellers in his holy city: their residence in the one giving them easy and constant access to the other. The same character that would make them honoured citizens, would make them welcome worshippers. In placing Jehovah in the light of a Host, the psalm sheds a soft radiance on the Divine character. It was beseeching that such a Host should have noble guests; and it will be observed how prominent nobility of character is here made, by the very nature of the virtues which are signalled. Such a man as is here portrayed could not be mean. The close observer will discover that the ten characteristics named are arranged in couplets and triplets:—a couplet of general principles in work and word (ver. 2); a triplet of social virtues, coming nearer and nearer to the man himself—neighbour, friend, intimate (ver. 3): a couplet of bold contrast, touching religious character (ver. 4a, b); then a triplet of sterner excellences, safeguarding social intercourse (vers. 4c, 5a, b). Summing up all that has gone before as the condition, the psalmist assures the would-be Citizen-Guest of a permanent welcome. Several other psalms fall into line with this in emphasising character: as 1, 24, 121; and Isaiah 33:14-16 may be aptly compared. The Christian justly enamoured of justification for the ungodly and salvation for the lost, will act wisely by reminding himself that the initial justification without works is in order to works; and the universal and imperative requirement of repentance demands the production of godly character as the great object of the Gospel.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is there some relationship between this psalm and the 14th?
2. Where is the tabernacle of God and His holy hill?—then and now.
3. What advantages would there be in finding refuge and shelter in the tabernacle of God?
4. Who said the morals of the Old Testament are lower than those of the New? How shall we account for the code of ethics here delineated?
5. Discuss the positive and negative thinking suggested in this psalm.

PSALM 16

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Ideal Israelite's Triumph over Death.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Prayer for Preservation: offered in Dependence on Jehovah, Discernment of his Doings, and Detestation of Idolatry. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Contentment with Jehovah as a Present Portion, under Divine Counsel creates Confidence for the Future. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, Exultant Expectation of Escape from Death and Entrance upon Heavenly Delights.

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(Lm.) Tablet<sup>1</sup>—By David

1. Preserve me O God, for I have taken refuge in thee.<sup>2</sup>
2. I have said<sup>3</sup> to Jehovah—"My Sovereign Lord art thou, for my well-being goeth not beyond<sup>4</sup> thee."

1. So Sep. With this well agrees Thirtle's suggestion: "The term *Michtam* seems best explained by a *personal* or *private* prayer or meditation. A "tablet" would well serve such a purpose. "Seems to mean primarily an inscription"—Del.

2. "This short introit is without any parallel clause, and is therefore nonostichi—a sigh that expresses everything in few words"—Del.

3. So some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.; and so Del., Per., Dr., Kp., Br., M.T.: "thou saidst" ("O my soul" prob. understood).

4. Ml.: "upon," "over." "That is, 'in addition to thee, beside thee,' equivalent in meaning to 'apart from thee,' or 'without thee'"—Del.



PSALM SIXTEEN

- 3 To the holy ones who are in his land  
 Jehovah is making wonderful his delight in them.<sup>1</sup>
- 4 They will multiply their sorrows who backwards do hurry:<sup>2</sup>  
 I will not pour out their drink-offerings because of bloodshed,  
 nor will I take their names upon my lips.
- 5 Jehovah is my share my portion and my cup,  
 Jehovah is the maintainer of my lot for me.<sup>3</sup>
- 6 The measuring lines have fallen for me in pleasant places,  
 verily! mine inheritance is mighty over<sup>4</sup> me.
- 7 I will bless Jehovah who hath counselled me,  
 yea! in the dark night have mine impulses<sup>5</sup> admonished me:
- 8 I have set Jehovah before me continually,  
 because he is on my right hand I shall not be shaken.
- 9 Therefore doth my heart rejoice in Jehovah  
 and my glory<sup>6</sup> exulteth in my God<sup>7</sup>  
 even my flesh shall dwell securely:
- 10 For thou wilt not abandon my soul to hades,  
 neither<sup>8</sup> wilt thou suffer thy man of kindness<sup>9</sup> to see the pit:

1. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn. M.T. (as rendered in R. V. text): "As for the saints that are in the earth, They are the excellent in whom is all my delight." Delitzsch's rendering is striking: "I say to Jahve: 'Thou are the Lord, Besides thee there is for me no weal,' and to the saints that are on the earth: 'These are the excellent, in whom is all my delight.'" So is Driver's: "I have said unto Jehovah, 'Thou are my Lord; my good is not beyond(?) thee.' As for the holy ones that are in the land, they are the nobles in whom is all my delight." But, for the text as emended above, see "Exposition."

2. So, in substance, Br. "Their anguish shall be multiplied who have taken an idol in exchange"—Del. "Their sorrows are multiplied that take another in exchange (for Jehovah)."

3. So Br. M.T. (R.V.): "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot." On which Del. beautifully says: "The very thing which the tribe of Levi exhibits in a national and external manner is true in its whole spiritual depth of every believer; it is not the earthly, the visible, the created, the material that has been assigned him as his possession and enjoyment, but Jahve, He alone; in Him, however, also perfect satisfaction."

4. So Sep. "The Sep. gives a well-known word, a usual construction and an appropriate meaning"—Br. Cp. 117:2.

5. U.: "reins": Lit. "kidneys." "Regarded by the Hebrews as the springs of feeling"—Dr. "Conceived of as the seat of the blessed feeling of the possession of Jahve"—Del.

6. For "glory" in like sense, see 30:12, 57:9, 108:2. And see "Exposition."

7. Thus (but with "Yahweh" twice) does Br. gain a line here and fill up the stanza. Del., keeping to the shorter M.T., calls the *seven* lines "seven rays of light."

8. So some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

9. Written "men": read "man" (sing.) Some cod. (w. 8 ear. pr. edns.) both write and read: "man" (sing.)—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

11 For thou wilt make known to me the path of life,—  
fulness of joy is with thy face,<sup>1</sup>  
delightfulness is at<sup>2</sup> thy right hand evermore.

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 16

Save me, O God, I have come to You for refuge.

2 I said to Him, "You are my Lord; I have no other help  
but Yours."

3 I want the company of the godly men and women in the  
land; they are the true nobility.

4 Those choosing other gods shall all be filled with sorrow;  
I will not offer the sacrifices they do or even speak the names  
of their gods.

5 The Lord Himself is my inheritance, my prize! He is my  
food and drink, my highest joy! He guards all that is mine.

6 He sees that I am given pleasant brooks and meadows as  
my share!<sup>3</sup> What a wonderful inheritance!

7 I will bless the Lord who counsels me; He gives me wisdom  
in the night. He tells me what to do.

8 I am always thinking of the Lord; and because He is so  
near, I never need to stumble or to fall.

9 Heart, body, and soul are filled with joy.

10 For You will not leave me among the dead; You will not  
allow Your beloved one to rot in the grave.

11 You have let me experience the joys of life and the  
exquisite pleasures of Your own eternal presence.

### EXPOSITION

This is the language of an Ideal Israelite, as a glance at  
Stanza II. will show. Of the spirit of the Ideal Israelite, it is  
needless to say, both David and Hezekiah largely partook. For  
that very reason, they must have been predisposed to accept and  
utilise any worthy psalmody-contributions from Levite-Seers. If

1. "In association with, in communion with the divine face or pres-  
ence"—Br. "In thy presence"—Del., Per., Leaser, Carter. Dr.

2. "On"—Br. "At"—Per. "In"—Del., Dr. (*viz.*, to distribute: cf.  
Prov. 3:16.)

3. Literally, "The boundary lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places."

## PSALM SIXTEEN

the writer of the present psalm was literally a Levite—a priest—then his protest against idolatry at the close of Stanza I. would assume an aspect of personal repugnance of much the more intense; and suggests the possibility that in the days of declension into idolatry, from the days of Ahaz and onwards, the same men may have sometimes been expected to act both as priests to Jehovah and as priests to idols.

Stanza I. as here critically emended by Ginsburg and Briggs, has in it several features of great interest. The very opening word, in view of the ending of the psalm, challenges a deeper significance than usual: *Preserve me*, save me from death, hold me in being. *I said to Jehovah*: "the Becoming One," who has yet more and more of the riches of his own immortal being to communicate: *My Sovereign Lord art thou*: I am at thy disposal. *My welfare*, my blessedness, *is not without thee*: has no independent existence. Make of me what thou wilt: I have no blessedness but in thee. A Christian's mind is irresistibly carried along to think what these words must have meant to the youthful Jesus of Nazareth; and once our thoughts reach that point of departure, we are naturally led on to conceive of the joy with which the Messiah would note how *the holy* men and women in the days of his manifestation on earth would perceive that *Jehovah was making wonderful his delight in them*, and in their kinsfolk and neighbours, as they were taught and healed. We pretend not to give to the words of the psalm any such exclusive application; for they apply to every visitation of Israel and every deliverance wrought in their midst, from the day they were written. *Jehovah ever delighted in his holy ones*, and on many occasions made his delight appear *wonderful*. The reference to idolatry in ver. 4, no doubt received its exactest fulfilment in the latter days of the monarchy, before idolatry had received its great check by the punishment of the Exile. Yet, still, we cannot think of that young Nazarene, save as entering into a fellowship of spirit with the faithful priests who in the times long before his coming had stedfastly refused to lend themselves to idolatrous rites; to which we may add the reflection that the occasional contact of Galileans in later times with caravans of idol worshippers, would be sufficient to keep alive in Northern Israel a whole detestation of the cruel customs of heathenism. We frankly admit that it is in foresight of what follows in this psalm that we thus early begin to breathe the Messianic spirit.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

It is, however, when we rise to the spiritual elevation of Stanza II. that we become more positively conscious of the Messianic atmosphere. And, indeed, it is just *as an atmosphere* that its penetrating and elevating energy is felt. It is here that the ideal Israelite submits himself to our admiring gaze. *Jehovah* is his *portion* and in his portion he delights; nor his portion only, but the *maintainer* and defender of it. Then he thinks of *the measuring lines* which have marked out his portion for him, as if with mental reference to the broad acres which such lines have mapped out for others: leaving him still perfectly contented with his own *lot*. Thus he reflects on his *inheritance* until it becomes *mighty over him*, throws over him a mighty spell. Again we say: How can a Christian help thinking of words which fall in line as fulfillment? How can he restrain his thoughts from One of whom he has read in a primitive Christian document: "Who, in consideration of the joy lying before him, endured a cross, shame despising; and on the right hand of the throne of God hath taken his seat?" That, surely, was an *inheritance* worthy to become *mighty over* even the Messiah. This Ideal Israelite still further lays bare his inmost being as he allows us to see that he discovers the *counsels of Jehovah* in, or by means of, the *impulses of the dark night*, when silent reflection causes the activities of the day to stir the inmost springs of being. In this case, however, the impulses are so chastened and purified as to call forth *blessings on Jehovah* who uses them to unveil his will. We can never in this world know how mighty and timely was the nightly training of Him, who after being thronged through the day with the multitudes coming and going, spent whole nights in prayer. As dangers thickened and enemies became more bitter and determined, he *set Jehovah before him continually*, *Because he was on his right hand, he was not shaken* from his purpose to go up to Jerusalem, and there become obedient as far as death.

In advancing now to the third stanza of this psalm we can scarcely fail to bring with us the one outstanding observation: That it is the moral elevation of the second stanza which prepares the way for the victory of the third. *Therefore*: because *Jehovah himself is my portion*; because I am fully content with mine inheritance, and it has a mighty influence over me; because night and day I follow Divine counsel and unreservedly place myself under Divine guidance for the future; *therefore* my heart

## PSALM SIXTEEN

is glad,—and in the strength of my joy I am led on to victory over death.

If the moral elevation of the second stanza is unique—as we think it is—if, in its own way, there is nothing quite equal to it elsewhere in the Psalms; then we need not be surprised to be led on to a more complete analysis of the human constitution than is to be found anywhere else in the Old Testament. Such an analysis does, indeed, appear to await us. The triumph to be realised is sufficiently complete that the **WHOLE MAN**, in the most exhaustive analysis of him, should be summoned to rejoice in it: *therefore, my heart—my glory—my flesh* are marshalled to advance to its realisation,—*my heart*, that is, my intelligent nature; *my glory*, that is, my spirit, God-given, God-related, the recipient of Divine impressions, the spring of emotional force; *my flesh*, that is, my body, with its well-known uses, wants, weaknesses and susceptibilities. Each of these is coupled with a suitable verb: my heart *rejoices* with intelligent joy; my glory *exulteth* with joy intensified into ecstasy; my flesh *shall rest*,—fatigued with stress and strain, shall rest; weakened by work and weariness, shall rest and be still; shall rest and be refreshed and renewed. For some cause, the “flesh” lags behind the “heart” and the “glory;” “my heart *already* rejoiceth” (verb in the complete tense); “my glory *already* exulteth” (verb again practically in the complete tense—imperfect with *waw* conversive); but “my flesh shall rest” (verb in the incomplete or incipient tense). Further, an element of surprise is introduced along with the flesh: ‘*aph* “even,” “implying, something surprising or unexpected” (O.G. p. 65)—“Yea,” “moreover,” “even” (=“surprising to say”) my flesh shall rest securely. Then, too, the noun, “flesh,” in being set before its verb, is by a well-known rule emphasised. There was good cause for the surprise—good cause for the emphasis. For “the flesh” was in danger: in danger of corruption! in danger, because the contingency supposed was the event of death. *It must have been death*; otherwise there would have been no entrance into hades, and consequently the promise of not being *abandoned to hades* would have been superfluous. When Dr. Burney wrote in *The Interpreter* for July 1907, p. 375, that “my flesh is only employed of the *living* body,” he must have forgotten Job 19:26 and Psalm 79:2. “Flesh,” clearly, may mean the dead body; and that it does so mean here, naturally follows from the surprise and the emphasis

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

already noted; and, we may add,—forms the allusion to danger made by the adverb “securely;” for why should the “flesh” alone be represented as in danger, but for the assumed fact of its exposure to early decay by death?

The point to which the danger extends is the point at which victory commences. This godly man dies, yet even his flesh rests securely. Why?

*For thou wilt not abandon my soul to hades. My soul may* here be taken to include the whole personality, according to the most common usage of the word throughout the Old Testament; and this brings it into parallelism with the term *hasith* in the next line:—

Thou wilt not abandon my soul (that is, ME) to hades,  
Neither wilt thou suffer thy *hasith* (=thy man of  
kindness=thine Ideal Israelite=thy Levite=ME,  
bearing as I do that character) to see the pit.

It is, of course, implied that he, the man, would *enter* hades; although he, the man, would not be *abandoned* to it. He would not, with the wicked, see the pit *in* hades: that is expressed. He would not, in his flesh, suffer harm; seeing that his flesh would dwell securely. The dominion of hades over him would be harmless, and therefore presumably brief. He would not remain long in hades. He would not suffer harm in hades. His whole personality would come safely through hades. As much as this, the words naturally convey: we need not press them to signify more. It is obvious how completely they were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth by his early resurrection.

Less than resurrection cannot be intended; for resurrection is the true and complete antithesis to death. If Jesus had not been raised bodily, to that extent he would have been abandoned to hades—which includes the grave.

Besides, *the path to life* naturally starts from the lowest point to which Jehovah's loved and loving One was permitted to descend. If he was suffered to lay aside his body, then he was permitted to take it again. Not only does the path of life lead up out of the underworld inclusive of the grave, but it leads up into heaven. It matters not, in this connection, where heaven is; but it matters much that it is where Jehovah most gloriously manifests his presence and unveils his face. *Fullness of joy*, for redeemed man, is “in communion with the divine face or

## PSALM SIXTEEN

presence." *Delightfulness*—more than "pleasure" (rather an abused word), more than "beauty" or "loveliness" to the eye, more than "sweetness" to the taste: all combined, and unspeakably more. The general thought is that man's utmost capacity for happiness will be satisfied *in the Divine Presence, or with* (the unveiling of) the *Divine face*, to behold which he is invited, and to which under the guidance of Redeeming Love he tends.

"The original situation is provided in 1 Sam. 26. For 'hasten after another' (4) see *v.* 19; for 'maintainest my lot' (5), see *v.* 25; for 'heritage' (6), see *vv.* 19, 25; for 'the Lord before him' (8) see *vv.* 16, 19, 20, 24; for 'deliverance' (1, 10, 11), see *v.* 24. On verse 11, cp. 1 Sam. 26:10. The whole was also remarkably appropriate for the reign of Hezekiah, and doubtless the psalm was adopted on that account. The delineation is found in Isa. 57 (which is attributed to Isaiah of Jersusalem), wherein whoredom (*vv.* 3, 4, 8) expresses the 'hastening after another.' In the words of this psalm, in *vv.* 4, 5, the pious of Judah were enabled to dissociate themselves from abominations specifically described by the prophet. The 'drink offerings' of the depraved people are repudiated; and over against their 'portion' and 'lot,' another is made the subject of boasting (cp. Isa. 57:6). As for *vv.* 8-11 of the psalm, they are remarkably appropriate for the man who was brought to the gates of death and then raised to newness of life (Isa. 38:18-20; cp. Ps. 17:15; 140:13)"—Thirtle, "Old Testament Problems," pp. 313, 314.

It will be seen, from the giving of the above liberal extract, how far these "Studies" are from ignoring the existence of typical prophecy in the Psalms. Whenever, and to whatever extent, foreshadowing types can be found, their employment in exposition is helpful. Nevertheless, as protested in dealing with Ps. 2, it is conceived that we should dutifully expect now and then examples of the bounding away of the Spirit of Foresight into things to come. These adjustments being borne in mind, the present writer has no need to excuse himself for having in the above Exposition felt himself at once carried away to think of Jesus of Nazareth as the Great Fulfiller.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The word "save" and "salvation" are often used in the psalms—what is its particular meaning? Does it have application to us?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2. Please read Acts 2:25 ff and discuss.
3. Oh—that the expression of the psalmist in verse 5 were ours—! How can we obtain this personal relationship with our God?
4. How does the 23rd psalm compare with verse 6?
5. Discuss the Messianic and personal aspects of this psalm.

## PSALM 17

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

One who is Righteous Prays, in Great Trouble,  
for Divine Deliverance and Manifestation.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Prayer of Righteousness. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, The Proving of Righteousness. Stanza III., vers. 4-6, The Precaution of Righteousness! Stanza IV., vers. 6-8, Prayer for Attention, Kindness and Tender Care. Stanza V., vers. 9, 10, Refuge sought from Greedy, Cross and Arrogant Enemies. Stanza VI., vers. 11, 12, Invaders Advancing, Surrounding, Encamping, and Waylaying. Stanza VII., vers. 13, 14, Arise, Confront, Bring down, Deliver, Slay! Stanza VIII., vers. 14, 15, Punishment invoked on Three Generations—Reward counted upon by a Hoped-for Satisfying Vision of God.

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#### (Lm.) Prayer—By David

- 1 Oh hear Jehovah one who is righteous—attend to my piercing cry,  
oh, give ear to my prayer—without lips of deceit:
- 2 from thy presence let my sentence come forth—that mine<sup>1</sup> eyes may behold it.
- 3 With equity hast thou tried my heart—hast inspected me by night,  
hast proved<sup>2</sup> me thou findest in me no evil purpose—my mouth transgresseth not:
- 4 as for the doings of men by the word of thy lips (do I regard them).  
I have watched the paths of the violent one;
- 5 my steps hold fast to thy tracks—my footsteps slip not

1. So. Sep.

2. "Zaraph, smelt, refine, test"—O.G.



## PSALM SEVENTEEN

- 6 I have called upon thee—surely thou wilt answer me O God!  
Incline thine ear to me—hear my promise,<sup>1</sup>
- 7 make wonderful thy deeds of kindness<sup>2</sup>—thou Saviour from  
assailants!<sup>3</sup>
- 8 I am taking refuge at thy right hand—protect me as the  
pupil the daughter of the eye.
- 9 In the shadow of thy wings wilt thou hide me from the  
lawless,  
those mine accusers that assail me—with greed<sup>4</sup> encompass  
me,
- 10 their gross heart<sup>5</sup> have they closed—with their mouth have  
they spoken proudly.
- 11 They advance now they march round us—their eyes they  
fix,
- 12 They mean to encamp in the land—they maltreat as a lion,  
they are greedy for prey—they are like a young lion lurking  
in secret places.
- 13 Oh, arise Jehovah! confront him bring him down,  
oh, deliver my soul from the lawless one (destroy with) thy  
sword!
- 14 let them be slain (by) thy hand—slain out of the world.  
Let their portion be during life—let thy stored-up penalty  
fill their bosom,<sup>6</sup>  
let their sons be sated—and leave their residue to their  
children;
- 15 but as for me let me have vision of thy face—be satisfied  
with thy form.<sup>7</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 17

I am pleading for Your help, O Lord; for I have been honest and have done what is right, and You must listen to my earnest cry!

1. "Saying" or "speech"; but cp. Ps. 119, table.

2. "Make signal thy kindnesses"—Dr.

3. "Those that rise up (against them)"—Dr.

4. *ML.*: "with (or in) soul."

5. *ML.*: "fat, midriff, diaphragm."

6. *ML.*: "belly."

7. *Or.*: "the form of thee" *M.T.*, more fully:—

But as for me in righteousness shall I have vision of thy face,  
Oh let me be satisfied when I awake a resemblance of thee!

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2 Publicly acquit me, Lord, for You are always fair.

3 You have tested me and seen that I am good. You have come even in the night and found nothing amiss and know that I have told the truth.

4 I have followed Your commands and have not gone along with cruel and evil men.

5 My feet have not slipped from Your paths.

6 Why am I praying like this? Because I know You will answer me, O God! Yes, listen as I pray.

7 Show me Your strong love in wonderful ways, O Savior of all those seeking Your help against their foes.

8 Protect me as You would the pupil of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings as You hover over me.

9 My enemies encircle me with murder in their eyes.

10 They are pitiless and arrogant. Listen to their boasting.

11 They close in upon me and are ready to throw me to the ground.

12 They are like lions eager to tear me apart, like young lions hiding and waiting their chance.

13, 14 Lord, arise and stand against them! Push them back! Come and save me from these men of the world whose only concern is earthly gain—these men whom You have filled with Your treasures so that their children and grandchildren are rich and prosperous.

15 But as for me, my contentment is not in wealth but in seeing You and knowing all is well between us. And when I awake in heaven, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see You face to face.

## EXPOSITION

The first method of these "Studies" as to the question of authorship was to analyse a psalm with exclusive regard to internal evidence; and to interrogate that evidence by saying, "Now what sort of man appears to have written that psalm, under what circumstances, with a view of what dangers (if any), and with what feelings?" Only after pursuing this method with the present psalm, did any name occur as probable; and then it was the name of King Hezekiah, in view and in presence of the Assyrian invasion. If we take this suggestion as a working

## PSALM SEVENTEEN

hypothesis, it is at once seen what a large amount of verisimilitude gathers about it. It is at once noticed how naturally, in such case, the writer appears both as an individual and as a personified nation; and the danger comes into view as an actual and most formidable invasion, by a cruel, greedy, insensate enemy. It is easily realised how naturally a good man like Hezekiah would assure himself of his rectitude, as a man and a monarch, in pressing his suit at Jehovah's footstool; and, considering the multitude of persons and the variety of interests at stake, how inevitable were the passion and the persistence in petition which are here displayed—piercingly loud (ver. 1), courageously bold (vers. 13, 14), thoughtfully tender (ver. 8); how suitable to the gravity of the occasion is the largeness of the blessings sought—that the answer should plainly have come forth from the *Divine Presence* (ver. 2), that it should amount to nothing less than Jehovah's *making his deeds of kindness wonderful* (ver. 7)—and that its result on the enemy should be his inevitable *slaughter* (vers. 13, 14). In view of such a situation, how little of personal vengeance appears in the most sweeping petitions for the punishment of the foe; for only by such an overthrow could the deliverance sought be so much as imagined. Even the desire that the stroke might be felt to the third generation (ver. 14) would seem to be necessarily involved in the making of Israel's deliverance effective. Perhaps, even beyond all these features of adaptation discoverable in this psalm, is its conclusion; and, quite unexpectedly, to the writer of this exposition, its conclusion rather in the shorter form inserted in the text than in the longer form relegated to the margin. For, assuredly, it was not without searchings of heart that the familiar and favourite ending of the Massoretic Text was, at the bidding of a very refined criticism—unwilling to admit any unsymmetrical distension of metre or stanza,—assigned to a lower place; especially considering that such assignment would in a measure put out of confident use the significant word "awake," which had always been felt to be evidence that actual resurrection from the dead formed, for the psalmist, "the path to life" by which he hoped to ascend to the beatific vision of Jehovah's face. But, with the apprehension that HEZEKIAH might have written this psalm, the whole realm of probability was changed. The natural thing for HEZEKIAH to say, under the

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

circumstances; would be the very thing that the textual critic prefers should be regarded as the original text: *But, as for me, let me have vision of thy face!*—the very thing Hezekiah had hoped for, without need to “awake,” because without having previously fallen asleep! This we can confidently gather from the very bitterness of his lament when the prospect of death came upon him: “I shall not see Yah even Yah in the land of the living!” (Isa. 38:11). *That*, then,—namely to “see Yah in the land of the living,”—had been Hezekiah’s cherished hope; and that is the hope expressed in the short but powerful conclusion of this psalm preferred in the text above. In decipherment of the final word—*be satisfied with thy form*—a backward and a forward glance will repay us: backward to Num. 12:8, to discover the same word employed as here; and forward to John 1:18, 14:9, 1 Pet. 1:7, 8, 1 John 3:2, to be reminded of the form, and the vision of that form, which we are joyfully assured will give unbounded satisfaction.

This psalm is a *tephillah* prayer; and admirably that word describes it. It is attributed *To David*; and doubtless its groundwork came from him. So strongly, however, is the image of Hezekiah impressed upon it, that already, in the above exposition, had such authorship been confidently inferred, before the perusal of Dr. Thirtle’s second book: which offers the following reinforcement:—“Hezekiah was familiar with persecution. Ver. 5 reads like Ps. 73:2; ver. 14 like 73:3-9, a psalm from the time of Hezekiah. The concluding verse looks forward to recovery from sickness.”—Thirtle, O.T.P., p. 314.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When and where was the request of verses one and two answered?
2. In what sense could David say he was “good” as in verse three?
3. How did Rotherham arrive at the thought that this psalm was a record of Hezekiah’s reaction to the Assyrian invasion? Do you agree? Discuss.
4. What do the textual critics say about this Psalm? Why? Discuss.
5. Verse 15 is applied to neither Hezekiah nor David in Acts 2:28—or is this the Psalm used by Peter? Discuss.

## PSALM EIGHTEEN

# PSALM 18

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

David's Song of Deliverance.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-6, By many Epithets of Admiration, the Psalmist proclaims Jehovah as Worthy of Praise, for Delivering him from Extreme Danger, in Answer to Prayer. Stanza II., vers. 7-12, a description of the Divine Descent from the Heavenly Temple, for the Purpose of Deliverance. Stanza III., vers. 13-19, Amid a Storm of Thunder and Lightning, the Drowning One is rescued. Stanza IV., vers. 20-27, Principles of Divine Procedure Declared. Stanza V., vers. 28-34, Enumeration of Deeds Done in Divine Strength. Stanza VI., vers. 35-42, More Deeds—of Climbing, Pursuing, Destroying, Girding, Defeating and Trampling Underfoot. Stanza VII., vers. 43-50, Deliverance from Feuds at Home, from Foes Abroad, and from Foreigners Infesting the Fastnesses of the Land,—made a Theme of Loving Thanks to Jehovah, and a Prophecy of Lasting Prosperity to the Dynasty of David.

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(Lm.) By the servant of Jehovah, by David,—who spake to Jehovah the words of this Song on the day when Jehovah had rescued him out of the grasp of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul; and he said:

- 1 I will tenderly<sup>1</sup> love thee Jehovah my strength!<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Jehovah was my crag and my fastness and my deliverer,  
my God my rock in whom I took refuge;  
my shield and my horn of salvation my lofty retreat.  
My Saviour! from violence<sup>3</sup> didst thou save me.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 Worthy to be praised I proclaim Jehovah,  
since from my foes I am saved.

1. "Fervently"—Per., Dr. For the unusual word here used, see 1 John 4:19 and final par. in Exposition.

2. This line not in 2 Sam. 22, a prob. addition by Hezekiah. (Cp. Thirtle, O.T.P., 123.)

3. Perh. originally "violent one"; cp. v. 48.

4. This line adopted from 2 Sam. 22.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 4 There encompassed me the breakers<sup>1</sup> of death,  
the torrents of perdition made me afraid;
- 5 The meshes of hades surrounded me,  
there confronted me the snares of death.
- 6 In the strait I was in I called on Jehovah,  
and unto my God made I outcry for help:  
He heard out of his temple my voice,  
and mine outcry before him entered into his ears.
- 7 Then did the earth sway and quake,  
and the foundations of the heavens<sup>2</sup> were distrubed,—  
they swayed to and fro because his anger burned:
- 8 They went up a smoke in his nostrils,  
and fire from his mouth devoured,—  
coals were kindled therefrom.
- 9 Then bowed he the heavens and came down,  
and thick gloom was under his feet:
- 10 Then rode he on a cherub and flew,  
and swooped down on wings of wind;
- 11 And he put darkness<sup>3</sup> round about him,  
a covering of darkness of waters:
- 12 thick clouds of the sky without brightness,  
Before him his cloud-masses rolled along.<sup>4</sup>
- 13 Then Jehovah thundered in<sup>5</sup> the heavens,  
yea the Highest gave out his voice;<sup>6</sup>
- 14 And he sent forth his arrows and scattered them,  
yea flashes flashed he and made a loud noise<sup>7</sup>
- 15 Then appeared channels of waters,  
were uncovered the foundations of the world,—  
(at thy rebuke Jehovah,  
at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils).<sup>8</sup>
- 16 He reached out from on high he laid hold of me,  
he drew me out of many waters:

1. So in 2 Sam. 22:5. M.T. here: "meshes"; but (Br.) "It is improbable that the original was so unnecessarily tautological."

2. So 2 Sam. 22:8. M.T. here: "mountains."

3. M.T. adds: "his hiding-place."

4. M.T. (emended by Ginsburg) adds: "There were kindled live coals of fire." Prob. a repetition, in error, of ver. 8c.

5. In some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.): "from." And so 2 Sam. 22:14, and Br. here.

6. M.T. adds: "Hail and live coals of fire." "Not in 2 S.: is a gloss"  
—Br.

7. So Br.

8. Note change of person; and that stanza too long by two lines.

## PSALM EIGHTEEN

- 17 He rescued me from my foe so mighty,  
and from those who hated me because they were too strong  
for me:
- 18 They confronted me in my day of distress,  
then became Jehovah a stay to me;
- 19 and brought me forth into a wide place,  
He rescued me because he delighted in me.
- 20 Jehovah rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands he repaid me
- 21 Because I had kept the ways of Jehovah,  
and not broken loose from my God:
- 22 Because all his regulations were before me,  
and his statutes did I not put from me:
- 23 So became I blameless with him,  
and kept myself from mine iniquity:
- 24 (So Jehovah returned to me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes).<sup>1</sup>
- 25 With the man of kindness thou dost shew thyself kind,  
with the blameless man thou dost shew thyself blameless,
- 26 with the pure thou dost shew thyself pure,  
and with the perverse thou dost shew thyself able to  
contend.<sup>2</sup>
- 27 For thou a humbled people didst save,  
but looks that were lofty layedst thou low.
- 28 For thou wast<sup>3</sup> my lamp O Jehovah,  
my God enlightened my darkness;
- 29 For in thee I brake down a fence,<sup>4</sup>  
and in my God lept I over a wall.
- 30 As for God blameless is his way,<sup>5</sup>  
a shield is he—to all who take refuge in him
- 31 For who is a **God**<sup>6</sup> save Jehovah?  
and who is a Rock save our God?—
- 32 The GOD who girded me with strength,  
and made blameless my way;
- 33 Who set my feet like hinds,  
and upon high places made me hold my ground;

1. Prob. a repetition of ver. 20.

2. *Ml.*: "tortuous": perh.—"able to cope with their perversity."

3. So 2 Sam. 22:29.

4. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

5. *M.T.* adds: "The saying (promise) of Jehovah is refined as with fire."

6. "A divine being"—*Del.*

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 34 Who taught my hands to war,  
and made mine arms bronze.
- 35 Thus didst thou grant me as a shield thy salvation,  
and thy right hand upheld me;  
and thy humility made me great.
- 36 Thou didst broaden my stepping-places under me,  
so that mine ankles faltered not.
- 37 I pursued my foes and overtook them,  
and turned not until I had made an end of them;
- 38 I smote them and they were unable to rise,  
they fell under my feet.
- 39 Thus didst thou gird me with strength for the battle,  
thou didst bring down mine assailants<sup>1</sup> under me;
- 40 As for my foes thou gavest me their neck,  
and as for them who hated me I exterminated them:
- 41 They cried out but there was none to save,  
unto Jehovah! but he did not answer them:
- 42 So I beat them small like the dust of the earth,<sup>2</sup>  
like mire in the lanes I pulverised<sup>3</sup> them.
- 43 Thou didst deliver me from the strivings of a people,  
thou didst set me as head of nations,—  
a people I had not known served me:
- 44 At the hearing of the ear they submitted to me  
the sons of the foreigner came cringing unto me
- 45 The sons of the foreigner lost heart,  
and trembled forth out of their fastnesses.
- 46 Living and blessed is my Rock,<sup>4</sup>  
and exalted is the God of my salvation:—
- 47 The GOD who avenged me,  
and subjugated peoples under me:
- 48 Who delivered me from my foes,  
yea from mine assailants<sup>5</sup> didst thou raise me on high,—  
from a man of violence didst thou rescue me.
- 49 For this cause will I thank thee among the nations Jehovah!  
and to thy name will I make melody.
- 50 Who hath made great the victories<sup>6</sup> of his king,

1. Or: "those that rose up against me."

2. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

3. So. *Br.*

4. *M.T.*: "Jehovah liveth and blessed be my rock"—*Del.*, *Dr.*

5. Or: "those rose up against me."

6. Or: "magnified the great salvation (pl. intensive). *Cp. Isa. 26:18,*



## PSALM EIGHTEEN

and wrought kindness for his Anointed—  
for David and for his seed to the ages.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 18

*(This song of David was written at a time when the Lord had delivered him from his many enemies, including Saul.)*

Lord, how I love You! For You have done such tremendous things for me.

2 The Lord is my fort where I can enter and be safe; no one can follow me in and slay me. He is a rugged mountain where I hide; He is my Savior, a rock where none can reach me, and a tower of safety. He is my shield. He is like the strong horn of a mighty fighting bull.

3 All I need to do is cry to Him—oh, praise the Lord—and I am saved from all my enemies!

4 Death bound me with chains, and the floods of ungodliness mounted a massive attack against me.

5 Trapped and helpless, I struggled against the ropes that drew me on to death.

6 In my distress I screamed to the Lord for His help. And He heard me from heaven,<sup>1</sup> my cry reached His ears.

7 Then the earth rocked and reeled, and mountains shook and trembled. How they quaked! For He was angry.

8 Fierce flames leaped from His mouth, setting fire to the earth;<sup>2</sup> smoke blew from His nostrils.

9 He bent the heavens down and came to my defense;<sup>3</sup> thick darkness was beneath His feet.

10 Mounted on the cherubim<sup>4</sup> He sped swiftly to my aid with wings of wind.

11 He enshrouded Himself with darkness, veiling His approach with dense clouds dark as murky waters.

12 Suddenly the brilliance of His presence broke through the clouds with lightning<sup>5</sup> and a mighty storm of hail.

1. Literally, "out of His temple."

2. Literally, "coals were kindled by it."

3. Implied.

4. Literally, "a cherub."

5. Literally, "coals of fire."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

13 The Lord thundered in the heavens; the God above all gods has spoken—oh, the hailstones; oh, the fire!

14 He flashed His fearful arrows of lightning and routed all my enemies. See how they run!

15 Then at Your command, O Lord, the sea receded from the shore. At the blast of Your breath the depths were laid bare.

16 He reached down from heaven and took me and drew me out of my great trials. He rescued me from deep waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me—I who was helpless in their hands.

18 On the day when I was weakest, they attacked. But the Lord held me steady.

19 He led me to a place of safety, for He delights in me.

20 The Lord rewarded me for doing right and being pure.

21 For I have followed His commands and have not sinned by turning back from following Him.

22 I kept close watch on all His laws; I did not refuse a single one.

23 I did my best to keep them all, holding myself back from doing wrong.

24 And so the Lord has paid me with His blessings, for I have done what is right, and I am pure of heart. This He knows, for He watches my every step.

25 Lord, how merciful You are to those who are merciful. And You do not punish those who run from evil.<sup>1</sup>

26 You give blessings to the pure but pain to those who leave Your paths.

27 You deliver the humble but condemn the proud and haughty ones.

28 You have turned on my light! The Lord my God has made my darkness turn to light.

29 Now in Your strength I can scale any wall, attack any troop.

30 What a God He is! How perfect in every way! All His promises prove true. He is a shield for everyone who hides behind Him.

31 For who is God except our Lord? Who but He is as a rock?

32 He fills me with strength and protects me wherever I go.

1. Literally, "with the upright You show Yourself upright."

## PSALM EIGHTEEN

33 He gives me the surefootedness of a mountain goat upon the crags. He leads me safely along the top of the cliffs.

34 He prepares me for battle and gives me strength to draw an iron<sup>1</sup> bow!

35 You have given me Your salvation as my shield. Your right hand, O Lord, supports me; Your gentleness has made me great.

36 You have made wide steps beneath my feet so that I need never slip.

37 I chased my enemies; I caught up with them and did not turn back until all were conquered.

38 I pinned them to the ground; all were helpless before me. I placed my feet upon their necks!

39 For You have armed me with strong armor for the battle. My enemies quail before me and fall defeated at my feet.

40 You made them turn and run; I destroyed all who hated me.

41 They shouted for help but no one dared to rescue them; they cried to the Lord, but He refused to answer them.

42 So I crushed them fine as dust and cast them to the wind. I threw them away like sweepings from the floor.

43, 44, 45 You gave me victory in every battle! The nations came and served me.

Even those I didn't know before cotted now and bow before me. Foreigners who have never seen me submit instantly. They come trembling from their strongholds.

46 God is alive! Praise Him who is the great rock of protection.

47 He is the God who pays back those who harm me and subdues the nations before me.

48 He rescues me from my enemies; He holds me safely out of their reach and saves me from these powerful opponents.

49 For this, O Lord, I will praise You among the nations.

50 Many times You have miraculously rescued me, the king You appointed. You have been loving and kind to me and will be to my descendants.

## EXPOSITION

It is important to remember that David inherited the unfinished task of Joshua, whose divine commission was—to extir-

1. Literally, "a bow of bronze."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

pate the Canaanite nations whose abominable iniquities had justly called down on them this awful doom. Unless this is borne in mind, the Royal Singer of Israel must appear to the Christian mind, especially in this his triumphal ode, as resting under a cloud of suspicion that he did not hate war as he should: seeing that when his wars were ended, he could, with such manifest satisfaction, celebrate the completeness of his victories. It is doubtless well that we should recoil from the terrible necessity for extermination, and realise the extent to which another spirit has fallen on us from our suffering and rejected Messiah; but it is not altogether well when we, for want of reflection, fail to mark the footsteps of God in history; and thus are led to blame an ancient hero whom we ought rather to praise. Whatever of courageous and skillful warrior David was, that had he become under divine training; and we have to beware lest we blame that training rather than the Canaanitish abominations which called for such avengers as the men who received it. The dispensation under which we live is one of forbearing and suffering Love; and, if we cast a longing eye on territories to possess ourselves of which we have received no such mandate as was given to Moses and his people,—let us beware lest we go before we are sent, and are sternly called to account by our Divine Judge for our lust of dominion. No opinion is here expressed as to whether a commission to exterminate tribes guilty of enormous wickedness may or may not be constructively inferred, in the absence of express Divine revelation; but let statesmen remember the position in which they stand in such matters, and make very sure of their Divine call to invade other lands before they draw the sword for such ends. Extremes beget extremes. Let us avoid them in this matter, by remembering that we are not Israel; but, of the Israel of ancient times, let us judge fairly; and of her hero king, as he appears in this truly magnificent song.

It will have been observed by every reader how very figurative is this psalm. Many of the metaphors employed, it is true, are so obvious in their significance and of such easy application to well-known or readily imaginable incidents in David's history as to need little explanatory comment. But there is one figurative representation in the psalm which is so bold, and prolonged as almost to amount to an allegory; and is at the same time so lofty in its sublimity as to render it possible for us to let its historical application escape us. The historical event to which it refers is David's danger of perishing by the hand of the violent

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King Saul; and the daring figure by which his escape from that danger is set forth is that of escape from drowning; but until we connect the danger as described in vers. 4 and 5 with the deliverance as briefly asserted in ver. 16; and observe that the intervening verses portray first a divine preparatory movement from the highest heaven down to the skies of this lower world, and then the gathering of the Storm which it to effect the rescue; and then, finally, the outburst of the Storm, culminating in the deliverance of the Drowning Man from sinking down into the abysses of destruction;—the possibility is that the point of the allegory may be lost in what may unjustly appear to be a cloud of words. But when once the largeness of the poetical scheme of representation is apprehended, then it may be found that the need arises for a fresh grasp of the historical situation, to enable us to discover some proportion between the facts as they occurred and the figures in which they are here clothed. Let us then sufficiently recall the incidents of the history to enable us to realise that the danger to David from Saul was greater, more prolonged, and more distressing, than any other which befell Israel's favourite hero prior to his firm settlement in his kingdom. Of the troubles which befell him afterwards and of their grievous occasion, there is no need here to take account; since we are only concerned now to get behind this Triumphal Ode and the events which led up to it. We have, then, to remember that Saul was David's first hero and lord; that, as Jehovah's anointed, he commanded the young Bethlehemite's profoundest homage; that he drew the young harpist and warrior into peculiarly close and difficult relations to himself; that he became unreasonably jealous of him, lent a willing ear to every malicious story told of him, persecuted him with relentless hatred: and, all the while, he—David—could not, would not, durst not lift up a hand against his master. He had to suffer and wait for Divine interposition; and many a time must it have appeared that such interposition was never coming. Is it any wonder, then, that, being a poet born, he should oft have compared himself to a DROWNING MAN, in his last exhausted struggles against the surging flood of the Kishon, the Jordan, or even of the great western sea, of sinking in the depths of which he may, in the course of this eventful life have been in danger? And, considering how in this contest he could not strike a blow in self-defence but had to leave his succour exclusively in Jehovah's hands, is it so very surprising that, being a poet born and

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conscious of a Divine afflatus carrying him out and beyond himself, and his deliverance when it came being so unexpected and ultimately so complete,—he should have conceived the idea and clothed it in words of such a theophanic interposition as he here describes? Other enemies could be alluded to in quite an ordinary manner; and his own share in *running, leaping, climbing, bending the bow*—using his *feet, his arms, his hands*, could all be allowed to shine through by means of familiar poetic allusions; but the *enemy*—the *violent man*—the *perverse*,—HE had to be reverently left to the judgment of God; and none can say that that judgment has not been most effectively— even if most poetically—described. From his chief foe, the poet had been rescued by an interposition absolutely Divine.

It has been objected to Stanza IV. (vers. 20-27), that, in various degrees it is unlike the original psalm, and must be regarded as made up of later glosses. Of vers. 21-24, in particular, it is alleged (by Br.) that "it has nothing in keeping with the previous thought of the psalm. The original is hot with passion: this is calm and placid." Now the fact of a passing change of feeling may be frankly conceded. But is the inference drawn therefrom legitimate? Why may not David have rested his muse for a little, and imparted a moral backbone to his ode by drawing from the stores of his memory sentiments learned in the school of Samuel in his brief "sojourn in Naioth"? In particular, those singular epigrammatic sayings forming vers. 25, 26 (*To the man of kindness, etc.*), may well be a sample of the wisdom learned by the sons of the prophets under the presidency of the great seer: who, as we know from 1 Sam. 15:22, 23, *knew how to moralise*. Moreover, there are several points of contact between the stanza brought under suspicion and those going before and after. The close of the previous stanza, at ver. 19 (*because he delighteth in me*), forms an excellent point of departure for what immediately follows; and then again ver. 27 reads much like an application of the foregoing principles, by David, to his own actual circumstances. It seems peculiarly apt that he should think of his own little band of followers as *a humbled people, saved*; and of the downfall of Saul's house as the *laying low of looks that were lofty* almost beyond endurance. Again, it may be observed that in any case the hot passion of the opening stanzas has cooled towards the end of the psalm. For there is something, not merely placid, but almost playful in the way in

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which, through Stanzas V. and VI., the now staid monarch recounts the exploits of his early and more warlike young manhood. Finally, it may be said, in the interest of the poetic art, that the retention of the stanza which Dr. Briggs sets aside, brings the stanzas up to the perfect number, seven, and admirably places the Wisdom stanza in the centre of the psalm, just between the passivity and the activity of the psalmist; at the same time leaving the closing stanza with those nice touches of royalty upon it which impart to it a special fitness to form the crown of the song.

It is reassuring, after the contrary denials of Wellhausen, to find so strenuous a critic as Dr. Briggs admitting that: "If we remove the glosses, which have adapted an ode of victory of David to later religious uses, the ode stands out in simple grandeur as fitting appropriately to the historical experience of David, whether he wrote it or another wrote it for him by historic imagination, entering into the experience of the heroic king. After removing the glosses there is nothing that bars the way to his authorship." Even a critical reader may doubt whether it is necessary to remove the alleged glosses, beyond the point which leaves us with seven symmetrical stanzas. It may be further said that, in view of the admitted beauties of this song, we need never decline the Davidic authorship of a psalm merely on the score of its poetic excellence.

The great value of the following extract will excuse its length. "David began, as in ver. 2, 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer'; and went on to rehearse the wonderful acts of God in his daily deliverance. Hezekiah had as much to say, if not more; but he must begin differently. His deliverance from death and a host of enemies, induced in him a tenderness of expression which suggested a new beginning for the psalm, even though confined to a single line. So he prefixed the words, 'I love thee, O Lord, my Strength.' The terms are striking—'Fervently do I love thee': 'warmly do I cherish thee' (*r-h-m*). After such a pledge of affection, the king could proceed, and appropriate to his own lips lines which, in the language of poetry, are suitable for the description of any notable intervention on the part of Jehovah . . . The grateful soul must entertain a warm affection for Jehovah by whom it had been loved (*h-sh-k*). Hence, he says in one place: 'I love (*'h-b*) the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication' (Ps. 116:1); and the Lord spoke in response 'Because he hath set his

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love (*h-sh-k*) upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name' (Ps. 91:14) . . . Upon whom is the king's affection lavished? Upon 'Jehovah, MY STRENGTH.' Who could say this like Hezekiah? The man whose name was *hzkyhu* speaks of his Deliverer as *yhw hzky*. All the promise and assurance of the king's name have been realised; and now love is returned, in warmest emotion, to a faithful God. In other words, in the terms used we have the elements of the name Hezekiah . . . Everything favours the conclusion that substantial changes (in the psalms) so far as they may be detected, belong to the reign of Hezekiah"—Thirtle, O.T.P., 122-124.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please read again the account of Saul's pursuit of David as given in I Samuel 19:1—27:12. Select and discuss at least two instances in which this psalm could have application or fulfillment.
2. Read II Samuel 22:1-51—notice that there is no question as to whom this psalm applies. Why is it repeated in the Bible?
3. Define and relate to David the following expressions: (a) "The breakers of death or the waves of death;" (b) "The meshes of hades or the cords of Sheol;" (c) "The snares of death."
4. Define and relate to Jehovah (and David) the following expressions: (a) "Then the earth shook and trembled;" (b) "Fierce flames leaped from His mouth, setting fire to the earth; smoke blew from His nostrils;" (c) "And He sent forth His arrows and scattered them."
5. Please satisfy your own mind (and of those who study with you) that there is no blame for injustice associated with God as revealed in this psalm. Discuss.
6. Read the following discussion of this psalm by G. Campbell Morgan—discuss his point of view:

This is one of the most majestic and beautiful of the worship psalms. It is at once a perfect pattern of praise, and therefore a great revelation of the method and might and mercy of God. So clear and simple is it in its movement and language that nothing need be said of it save perhaps to suggest an analysis to aid in its study.



## PSALM EIGHTEEN AND NINETEEN

PROLOGUE OF PRAISE (vers. 1-3). Here the psalmist pours out the gladness and gratitude of his heart which thrills with the highest spirit of adoration.

THE PERIL AND DELIVERANCE (vers. 4-19). The terrible nature of the peril is first made clear, and then the story of the might and majesty of Jehovah's process is told, and the fact of deliverance declared.

THE PRINCIPLE (vers. 20-29). The reason of the Divine deliverance is declared, and the truth of perpetual importance, that God is to man what man is to God, is affirmed.

THE RESULTANT CONFIDENCE (vers. 30-45). Again the song breaks forth in almost tumultuous joy. Absolute confidence in God, and assurance of continued triumph are based upon experiences already gained of His goodness.

EPILOGUE OF PRAISE (vers. 46-50). The anthem ends with further sentences which group the benefits conferred upon the king by his God, and attest his determination to praise Him among the nations.

## PSALM 19

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Greater than the Glory of God in the Heavens is the  
Grace of Jehovah in the Law.

### ANALYSIS

A Composite Psalm: in which, by the mere force of Juxtaposition, the Grace of Jehovah in the Law, is seen to be even More Precious than the Greatness of God in the Heavens. Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, 4, The Witness to God borne by the Heavens in General. Stanza II., vers. 4c-6, The Witness by the Sun in particular. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, The Excellence of the Law in Itself and in its Beneficent Effects. An Overflow from the foregoing Stanza (ver. 10). Stanza IV., vers 11-14, A Personal Application: with Prayer, for Profit by the Law, and for the Divine Acceptance of this Psalm.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of GOD,  
and the work of his hands the expanse is declaring:
- 2 Day unto day doth pour forth speech,

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- 3 and night unto night doth breathe out knowledge:<sup>1</sup>  
 4 Through all the earth hath gone forth their voice,  
 and to the end of the world their sayings:  
 For the sun hath He set up a tent therein;  
 5 and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
 he rejoiceth as a hero to run a race.  
 6 From one end of the heavens is his going forth,  
 and his circuit unto the other end thereof;  
 and nothing is hid from His glowing sun.<sup>2</sup>  
 7 The law of Jehovah is perfect<sup>3</sup>—refreshing<sup>4</sup> the soul,  
 The testimony of Jehovah is trustworthy—making wise the  
 simple;  
 8 The precepts of Jehovah are right<sup>5</sup>—rejoicing the heart,  
 The commandment of Jehovah is clear<sup>6</sup>—enlightening the  
 eyes;  
 9 The reverence of Jehovah is clean—enduring evermore,  
 The regulations of Jehovah are truth—vindicated altogether.  
 10 More desirable than gold—yea than much fine gold,  
 Sweeter also than honey—or than the droppings from the  
 comb.  
 11 Even thine own servant findeth warning in them—  
 in keeping them the reward is great.  
 12 Mistakes who perceiveth?  
 from concealed things acquit me,

1. M.T. adds:—

There is no speech, and there are no words:  
 unheard is their voice.

Sep. and Vul. expand this into:—

There is no speech, there are no words,  
 where their voice is not heard.

These are followed by the italics in A.V. Delitzsch renders as follows:—

There is no speech and there are no words,  
 whose voice is inaudible.

Driver's alternative rendering runs:

It is not a speech, neither are they words,  
 the voice whereof cannot be heard.

2. So. Br.

3. Or: "blameless," "whole," "sound."

4. "See Prov. 25:13, Lam. 1:11, 16, 19; and cf. Ps. 23:3. Lit. *bringing back*, i.e. restoring, invigorating. The 'soul' is the principle of life . . . ; here, of the spiritual life."—Dr. "To restore the sense of life—Dr. Glossary I. to Parallel Psalter.

5. Or: "upright." Ml.: "straightforward." Cp. 119:137.

6. Or: "bright." Sep. "far-shining."

7. "Lapses—who marketh them?"—Del. "That is, sins of inadvertence; cf. Lev. 4:2, R.V. *margin*.—Dr.

## PSALM NINETEEN

- 13 Also from presumptuous ones restrain thy servant—  
let them not rule over me:  
Then shall I be blameless—<sup>1</sup>  
and be cleared of great transgression.
- 14 Acceptable be the sayings of my mouth—  
and the soft utterance of my heart,  
Before thee continually,<sup>2</sup> O Jehovah—  
my rock and my redeemer.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God; they are a marvelous display of His craftsmanship.

2 Day and night they keep on telling about God.

3, 4 Without a sound or word, silent in the skies, their message reaches out to all the world.

The sun lives in the heavens where God placed it

5 And moves out across the skies as radiant<sup>3</sup> as a bridegroom going to his wedding,<sup>4</sup> or as joyous as an athlete looking forward to a race!

6 The sun crosses the heavens from end to end, and nothing can hide from its heat.

7, 8 God's laws are perfect. They protect us, make us wise, and give us joy and light.

9 God's laws are just and perfect. Reverence for God keeps us pure and leads us on to heaven.<sup>5</sup>

10 His laws are more desirable than gold. They are sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb.

11 For they warn us away from harm and give success to those who obey them!

12 But how can I ever know what sins are lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults.

13 And keep me from deliberate wrongs; help me to stop doing them. Only then can I be free of guilt and innocent of some great crime.

1. *ML.*: "one whole" ("all of a piece").

2. "So *Sep.* as the measure requires"—*Br.*

3. *Implied.* Literally, "is like a bridegroom."

4. *Implied.* Literally, "going forth from his chamber."

5. *Or.* "The rules governing the worship of the Lord are pure and need never be changed."

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14 May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing even to You, O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.

### EXPOSITION

This is a psalm of exquisite beauty, which winningly invites us along the path of exposition; but which, nevertheless confronts us with a difficulty which we shall do well to settle at once if possible, so as to study the psalm without distraction and to the utmost profit. The difficulty, when first stated, appears sufficiently formidable; seeing that it involves the serious question whether or not ver. 3 should be regarded as an excrescence. Whoever will look at this verse as it appears in the A.V., will readily understand the nature of the problem. Strip off the three italic words which, in that version, are incorporated with it, and which young readers will remember are to be taken as having no express warrant in the original,—and the statement remaining is found to be a thrice repeated negative: “no speech, nor language, their voice is not heard”—in express contradiction of both the spirit and letter of vers. 1, 2 and 4; and the remarkable thing is that the Hebrew text handed down to us, simply contains these three unqualified negatives. Next observe, that the supplied words have the startling effect of converting the negative into a positive; and asserting that, wherever any language is spoken, there the heavens utter a voice—of course, in harmony with the context; thereby getting over the difficulty, and not wholly without authority, seeing that both Septuagint and Vulgate (Greek and Latin) versions contain the very words (or their equivalent) which thus turn the statement completely round. Noting these things, the first impulse of many readers will undoubtedly be to acquiesce in this solution, by saying: “Evidently some little word or words have dropped out of the Hebrew, the substance of which has been fortunately preserved by the ancient Greek and Latin versions.” Well: for those so content, the verse will be found at the foot of the text; and further, inasmuch as some think that even the direct negatives of the Hebrew can be *harmonised* with the context, as either a sort of “aside” spoken by an objector (which was suggested in “the Emphasised Bible”) or with a sort of mental gloss. “No LITERAL voice—though, ‘in reason’s ear,’ there *is* a voice,” for this cause, the literal Hebrew, as reflected in the R.V., is also

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given at the foot. Now will these contented readers exercise a little forbearance towards a few more critical minds, who are not so easily satisfied, but who prefer the opinion that this verse is an excrescence. Their reasons are: *first*, that it just makes this stanza so much too long, which alone would not count for much, but is of sufficient force to sustain the additional reason now to be submitted: namely, *secondly*, that as soon as the negative is turned into a positive, then it is *needless*, seeing that vers. 1 and 2 positively assert that "the heavens," ect., *tell, declare, pour forth* and *breathe out* their witness to God's glory; and further, that ver. 4 makes this positive assurance universal in extent. So that, in a word, by dropping the two lines which make the stanza too long, nothing substantial is lost, while brevity and point, as well as symmetry, are gained. The reader who is not yet quite persuaded to join the more critical, will at least understand, without a disturbing thought, why the following exposition takes the shorter and more direct route leading to the same end.

The general witness of the heavens is brought to bear upon a point twice expressed: it is *the glory of God*—their brightness and beauty being expressive of his own; and being, as they are, *the work of his hand*, the inference is that he is greater than they. The fact that the heavens bear this witness is four times expressed: they *tell* it out or *recount* it, as if spoken of a story composed of numberless details, they *declare* it, as with authority, making God's glory conspicuous; they *pour it forth* in a stream of eloquence as from an exhaustless fountain of evidence; and they gently *breathe out* the intelligence, with such soft accents as leave the truth larger, loftier, louder than their low utterance can attain. The second couple of these verbs is apportioned, the one to the day, and the other to the night. It is the *day* that pours forth speech, as through the channels of a thousand voices: it is the *night* that breathes out her almost inaudible whispers. Moreover, one day speaks the *the next*, the day-studies being handed on for further days to prosecute; and the night, ceasing her story when the day appears, takes up the broken thread when the *next night* comes—which is poetically true to fact: since day-studies can only be pursued by day, and night-studies by night. To suggest all this without actually saying so is a triumph of the poetic art. An effective synonymous couplet sets the seal of universality upon this testimony

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to the glory of God. Wherever men can dwell, God is there, in his works, to speak to them of himself. So much, says Stanza 1., of the heavens in general.

But now the *sun* takes a stanza all to himself; and, as seems meet, the figures wax more bold. The emphasis now to be laid on "the sun" is shown by his position at the very head of the stanza. An excellent point of connection with the first stanza is gained by attributing the act of setting up the tent for the sun to God himself (the 'El of the opening line of the psalm) and for once we spell the pronoun *He* with a capital initial. The word *tent* is the simple and usual rendering of the Hebrew 'ohel, and no "Sunday garment" is needed for it. The word *therein* naturally refers back to the *heavens* of ver 1, and so forms another link of connection with the first stanza. Moreover, as every eye can see *where* the sun enters his tent in the evening and *where* he reappears in the morning, the perhaps rather fanciful question arises whether the ancient Hebrews were quite so backward in their nature-views as is commonly supposed. The emphasis on the pronoun *he* in the second line of the stanza naturally carries the mind right back to the "sun" at the head of the previous line: *and he is like*. By a most beautiful figure of speech, comparing the sun to a *bridegroom* coming forth with a smile on his face from his nuptial *chamber*, the freshness of the sun every morning is expressed. With joy behind him, he has at the same time gladness before him, as he *comes forth* like a *hero rejoicing* in the consciousness of his staying powers, and that whoever may have need to retire for sleep at mid-day, he, unwearied, will be able to hold on his way till his race is run. The poet's eye measures the racer's course *from one end of the heavens to the other*; and, impressed with its magnificent sweep, his mind is struck with the universality of the sun's searching *warming* rays. The word for *sun* at the beginning of the stanza was *shemesh*, the customary word: it is now, at the end of the stanza, *hammah*, a poetical and less customary word to denote the orb of day; and though derived from a root meaning *to be hot*, yet in O.T. usage it is always used of the sun himself, and not merely of his heat, as all the other instances of its occurrence in the O.T. will show: Job 30:25, S. Song 6:10, Isa. 24:23 and 30:26. It is hence permissible to conclude that here also is the sun himself that is meant; and, if so, the pronoun *His* ("His sun"),—again spelling it with a capital, like the *He* of the first line,—will once more carry us up to "God," whose representative

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the *sun so strikingly is*: implying, without expressing, that, as the sun searches all, so in a higher sense does God. Thus the end of the second stanza returns to the beginning of the first, and the two are locked into a unit.

With Stanza III. we enter upon the second half of the psalm: the transition to which is certainly very abrupt, however we may account for that circumstance; some conceiving that here we have two distinct psalms on two distinct subjects, whose juxtaposition, as an afterthought, naturally causes the sense of abruptness; others thinking that the same mind that originated the first half, pausing to face a new but counterpart theme, instinctively adopted a new vocabulary and a new style. The exact genesis of the change we may never know, but the fact of the change remains undeniable, and the magnitude and tenor of it we may briefly trace.

Note, then, that the Divine name *El*, "the Mighty One," used once, and once only, in the former half of the psalm, now gives place to the Divine name *Jehovah*, which occurs six times in this stanza and once in the next, making seven times in all, in the second half of the psalm. This fact is significant; for, though this second half of the psalm is not strictly speaking about Jehovah himself but about his Law, etc., yet the repeated use of this different and more gracious Divine Name clearly ought to be regarded as shedding a soft lustre over the whole of this division of the psalm. If it only be true that "Jehovah" is pre-eminently a name of grace, as it undoubtedly is, then everything which it touches is graciously affected thereby. Whether "law," "testimony," "precept," or whatever else of "Jehovah," every form of his instruction for my guidance is lit up by its relation to himself, as the "Becoming One," "the helper of his people."

With this agree the breadth and variety of both nouns and adjectives which are related to Jehovah: his *law* in his "instruction" to guide as well as his "law" to bind; his *testimony* witnesses to his own grace as well as to the saint's duty; and so on to the end. The same with the adjectives: *perfect*, lacking nothing that the soul needs; *trustworthy*, warranting the fullest confidence; *right*, satisfying man's better judgment; *clear*, saying what it means, making duty plain; *clean*, no foul spot in it, to corrupt and abolish it; *truth*, giving right decisions between man and man, claim and claim, and therefore regulations worthy to regulate.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

But if nouns and adjectives have the grace of "Jehovah" resting on them, how much more those beautiful little pendants hanging upon them, each like a jewel in the ear of beauty; which, in four cases, describe the beneficent action of Jehovah's instruction, and in the two remaining instances attest its self-preserving power. The actions are all gracious: they *refresh*, they *make wise*, they *gladden*, they *enlighten*. Such Divine guidance must abide: *enduring evermore*, their Divine perfections are *vindicated* from all attacks, and they mutually explain and defend *each other*.

But is all this praise of the *Law*, not just a little exaggerated? No! why should it? Granted that the *Law* was a tutor guiding to Christ: are we to think that the child-guide had no affection for his ward? Besides, the terms employed are too broad and various to be limited to the mere binding force of the edicts from Sinai's summit: though even the Ten Words of Thunder had their gracious undertones. Let the Christian bethink him whether he cannot translate the whole of these six synonyms into the terms of Jesus and his Apostles, and then sing, "How gentle God's command"! Do the New Testament instructions not "refresh," "make wise," "gladden," "enlighten"—and "endure," triumphantly "vindicated"?

That "overflow," the 10th verse,—what means it? It looks as though, to the incipient apprehension of the psalmist, it had occurred, as a first thought, to have EIGHT full-fledged synonyms of the *Law*, as in Ps. 119; which half-formed design was subsequently abandoned; and then the unused colours were dashed on the canvas in magnificent profusion that nothing might be lost. Instead of saying seventhly,—“The word of Jehovah is costly—*more desirable than gold!*” and, eighthly, “The statutes of Jehovah are satisfying—*sweeter than honey,*” his enthusiasm breaks bounds, and he takes the saint's experimental response alone and intensifies two phases of it into a climax, and exclaims without more ado: *More desirable than gold—yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey—or the droppings of the comb.*

The transition at ver. 11 to the last stanza is very striking. Hitherto, neither "El" nor "Jehovah" has been directly addressed; but now a sense of *nearness* leads the psalmist reverently to look in the face of Jehovah, and say, *Thy—Thou—Thee*. He is in his heavenly Master's presence, and dutifully terms himself Jehovah's *servant*, yet without losing his sense of nearness or



## PSALM NINETEEN

favoured acceptance; for he lays stress on this as a further commendation of the *regulations* of the Divine Law: *Even thine own servant*—who has long delighted himself in thy precepts and made them known to others—even HE *findeth warning in them*; lest, through inattention or over-confidence, he should insensibly or presumptuously fall into the error of the wicked. Thus admonished and restrained, he can bear witness that in *keeping them the reward is great*.

As if now moved to a searching of heart, the psalmist abruptly exclaims: *Mistakes who perceiveth?* By the emphasis he throws on the word “mistakes” through boldly preplacing it, he calls pointed attention to the precise nature of the failures of which he is thinking. Of course he is keeping within the general limits of *practical* “mistakes,” errors of conduct in doing or leaving undone, as alone worthy of notice here; but in thus calling attention to their exact character, he throws his mind back on this as the essence of them, that, being genuine “mistakes,” they are of course *unperceived*, or they would not be “mistakes”; and then the disturbing question arises: “How often may I not have unwittingly done wrong? For ‘wrong,’ after all, was the doing of the thing graciously forbidden, or the leaving undone of the thing graciously commanded. It was ‘wrong’ all the same—though I noted it not: the ‘law’ was transgressed, and my ‘soul’ lost its ‘refreshing.’” And so on, along the interminable line of sins of ignorance, which yet *are* sins. And therefore the psalmist is moved to pray the first prayer of the psalm: *from concealed things* (understand, “SUCH concealed things, concealed from myself by error or inadvertence,” otherwise they might still have been presumptuous though “concealed” from others) *acquitt me*. What a searching lesson for us all!

Carelessness, in not noticing or remembering Divine Law, may lead to indifference as to heeding it when known and remembered; and thus sins of ignorance suggest sins of *knowledge and daring*; and behind even these the impulse to commit them may be strong, the temptation great; and then Divine restraint will be needed and is here earnestly sought—*how* earnestly, is seen by observing how aptly the petitioner reminds himself that he *is* Jehovah’s *servant*—and therefore bound by every tie thrown about him by his Master’s favour,—and by observing how seasonably he calls to mind that *presumptuous*

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

*sins*, if not sternly checked, will assume *dominion* over him. No wonder that, with an evident sense of relief, a mind thus happily sensitive should exclaim: *Then*—acquitted from unwitting sins and restrained from presumptuous sins—*shall I be perfect*—not indeed in degree, but in *whole-heartedness, and be cleared of great transgression*.

Most appropriately is this last stanza of the psalm concluded by the unique prayer—in which surely even the holy men of today may join, at a long distance behind those holy men of old—*accepted be the sayings of my mouth*—which are here set forth as “pruned” to suit the strings of my lyre, *and the soft utterance*—the tentative soliloquising—*of my heart*—on mine own ear while constructing this my poem: *Before thee, continually* (surely the recording angel made a memorandum of them all!) *O Jehovah*—thou God of covenant grace—*my Rock* of strength and confidence, and *my Redeemer*—from sin, sorrow and death.

There is little need to say, that reasonable latitude should be given to the inscription *To David*. So long as the Royal Librarian felt justified in thus marking a psalm, the ends of literary justice and working convenience were met. A psalm may have been written by one of David's prophetic scribes or singers; yet, if offered to his royal master, and examined and approved by him, it would naturally be regarded strictly Davidic, and be fittingly deposited in the department of the library set apart to David's psalms. Notwithstanding all this, there would seem to be a peculiar poetic justice in attributing the first part of this psalm to David himself. The shepherd of Bethlehem was as familiar with the sun as with moon and stars; and having, in the leisure hours of his pastoral duties, oft marked the freshness of the sun in his rising, the triumphant valour of his unwearied way, the vast sweep of his daily circuit, the searching energy of his penetrating heat, and the calm majesty of his nightly retirement to his tent,—who so likely among psalmists as he, to have penned this snatch of song in his praise? The poetic justice lies in cherishing the conception that he who harped to the moon and the stars in Ps. 8 was the likeliest man to be allowed to sweep his strings to the sun in Ps. 19. It has been remarked, in the above Exposition, that even this snatch of song to the sun possesses a closely welded unity. Nevertheless, its ending is abrupt, and if it stood alone, must, as a psalm, have

## PSALM NINETEEN

been pronounced unfinished. This apprehension is at once appeased by the theory of co-authorship. What the original ending of the sun-stanzas may have been, we know not; but the hypothesis is an easy one, that it had in it some local or temporal element which could be spared for the worthy purpose of making way for a second part. And then, as to the authorship of that second part, who so likely as Hezekiah to have composed it? With the passionate love for the law and for the temple and for the functions of priests and Levites which history attributes to him; with the leisure and the culture which as a prince naturally fell to his lot; and with the high poetic genius which, from Isa. 38, we know he possessed;—who so likely in all history as he, to have wedded this Law-Bride to that Sun-Bridegroom? Besides, the segments of truth are formed for cohesion; and the poet who penned the second part of this psalm, is the likeliest man whose shadow has ever been seen, to have possessed in himself and been able to command in gifted associates, the constellation of sanctified genius adequate, under Divine guidance, to the production of that literary marvel, Ps. 119,—after which it is but little to say, that, of course, he also wrote our present Ps. 1. Thus, another chain of unity at an early date, is forged for binding together The Song Book of all coming ages. “The king whose delight it was to speak of ‘the Maker of heaven and earth’ (Isa. 37:16; Ps. 121:2); and who encouraged the priests and Levites in their devotion to the Law of the Lord (2 Chron. 31:4), would readily adopt (and expand) this poem of David’s” —Thirtle, O.T.P., 314.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why doesn't Rotherham include verse three in the text of his translation? Discuss the problem.
2. What is the meaning of the expression “the glory of God”?
3. Do the heavens speak of the glory and power of God to an unbeliever? Cf. Rom. 1:20-23. Discuss.
4. The sun is especially considered in the handiwork of God—check our present known facts on the immense size of the sun—i.e. compared with the earth—What is “the tent” of the sun?
5. Give three of the beautiful comparisons made between the sun and a bridegroom—Discuss.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

6. Is there some connection between the first half of this psalm (verses 1 thru 6) and the last half? (verses 7 thru 14) what is it?
7. Discuss the terms "law"—and "testimony"—as they relate to God's word.
8. Discuss the adjectives: "perfect"—"right"—"clear"—"clean"—"truth" as they relate to our response to God's Law.
9. If the Old Covenant was to produce such response as: "refresh"—"make wise"—"gladden"—"enlighten"—how much more the New Covenant—discuss how this can actually happen.
10. How can God help us overcome sin? Be practical and personal.

## PSALM 20

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

To Prayer for a King in Distress, a Favourable Answer  
is Confidently Awaited.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Petitions for Divine Succour. Refrain, ver. 5, Promise of Praise for Victory. Stanza II., vers. 6-8, Assuring Answer Acknowledged. Refrain, ver. 9, Praise Offered in Anticipation.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 May he<sup>1</sup> answer thee in the day of distress,  
may the<sup>2</sup> God of Jacob set thee on high;
- 2 Send help to thee out of the sanctuary,  
and out of Zion uphold thee;
- 3 Remember all thy grain-offerings,  
and thine ascending-sacrifice esteem.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Give thee according to thy heart,  
and all thy purpose fulfill.

1. M.T.: "Jehovah."

2. M.T.: "name of the."

3. "Find thy sacrifice fat"—Dr.

## PSALM TWENTY

We will ring out our joy in thy victory,<sup>1</sup>  
and in the name of our God will we exult.<sup>2</sup>

- 6 Now hath the hand of Jehovah been made known,<sup>3</sup>  
Jehovah hath given victory to his Anointed One:  
he answereth him out of his holy heavens,  
by the mighty deeds of victory of his right hand.
- 7 These by chariots and horses  
but we by Jehovah are strong:<sup>4</sup>
- 8 They have bowed down and fallen,  
but we have arisen and are established.
- 9 Jehovah hath given victory to the king,—  
He answereth us on the day when we call.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 20

In your day of trouble, may the Lord be with you! May the God of Jacob keep you from all harm.

2 May He send you aid from His sanctuary in Zion.

3 May He remember with pleasure the gifts you have given Him, your sacrifices and burnt offerings.

4 May He grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans.

5 May there be shouts of joy when we hear the news of your victory, flags flying with praise to God for all that He has done for you. May He answer all your prayers.

6 "God save the king"—I know He does! He hears me from highest heaven and sends great victories.

7 Some nations boast of armies and of weaponry, but our boast is in the Lord our God.

8 Those nations will collapse and perish; we will arise to stand firm and sure!

9 Give victory to our king, O Lord; oh, hear our prayer.

1. Or: "salvation."

2. So with many critics, and some copies of Sep. M.T. adds: "Jehovah fulfill thy petitions." Prob. repetition from ver. 4.

3. Thus, by Br., conjecturally restored. M.T.: "Now do I know that Jehovah hath saved his Anointed One."

4. M.T.:

These by chariots and those by horses

But well by the name of Jehovah our God make memorial.

But, in any case, according to Ginsburg, make memorial (*nazkir*) shd. give place to "be strong" (*nigbir*).

## STUDIES IN PSALMS EXPOSITION

This psalm and the next, pair well together. The occasion of them (in the present form), was, in all probability, the peril and deliverance of King Jehoshaphat as recorded in 2 Ch. 20. "The victory of Jehoshaphat in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, cf. 2 Ch. 20, gives us a most appropriate historical situation; and the promise of victory, given by the prophet, gives an appropriate explanation of the change from petition to certitude in the two parts of the psalm"—Briggs. It is observable that whereas the prayer had been that Jehovah would send help *out of the sanctuary*, the assurance, later on, traces the victory *to the holy heavens* as its source. There is in reality no contradiction between the two representations: king and people were already assembled "in the house of Jehovah, before the new court," when Jahaziel a Levite, and therefore a servant of the sanctuary, stood forth in the midst of the convocation; and, with the spirit of prophecy upon him, gave the people a Divine assurance of victory. It was rightly felt that this assurance came direct from heaven, as also the signal deliverance which on the next day became an accomplished fact. "For if God then condescended to dwell in visible glory among men, yet He would teach his people that he is not limited by the bounds of time and space"—Perowne. "This turning toward heaven is not inconsistent with the previous turning toward the sanctuary as the source of help, for the conception of theophanic residence in sacred places on earth, did not from the earliest times of the Hebrew religion, lead them away from the thought that the real residence of Yahweh was in heaven"—Briggs.

Notwithstanding the opinion expressed above that Psalms 20 and 21, "in their present form," commemorate primarily the peril and deliverance of King Jehoshaphat, both psalms in their original form may have come from David, and may have had special reference to Solomon. From these assumptions, it becomes all the more striking to note how well their main characteristics suit Hezekiah also. "The words were a timely prayer for Hezekiah, in whose reign vers. 7-9 were added (note the plural number predominating in the pronouns here)"—Thirtle, O.T.P., 314.

## PSALM TWENTY

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read II Chronicles chapter 20 and see if you agree with Rotherham that this psalm as well as the 21st refer to Jehoshaphat. Discuss.
2. William Graham Scroggie had another concept of this psalm—Read the following and discuss:

Psalms xx and xxi are a pair: both are *Battle Songs*; the twentieth precedes the encounter, the twenty-first follows it; the one is *prayer* and the other is *praise*; the one anticipates, and the other reflects. Each of them is in two parts, and taken together present an inverted parallelism. In xx, in the main, the *People* speak first (1-5), then the *King* (6-8); and in xxi, the *King* speaks first (1-7), and then the *People* (8-12). Read the two Psalms now, with this in mind, and remember, the battle takes place between them.

Both Psalms fit the time of David, and both in their deepest sense are Messianic, and point to Him Who cannot but be victorious at last over all that opposes His Throne. Verses 1-5 are the address of the people to their king, and it is worthy of notice that their confidence is not in the king's strength, skill, or past successes, but in Jehovah, the "*God of Jacob*." The psalmist does not speak of "the God of Abram"; that would have been less encouraging, for Abram was so great in faith that we feel far removed from him, but we all are more on Jacob's level. Warfare and worship should go together (3); he who does not sacrifice is not likely to succeed. The LORD will *fulfil our petitions* when they are on this note and in this vein (5).

To this desire of the people the king replies (6-8, or in 6 only, if 7-9 be attributed to the people). They had asked for help from Zion (2), but the king looks higher up, to heaven (6). God acts when His people pray. "A whisper may start an avalanche." Impotence can set Omnipotence in motion. The "*Name of the LORD our God*" is opposed to the enemies, chariots and horses. "What's in a name?" It depends upon whose name it is. Nothing can successfully oppose the NAME OF THE LORD.

The address to the earthly king in verses 1-5 rises to an appeal to the heavenly King in verse 9. Now for the battle which is not recorded, his, yours, mine!

Thought: *Always kneel before you fight.*

From PSALMS, p. 131, 132.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

# PSALM 21

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Thanks for the King's Victory, and Confidence  
of Further Triumphs.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-6, Recent Victory with Joy Acknowledged, vers. 1, 2; traced back to Blessings beginning with Coronation, ver. 3, when Long Life was asked, ver. 4; the Continuance of which Life and Blessings is now Counted upon with Confidence, vers. 5, 6. *Refrain*, ver. 7, The People extol their Monarch's Faith, and Assure Themselves of the Stability of his Reign. Stanza II., vers. 8-12, Coming Conquests Foretold, ver. 8, bringing on Enemies Fearful Punishments, vers. 9, 10, and the Defeat of their Devices, vers. 11, 12. *Refrain*, ver. 13, Jehovah's Power Extolled.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 Jehovah: in thy might rejoiceth the king,  
and in thy victory<sup>1</sup> he exulteth greatly!
- 2 The longing of his heart thou hast given him,  
and the request of his lips hast thou not withheld.
- 3 For thou camest to meet him with blessings of goodness,  
thou didst set on his head a crown of fine gold:
- 4 Life he asked of thee—thou gavest it him.  
length of days to the ages and beyond
- 5 Great is his glory in thy victory,<sup>1</sup>  
majesty and state thou layest upon him;
- 6 For thou dost appoint him blessings evermore,  
thou dost cheer him with gladness by thy countenance.
- 7 Yea the king is trusting in Jehovah,  
and in the kindness of the Highest he will not be shaken.
- 8 Thy hand will find out all thy foes,  
thy right hand will find them who hate thee:
- 9 Thou wilt put them in a furnace of fire,  
in the time of the setting of thy face against them.

1. Or: "salvation."



## PSALM TWENTY-ONE

- Jehovah in his anger will swallow them up,  
and there shall consume them the fire of his wrath;<sup>1</sup>  
10 Their offspring<sup>2</sup> out of the earth wilt thou destroy,  
and their seed from among the sons of men.  
11 Though they have held out over thee a wicked thing,  
devised an evil device they shall not prevail;  
12 For thou wilt make them turn shoulder in flight,  
on thy bow-strings wilt thou make ready against their faces.  
13 Be thou exalted Jehovah in thy strength,  
We will sing and will harp thy power.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) Concerning The Hind  
of the Dawn? = The King in his Beauty.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 21

How the king rejoices in Your strength, O Lord! How he  
exults in Your salvation.

2 For You have given him his heart's desire, everything he  
asks You for!

3 You welcomed him to the throne with success and pro-  
perity. You set a kingly crown of purest gold upon his head.

4 He asked for a long, good life, and You have granted his  
request; the days of his life stretch on and on forever!

5 You have given him fame and honor. You have clothed  
him with splendor and majesty.

6 You have endowed him with eternal happiness. You have  
given him the unquenchable joy of Your presence.

7 And because the king trusts in the Lord, he will never  
stumble, never fall; for he depends upon the steadfast love of the  
God who is above all gods.

8 Your hand, O Lord, will find Your enemies, all who hate  
You.

9, 10 When You appear, they will be destroyed in the fierce  
fire of Your presence. The Lord will destroy them and their  
children.

11, For these men plot against You, Lord, but they cannot  
possibly succeed.

1. Ver. 9 slightly expanded by Br., to make four lines and fill stanza.  
2. M.L.: "their fruit."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

12 They will turn and flee when they see Your arrows aimed straight at them.

13 Accept our praise, O Lord, for all Your glorious power! We will write songs to celebrate Your mighty acts!

### EXPOSITION

The temptation to declare this psalm to be simply a Coronation Psalm, to which some expositors have yielded, is obvious. On closer examination, however, it will probably be found that a more satisfactory view of the setting and scope of the whole psalm can be obtained by regarding the reference to coronation as incidental to the more general conception of reign. A recent victory restores the lustre of a reign which had become beclouded by the invasion of foes: this very naturally brings up a reminiscence of the high hopes with which the reign was begun. The king then became Jehovah's vicegerent; for Jehovah crowned him. Aspiring to rule well, as every dutiful Son of David must,—he naturally desired to rule long; in which desire his people loyally united, apprehensive of the evils of succession and change. Hence sprang the coronation greeting, *May the King live! How long? Who could think of assigning a limit? Nay, may the king live for ever! as long as ever Jehovah please: loyalty declines to assign a limit.* Besides, who knows when King Messiah shall come? Who can ever tell whether this Heir to the Throne may not be He? and who knows whether the Heir Himself, breathing such an atmosphere, may not have conceived the incipient wish that it might be himself? Dim, visionary, yet withal dazzling,—the wish may have been father to the prayer: *Life he ask of thee, to which he felt no need to assign an end—life, only life!* The spirit of the Messiah, working in the psalmist, carries him out of himself. It has not been revealed to the psalmist who will be the Messiah. But, in language vaguely and benevolently suited to *any* Son of David, yet strictly applicable only to *the* Son of David, he adds:—*thou gavest it him, Length of days, 'olam wa-edh, age-abidingly and beyond.* From this point onward the radiance of a Messianic light rests on the psalm. It is King David or King Jehoshaphat who sits yonder, but on him rests a light from afar, not his own. Through the type, we catch glimpses of the Antitype.

## PSALM TWENTY-ONE AND TWENTY TWO

While abiding by the dominant view of authorship appended to the preceding psalm, hearty consent may be accorded to the following judgment:—"When, in after times, the prosperity of Hezekiah was celebrated in the Temple worship, this psalm was singularly appropriate. Whether by adaptation or not, ver. 4 had a special meaning when spoken of him; and vers. 11, 12 tell of the Assyrian army and its destruction"—Thirtle, O.T.P., 314-15.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is referred to as a Coronation hymn—why?
2. What is meant by the expression—"Long live the King"? i.e. in context.
3. There are three applications to each of these psalms:
  - (1) apply it to David or the writer;
  - (2) apply it to the Messiah;
  - (3) apply it to ourselves.What personal encouragement is found in this psalm?
4. Notice the possible Messianic application of verses 3 through 6. Cf. II Sam. 7.
5. Anticipation of victory instead of defeat is a great source of encouragement—Read verses 8 through 13 with personal applications.

## PSALM 22

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Voice of a Forsaken Sufferer—Loudly Lamenting his Lot, Minutely Describing his Pain and Shame, without Reproaching God or Accusing Himself—is Suddenly Silenced (in Death); and then as Suddenly is Heard in a Strain of Triumph, in which Other Voices join, all Celebrating the Praises of Jehovah as Sovereign Lord.

### ANALYSIS

This psalm naturally falls into two parts: the *first* part, spoken by One Voice, consisting of six decastich stanzas, One of them Broken Short; and the *second* part, spoken by Other Voices, consisting of four tristich stanzas, each of these including an Appropriate Refrain.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

PART I.—Stanza I, vers. 1-5, a Sufferer, Loudly Complaining of being Forsaken by God, is yet careful to Acknowledge Jehovah's Delivering Faithfulness to his People in the Past. Stanza II., vers. 6-10, He owns himself Disesteemed Abroad and at Home, and Openly Derided by Spiteful Enemies; yet Claims that he has been Divinely Sustained from his Birth. Stanza III., vers. 11-14, He asks God to be Near Him in his Distress, caused by Enemies acting like Wild Beasts (Bulls and Lions), and by his Own Deplorable Bodily Condition. Stanza IV., vers. 15-18, Suffering from Thirst and in Prospect of Death, his enemies like Fierce Dogs gather round and ill-treat him; His Person being exposed to his Own and to the Vulgar Eye, and His Garments being Distributed. Stanza V., vers. 19-21, He Renews his Petitions for Help, Rescue and Salvation . . . Stanza VI., vers. 22-25, Straits of Triumph break forth from the Same Voice, in Praise of Jehovah's Name, before a Large Assembly.

PART II.—Stanza VII., ver. 26, Humble Seekers of Jehovah Felicitated. Stanza VIII., vers. 27, 28, Distant Nations render homage to earth's king. Stanza IX., vers. 29, 30, Both the Vigorous and those who are raised from Imminent Death, Alike Worship. Stanza X., vers. 30, 31, Perpetuation of Testimony to Jehovah's Deeds.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

(Part I. Spoken by One Voice.)

- 1 My GOD my GOD! why hast thou failed<sup>1</sup> me?  
"Far from my salvation" are the words of my loud  
lamentation.
- 2 My God! I keep crying—by day and thou dost not answer  
me  
and by night and there is no respite for me.
- 3 But thou O Jehovah the Holy One,—  
enthroned upon the praises of Israel:—<sup>2</sup>
- 4 In thee trusted our fathers,  
they trusted—and thou didst deliver them:
- 5 Unto thee made they outcry—and escaped,  
in thee they trusted—and were not put to shame.
- 6 But I am a worm—and No-one,  
a reproach of mankind—and despised of a people:

1. Cp. Job 19:14 and Ps. 27:10.

2. "The songs of praise, which resound in Israel as monuments of His saving deeds, are like Cherubs' wings, upon which His presence in Israel hovers"—Del.

PSALM TWENTY-TWO

- 7 All that see me deride me,  
they open with the lip—they shake the head saying:—
- 8 “Roll thy cause on Jehovah—let him deliver him!  
let him rescue him—since he hath found pleasure in him!”
- 9 Yea thou art he that caused me to be born,<sup>1</sup>  
my trust on the breasts of my mother:
- 10 Upon thee was I cast from birth,  
from the lap<sup>2</sup> of my mother my GOD wast thou
- 11 Be not far from me—for there is distress,  
be near—for there is no one to help:
- 12 There have surrounded me many bulls,  
mighty ones of Bashan have encircled me:
- 13 They have opened against me their mouth,—  
a lion rending and roaring.
- 14 Like water am I poured out,  
and parted from each other are all my bones:  
My heart hath become like wax,  
it is melted in the midst of my body.<sup>3</sup>
- 15 Dried as a potsherd is my palate,<sup>4</sup>  
and my tongue is made to cleave to my gums;  
and in the dust of death will they<sup>5</sup> lay me.
- 16 For there have surrounded me dogs,  
a pack of maltreaters<sup>6</sup> have closed in about me;  
they have bored through<sup>7</sup> my hands and my feet.<sup>7</sup>
- 17 I may count all my bones,  
they look about<sup>8</sup>—they gaze<sup>9</sup> upon me.
- 18 They part my garments among them,  
and for my garments they cast lots.
- 19 But thou Jehovah! be not far off,  
oh my help! to aid me make haste!
- 20 Rescue from the sword my soul,  
from the power of the dog my solitary self:

1. Ml. “severed me from the womb.” So it shd. be (w. Syr.); cp. 71:6  
—Gn. M.T.: “drew me forth.”

2. Ml.: “womb.”

3. Ml.: “mine inwards.”

4. So *Gt.*—Gn.

5. Br. reads “3rd pers. plu.”

6. So Maclaren. “A crew of miscreants”—Del.

7. “They dig into”—Br. “They have digged into” (so Sep., Vul., Syr.)

—Dr.

8. For the difference between *nabat* and *r'aah*, see 1 Sam. 17:42.

9. “Feast their eyes”—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 21 Save me from the mouth of the lion,  
yea from the horns of wild oxen mine afflicted one.<sup>1</sup>  
\* \* \* \* \*
- 22 I will tell of thy name unto my brethren,  
in the midst of an assembly will I praise thee:—
- 23 “Ye that revere Jehovah praise him,  
all ye seed of Jacob glorify him,  
and stand in awe of him all ye seed of Israel:
- 24 Because he hath not detested to answer the humbled one,  
neither hath he hid his face from him;  
but when he cried for help unto him he heard.”
- 25 From thee will come my praise in a large assembly,  
my vows will I perform before thee.

### (Part II. Spoken by Other Voices.)

- 26 Humble ones will eat and be satisfied,  
they will praise Jehovah who are seekers after him:—  
“May your heart live evermore!”<sup>3</sup>
- 27 All the ends of the earth will remember and return to  
Jehovah,  
and all the families of the nations will bow down before  
him:—
- 28 Surely to Jehovah belongeth the kingdom—and one to rule  
over the nations.
- 29 Yea to him<sup>4</sup> will bow down all the vigorous of the earth,  
before him will kneel all who were descending to dust:—
- 30 “Yea mine own soul<sup>5</sup> to him doth live—my<sup>6</sup> seed shall serve  
him.”
- 31 It shall be told of my Sovereign to a generation to come.<sup>7</sup>

1. That is: “my poor soul.” M.T.: “thou hast answered me.” (The psalmist, by a sudden impulse of faith, pictures his deliverance as accomplished—Dr.) The difference consists of one letter and of a change of vocalisation.

2. These asterisks are to suggest an abruptly broken and unfinished stanza.

3. “Owing to the change of person this can only be the words of those who seek Yahweh, addressed to the afflicted”—Br.

4. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* Merely a different grouping of the letters.

5. “Pathetic circumlocution for personal pronoun.” See Dr. quoted *Intro.*, Chap. III., “Soul.”

6. So it shd. be (w. *Sep.* and *Vul.*)—*Gn.*

7. So it shd. be (w. *Sep.* and *Vul.*). Cp. 48:13, 102:18—*Gn.*

PSALM TWENTY-TWO

that they may declare his righteousness to a people to be born:—

“That he hath done it! That he hath done it!”<sup>1</sup>

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 22

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why do You refuse to help me or even to listen to my groans?

2 Day and night I keep on weeping, crying for Your help, but there is no reply—

3, 4 For You are holy.

\* \* \* \* \*

The praises of our fathers surrounded Your throne; they trusted You and You delivered them.

5 You heard their cries for help and saved them; they were never disappointed when they sought Your aid.

6 But I am a worm, not a man, scorned and despised by my own people and by all mankind.

7 Everyone who sees me mocks and sneers and shrugs;

8 “Is this the one who rolled his burden on the Lord?” they laugh. “Is this the one who claims the Lord delights in him? We’ll believe it when we see God rescue him!”

9, 10, 11 Lord, how You have helped me before!<sup>2</sup> You took me safely from my mother’s womb and brought me through the years of infancy. I have depended upon You since birth; You have always been my God. Don’t leave me now, for trouble is near and no one else can possibly help.

12 I am surrounded by fearful enemies, strong as the giant bulls of Bashan.

13 They come at me with open jaws, like roaring lions attacking their prey.

14 My strength has drained away like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart melts like wax;

15 My strength has dried up like sun-baked clay; my tongue sticks to my mouth, for You have laid me in the dust of death.

1. For this repetition (to fill the line) cp. 150:6.

2. Implied.

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16 The enemy, this gang of evil men, circles me like a pack of dogs; they have pierced my hands and feet.

17 I can count every bone in my body. See these men of evil gloat and stare;

18 They divide my clothes among themselves by a toss of the dice.

19 O Lord, don't stay away. O God my Strength, hurry to my aid.

20 Rescue me from death; spare my precious life from all these evil men.<sup>1</sup>

21 Save me from these lions' jaws and from the horns of these wild oxen; yes, God will answer me and rescue me.

22 I will praise You to all my brothers; I will stand up before the congregation and testify of the wonderful things You have done.

23 "Praise the Lord, each one of you who fears Him," I will say. "Each of you<sup>2</sup> must fear and reverence His name. Let all Israel sing His praises,

24 For He has not despised my cries of deep despair; He has not turned and walked away. When I cried to Him, He heard and came."

25 Yes, I will stand and praise You<sup>3</sup> before all the people. I will publicly fulfill my vows in the presence of all who reverence Your name.

26 The poor<sup>4</sup> shall eat and be satisfied; all who seek the Lord shall find Him and shall praise His name. Their hearts shall rejoice with everlasting joy.

27 The whole earth shall see it and return to the Lord; the people of every nation shall worship Him.

28 For the Lord is King and rules the nations.

29 Both proud and humble together, all who are mortal—born to die—shall worship Him.

30 Our children too shall serve Him, for they shall hear from us about the wonders of the Lord;

31 Generations yet unborn shall hear of all the miracles He did for us.

1. Literally, "Deliver my soul from the sword, my only one from the power of the dog!"

2. Literally, "all you sons of Jacob."

3. Literally, "praise from you."

4. Literally, "the afflicted."



## PSALM TWENTY-TWO EXPOSITION

The Mysterious Forsaken Sufferer of this psalm appears to be AN INDIVIDUAL: seeing that, in the course of his loud lamentation, he distinctly alludes to his *mouth, palate, tongue, gums, heart, bones, and clothing*; looks back to his *childhood* and forward to his *death*.

HIS SITUATION is indicated with circumstantial minuteness. He is exposed to public view; for he refers to *all who see* him. He is fixed to one spot; for his enemies *gather round* him. He has been deprived of his clothing; for he can *count* his own *bones*, shrinks from the vulgar gaze as men *look for* and *behold* him, and sees his *garments* distributed to others. He has, moreover, been subjected to at least one form of bodily violence; for his enemies have *bored through his hands and his feet*. And finally, inasmuch as such as would see him, both *look for* and *gaze upon* him, it may not unnaturally be surmised that either he has companions in suffering from whom visitors to the spot would desire to distinguish him, or else darkness has gathered, making it difficult to descry him.

He is either absolutely FRIENDLESS, or his friends are so few and feeble that they do not count, being powerless to help him: hence his repeated cries for Divine pity and succor. Nevertheless, strange to say, he has *brethren* somewhere in the background, numbering *a large assembly*; but these come not into view until his sufferings are ended.

His ENEMIES are many. MANKIND in general *reproach* him: his own *people despise* him: beholders *deride* him with scornful gestures and taunting words. The gathered throng of his foes appears large and threatening, formidable and fierce: he compares them to *bulls*, wild and gigantic—each *as a lion rending and roaring*; and either the same or others he likens to *dogs*, fierce, foul and mean, united into a *pack* large enough to *close in about* him. Moreover, the *sword* of authority appears in their midst. His life is threatened on every hand.

Meanwhile his SUFFERINGS are intense and prolonged. His body is so distended that his *bones* are *dislocated*; his mouth is parched with *thirst*, his strength flows away *like water*, his physical courage fails like *melting wax*. His mind, sensitive to the shame of his exposure and to the cruel taunts of his enemies, struggles bravely to maintain its confidence in God: the deepest

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distress of all being that HE seems to be *far away*, and to be *slow to rescue*,—incessant *crying to Him day and night* bringing *no answer*.

The PRIMARY CAUSE of suffering is implied rather than expressed. Reverently keeping to what is actually before us, in our search for what is implied,—the answer appears to be at once simple and sufficient. The mental anguish so strongly indicated is due to the Divine permission that he, the Sufferer, should thus fall into the hands of his enemies; and that his God should be so long in coming to his rescue. The Sufferer feels himself to be *forsaken*, or, rather, that his God *has failed* him—THAT is in evidence. His enemies have got him into their power—THAT too is in evidence. Ver. 11 suggests a connection between the two; and vers. 19-21 confirm it. The Divine forsaking consists in leaving him thus to fall into his enemies' hands. The converse, prayed for, shows this. These verses (11, 19-21) say, in effect: "Return, come near; and rescue me from the sword, from the dog, from the lion, from the wild-ox"; thereby implying that it was God's withdrawing and holding aloof, that delivered him into the power of these his enemies. The Divine withdrawing, the Divine holding aloof,—THIS was the Divine *faliure*. So much is in evidence. And this is sufficient. We have no need, no right, to seek for more. It is sufficient. Are we to say, it is not sufficiently *mysterious*? As surely as we do say this, we show how completely we fail to enter into the position of the Sufferer. It is painfully mysterious to him, to be at all allowed to fall into his enemies' hands. The fathers had trusted, and always been delivered: HE has trusted, and NOT been delivered: herein lies the mystery—herein the chief pain—the agony—continued—oh! so long!

The SUDDEN CLOSE of the suffering is very remarkable. It is that in any case: whether, strictly adhering to the M.T., we get the break in the form and by the force of a single word, in a new strain, at the end of line 6 in stanza V (lit., *thou hast answered me*); or whether, by a slight modification of the M.T., helped out by the Sep., we become aware of the change, not by a single word, but by the dramatic force of a sudden breaking off of the one stanza and the commencement of another in a new key. In either case, the fact remains, that all at once the strain of sorrow ceases; and, when it ceases, it ceases altogether: there is absolutely no recurrence of pain, no trace further of a single sob. It cannot be doubted that it is the same voice which

## PSALM TWENTY-TWO

thus suddenly breaks out in praise; for the metre is the same, the direct address to Jehovah is the same, and—allowing for the change of tone—the theme is the same: the lament has been, “He hath not heard”; the joy now is, “He hath heard.” Moreover, as if to make this point clear, the very terms of the announcement which the late Sufferer now makes to his *brethren*, bear upon them vivid reminiscences of the shame and pain through which he has passed: by man he had been *detested*, and deeply *humbled*. God had *hid his face*, and he the Sufferer had *cried for help*. Now all is changed; and by every sign of continuity of speech we are warranted to rest in the conclusion, that it is the same voice that tells us the joyful news.

A mystery at present hangs over the *assembly* in or from which the triumph shall be sounded forth; but no ambiguity rests on the language then and there to be employed. According to a classification with which we have become familiar in our study of Hebrew Poetry, we can detect Gentile worshippers in the phrase—*Ye that revere Jehovah*, and the parallel phrases *seed of Jacob*, *seed of Israel* are too plain in their application to the Hebrew nation to leave room for a moment’s doubt. So that we are here met with the rousing prospect that the Delivered Sufferer will announce his deliverance as a fact of deep interest to the world at large as thus represented. It looks, indeed, as though, to his own nation, the announcement would be more profoundly moving than even to the Gentile world; seeing that, while Gentile worshippers are simply called upon to *praise* Jehovah for this his interposition in behalf of the Sufferer, the seed of Jacob are called upon not only to *glorify* him, but to *stand in awe* of his holy majesty, for this story of his doings.

As the sixth stanza completes the first part of the psalm, and to all appearance other voices now carry on the psalm to its conclusion, the present seems a convenient point at which to raise the broad question of FULFILMENT: Who is this Mysterious Sufferer?

We took care to remark, at the beginning of our exposition, that the Sufferer appears to be an INDIVIDUAL; and no doubt this impression ought to be left undisturbed until something more likely can be suggested; until it can be shown that, though he so appears, yet this is but the allegorical dress in which the prediction is adorned; and that the seeming individual is, after all, a larger or a smaller group of individuals—a nation or a remnant of a nation. Now it may be frankly allowed, that there

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is no *prima-facie* impossibility in this. Nevertheless, every psalm, every representation in the psalms, must be considered on its own merits. *This* sufferer cannot be the nation, because he is distinguished from the nation—*despised* of a people. But may he not be a Suffering Remnant of the nation? At first sight, this appears possible; but then what sort of remnant would this be? If not a sinless remnant, at all events it is one that here makes no confession of sin. Besides, if it is a remnant that suffers, it must also be a remnant that is delivered, and declare Jehovah's name *in an assembly*: all of which goes to show how unnatural it is to see in this individual a number of individuals. A remnant may indeed be delivered from further suffering; but to represent a remnant as declaring Jehovah's name in an assembly is so incongruous as to suggest how much more simple and natural it is to adhere to literal individuality throughout this part of the psalm.

It is notorious that Christians see in this psalm a wonderfully vivid and realistic picture of the Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In order to account for this, it is not necessary to hazard the opinion that anyone could have said before the event: "This sufferer in the psalm is evidently undergoing the horrors of crucifixion." All that is necessary is to take the psalm as it is written, and the story of the crucifixion of Jesus as it is told in the four Gospels, to lay them side by side, and then to look first on the one picture and then on the other. Detail by detail, the striking similarity comes into view. There are—the outcry on the cross from the opening of the psalm, the mocking of the by-standers in the very words that follow later on in the psalm, and the source of which those mockers must surely have forgotten; the parching thirst; the outstretched body; the cruel gaze of the assembled throng; the wounded hands and feet; the parted garments. As Dr. Briggs well says: "It seems to the Christian that the psalmist indeed gives a more vivid description of the sufferings of Christ on the cross than the authors of the Gospels." Myriads of readers can attest that this is no exaggeration. It may be added, that there are less obvious harmonies, which, when perceived, deepen the impression of fulfillment. That suddenly interrupted stanza (like a broken column in a cemetery) eloquently suggests the hushing of the voice of Jesus in death. The sudden resumption of speech in tones of triumph: it may not even yet have been fulfilled in its full and ultimate intent for the *assembly*—that *large assembly*

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may not yet have been gathered; and yet, for all that, the Resurrection of Jesus, together with his renewed intercourse with his disciples; his promise, on parting, to return; the gradual formation of his assembly, his ecclesia; his own undying love for the seed of Israel:—all these serve to give a sense of spaciousness for complete and more than complete fulfillment, which leaves nothing to be desired.

It is little to confess, that we can only with the greatest difficulty begin to imagine, how an alphabet of thought for conceiving such a psalm as this, could have been communicated to any psalmist's mind. That the suffering prophets of old were types of the coming suffering Messiah, we can well believe; that every phase of suffering here portrayed may have been already experienced in rudimentary forms, a little by one sufferer and a little by another, and then passed into a common stock of conceptions made ready for the actual writer of this part of the psalm, is also not impossible. Those conceptions may even have been vivified and intensified by an actual experience which converted the writer into a not unworthy type of the Suffering One; and yet after all have amounted to nothing more than a dim outline of the Reality. From this point of view, we can well believe that David wrote the earlier part of this psalm; if, at least, we admit with Delitzsch that "David descends with his complaints to a depth that lies beyond the depth of his suffering, and rises with his hopes to a height which lies beyond the height of the reward of his suffering," so that "the hyperbolical element is thereby changed into the prophetic." The ultimate product remains, in this Divinely illumined fore-sketch, offering a Spectacle of Jesus of Nazareth, suffering on the Cross, as a proof of Divine Foresight and Divine Skill,—which nothing that we can conceive can ever surpass for satisfying the judgment and moving the soul.

In advancing to Part II. of this psalm, attention is called to the circumstance that careful regard to expert critical judgment on a few nice points, some obvious difficulties have been removed and the whole presented with a striking measure of symmetry and brightness. Of difficulties, may be mentioned this: That however suitable it may appear that *the humble* should now *eat and be satisfied* (ver. 26), it is by no means so acceptable to be told (ver. 29) that the already "fat" shall eat as well as worship. This incongruity is at once removed, simply by a different grouping of letters, as advised by Ginsburg. Then if

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we render *vigorous* instead of "fat" as suggested by O.G. we get a fine strong line, forming a good contrast with that which follows it:—

Yea to him will bow down all the vigorous of the earth,  
Before him will kneel all who were descending to dust.

Not who "go down," with A.V. and R.V.; but, as the participle may just as well be rendered, *who were going down or descending*; which makes all the difference, since their progress downwards to the dust is suddenly arrested. These emendations prepare the way for another. For how is any helpful sense discovered by the next clause thrown in by the A.V.; "And none can keep alive his own soul"? Whether left just so, or even slightly altered by the R.V.: "Even he that cannot keep his soul alive," it sounds quite as much like a burlesque as any advance of thought in the main line of the psalm: inasmuch as it seems to say, "They may worship, but still they have to die all the same." Whereas, by accepting a hint from the Septuagint; and another from ver. 26, which is crowned by a quotation; and yet another which Dr. Ginsburg had already given us, *My seed*;—we obtain a splendid refrain to this little stanza also.

Yea, my own soul to him doth live—my seed shall serve him. Why! it is both literally and metaphorically, "life from the dead"! Thus, in getting rid of difficulties, a second quotation, serving as a refrain, appears, and puts us on scent for a third (ver. 28) and a fourth (ver. 31). For we have only to bear in mind that the Hebrew has no quotation marks, and is reluctant even to employ the word "saying"; and then to reflect that when men *bow down* they are apt to have words of worship on their lips, to become satisfied that ver. 28 is composed of quoted words; and a magnificent refrain it makes for *the families of the nations unto the ends of the earth* to utter. In like manner, when generation after generation tells and declares something to posterity of which it is glad, it can generally find words, however simple, in which to express it; and so, once more, we hear herald voices exclaiming in honour of earth's King:—

He hath done it! He hath done it!

Those who, with a view to the thorough understanding of Part II. of this psalm, have thus minutely observed its peculiar structure—in contrast with all that had gone before,—will be prepared for our acquiescing in the judgment of Thirtle (O.T.P.),

## PSALM TWENTY-TWO AND TWENTY-THREE

that the chief part of the present conclusion of the psalm was penned by Hezekiah. Recalling the almost certain fact, that the bitterest ingredient in Hezekiah's cup was the reflection that by his death his race would be extinguished, and the Royal Line of David would be buried with him, we feel that a new and thrilling interest invests the joyful exclamation which now crowns the last stanza but one of the psalm,—

Yea my own soul to him doth live—my seed shall serve him.  
This from the man who just before was rapidly *descending to dust*; whose *own soul*, instead of *living*, was on the point of dying; and who had no *seed* to succeed him!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham does a beautiful job of relating this psalm to the crucifixion without at first mentioning the crucifixion—notice the several minute circumstances. List the details of the crucifixion here either *stated* or *implied*;—do this to get the impact of fulfilled prophecy.
2. What is the *primary cause* of the suffering?
3. Why refer to the one suffering as mysterious?
4. List the characteristics of the enemies of the mysterious sufferer as they also describe the enemies at the cross.
5. There is a sudden break in thought in this psalm—Where is it? What does it mean? Discuss.

## PSALM 23

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The All-Sufficiency of Jehovah.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3a, As Shepherd; Stanza II., vers. 3b, 4, as Guide; Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, As Host.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 Jehovah is my shepherd—I have no want:
- 2 in pastures of tender grass he maketh me lie down,  
unto waters of quietness he leadeth me;

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- 3 my soul he refresheth<sup>1</sup> continually.<sup>2</sup>  
He guideth me in right tracks—for the sake of his name:  
4 yea when I walk in a gloomy ravine<sup>3</sup>  
I fear no harm—for thou art with me,  
thy club and thy staff<sup>4</sup> they comfort me.  
5 Thou spreadest before me a table—in the presence of mine  
adversaries,  
thou hast anointed with oil my head—my cup giveth cheer:—  
6 Surely goodness and kindness will run after me<sup>5</sup> all the days  
of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah evermore.<sup>6</sup>

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 23

Because the Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need!  
2, 3 He lets me rest in the meadow grass and leads me beside  
the quiet streams. He restores my failing health. He helps me  
do what honors Him the most.

\* \* \* \* \*

4 Even when walking through the Dark Valley of death I  
will not be afraid, for You are close beside me, guarding, guiding  
all the way.<sup>7</sup>

5 You provide delicious food for me in the presence of my  
enemies. You have welcomed me as Your guest,<sup>8</sup> blessings  
overflow!

6 Your goodness and unfailing kindness shall be with me all  
of my life, and afterwards I will live with You forever in Your  
home.

### EXPOSITION

The beauty of this little psalm consists, *first*, in its calm  
assurance of Jehovah's all-sufficiency; and, *second*, in the sim-

1. "To restore the senses of life."—Dr. Par. Psalter.

2. So Br., resolving the Heb. letters into finite verb, followed by infinitive absolute, which then yield above meaning.

3. So most moderns, after older commentators. Cp. O.G. 853.

4. "The nail-knobbed club, for purposes of defence, and the staff with a bent handle, for help in walking, still used by shepherds in the East"—Dr.

5. As the alert servants of my host.

6. Ml. "to length of days." N.B.: Br. finds in stanza one 3 beats, in stanza two 4 beats, and in stanza three 5 beats.

7. Literally, "Your rod and Your staff comfort me."

8. Literally, "You have anointed my head with oil, my cup runs over."



## PSALM TWENTY-THREE

plicity, variety, and fullness with which this assurance is set forth. How much the essential theme contributes to the reader's satisfaction, may be gathered from the undoubted fact that the majority of readers never reflect on the change of figures which takes place before the psalm is ended. The essential thought is felt to be one from beginning to end, and that thought is sweet. The infinite God is mine, and cares for me, provides for me, is with me—this is the charm of it. There may be need and danger, discipline and even hostility on the background; but there they remain throughout: the things that come to the front are—the supply for the need, the deliverance from the danger, the use of the discipline, and the powerlessness of the hostility. Quite simply all these blessings come from One Person, whose loving activity is noted throughout. Every blessing named appears as a personal gift. It is this intense personality which so greatly endears the psalm. Practically, there are but two persons in the psalm—Jehovah and I. And then there is a satisfying conclusion: it is a consummation, which delights, because of the feeling of home-longing to which it appeals, and which it assures of satisfaction. There are figures in the psalm, but they are transparent throughout. The One Personality shines through all. Jehovah begins by being my shepherd; soon and imperceptibly he becomes everything. This, then, is the first and chief element in the preciousness of this psalm. The *second*—which is worthy of it—consists in the simplicity, variety and fullness with which the assurance of the psalm is set forth: Shepherd, Guide, Host—relation to whom as sheep, traveller, guest, is easily imagined by every quickened soul. Little is said of each relation; but what is said is fundamental, and each detail speaks a volume. It is better to regard the relation of Shepherd as completed by three clauses, which are congruous and complete: the shepherd secures for his sheep—food, with rest; drink, with rest; and the consequent reinvigoration of life. This rounds off the first figure. Letting this figure go, the next brings an advance of ideas. As a sheep, Jehovah led me; and, with renovated life, all was well.

Now, as a traveller, I have tracks to find; and he guideth me to the right tracks for conducting me safely home. Over the hills, the tracks may be few, faint, and divergent: for the sake of his own name and honour he guideth to those that are right. Down among the valleys, I may come to a dark and fearsome ravine. Still he is with me, my companion as well as my guide.

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I hear his voice, as he cheerily beguiles me along. I know he has a *club* for defence against assailants, and is well able to wield it. His *staff* he lends me to lean on in my weariness. And so *both his rod and his staff they comfort me*. The idea of guidance is complete. It wants no addition.

Once more the scene changes. I am welcomed to a mansion. A spread table awaits me. Enemies who may witness my admission, dare not come near to molest me; for they know that the power and honour of my host are pledged to my defence. I am his privileged guest. I have been to the bath, and now with his own hand he anoints my head with fragrant oil. My cup is well filled and gives me good cheer. In the hall of my host are attendants. Upon me two of them wait. Their names are Goodness and Kindness; and these follow me with alacrity whithersoever I please to go, anticipating my every want. And so it is to be as long as I live; for finally I discover that here, in this mansion, at last I am at home! No need for another word.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The beauty of this psalm is seen from two thoughts—What are they? How do they relate to us?
2. Who are the participants in this psalm? Discuss the fact that essentially this is all there ever is—all there need be anytime.
3. Do you agree that the figure of a shepherd and sheep follow throughout the psalm or is there a change? Discuss.
4. Suppose we approach the psalm with the thought of our Lord being a shepherd—a guide to the traveler and a host. What does He provide for the sheep?
5. What does He provide for the traveler?
6. What does He provide as the Host?

## PSALM 24

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Admission of Worshippers into the Presence  
of the Previously Admitted King.

PSALM TWENTY-FOUR  
ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Jehovah's Ownership of the World the Ground for Worshipping him. Stanza II., vers. 3-6, Worshippers seek and obtain Admission into the Presence of Earth's King: first, Asking Who may Enter; second, Getting an Answer by Description of Character; third, Claiming to be the Class Described. Stanza III., vers. 7-10, Prior Admission demanded for Jehovah Himself as the King of Glory.

(Lm.) By David—Psalm.

- 1 To Jehovah belongeth the earth and the fulness thereof,  
the world and they who dwell therein;
- 2 For he upon seas founded it,  
and upon streams maketh it firm.<sup>1</sup>
- 3 Who may ascend the mountain of Jehovah?  
and who may stand in his holy place?
- 4 The clean of hands and pure of heart,  
who hath not uplifted to unreality his desire,<sup>2</sup>  
neither hath sworn to deceit
- 5 Shall bear away a blessing from Jehovah,  
and vindication from his delivering God.<sup>3</sup>
- 6 This is the class of those who are seeking after him,  
who are seeking the face<sup>4</sup> of the God<sup>5</sup> of Jacob.
- 7 Lift up ye gates your heads,  
and lift yourselves up ye ancient<sup>6</sup> doors,—  
That the king of glory may come in.
- 8 Who' then is the king of glory?  
Jehovah strong and mighty,  
Jehovah mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up ye gates your heads,  
and lift yourselves up ye ancient doors,—  
That the king of glory may come in.  
Who then is' the king of glory?
- 10 Jehovah God of hosts,  
He is the king of Glory.

(Nm.)

1. See Intro., Chap. III., "earth."
2. U.: "soul."
3. Ml. "his God of safety" or "salvation."
4. So Sep.
5. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Syr.)—Gn.
6. Or, "age-abiding."

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 24

The earth belongs to God! Everything in all the world is His?

2 He is the One who pushed the oceans back to let dry land appear.<sup>1</sup>

3 Who may climb the mountain of the Lord and enter where He lives? Who may stand before the Lord?

4 Only those with pure hands and hearts, who do not practice dishonesty and lying.

5 They will receive God's own goodness<sup>2</sup> as their blessing from Him, planted in their lives by God Himself, their Savior.

6 These are the ones who are allowed to stand before the Lord and worship the God of Jacob.

7 Open up, O ancient gates, and let the King of Glory in.

8 Who is this King of Glory, The Lord, strong and mighty, invincible in battle.

9 Yes, open wide the gates and let the King of Glory in.

10 Who is this King of Glory? The Commander of all of heaven's armies!

EXPOSITION

The peculiarity in the structure of this psalm, as revealed by the analysis prefixed to it, is so thoroughly sustained by internal evidence as to need little more than reaffirmation here. The first stanza is in any case introductory to the other two, and no one will seriously question its fitness to serve that purpose. The second stanza, representing worshippers asking who may ascend the holy mountain, necessarily presupposes that Jehovah's residence has already been fixed there; for surely they would not ask for admittance into his presence before he had taken up his abode in the tabernacle prepared for him. Consequently, the third stanza must have come from an earlier time; because it represents Jehovah himself as demanding admission into his new abode. The psalm may easily have been so constructed. David himself may have indited both parts, at times only a little distant from each other. First, in view of the up-bringing of the ark, he may have written expressly for that

1. Literally, "He has founded it upon the seas."

2. Literally, "righteousness," right standing with God.

## PSALM TWENTY-FOUR

occasion—the third stanza, as an independent psalm to be sung among others; or as a fragment of a larger psalm meant for that occasion only. Then, later on, either for habitual use in connection with the tent when set up and honoured by the symbolic Divine Presence; or, for use in the Temple which Solomon was about to build, the first and second stanzas may have been prefixed to make the psalm as a whole suitable for general use, which the third stanza alone would scarcely have been.

Passing on to survey the psalm as we have it on its merits, we observe the admirable fitness of the introductory stanza to serve its purpose, because it lays a solid foundation for all worship. The earth, with its contents, the world, with its inhabitants,—these all belong to Jehovah, because he made them; and therefore it is meet that he should be adored, thanked and praised for what he has done. Jehovah, the God of grace, is at the same time the God of nature: had he not created us such as we are, we could not have desired to worship him; we could not have known him and realised a need and a desire to know him better.

Knowing him—knowing these fundamental things about him—and desiring to worship him; we next need to know where he may be found; and we learn that he dwelleth in yon holy place, on yonder holy mountain of Zion. This may not be all the truth: it may be but a stepping-stone to higher truth. His local earthly presence may be only introductory to his local heavenly presence; and even his local heavenly presence may ultimately be found to be only introductory to his universal presence. Nevertheless, this is the way in which he is leading us; and we had better accept our lessons as he gives them. Even though means of an earthly symbolic presence, we may learn invaluable lessons; and one such lesson is given us here. Who may enter yonder sacred spot, who stand with acceptance in yonder hallowed shrine? The answer comes in the form of a *description of character*: nothing else is named. Nationality is ignored: tribe, clan, family, age, social standing—these are all brushed aside; everything gives place to character. Character is to be triumphant. He that possesses these sterling characteristics shall bear away in triumph a blessing from Jehovah, a vindication from his delivering God. Are there only a comparatively few who possess such a character? Then let all seek

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

to belong to the comparatively few? Do any protest that they are not saints but sinners; that their characters have become broken and damaged and unrepresentable before this holy God? Then, this conviction may prepare them for the next lesson: it may put them on the track of salvation. But meantime this first lesson must be strongly enforced: that salvation is salvation into character: character becomes an abiding reality. Only the pure in heart can see God. The craving to worship is a craving to see God. But this earthly presence speaks of a heavenly presence; and the ultimate lesson is that a holy character is essential to the heavenly presence of Jehovah. But the heavenly presence is coming down to earth. God is coming down to lift us up. The tent of God—his eternal tent—his eternal near and intimate dwelling—is coming down to be with men. Then men should arise and prepare to meet their God.

Advancing to the third stanza for general lessons, we mark the character in which Jehovah himself demands admission into his earthly temple: it is as "King of Glory." Twice the demand for admission is made; twice it is as the "King of Glory." When identification is sought as to Who the King of Glory is, and the answer has been by name and attribute and relationship given, the answer is crowned by a third employment of this descriptive title: "He is the King of Glory." What is the NAME of "the King of Glory"? His name is "Jehovah." What are his attributes? "Strong"—"mighty"—"mighty in battle": these are his attributes—all chosen as if to support the claim to be King, as much as to say—"Beware! for none can successfully resist him." Certainly, then, the Kingship of Jehovah is made especially prominent: by the threefold repetition of the title; by the attributes selected to enforce it; and, we may add, by the claim here made, that he has "ARMIES" at his command; for such is evidently the force of the word "hosts," "Jehovah of hosts," "Jehovah of armies in battle array." It is asked who are these, Jehovah's hosts? First and foremost, in the merely typical application, to the time and circumstances then present, David and his men; successors of Joshua and his men; the hosts of Isarel, who are now completing their conquest of Canaan, the hosts of Israel with Jehovah, the King of Glory, at their head. This is the lowest application. We need not stop there. As the kingship is lifted up and the claim for submission is widened, —the "hosts," the "armies," will multiply, until they include

## PSALM TWENTY-FOUR

the heavenly hosts themselves. The one point on which we would concentrate attention is the Kingship of Jehovah. And let it be remembered that "the King of Glory" is another way of saying, "Glorious King." As King he will enter: as King he will be enthroned: as King he will be worshipped. The Creator of the beginning of the psalm, is the Glorious King of the close of the psalm.

Is all this a Type? From early times—from the times of the early "Fathers"—and we are willing to think from the very times of the Apostles, when Christ's early disciples realised that their Risen Lord had gone up into heaven, Christians have felt they were getting near—if they had not altogether reached—the Antitype of that Type—that magnificent Type from one point of view—that feeble type from another. It is doubtless the Antitype that dwarfs the Type. Let it be remembered that it is the type of David's time which just now sets us on the right road of application. The Type had in it these elements: That it was the Earth—not heaven—to which claim was laid; that Jerusalem was regarded as the Governmental Centre of the Earth; that visible and effectively enforced Kingship claimed to be acknowledged at that centre: Jehovah of armies—he is the Glorious King of Earth! Christ's ascension is only a part of the fulfillment; for—in a sense much needed and most true for the safe development of this theme—Christ's ascension is not yet complete. Christ the Head of the Church has ascended; but the Corporate Christ has not yet been "taken up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16): *that* complementary ascension awaits the time when by "preaching Christ among the Gentiles," and his being "believed on in the world," the number required to complete his body will be made sufficiently large to suit the purposes of the Father's love. Then and thereafter will the Type be carried forward into a yet wider, deeper, higher fulfillment. We are but learners on this theme. This psalm does not stand alone, as though it were the only Ascension Psalm: there are others, and notably among them the 47th, in view of which we may shadow forth a legitimate surmise—provided we call it no more—that in the Coming Kingdom, Ascension and Descension may be repeated until at length the tent of God shall be with men, and He will dwell among them as their God.

Due consideration of the structure and contents of this psalm will easily adjust the questions of authorship and fit occasions

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

for use. The whole of the psalm may well have been composed by David; though probably the third stanza was written before the second, as suggested in the above exposition. After being used on some fitting occasion of solemn procession to the temporary tent, it can have scarcely failed to be employed on the dedication of Solomon's temple; and must have been thrice welcome to Hezekiah when he cleansed and reopened the house of Jehovah. It has been a fountain of inspiration for analogous occasions ever since; and yet, possibly, only in the future manifestation of the promised Kingdom of the Messiah, will its sublime capabilities for leading the praises of adoring multitudes be fully realised.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please consider the possibilities of allowing psalms 22, 23 and 24 to be progressive in meaning—The Suffering Saviour—The Good Shepherd—The Coronated King. Discuss.
2. Discuss the progressive nature of this psalm—i.e. how stanzas two and three depend on stanza one.
3. How do we obtain clean hands? A pure heart? How do we keep clean and pure?
4. How can we poor, dirty, impure, deceitful, sinners worship God?
5. Has the Suffering Servant—The Good Shepherd—entered the city to be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

## PSALM 25

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Alphabetical Psalm of Supplication.

### ANALYSIS

Seven lines of Direct Address to Jehovah, vers. 1-7; three lines in Praise of Jehovah, vers. 8-10; one line of Direct Address, ver. 11; three lines Descriptive of him who Revereth Jehovah, vers. 12-14; one line Concerning the Psalmist, ver. 15; six lines of Direct Address, vers. 16-21; and one line of *Refrain*, ver. 22.



PSALM TWENTY-FIVE

(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Unto thee Jehovah my soul do I lift—  
oh let me not be put to shame.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 In thee my God<sup>2</sup> have I trusted—  
let not my foes exult over me.
- 3 Yea let none who wait for thee be put to shame—  
let them be put to shame who act covertly without cause.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Thy ways Jehovah let me know—  
thy paths teach thou me.
- 5 Guide me into thy truth and teach me—  
for thou art my saving<sup>4</sup> God.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 Remember thy compassions Jehovah and thy kindness—  
for from age-past times have they been.
- 7 The sins of my youth<sup>6</sup> do not remember—  
according to thy kindness remember thou me.
- 8 Good and upright is Jehovah—  
therefore will he direct<sup>7</sup> in the way.
- 9 He will guide humble ones to vindication—  
that he may teach humble ones his way.
- 10 All the paths of Jehovah are kindness and faithfulness—<sup>8</sup>  
to such as keep his covenant.<sup>9</sup>
- 11 For the sake of thy name Jehovah—  
therefore wilt thou pardon mine iniquity though it is great.
- 12 Who then is the man that revereth Jehovah?  
he will direct him in the way he chooseth.
- 13 His soul with prosperity shall tarry—<sup>10</sup>  
and his seed shall possess the land.
- 14 The intimacy of Jehovah have they who revere him—  
even his covenant to let them know.

1. So (w. Br.) transposed from ver. 2. The redistribution of clauses speaks for itself.

2. So *Gt.*, by simple transposition bringing *beth* to beginning of line.

3. "Traacherously without effect"—Br.

4. Or: "delivering."

5. M.T. adds: "for thee have I wanted all the day." Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.) prefix *waw*="and" (Gn.). Perh. relics of an original *waw* ( ) stanza.

6. M.T. adds: "and my transgressions."

7. M.T. adds: "sinners"; but redundant in measure, and morally improbable.

8. Or: "truth."

9. M.T. adds: "and his testimonies."

10. Or: "be a guest."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 15 Mine eyes are continually unto Jehovah—  
for he bringeth forth out of the net<sup>1</sup> my soul.
- 16 Turn unto me and be gracious unto me—  
for lonely and humbled am I.
- 17 The distresses of my heart oh relieve—  
and out of my straits bring me forth.
- 18 Come to the relief<sup>2</sup> of my humiliation and my travail—  
and take away<sup>3</sup> all my sins.
- 19 See my foes for they have multiplied—  
and with the hatred of violence do they hate me.
- 20 Oh keep my soul and rescue me—  
let me not be put to shame for I take refuge in thee.
- 21 Let blamelessness<sup>4</sup> and uprightness<sup>5</sup> rescue<sup>6</sup> me—  
for O Jehovah I have waited for thee.
- 22 Ransom Israel O God out of all his distresses.<sup>7</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 25

To You, O Lord, I pray!

2 Don't fail me, Lord, for I am trusting You. Don't let my enemies succeed. Don't give them victory over me.

3 None who have faith in God will ever be disgraced for trusting Him. But all who harm the innocent shall be defeated.

4 Show me the path where I should go, O Lord; point out the right road for me to walk.

5 Lead me; teach me; for You are the God who gives me salvation. I have no hope except in You.

6, 7 Overlook my youthful sins, O Lord! Look at me instead through eyes of mercy and forgiveness, through eyes of everlasting love and kindness.

1. "Too specific"—Br. Yet well suited to David or Hezekiah.

2. So some critics (*kara'*): supplying the missing *koph*, and obviating the M.T.'s repetition of *resh*.

3. Or: "grant forgiveness of."

4. Or: "wholeheartedness," "integrity."

5. Or: "straightforwardness." "These two fundamental virtues he wishes to be his guardians on his way"—Del.

6. Prob. *nzl* as in prev. line, instead of *nzr* (in M.T.)

7. Cp. Ps. 34:22.

## PSALM TWENTY-FIVE

8 The Lord is good and glad to teach the proper path to all who go astray;

9 He will teach the ways that are right and best to those who humbly turn to Him.

10 And when we obey Him, every path He guides us on is fragrant with His lovingkindness and His truth.

11 But Lord, my sins! How many they are. Oh, pardon them for the honor of Your name.

12 Where is the man who fears the Lord? God will teach him how to choose the best!

13 He shall live within God's circle of blessing, and his children shall inherit the earth!

14 Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence Him. With them alone He shares the secrets of His promises.

15 My eyes are ever looking to the Lord for help, for He alone can rescue me.

16 Come, Lord, and show me Your mercy, for I am helpless, overwhelmed, in deep distress;

17 My problems go from bad to worse. Oh, save me from them all!

18 See my sorrows; feel my pain; forgive my sins.

19 See how many enemies I have and how viciously they hate me!

20 Save me from them! Deliver my life from their power! Oh, let it never be said that I trusted You in vain!

21 Assign me Godliness and Integrity as my bodyguards, for I expect You to protect me,

22 And to ransom Israel from all her troubles.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm needs little expounding; but will repay devout meditation. It springs from a deep sense of need, and abounds in supplication. It is artificial in structure, and has many minute beauties. It was framed to help the memory when books were few. It suggests many literary and historical problems, some of which it helps to settle. Specially worthy of note is the fact that, although clearly alphabetical, one letter of the alphabet has been suppressed, presumably to make way for the refrain at the end, outside the acrostic arrangement, yet so as not to exceed the number twenty-two. Its companion psalm is the thirty-fourth: this being a psalm of petition—that of praise.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

The refrains to these psalms are specially noticeable. The psalms themselves are private and individual; but the refrains reach out to public events in which all Israel are interested. Thus viewed, the two psalms become intensely dramatic; and lend themselves to thrilling events in Israel's ancient history. Cp. Thirtle, O.T.P., 107-8.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The words of W. G. Scroggie help our understanding as to what is meant by "an alphabetical psalm"—: "Certain of the Psalms are in acrostic form, that is there is traceable in them an alphabetical succession in the initial letters of verses. As these Psalms have come down to us this arrangement is not always complete, but may have been so originally. The acrostic Psalms are 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145."
2. What is meant by the word "ashamed" in verses 2 and 3? Does this refer to embarrassment? Discuss.
3. How did David or Hezekiah or whoever wrote this psalm imagine the requests to be taught and led would be answered?
4. What are the sins of youth as compared with the sins of old age?
5. The positive advantages in following and loving God are often here emphasised.—how we need this emphasis! Obedience of God's law is the doorway into freedom of heart. How shall we convince men that this is true?
6. Follow through this psalm with a list of man's responsibilities resulting in a list of God's blessings—Discuss.

## PSALM 26

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Ideal Levite's Prayer for Vindication by the  
Prolongation of his Life.

### ANALYSIS

An introductory Petition, ver. 1a, is sustained by six stanzas of protestations and prayers. Stanza I, vers. 1b, c, 2, A protest of blamelessness

## PSALM TWENTY-SIX

and trust, is sustained by Prayer for further Testing. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Protest continued, of right feeling, right conduct and avoidance of evil company. Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, Protest prolonged, and pointed towards worship! Stanza IV., vers. 7, 8, To proclaim Jehovah's wonders, his House is loved. Stanza V., vers. 9, 10, Plea for life, in contrast with evil doers. Stanza VI., vers. 11, 12, Blamelessness moves to prayer for redemption, and gives assurance of public praise.

(Lm.)—By David.

- 1 Vindicate me<sup>1</sup> O Jehovah!<sup>2</sup>  
For I in my blamelessness have walked,  
and in Jehovah have I trusted without wavering:<sup>3</sup>
- 2 Try me Jehovah and prove me,  
test thou my motives and my mind.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 For thy kindness hath been before mine eyes,  
and I have walked to and fro in thy truth;<sup>5</sup>
- 4 I have not sat with worthless men,<sup>6</sup>  
and with dissemblers would I not enter.
- 5 I have hated an assembly of evil-doers,  
and with lawless men<sup>7</sup> would I not sit.<sup>8</sup>
- 6 I can bathe in pureness my palms,<sup>9</sup>  
and would fain march around thine altar O Jehovah.
- 7 To proclaim aloud<sup>10</sup> a thanksgiving,  
and to tell of all thy wondrous works
- 8 Jehovah! I have loved the dwelling of thy house,  
even the place of the habitation of thy glory.<sup>11</sup>
- 9 Do not take away with sinners my soul,  
nor with men of bloodshed my life:
- 10 In whose hands is an evil device,  
and their right-hand is filled with a bribe.

1. Cp. 7:8, 43:1.

b. Cp. short line for emphasis 1:1, 3, 8:1, 9.

3. Cp. 2 K. 18:5.

4. U.: "my reins and my heart." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "heart," "reins."

5. Cp. Isa. 38:3.

6. "Insincere persons"; (or *frivolous persons*: lit. *men of unreality*)"

—Dr.

7. "Implies disloyal association with the heathen, the impious outsiders"

—Thirtle, O.T.P., 106.

8. Cp. 1:1.

9. 73:13.

10. Ml. "with voice."

11. Note the continued presence of the shekinah.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 11 Since I in my blamelessness do walk<sup>1</sup>  
ransom me and be gracious unto me Jehovah.  
12 My foot hath taken its stand in a level place,  
in assemblies do I bless Jehovah.<sup>2</sup>

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 26

Dismiss all the charges against me, Lord, for I have tried to keep Your laws and have trusted You without wavering.

2 Cross-examine me, O Lord, and see that this is so; test my motives and affections too.

3 For I have taken Your lovingkindness and Your truth as my ideals.

4 I do not have fellowship with tricky, two-faced men; they are false and hypocritical.

5 I hate the sinners' hangouts and refuse to enter them.

6 I wash my hands to prove my innocence and come before Your altar

7 Singing a song of thanksgiving and telling about Your miracles.

8 Lord, I love Your home, this shrine where the brilliant, dazzling splendor of Your presence lives.

9, 10 Don't treat me as a common sinner or murderer who plots against the innocent and demands bribes.

11 No, I am not like that, O Lord; I try to walk a straight and narrow path of doing what is right; therefore in mercy save me.

12 I publicly praise the Lord for keeping me from slipping and falling.

### EXPOSITION

This is a bright and beautiful psalm, with a ring of sincerity in it, and lighted up with a glowing hope of public blessing. The experiences of both David and Hezekiah lie behind it. Thirtle well says of it:—"Words in every sense suited to the

1. Cp. ver. 8 and Isa. 38:3.

2. Cp. Isa. 38:20. "In the choirs of the congregation do I praise Jahve"—Del. "In full assemblies will I bless Jehovah"—Dr.

## PSALM TWENTY-SIX AND TWENTY-SEVEN

times of either king. Ver. 8 recalls Hezekiah's love for the Temple, and ver. 9 expresses his revulsion at the thought of dying the death of a sinner, which was his interpretation of the mortal sickness with which God had smitten him" (Thirtle, O.T.P., 315-6.) The references appended to the text will transport the reader into a realm of reality, and the Analysis prefixed to it will probably make detailed exposition appear unnecessary.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Integrity is a grand virtue—how can we plead it before an absolute holy God? Is this the circumstance of verses 1 through 7? Discuss.
2. Can we really love God without truly hating sin?
3. Before whom or to whom, is the psalmist trying to demonstrate his integrity? Is this normal? Discuss.
4. "The company we choose is always an index of our character"—Discuss.
5. When cut loose from social or civilized restraints—to where do we gravitate? This is a revelation of our real selves—is this true? Discuss.

## PSALM 27

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Trust and Prayer in the Hour of Danger.

### ANALYSIS

Part I., Two pentameter hexastichs: Stanza I., vers. 1-3, That which Jehovah Is Now he Has Been in the Past, and Will Be in the Future; Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The One Thing sought in spite of Intermediate Danger, is Anticipated with Confidence. Part II., Four irregular tetrastichs, betraying Adaptation: Stanza I., vers. 7, 8, Prayer in Seeking Jehovah's Face. Stanza II., ver. 9, The Hiding of Jehovah's Face Deprecated. An addition, ver. 10: Jehovah will Not Fail, though Father and Mother may. Stanza III., vers. 11, 12, Prayer for Guidance in Presence of Enemies. Stanza IV., ver. 13, The Prospect of Prosperity Awaited with Confidence.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

(Lm.)—By David.

### Part I

- 1 Jehovah is my light and my salvation—  
of whom shall I be afraid?  
Jehovah is the stronghold of my life—  
of whom shall I be in dread?
- 2 When there drew near against me evil-doers—  
to devour my flesh  
Mine adversaries and mine enemies mine  
they stumbled and fell.
- 3 Though there encamped against me a host<sup>1</sup>  
my heart shall not fear,  
Though there rise up against me a battle  
in spite of this I am trustful.
- 4 One thing have I asked of Jehovah—  
that will I seek to secure:—<sup>2</sup>  
To gaze upon the delightfulness of Jehovah  
in the morning<sup>3</sup> in his temple.
- 5 Surely he will conceal me in his covert  
in the day of calamity,  
He will hide me in the hiding-place of his tent—  
in straits<sup>4</sup> will uplift me.
- 6 Now therefore shall my head be uplifted  
above my foes round about me,  
And I will sacrifice in his tent  
sacrifices of sacred shouting<sup>5</sup> to Jehovah.

### Part II

- 7 Hear O Jehovah my voice,  
I call—be gracious unto me then and answer me.
- 8 To thee said my heart—<sup>6</sup>  
“Thy face Jehovah do I seek”

1. Ml.: “camp.”

2. M.T. adds: “That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life.” But as the claims of stanza uniformity, in a psalm like this first part, are considerable; and as the essence of the “one thing desired” seems to be preserved by the next line, the force of symmetry has been allowed to bring this line to the foot of the text.

3. So with Br.; and cp. 5:4, 59:17, 88:14.

4. Or, as otherwise pointed: “in a rock.”

5. M.T.: “I will sing and will harp”: too much for the measure, yet not improbably by the co-author (cp. Isa. 38:20).

6. M.T. adds: “Seek ye my face.” Prob. (w. Br.) “an early marginal exclamation” which “eventually came into the text.”



## PSALM TWENTY-SEVEN

- 9 Do not hide thy face from me,  
do not thrust away in thine anger thine own servant:  
My help hast thou been  
do not abandon or fail me my saving God!<sup>1</sup>
- 10 Though my father and my mother have failed<sup>2</sup> me  
yet Jehovah will care for me.<sup>3</sup>
- 11 Point out to me O Jehovah thy way,  
and guide me in an even path.<sup>4</sup>
- 12 Do not give me up to the greed<sup>5</sup> of mine adversary,<sup>6</sup>  
he that breatheth out violence against me.
- 13 I believe<sup>7</sup> that I shall gaze upon the good things of Jehovah  
in the land of the living<sup>8</sup>  
Wait thou for Jehovah: be strong,<sup>9</sup> and let thy heart be bold,  
wait thou then for Jehovah.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

2 When evil men come to destroy me, they will stumble and fall!

3 Yes, though a mighty army marches against me, my heart shall know no fear! I am confident that God will save me.

4 The one thing I want from God, the thing I seek most of all, is the privilege of meditating in His temple, living in His presence every day of my life, delighting in His incomparable perfections and glory.

5 There I'll be when troubles come! He will hide me. He will set me on a high rock

6 Out of reach of all my enemies. Then I will bring Him sacrifices and sing His praises with much joy.

1. Symmetry is improved by Br.—at risk of wiping out co-author's intensifications.

2. Or: "forsaken"; yet see 22:1.

3. Or (w. Thirtle): "recover me." For this meaning of *'asaph*, see 2 K. 5:3, 6, 11. Remarkable, as there applied to leprosy.

4. M.T. adds: "because of my watchful foes."

5. U.: "soul." See Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

6. M.T. adds: "for there have arisen against me false witnesses."

7. M.T.: "Unless" ("unless I had believed")—but marked as spurious—Gn. "It is not justified by the most ancient versions"—Br.

8. Cp. Isa. 38:11.

9. Heb. *hzk*: in prob. allusion to HeZeKiah's name.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

7 Listen to my pleading, Lord! Be merciful and send the help I need.

8 My heart has heard You say, "Come and talk with me, O My people." And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."

9 Oh, do not hide Yourself when I am trying to find You. Do not angrily reject Your servant! You have been my help in all my trials before; don't leave me now. Don't forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10 For if my father and mother should abandon me, You would welcome and comfort me.

11 Tell me what to do, O Lord, and make it plain because I am surrounded by waiting enemies.

12 Don't let them get me, Lord! Don't let me fall into their hands! For they accuse me of things I never did, and all the while are plotting cruelty.

13 I am expecting the Lord to rescue me again, so that once again I will see His goodness to me here in the land of the living!

\* \* \* \* \*

14 Don't be impatient! Wait for the Lord, and He will come and save you! Be brave, stout-hearted and courageous. Yes, wait and He will help you.

## EXPOSITION

There is great beauty in this psalm, and there are some irregularities: traces of careful preservation, and tokens of accidents and changes which may elude our most careful research. The psalm is manifestly composite, though not the less instructive for that reason. If we could know its exact literary history, we should probably see how some supreme event welded its composite parts into one; and its transcriptional history would probably account for its various readings. Part I. is exceedingly beautiful from the poetic point of view; and its spiritual elevation is most inspiring to the devout mind. Danger is near, but the spirit of the psalmist is calm; his thoughts flow with ease, and his numbers hold their way with clearness and regularity. This part is, indeed, a fine specimen of Hebrew poetry; nor is it less valuable as showing the calm height to which communion with Jehovah can lift a soul in the midst of peril. It needs but little detailed exposition: yet a perception

## PSALM TWENTY-SEVEN

of the situations implied, tend to make it all the more luminous. Part II. is altogether different, except as to the strength of faith and devotion expressed. It shows a marked change of measure; and has probably not been preserved so well as the more finished production that precedes it. An enquiry into authorship, and a glimpse of probable originating situations may best help readers to appreciate this psalm at its true value. Joint authorship is strongly indicated. There is no reason for doubting the truth of the inscription *To David*; though, what portions he contributed, it is impossible now to say. Dr. Briggs sees, even in the first part, glimpses of the days of Hezekiah. "The calm confidence," says he, "in connection with extreme perils from enemies, apparently besieging the city, reminds us of the situation of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah, *vide* 2 Kings 18, 19." On the other hand, Dr. Thirtle says: "The second part (vers. 7-14) seems to have been added by Hezekiah when consumed with a desire to go up to the house of the Lord (Isa. 38:22)." And, further on: "We are not to find in ver. 10 a biographical note, or an allusion to personal bereavement, but rather an expression of implicit confidence in God—as if to say, 'Though my sickness is such that even father and mother may forsake me, yet for all that the Lord will receive me,' or *recover* me, as the verb *asaph* implies in a context relating to the treatment of leprosy (cp. 2 Kings 5:3, 6, 11). In other words, 'Though nearest and dearest prove false, the Lord will be faithful to me'"—Thirtle, O.T.P., 316. Charming and helpful as this is, it may not be out of place to suggest, that even the second part of this psalm may have had a Davidic *foundation*; and, in particular, that if only we had David's history before us, that alone might have made it perfectly gratuitous to resort, with Dr. Briggs, to Maccabean times to find a situation in which ver. 10 could have been written. David's "father and mother" did not indeed "forsake" him; but they naturally "failed" to afford him the counsel and help which he might have fondly hoped to derive from their presence in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1-4). On the other hand, adaptations to Hezekiah's circumstances quite cluster about the close of the psalm. Ver. 12 may be held to point plainly to the Assyrian invader; ver. 13 to refer to Hezekiah's trust (2 K. 18:5), to reproduce Hezekiah's very style (Isa. 38:11), and to enshrine an allusion to his name. (See note on "Be strong," above; and Thirtle, O.T.P., 123, 124.)

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Notice the two distinct parts to this psalm (vs. 1-6) and (vs. 7-14). With what one word would you characterize each part? Does this mean two authors were involved in the composition of this psalm? Discuss.
2. Talk about specific ways God can be a "light" and "fortress" to us.
3. How often does God protect us unknown to us? Are there not "Spiritual hosts (armies) of wickedness"? Discuss.
4. What is the "house of the Lord"—how shall we dwell in it?
5. In the experience of David when did his father and mother fail him?

PSALM 28

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer Turned into Praise.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Prayer Boldly Pleads the Feared Result of Refusal to Answer. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4 (with addition, ver. 5), Depicts the Character of the Lawless, and Imprecates their Punishment. Stanza III., vers. 6-8, Praise for Deliverance. *Refrain*, ver. 9, Invokes Jehovah's Blessing on his People.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Unto thee I call my Rock—<sup>1</sup>  
do not turn silently from me;  
Lest if thou turn silently from me—  
I be likened with them who are going down to the pit.
- 2 Hear the voice of my supplication—  
as I cry for help unto thee,  
As I lift up my hands (O my God)<sup>2</sup>  
unto thy holy shrine.<sup>3</sup>

1. M.T. adds: "Jehovah."

2. Not in M.T.

3. "Chancel"—Dr.

## PSALM TWENTY-EIGHT

- 3 Do not drag me away with the lawless—  
and with workers of iniquity,<sup>1</sup>  
Who are speaking peace with their neighbours—  
while wrong is in their heart.
- 4 Give them according to their deed—  
and according to the evil of their doings;  
According to the work of their hands give them—  
bring back their dealings to themselves.
- 5 Because they heed not the deeds of Jehovah—  
nor the work<sup>2</sup> of his hands<sup>3</sup>  
he will put them down and not build them.
- 6 Blessed be Jehovah  
because he hath heard the voice of my supplication:
- 7 Jehovah my strength and my shield—  
in whom hath trusted my heart,  
Since I have found help and my heart hath exulted  
with my song will I thank him:
- 8 Jehovah a strength to his people<sup>4</sup>  
and the all-saving stronghold<sup>5</sup> of his Anointed one is he!
- 9 Oh save thy people and bless thine inheritance,  
and shepherd them and carry them unto the ages!<sup>6</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 28

I plead with You to help me, Lord, for You are my Rock of safety. If you refuse to answer me, I might as well give up and die.

2 Lord, I lift my hands to heaven<sup>7</sup> and implore Your help. Oh, listen to my cry.

3 Don't punish me with all the wicked ones who speak so sweetly to their neighbors while planning to murder them.

1. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

2. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.): "works" (pl.)—Gn.

3. Cp. Isa. 5:12.

4. So it shd. be—G. Intro., 143. And so it is in some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.). Cp. Ps. 29:11—Gn.

5. Ml.: "the stronghold of the salvations" (= "great salvation," pl. intensive).

6. Ml.: unto the age: Heb. *'adh-ha 'olam*.

7. Literally, "Your innermost shrine," i.e., the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

4 Give them the punishment they so richly deserve! Measure it out to them in proportion to their wickedness; pay them back for all their evil deeds.

5 They care nothing for God or what He has done or what He has made; therefore God will dismantle them like old buildings, never to be rebuilt again.

\* \* \* \* \*

6 Oh, praise the Lord, for He has listened to my pleadings!

7 He is my strength, my shield from every danger. I trusted in Him, and He helped me! Joy rises in my heart until I burst out in songs of praise to Him.

8 The Lord protects His people and gives victory to His anointed king.

9 Defend Your people, Lord; defend and bless Your chosen ones. Lead them like a shepherd and carry them forever in Your arms.

## EXPOSITION

In this psalm prayer is prolonged; but praise, when it comes, is pronounced. The prayer is prompted by some unnamed peril, the continuance of which, it is feared, will cause death. We are struck with the terms in which the prayer is couched. God is so addressed by the term *Rock* as to make of this word a proper name, inasmuch as the *figure* of a rock as such disappears, since an entreaty to a rock to turn or not to turn is incongruous: thus showing that the application of the term to Jehovah has become so familiar that the appropriate imagery is forgotten. The Becoming One (=“Jehovah”) is the Abiding One, the Changeless One (the “Rock”): the conception of immutability being retained, all else is let go. The Changeless in nature, is thought of as changing in attitude: turning towards in favour, ready to answer prayer; or turning away in silence, leaving the suppliant’s mind in painful suspense. The feeling for the personality of Jehovah is intense; and the sense of nearness to him is so vivid as to induce great boldness in supplication. The impression of this made by the first stanza is deep. Before leaving this stanza, we may recall the fact that the name *Rock*, is a favourite name for Jehovah, is found in Psalms closely bound up with David’s name; e.g. 18:2, 31, 46; *Debir* for *shrine*, as used of “the holy of holies,” is more closely associated with the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:5 and onwards) than with the holy tent of David’s

## PSALM TWENTY-EIGHT

own day; but as names are often carried backwards it would be trifling to make of this an argument against the Davidic joint-authorship of this psalm. It is wonderful, however, to note how much Hezekiah found in David suited to his own case; and then further how brightly the image of Hezekiah himself is wont to shine out in the close of the psalms. There is, indeed, nothing in the third stanza (vers. 6-8) which David could not have used; but a sense of enhanced fitness greets a reference to the unparalleled experience of the later monarch. "At ver. 6 Hezekiah adds his experience (cp. Isa. 38:10-20)"—Thirle, O.T.P., 316.

With the reference to the "lawless" in ver. 3, Ps. 9:17 and the note on "lawless" in Ps. 1:1 may be usefully compared.

The imprecations of vers. 4, 5 may serve to remind us of the instinctive passion with which injured human nature turns to "the vindicatory righteousness of God" (Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness"); and that it is only in the strength of the highest manifestation of the Messianic Spirit that we can hope victoriously to exclaim, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." At the same time all persecutors would do well to beware of the Divine indignation which may necessarily alight on them in order that Jehovah may *save his people, bless his inheritance—shepherd them also and carry them unto the ages.*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Lord is our "rock"—specify two or three comparisons of Jehovah to a rock.
2. If God is a loving Father, why is it necessary to plead with Him to do what we know He must do? Discuss.
3. Vindictiveness seems to be a part of this psalm—and of several others—how shall we understand this? There *is* an explanation—Discuss.
4. Read these eight points of thought by W. G. Scroggie on the subject of "The Imprecatory Psalms"—(p. 317 in PSALMS).

IMPRECATION is the invoking of evil upon others. Imprecations are found in a number of brief utterances, as in 40:14-16; 63:9; 104:35; 143:12; but statements of some length are found in 35:1-8, 26; 59:11-15; 59:22-28; 109:6-20; and 139:19-22. These anathemas constitute a major moral problem, and, obviously,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

are contrary to the spirit of the New Testament (Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). Such imprecations cannot be regarded—

- 1 as referring, not to individuals, but to the moral enemies of the soul.—(ARNOLD).
- 2 as predictions of a future yet to come, when all the unrepentant wicked shall be punished.—(HORNE).
- 3 as curses, not of the Psalmist, but of his enemies; by supplying, for example, the word *saying* at the end of verse 5 of Psalm 109.

Towards an understanding of this problem the following points should be considered.

- 1 The writers lived in the dispensation of Law and not of Grace (John 1:17).
- 2 The intense provocation to which the sufferers were subjected.
- 3 The utterances need not be regarded as expressions of personal vindictiveness.
- 4 The belief that Israel's enemies were God's enemies (139:21, 22).
- 5 The sharp distinction which we draw between the sinner and his sin, was not recognized by the Hebrews; they regarded them as identical.
- 6 The imprecations disclose a zeal for righteousness.
- 7 The unit of old was the family, not the individual, so that a man's fate was the fate of his family (109:9-13).
- 8 The belief that the righteous must be rewarded and the wicked punished in this life, for there was then no revelation of a final Judgment.

## PSALM 29

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Glory in the Temple and in the Tempest: Jehovah's Kingship of Judgment in the Past and of Blessing in the Future.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Angels Called to Worship in the Heavenly Temple.  
Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Commencement of Storm on the Mediterranean.  
Stanza III., vers. 5-7, Bursting of Storm in the North. Stanza IV., vers. 8,



## PSALM TWENTY-NINE

9, Sweep of the Storm to the South. Stanza V., vers. 10, 11, Jehovah's Abiding Kingship will Ultimately bring Strength and Blessing to his People.

(Lm.)—Psalm by David.

- 1 Give unto Jehovah ye sons of the Mighty,<sup>1</sup>  
give unto Jehovah glory and strength;
- 2 Give unto Jehovah the glory of his name,  
bow down unto Jehovah in holy adorning.
- 3 The voice of Jehovah is on the waters—  
the God of glory hath thundered;  
Jehovah is on mighty waters:
- 4 The voice of Jehovah is with power,  
the voice of Jehovah is with state.
- 5 The voice of Jehovah is breaking cedars,  
aye! Jehovah breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon
- 6 He maketh Lebanon<sup>2</sup> skip about like a calf,  
and Sirion like a bull-calf of wild-oxen:
- 7 The voice of Jehovah cleaveth open and letteth out flames  
of fire.
- 8 The voice of Jehovah whirleth—about the wilderness,  
Jehovah whirleth—about the wilderness of Kadesh:
- 9 The voice of Jehovah whirleth—about terebinths,<sup>3</sup>  
and strippeth—bare forests;  
And in his temple<sup>4</sup> the whole of it is saying<sup>5</sup>—"Glory!"
- 10 Jehovah for the flood sat enthroned,  
and Jehovah will sit enthroned a king to the ages:<sup>6</sup>
- 11 Jehovah will give strength to his people,  
Jehovah will bless his people with prosperity.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 29

Praise the Lord, you angels of His; praise His glory and His strength.

1. Heb. *'elim*: prob. a synonym of *'elohim*, and like it a plural of excellence; and therefore—"sons of God," like the more usual form in 89:7, Job 38:7. Cp. also 8:5, 82:1, 97:7.

2. So, almost certainly (w. Br.) should Lebanon and Sirion be distributed. For "Sirion," see Deu. 3:9.

3. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* And so Br.

4. Or: "palace."

5. "Everything saith"—Del. "All are saying"—Dr.

6. *ML.*: "to concealed duration."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2 Praise Him for His majestic glory, the glory of His name. Come before Him clothed in sacred garments.

3 The voice of the Lord echoes from the clouds. The God of Glory thunders through the skies.

4 So powerful is His voice; so full of majesty.

5, 6 It breaks down the cedars! It splits the giant trees of Lebanon. It shakes Mount Lebanon and Mount Sirion. They leap and skip before Him like young calves!

7 The voice of the Lord thunders through the lightning.

8 It resounds through the deserts and shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the Lord spins and topples the mighty oaks.<sup>1</sup> It strips the forests bare! They whirl and sway beneath the blast. But in His temple all are praising, "Glory, glory to the Lord."

10 At the Flood, the Lord showed His control of all creation. Now He continues to unveil His power.

11 He will give His people strength. He will bless them with peace.

## EXPOSITION

This is in every way a magnificent psalm,—exquisite in form, splendid in imagery, lofty in sentiment, and probably prophetic in adumbration. We can scarcely fail to perceive how fitting an instrument for producing it was the sweet singer of Israel who penned the 8th psalm, the 18th and the first part of the 19th, in all of which the same gift for reflecting the beauties of Creation can be detected. Perhaps the most precious element in this psalm is the firmness with which it grasps the manifestation, in nature, of Jehovah the God of grace. The thunder of the tempest is his voice. Scarcely less precious a feature is the light swiftness of the movements by which, in the opening stanzas, heaven and earth are united; and, at the close, the past is run on into the future. He that sat enthroned at the flood sits enthroned still. He who executed judgment then, is guiding all toward blessing on and through his people in the ages to come. Meanwhile, though the storms are still raging here below, heavenly worshippers, as through an open door, are permitted to let us know, that everything is being well guided

1. Or, "makes the hinds to calve."

## PSALM TWENTY-NINE AND THIRTY

to that great far-off event to which the whole creation moves. The God of nature is the God of grace. Jehovah is no tribal God, but the Maker of heaven and earth.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Thy will be done on earth *as it is* in heaven" so prayed our Lord. Read verses one and two. Shall we not here also imitate angels? How?
2. What are the "sacred garments" or "the beauty of holiness" with which we are to be dressed before we worship before Him?
3. "This surely is one of the most graphic descriptions of a thunderstorm in all literature." Please work out and discuss the two parts: vs. 3-6 and vs. 7-9.
4. Notice how often God is named or referred to in these eleven verses. God is in the storm. Is God in the storms of our lives today? Discuss.
5. While the storm rages on earth in the temple of Jehovah all the angels are saying—or singing "glory". Discuss the significance. (vs. 9).

## PSALM 30

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song of Joy on Recovery from Sickness.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Declaration of Praise and its Occasion. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Call on Levites to Praise, with Words Supplied. Stanza III., vers. 6, 7, Record of Experience Prior to the Sickness. Stanza IV., vers. 8-10, The Prayer offered During the Sickness. Stanza V., vers. 11, 12, Great Joy Beautifully Expressed.

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(Lh.) Psalm—Song of the Dedication of the House<sup>1</sup>—By David.

1 I exalt thee Jehovah for thou hast drawn me up,  
and hast not gladdened my foes concerning me!

1. Cp. prob. 2 Sam. 5:11, 12.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 Jehovah my God!  
I cried for help unto thee—and thou didst heal me:
- 3 Jehovah!  
thou hast brought up out of hades my soul,  
hast restored me to life from among them who were going  
down to the pit.
- 4 Make melody to Jehovah ye his men of kindness,  
and give thanks unto his Holy Memorial:<sup>1</sup>
- 5 “Surely a moment<sup>2</sup> in his anger—  
a lifetime<sup>3</sup> in his favour;  
At eventide there cometh to lodge—Weeping,  
but by morning Jubilation!”<sup>4</sup>
- 6 But I had said in my careless ease—  
“I shall not be shaken to the ages.”
- 7 Jehovah!  
In thy good pleasure thou hadst given stability to mountains  
of strength:<sup>5</sup>  
thou didst hide thy face—I became dismayed!
- 8 Unto thee Jehovah I continued crying—<sup>6</sup>  
yea unto Adonay<sup>7</sup> making supplication:—
- 9 “What profit in my blood when I descend into the pit?  
will dust thank<sup>8</sup> thee? declare thy truth!
- 10 Hear O Jehovah and be gracious unto me!  
Jehovah! become thou a helper to me!”
- 11 Thou hast turned my lamentation into a dance for me,  
thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness;
- 12 That my glory<sup>10</sup> may make melody to thee and not be still:  
Jehovah my God! to the ages will I thank thee.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

1. “Poet, for ‘name’: cp. Ex. 3:15, Ps. 135:13”—Dr.
2. Cp. Isa. 54:7.
3. Or: “life” (on and on).
4. Or: “a ringing cry.”
5. So *Gt.*—Gn. “Thou hadst established strength for my mountain”—  
Dr. But Br. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): “thou didst cause mine honour to stand  
firm in strength.”
6. “Imperfects referring to past experience, and therefore frequentatives  
implying oft-repeated importunate prayer”—Br. Cp. 2 K. 19:14-20.
7. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): “Jehovah.”
8. Cp. 6:4, n.
9. Cp. Isa. 38:18.
10. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr.). Cp. 108:1—Gn. For “glory” in the  
like sense, see 16:9, 57:8, 108:1.

## PSALM THIRTY PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 30

I will praise You, Lord, for You have saved me from my enemies. You refuse to let them triumph over me.

2 O Lord my God, I pled with You, and You gave me my health again.

3 You brought me back from the brink of the grave, from death itself, and here I am alive!

4 Oh, sing to Him you saints of His; give thanks to His holy name.

5 His anger lasts a moment; His favor lasts for life! Weeping may go on all night, but in the morning there is joy.

6, 7 In my prosperity I said, "This is forever; nothing can stop me now! The Lord has shown me His favor. He has made me steady as a mountain."

Then, Lord, You turned Your face away from me and cut off Your river of blessings.<sup>1</sup> Suddenly my courage was gone; I was terrified and panic-stricken.

8 I cried to You, O Lord; oh, how I pled:

9 "What will You gain, O Lord, from killing me? How can I praise You then to all my friends?<sup>2</sup> How can my dust in the grave speak out and tell the world about Your faithfulness?"

10 Hear me, Lord; oh, have pity and help me."

11 Then He turned my sorrow into joy! He took away my clothes of mourning and gave me gay and festive garments to rejoice in

12 So that I might sing glad praises to the Lord instead of lying in silence in the grave. O Lord my God, I will keep on thanking You forever!

## EXPOSITION

This psalm appears to be so full of Hezekiah, that the wonder is, where David can be found. And yet there is but little unsuited to David's time, if we had but the biographical details to identify one or two more incidents of his life which seem to be here memorialised. Perowne's suggestion is good, that the *dedication* alluded to in the inscription, was perhaps the dedication of his own house, "the building of which he seems to have

1. Implied.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

regarded as a pledge of the security and prosperity of his kingdom" (2 Sam. 5:11, 12). "We must however still suppose that he had suffered just before from a sickness, about which the history is silent." There is nothing surprising in such silence, and we must not be unreasonably exacting in seeking for the historical occasions giving birth to individual psalms. (Yet see, *post*, on Pss. 38 and 41.) We may at least feel satisfied that we are within the charmed circle of psalm-production. For when, in the case of this psalm, we do advert to the co-authorship of King Hezekiah,—we discover Hezekian incidents starting out of every stanza. By the help of the references any reader can verify this for himself. Briggs makes an apt reference from the "moment" of this psalm to the "small moment" of Isa. 54:7. Nevertheless, we must regard as futile the attempt to establish the position that the seeming *individual* whose deliverance is here celebrated was the nation of Israel. Far rather, may we reverse the process—especially when the so-called "Second" Isaiah is discovered to be the well-known Isaiah himself—by permitting the King here in the psalm to celebrate the almost momentary brevity of his own trial; and then find, in its most fitting place, the great prophecy itself, the Prophet's improvement of the royal incident, with which we know he was perfectly familiar: "Like as the hiding of Jehovah's face from our beloved King was but as for a moment; so, O Israel, when the long vista of future blessedness opens before thee, shall all the grief of thy long forlorn condition appear to thee in retrospect as having been but for 'a small moment.'" In deference to Dr. Thirtle, we may imagine Isaiah to have added: "Even as the weary months of the Assyrian invasion shall appear to the nation to have been but 'for a moment,' when the glorious fifteen years of assured prosperity have well set in."

Perhaps the one reflection most apt to arise in the devout mind on the reading of this psalm will be, the grateful recognition of the selective power with which the human mind is endowed, whereby it can suffer long months or years of suffering to contract themselves into practically a short compass, comparatively a "moment," while the mercies of the past can be counted lingeringly one by one, and allowed to extend into a long line of blessings. *At eventide cometh to lodge Weeping—in the morning, Jubilation.*

## PSALM THIRTY AND THIRTY-ONE

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. All of us can remember the exhilaration we felt when once the fever of flu left us, or the nausea; we awoke one morning and we were no longer sick. This seems to be the background of this Psalm. Perhaps the sickness was more serious than flu. Perhaps we have been healed from another sickness. Discuss.
2. "At eventide there cometh to lodge, Weeping, but by morning, Jubilation." There are other translations of verse 5, discuss them.
3. There are some beautiful contrasts; discuss these: anger and favour, a moment and a lifetime, evening and morning, weeping and joy, mourning and dancing, sackcloth and festive attire.
4. Verse nine seems to suggest that man has one primary task on earth—what is it? How do we fulfill it?
5. This is a song of dedication of the House—why isn't it used at a church dedication? Discuss.

## PSALM 31

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Fellowship in Suffering and Salvation.

### ANALYSIS

Stanzas I. and II., vers. 1-4, and 5-8, Suffering, caused chiefly by enemies, some of them Idolatrous, Overcome by Steadfast Faith. Stanza III., vers. 9-12, The Lament of a Leper. Stanza IV., vers. 13-16, A complaint of conspiracy, concluded with confidence of Salvation. Stanza V., vers. 17, 18, Prayer for Vindication from the Lawless. Stanza VI., vers. 19, 20, Jehovah's Goodness Admired. Stanza VII., vers. 21, 22, Praise for a Special Deliverance from an Alarming Danger. Stanza VIII., vers. 23, 24, Closing Exhortation to Love, Confidence and Courage.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 In thee Jehovah have I taken refuge—  
oh shame me not to the ages deliver me:

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 In thy righteousness bow down unto me thine ear—  
speedily rescue me:  
Become thou to me a stronghold-rock—  
a house of munitions<sup>1</sup> to save me:
- 3 Because my cliff and my fastness art thou  
therefore<sup>2</sup> lead me and guide me:<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Wilt thou bring me forth out of the net which they have  
hidden for me—  
because thou art my stronghold.
- 5 Into thy hand I commit my spirit—<sup>4</sup>  
thou hast ransomed me O Jehovah.
- 6 O God of truth! thou hatest<sup>5</sup> such as  
give heed to unreal vanities.<sup>6</sup>
- 7 I therefore unto Jehovah have directed my trust—  
I will exult and be glad in thy kindness,—  
Thou who hast looked upon my humiliation—  
hast taken note of the distresses of my soul,
- 8 And hast not delivered me into the hand of an enemy—  
hast given standing in a roomy place to my feet.
- 9 Be gracious unto me Jehovah, for distress is mine—  
wasteth away<sup>7</sup> my soul and my body;<sup>8</sup>
- 10 For consumed with sorrow is my life—  
and my years with singing:
- 11 Staggered with humiliation<sup>9</sup> is my strength—  
and my bones waste away because of my distress;  
I have become a reproach and to mine acquaintances a  
terror—<sup>10</sup>  
in the street they flee from me;<sup>11</sup>

1. Or: "castle." *MI.*: "house of fastnesses."  
2. *M.T.*: "for the sake of thy name, then."  
3. *Cp.* 71:3.  
4. *Cp.* *Lk.* 23:46.  
5. So some *cod.* (w. *Aram.*, *Sep.*, *Syr.*, *Vul.*)—*Gn.* "This reading gives the contrast required by the next line"—*Kp.*  
6. So *Dr.* "That is false gods, or idols: *cp.* *Deu.* 32:21, *Jer.* 14:22."  
7. *M.T.*: "with vexation mine eye."  
8. *MI.*: "my belly," *Heb. betan.* *Cp.* 44:25.  
9. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*  
10. So apparently *Br.* *M.T.* (as rendered by *Dr.*): "Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach, and unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a dread to my familiar friends: they that see me without flee from me." ("Read probably," says *Dr.* "I am become a reproach exceedingly, and a dread to my familiar friends, and to my neighbours.")  
11. "This verse is difficult"—*Per.*



PSALM THIRTY-ONE

- 12 I am forgotten like a dead man out of mind—  
I am become like a missing vessel.
- 13 For I have heard the whispering of multitudes—  
“A terror round about!”<sup>1</sup>  
When they have sat in conclave together—  
to take away my life<sup>2</sup> have they intrigued;
- 14 But I on thee have set my trust—  
Jehovah my God are thou.
- 15 In thy hand are my times—  
rescue me from the hand of my foes and my pursuers,
- 16 Light up thy face on thy servant—  
grant me salvation<sup>3</sup> in thy kindness.
- 17 Jehovah! oh let me not be put to shame that<sup>4</sup> I have called  
on thee:  
shamed be the lawless—become silent for hades;
- 18 made dumb be lips of falsehood,  
which are speaking against a righteous one arrogantly  
with pride and contempt.
- 19 How great is thy goodness O Jehovah,<sup>5</sup>  
which thou hast treasured up for them who revere thee,  
which thou hast wrought before the sons of men  
for them who take refuge in thee.<sup>6</sup>
- 20 Thou hidest them in the hiding-place of thy presence,  
from the harshness<sup>7</sup> of men:  
Thou treasurest them in a shelter  
from the strife of tongues.
- 21 Blessed be Jehovah! in that he hath made wonderful his  
kindness for me in a city beseiged.
- 22 But I had said in mine alarm—  
“I am driven out<sup>8</sup> before thine eyes!”  
Nevertheless thou didst hear the voices of my supplication,  
when I cried for help unto thee.
- 23 Love ye Jehovah all ye his men of kindness,

1. Jer. 6:25, 20:3, 10, 46:5, 49:29, Lam. 2:22.

2. U.: “soul.”

3. Or.: “deliverance”; occasionally “victory.”

4. Or.: “for.”

5. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.) add this “Oh Jehovah”—Gn.

6. Clause transposed for clearness of sense and assonance of ending.

7. So. Br. “Plottings”—Kp. “From the bandings together”—Dr. “Conspiracies”—Per. “From the factions of the people”—Del.

8. Cp. Jonah 2:4.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

it is the faithful Jehovah preserveth;  
but he repayeth in abundance<sup>1</sup> the proud doer.

24 Be strong<sup>2</sup> and let your heart be bold—  
all ye who are waiting for Jehovah.

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 31

Lord, I trust in You alone. Don't let my enemies defeat me. Rescue me because You are the God who always does what is right.

2 Answer quickly when I cry to You; bend low and hear my whispered<sup>3</sup> plea. Be for me a great Rock of safety from my foes.

3 Yes, You are my Rock and my fortress; honor Your name by leading me out of this peril.

4 Pull me from the trap my enemies have set for me. For You alone are strong enough.<sup>4</sup>

5, 6 Into Your hand I commit my spirit . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

You have rescued me, O God who keeps His promises! for I worship only You; and how You hate all those who worship idols, those imitation gods.

7 I am radiant with joy because of Your mercy, for You have listened to my troubles and have seen the crisis in my soul.

8 You have not handed me over to my enemy, but have given me open ground in which to maneuver.

\* \* \* \* \*

9, 10 O Lord, have mercy on me in my anguish. My eyes are red from weeping; my health is broken from sorrow. I am pining away with grief; my years are shortened, drained away because of sadness. My sins have sapped my strength! I stoop with sorrow and with shame.<sup>5</sup>

11 I am scorned by all my enemies and even more by my neighbors and friends. They dread meeting me and look the other way when I go by.

1. Ml.: "on the basis of abundance"—O.G.

2. Heb.: HIZKU (?reminding one of HEZEKIAH).

3. Implied.

4. Literally, "for You are my refuge."

5. Literally, "Even my bones are rotting away."

## PSALM THIRTY-ONE

12 I am forgotten like a dead man, like a broken and discarded pot.

13 I heard the lies about me, the slanders of my enemies. Everywhere I looked I was afraid, for they were plotting against my life.

14, 15 But I was trusting You, O Lord. I said, "You alone are my God; my times are in Your hands. Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly.

16 Let Your favor shine again upon Your servant; save me just because You are so kind!

17 Don't disgrace me, Lord, by not replying when I call to You for aid. But let the wicked be shamed by what they trust in; let them lie silently in their graves,

18 Their lying lips quieted at last—the lips of these arrogant men who are accusing honest men of evil deeds."

19 Oh, how great is Your goodness to those who publicly declare that You will rescue them. For You have stored up great blessings for those who trust and reverence You.

20 Hide Your loved ones in the shelter of Your presence, safe beneath Your hand, safe from all conspiring men.

21 Blessed is the Lord, for He has shown me that His never-failing love protects me like the walls of a fort!

22 I spoke too hastily when I said, "The Lord has deserted me," for You listened to my plea and answered me.

23 Oh, love the Lord all of you who are His people; for the Lord protects those who are loyal to Him, but harshly punishes all who haughtily reject Him.

24 So cheer up! Take courage if you are depending on the Lord!

## EXPOSITION

This psalm might very well be described as a Mosaic of Misery and Mercy. Its most striking feature is, the bringing together of such varied experiences of suffering, that the reflective reader seems compelled to picture to himself several distinct types of sorrow; and herein probably lie the greatest charm and value of this psalm.

For two stanzas, we realize that we are at home with David: the dangers are his, and the deliverances; the favourite phrases also and figures are his. We may even go so far as to suggest that the subdued climax to which these stanzas rise in vers. 7

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and 8 admirably suits the time of the coronation of David in Hebron. He had not then reached the summit of dominion over all Israel, but his feet had become firmly planted in a *roomy place*. Many a time had the courtiers and soldiers of Saul, sought to catch him by a *net* of diplomacy or military stratagem. More than once, we know, he was in such imminent danger of death, as to have been moved to *commit* his imperilled *spirit* to his *redeeming* God.

The third stanza transports us into a widely different scene. We are in the presence of a stricken one, who is *wasting away*, who *staggers* under the *humiliating* blow which has fallen upon him. If he goes into the *street*, his old *acquaintances* flee from him: in dismay and disgust he stays in his "several" house until he is *forgotten*. We instinctively think of the leper-king Uzziah! Who, but an author having deep sympathy for lepers, would have introduced such a realistic picture into a psalm? But one touch of *nature* makes the whole world kin! And Hezekiah had felt that touch.

Again we are transported, by the fourth stanza, into a scene of persecution. We have set before us a victim of intrigue, whose likeness we recognize. He is a man with a nickname. They mockingly call him *Magor missaviv*, *A terror round about*. It is no other than Jeremiah. How he came here is another question. Ezra or one of the Sopherim may have let in his picture into this gallery of portraits of Famous Sufferers—in which Jeremiah well deserved a place.

But now, in the fifth stanza, we seem to be brought back to an earlier conclusion of the psalm. The voice is Hezekiah's. The *lawless* foreigners are in evidence. They do not *whisper* like Jeremiah's cowardly persecutors: no! they *speak arrogantly with pride and contempt*—like that "vile person"—Rabshakeh! And it is against an *individual righteous one* that the villain points his profane tongue. We count ourselves happy that we are beginning to know that righteous KING OF ISRAEL better than we did! *He* suffered of old for his momentary pride: *we* have long suffered for his modesty.

But the tones of his harp wax more fully and loud. Note to what a goodly theme he rises in the sixth stanza—how largely he generalises—how lofty are his conceptions of *Jehovah's goodness*, as one while He *hides his loved ones in his presence from the harshness of men* and at another works his wonders *before the sons of men*.

## PSALM THIRTY-ONE

More specific still, is the reminiscence of personal history contained in stanza seven. Over and over again, may Hezekiah have anticipated flight from the holy city. He had, in his alarm, imagined himself reproaching his Divine Protector—"I am driven out before thine eyes." But the realisation of that extreme stage of desperation had been spared him. Jehovah had *made his kindness so wonderful*, as effectually to prevent it.

After this, what more fitting than that praise should be merged into exhortation? and, as the psalmist calls upon his *men of kindness*, official as well as unofficial, to *love Jehovah* as well as praise him, and remembers the *preservation* granted to himself and his fellow-believers, he seems to be glancing to the mountains on which the Assyrians fell when he says, *But he repayeth abundantly* the proud doer. *Be strong*, he says, almost signing his name, see footnote on ver. 24) and *let your heart be bold, all ye who*, at any time for evermore, shall be *waiting for Jehovah*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. G. Campbell Morgan suggests this psalm contains an experience common to all of us—he says:

In this song we find the seasons of the soul as we all know them sooner or later. First autumn with its winds and gathering clouds, yet having sunlight, and a golden fruitage, even though the breath of death is everywhere (vers. 1-8). Then follows winter, chill and lifeless, full of sobs and sighing (vers. 9-13). After that the spring, with its hope and expectation, its sweeping rains, and bursting sun-gleams (vers. 14-18). At last the glad and golden summer (vers. 19-24). We need them all to complete our year! (*Notes on the Psalms*—p. 60)

2. Verse five sounds very familiar. Who used it? Show how appropriate it was. If we do not commit our Spirit to Him in the hour of sunlight will we do it in the hour of darkness?
3. Somehow the condition of the body becomes the condition of the soul—did then God intend man to be sick? Isn't sickness unnatural? Discuss.
4. Mr. Rotherham has a real struggle trying to identify the author as either Hezekiah, Jeremiah, or David. We have but little difficulty identifying ourselves in verses 9 through 12. Indicate and discuss your own "sobs and sighs."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

5. "I spoke too hastily when I said, 'The Lord has deserted me.'" Discuss the essential element of faith. What is faith? How do we obtain it? What will increase it?

## PSALMS 32, 33

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Felicitations to the Forgiven, and Examples of the Songs that they Sing.

### ANALYSIS

Part I., Psalm 32. Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Happy the Forgiven; yet Divine Discipline has sometimes to Drive to Confession. Stanza II., vers. 5, 6, Confession brings Pardon, and promotes Exhortation. Stanza III., ver. 7, Petitions prompted by Exhortation. Stanza IV., vers. 8, 9, Divine Response to Petitions. Stanza V., vers. 10, 11, A Moral and an Invitation.

Part II., Psalm 33. Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Praise to Jehovah urged by his Word, Work, and Character. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, Jehovah's Creatorship a Ground for Earth's Reverence. Stanza III., vers. 10-12, Jehovah Overruleth All Nations for the Good of his Own Nation. Stanza IV., vers. 13-17, Jehovah's Regard for All Nations should Wean them from Trust in Brute Force. Stanza V., vers. 18-22, Experience Gratefully Closes the Song.

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(Lm.) By David—An Instructive Psalm.

- 1 How happy is he—  
whose transgressions is forgiven,<sup>1</sup>  
whose sin is pardoned,<sup>2</sup>
- 2 How happy the man—  
to whom Jehovah reckoneth not iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- 3 When I refused to confess<sup>3</sup> my bones became old with my  
loud lamentation;<sup>4</sup>  
for day and night heavy on me was thy hand,—
- 4 I was changed into misery as when thorns smite me.<sup>5</sup>

1. *ML.*: "lifted off," "taken away."

2. *ML.*: "covered."

3. *ML.*: "when I kept silence."

4. *M.T.* adds: "all the day."

5. *So Br.*, after *Sep.*

PSALM THIRTY-TWO AND THIRTY-THREE

- 5 My sin I then made known to thee,  
and mine iniquity did I not cover:  
I said—"I will confess concerning my transgressions to  
Jehovah,"  
and thou didst forgive mine iniquity  
my sin didst pardon.<sup>1</sup>
- 6 For this cause let the<sup>2</sup> man of kindness pray unto thee in a  
time of distress.<sup>3</sup>  
At the outburst of waters unto him shall they not reach.
- 7 O thou my hiding-place! from distress wilt thou preserve me,  
with jubilations of deliverance wilt thou encompass me!
- 8 "I will give thee understanding—I will instruct thee in the  
way thou shouldst go,  
I will counsel thee—will fix<sup>4</sup> on thee mine eye.
- 9 Do not become as the horse as the mule—without under-  
standing,—  
having bridle and halter as his harness for holding him in."<sup>5</sup>
- 10 Many pains hath the lawless one,  
but he that trusteth in Jehovah kindness will encompass him.
- 11 Be glad in Jehovah and exult, O ye righteous ones;  
and ring out your joy, all ye upright in heart.

(Nm.)

PSALM 33

(Nm.)

- 1 Ring out your joy ye righteous in Jehovah,  
to the upright seemly is praise:
- 2 Give thanks to Jehovah with the lyre,  
with a lute of ten strings make melody to him:
- 3 Sing to him a song that is new,  
with skill sweep the strings with sacred shout.
- 4 For straightforward is the word of Jehovah,  
and all his work is in faithfulness.
- 5 He loveth righteousness and justice,  
of the kindness of Jehovah the earth is full.

1. Prob. *s-l-h* (= "pardon") was omitted because of its close resemblance to *s-l-h* (= *selah*).—see Br.

2. M.T.: "every."

3. So Br., reading *m-z-k* for *m-z'-r-k*. Cp. O.G. 848a.

4. So. Br. with Syriac.

5. M.T. adds: "he will not come near thee."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 6 By the word of Jehovah the heavens were made,  
and by the breath of his mouth all their host:
- 7 Gathering as into a skin the waters of the sea,  
delivering into treasuries the roaring<sup>1</sup> deep.
- 8 Let all the earth be in fear of Jehovah,  
of him stand in awe all the inhabitants of the world;
- 9 For he said Be!<sup>2</sup> and it was,  
he commanded and it stood forth.
- 10 Jehovah hath frustrated the counsel of nations,  
he hath brought to nothing the plans of the peoples.
- 11 The counsel of Jehovah to the ages shall stand,  
the plans of his heart to generation after generation.
- 12 How happy the nation whose God is Jehovah,  
the people he hath chosen as an inheritance for himself.
- 13 Out of the heavens hath Jehovah intently looked,  
he hath seen all the sons of mankind:
- 14 Out of his fixed place of abode hath he directed his gaze  
unto all the inhabitants of earth:—
- 15 Who fashioneth together their heart,  
who giveth heed unto all their doings.
- 16 Not the king can win victory by greatness of force,  
a mighty man will not deliver himself by greatness of  
strength:
- 17 A delusion is the horse for victory,<sup>3</sup>  
and by his greatness of force shall he not deliver.
- 18 Lo! the eye<sup>4</sup> of Jehovah is toward them who revere him,—  
to such as have waited for his kindness:
- 19 To rescue from death their soul,  
and to keep them alive in famine.
- 20 Our own soul hath longed for Jehovah,—  
our help and our shield is he.
- 21 For in him shall our heart rejoice  
for in his holy name have we trusted.
- 23 Be thy kindness O Jehovah upon us,  
according as we have waited for thee.

(Nm.)

1. Or: "primeval"—Br.

2. So Carter.

3. Or: "safety" (as Dr.)

4. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "eyes" (pl.)—Gn.



## PSALM THIRTY-TWO AND THIRTY-THREE

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 32

What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.

3 There was a time when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was.<sup>1</sup> But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration.

4 All day and all night Your hand was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day

5 Until I finally admitted all my sins to You and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess them to the Lord." And You forgave me! All my guilt is gone!

6 After this experience, I say that every believer should confess his sins to God as soon as he becomes aware of them, while there is yet time to be forgiven. If he does this, judgment will not touch him.<sup>2</sup>

7 You are my hiding place from every storm of life; You even keep me from getting into trouble! You surround me with songs of victory.

8 I will instruct you (says the Lord) and guide you along the best pathway for your life; I will advise you and watch your progress.

9 Don't be like a senseless horse or mule that has to have a bit in its mouth to keep it in line!

10 May sorrows come to the wicked, but adding love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

11 So rejoice in Him, all those who are His,<sup>3</sup> and shout for joy, all those who try to obey Him.<sup>4</sup>

#### PSALM 33

Let the joys of the godly well up in praise to the Lord, for it is right to praise Him.

2 Play joyous melodies of praise upon the lyre and on the harp!

1. Literally, "When I kept silence."

2. Literally, "When the great waters overflow they shall not reach him."

3. Literally, "You righteous."

4. Literally, "All who are upright in heart."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

3 Compose new songs of praise to Him, accompanied skillfully on the harp; sing joyfully.

4 For all God's words are right, and everything He does is worthy of our trust.

5 He loves whatever is just and good; the earth is filled with His tender love.

6 He merely spoke, and the heavens were formed, and all the galaxies of stars.

7 He made the oceans, pouring them into His vast reservoirs.

8 Let everyone in all the world—men, women and children—fear the Lord and stand in awe of Him.

9 For when He but spoke, the world began! It appeared at His command!

10 And all with a breath He can scatter the plans of all the nations who oppose Him,

11 But His own plan stands forever. His intentions are the same for every generation.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, whose people He has chosen as His own.

13, 14, 15 The Lord gazes down upon mankind from heaven where He lives. He has made their hearts and closely watches everything they do.

16, 17 The best-equipped army cannot save a king—for great strength is not enough to save anyone. A war horse is a poor risk for winning victories—it is strong but it cannot save.

18, 19 But the eyes of the Lord are watching over those who fear Him, who rely upon His steady love. He will keep them from death even in times of famine!

20 We depend upon the Lord alone to save us. Only He can help us, He protects us like a shield.

21 No wonder we are happy in the Lord! For we are trusting Him! We trust His holy name.

22 Yes, Lord, let Your constant love surround us, for our hopes are in You alone.

## EXPOSITION

"The headlines serve to individualize psalms . . . this fact will yield important results . . . There is no headline to Psalm 33, so on the surface it belongs to Psalm 32. A study of the material places the relation beyond question" (Thirtle, O.T.P.,

## PSALM THIRTY-TWO AND THIRTY-THREE

102). This witness is true; and, in the present case, adds quite an unusual interest to the sequence thus assumed. Kirkpatrick had already called attention to the close relationship between the two psalms. At the commencement of his comments on Ps. 33, he says: "The psalm begins by repeating the call to praise with which the preceding psalm closed, and recites the grounds on which Jehovah is worthy to be praised. It stands here as an answer to the invitation of 32:11, an example of the 'songs of deliverance' spoken of in 32:7. Yet it differs widely in character from Ps. 32. That psalm is an instruction based upon a particular personal experience; this is a congregational hymn of praise, arising (if indeed any special event inspired it) out of some national deliverance." If to these observations we add the suggestion, that it is when a man receives and enjoys the forgiveness of his personal sins, that he is prepared to unite "with all saints" in the celebration of public mercies, we shall perhaps have received the inwardness of the connection between these two psalms. Not that a single reference to the fact of such connection can by any means exhaust its fruitfulness. It is nothing less than thrilling, to hear David, when forgiven, calling out in spirit, to his son Hezekiah in 32:6; to think of the latter (32:7) coming into just such a *time of distress*; in imminent danger of being swept away by *the outburst of the mighty (Assyrian) waters* (cp. Isa. 8:7, 8); and that nevertheless they did not *reach* him. Thus in ver. 7 we may detect the response to ver. 6. The earlier verse said "Let him pray": in the later verse he does pray, and we seem to hear Hezekiah crying unto Jehovah, and promising at the close of his petitions the very thing that he promised more explicitly in Isa. 38:20. To complete the entwining of these bonds of connection between the two psalms, and Isaiah, it may be observed how admirably Ps. 33:10, 11 compares with Isa. 8:10, 14:24-27, 46:10.

To the reader who has grounded himself carefully in the text of these psalms, and has also grasped the illuminating connection between the two, little more assistance need be offered than a few brief notes on the successive groups of verses as they are rapidly passed in review.

Verses 1-4 (Ps. 32). The great thing here is to ponder well the undoubted truth, that unforgiven sin must sooner or later be punished. Second only to this, is the reflection, that un-

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

confessed sin cannot be forgiven. It follows that all Divine chastisements, which—falling short of capital punishment—are fitted to lead to the confessing and forsaking of sin, are administered in mercy, whatever instruments are used to inflict them. How much misery might be spared us, if we would sooner humbly confess our transgressions!

Verses 5-6. If sin can be pardoned, every other mercy may be hoped for and be made a subject of prayer. Hence the opening clause of ver. 6 is perhaps wider than "*For this*"—namely forgiveness. Rather does it suggest: That the man whose heart is touched by the Divine kindness may embolden himself to pray that a pardoning God would become a delivering God. In passing, we may note how well the various reading *distress* in ver. 6 prepares for the *distress* of ver. 7.

Verse 7. To perceive in this verse a response to the appeal of the previous, is to discover a reason for its abruptness and brevity. It is graphic: neither advice to pray, nor promise, but PRAYER. As already suggested: it seems like Hezekiah's practical response to David. What is stanzistical uniformity, compared with such tokens of life?

Verses 8, 9 are surely (with Kirkpatrick) Jehovah's words rather than (with Delitzsch and Perowne) the psalmist's. The reference to horse and mule seems to say, "Let us beware of becoming brutish, lest Divine Pity have to deal with us sternly."

Verses 10, 11. *The lawless one* reminds us of Rabshakeh 1:1 note, 9:17, and *he that trusteth in Jehovah* of Hezekiah (2 K. 18:5).

Verses 1-5 (Ps. 33). Jehovah is no "tribal God," as men sometimes mistakenly say: *With the kindness of Jehovah, the earth*, and not merely the land of Isarel, *is full*; for this alone leads on to what follows.

Verses 6-9. Creation is wide as the earth, and furnishes reason why all the *world* should *revere* Jehovah, who, as Hezekiah delights to tell us (Pss. 121:2, 134:3) is "Maker of heaven and earth."

Verses 10-12. Nevertheless vain are the *counsels* of the other *nations*, when directed against *the nation* whom Jehovah has *chosen as his own inheritance*.

Verses 13-17. Far from neglecting the nations, Jehovah severely discounts their trust in brute force.

## PSALM THIRTY-TWO AND THIRTY-THREE

Verses 18-22. He has a *watchful regard* for all who in any nation *revere him*; but happy are they who know him and trust him. So sings one of a remnant who can speak from experience of what Jehovah has done for their *own soul*: knowing what they do, they *long*, they *rejoice*, they *trust*, they *pray* they *wait!*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Paul felt the teaching of this psalm was very much a part of the joys of a Christian. Read Romans 4:6-8 and discuss; both as the psalm relates to David and as the truth relates to each of us.
2. Notice the "fourfold description of evil". Discuss the meaning of these four words: (1) transgression, (2) sin, (3) iniquity, (4) guile.
3. When we will not admit, confess and forsake our sin a terrible payment is exacted in our personality—in our physical bodies—in our minds. Discuss. Read verses 3 and 4.
4. What therapeutical value is there in confessing our sins "one to another?" (James 5:16); or should this be only a confession to God?
5. After we are forgiven we have a deep sense of security—relief, but our relationship to God does not end here; we are not to be like a horse or mule—howso? Discuss.

### Psalm 33

6. Are we to understand by verses one through three of this psalm that it is possible that a Hebrew without Christ had such joy in his heart that he actually expressed it in the manner here described? Discuss.
7. How can it be true that "of the kindness of Jehovah the earth is full" or "the earth is full of His tender love."?
8. "Hallowed be Thy name"! This was the first thought in the prayer of our Lord. When we consider the creation of our God is there any other response?
9. Jehovah is not only the God of creation—He is the God of history. Read and discuss verses 10 through 19 with this thought.
10. There is a way to be glad and have the highest hope. Read verses 20 through 22 for the divine formula. Make specific application of this to your life.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 34

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Alphabetical Psalm of Praise and Instruction.

#### ANALYSIS

For convenience, this psalm may be regarded as resolving itself into three stanzas of seven verses each, followed by a *Refrain*. Its chief contents are: Resolve to Praise, Invitation to Join, and a Manifesto of Principles to be Discovered in Jehovah's Government. Its principal Literary features are: its Alphabetical structure, with the Waw-stanza Absent, as if to make way for a Redemption-*Refrain* without exceeding Twenty-two verses. It responds, with its Predominant Praise, to Psalm 25 with its Burden of Prayer. For its probably Romantic Origin, see "Exposition."

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(Lm.)—By David—When he disguised his sanity before Abimelek;  
and he drove him away, and he departed.

- 1 Let me bless Jehovah at all times—  
continually be his praise in my mouth.
- 2 In Jehovah shall my soul boast—  
let the humble make it heard and be glad.
- 3 Ascribe ye greatness to Jehovah with me—  
and let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought after Jehovah and he answered me—  
and out of my terrors he rescued me.
- 5 They looked intently unto him and beamed—  
and their faces were not abashed.
- 6 This humbled one cried and Jehovah heard—  
and out of all his distresses saved him.
- 7 The messenger of Jehovah encamped  
around those revering him and rescued them.
- 8 Taste and see that good is Jehovah—  
how happy the man taking refuge in him.
- 9 Revere Jehovah ye his holy ones—  
for there is no lack to them who revere him.
- 10 Young lions have wanted and hungered—  
but they who seek after Jehovah lack not any good thing.

## PSALM THIRTY-FOUR

- 11 O come sons and hearken unto me—  
the reverence of Jehovah will I teach you.
- 12 Who is the man that taketh pleasure in life—  
loving days that he may see good?
- 13 Keep thy tongue from evil—  
and thy lips from speaking deceit:
- 14 Depart from evil and do good—  
aim at peace and pursue it.
- 16 The face of Jehovah is against the doers of evil—  
to cut off from the earth their remembrance.<sup>1</sup>
- 15 The eyes of Jehovah are towards the righteous—  
and his ears towards their cry for help.
- 17 They made outcry and Jehovah heard—  
and out of all their distresses delivered them.  
and the crushed in spirit he saveth.
- 19 Many are the misfortunes of the righteous—  
but out of them all Jehovah rescueth him.
- 20 He keepeth all his bones—  
not one from among them is broken.
- 21 Misfortune will slay the lawless one—  
and the haters of the righteous one shall be held guilty.
- 22 Jehovah ransometh the life<sup>2</sup> of his servants,  
and none shall be held guilty who take refuge in him.

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 34

I will praise the Lord no matter what happens. I will constantly speak of His glories and grace.<sup>3</sup>

2 I will boast of all His kindness to me. Let all who are discouraged take heart!

3 Let us praise the Lord together, and exalt His name.

1. That the -stanza originally stood before the -stanza, is deemed probable by Delitzsch; and is sustained by reference to Lam. 2:16, 17, 3:46-48, 49-51, 4:16, 17. Transposing vers. 15 and 16, accordingly, as above, causes the matter to run on consecutively, and makes it needless to *supply* the words "the righteous" in ver. 17, as is done in A.V., R.V. and Sep. The further effect of this transposition is to produce an Introverted Stanza, which devotes its first and last verses to the wicked, and all the intermediate verses to the righteous.

2. U.: "soul."

3. Literally, "His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

4 For I cried to Him and He answered me! He freed me from all my fears.

5 Others too were radiant at what He did for them. Theirs was no downcast look of rejection!

6 This poor man cried to the Lord—and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his troubles.

7 For the Angel of the Lord guards and rescues all who reverence Him.

8 Oh, put God to the test and see how kind He is! See for yourself the way His mercies shower down on all who trust in Him!

9 If you belong to the Lord, reverence Him; for everyone who does this has everything he needs.

10 Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those of us who reverence the Lord will never lack any good thing.

11 Sons and daughters, come and listen and let me teach you the importance of trusting and fearing the Lord.

12 Do you want a long, good life?

13 Then watch your tongue! Keep your lips from lying.

14 Turn from all known sin and spend your time in doing good. Try to live in peace with everyone; work hard at it.

15 For the eyes of the Lord are intently watching all who live good lives, and He gives attention when they cry to Him.

16 But the Lord has made up His mind to wipe out even the memory of evil men from the earth.

17 Yes, the Lord hears the good man when he calls to Him for help, and saves him out of all his troubles.

18 The Lord is close to those whose hearts are breaking; He rescues those who are humbly sorry for their sins.

19 The good man does not escape all troubles—he has them too. But the Lord helps him in each and every one.

20 God even protects him from accidents.

21 Calamity will surely overtake the wicked; heavy penalties are meted out to those who hate the good.

22 But as for those who serve the Lord, He will redeem them; everyone who takes refuge in Him will be freely pardoned.

## EXPOSITION

The *occasion* of this psalm, as stated in the ancient headlines, is sufficiently extraordinary to appear romantic, if not incredible. There is no need, however, to make the occasion



## PSALM THIRTY-FOUR

psychologically impossible, by overlooking the precise terms of the superscription; and assuredly the *prima-facie* evidence strongly suggests that such an account of the origin of the psalm could not easily have been placed where it is, had it been a mere afterthought. It would obviously be mere wanton oversight to suggest that David was disguising his sanity at the Court of King Achish (or Abimelek) and composing an acrostic at one and the same time. The legend distinctly enough points to David's *departure* from Gath; and suggests the question—Whither went he when he so departed? Learning as we do (from 1 Sam. 22) that it was to the cave of Adullam, probably less of an incommensurable hole in the rocks than a subterranean palace, large enough for multitudes to hide in, and comfortable enough to afford accommodation for David's father and mother,—as we think of all this,—incredulity begins to retire, and an almost fascinating romance steps into its place. All sorts of realistic questions come to our aid. Did not David, in all probability, reach the cave of Adullam nearly alone? Ere yet comrades gathered to him, how spent he his time? What sort of man was he? Was he not devout? Was he not a poet and a musician? In his fleeing from place to place, did he never contrive to have his harp near him? A worshipper—a poet—a harpist—yea, and possessing an oriental memory, with genius enough in him to contrive those acrostics to aid it,—how far yet are we from the atmosphere of the credible? And then, supposing he had with him no writing-skins, were there no rock surfaces available for such a record? It is true, these are mere tentative questions; but at any rate they are ventilated in the interests of an indubitably ancient inscription: which inscription, be it said, was no more probable invention, than it was of easy insertion, when once the psalm had been continuously and closely written on tablet or parchment, and safely deposited in David's palace library! Books were not then printed in thousands and scattered broadcast, that their readings should be tampered with by every scribe, and wild fancies gain admission and insertion by the royal librarian!

Turning now to the *structure* of this psalm, the two things which claim our attention are: first, that it is alphabetical or an abecedarian acrostic; and, second, that the letter *waw* is wanting, raising the enquiry—*Why?* As to the mere fact that it is alphabetical, there is this to add to a former suggestion, that such an arrangement may, under conceivable circumstances, have

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

been due as much to the exigencies of the composer, as to his desire to help the memory of his readers (or hearers, when books were few). Not only were books few for readers; but occasionally papyrus or skins were scarce for authors. The absence of *waw* from the alphabetical arrangement, points to the suppression of a stanza, not for the purpose of reducing the lines to 21 (or 3 times 7) as Briggs suggests, but rather to make way for the additional REDEMPTION stanza at the end, without exceeding the number 22.

As to the *sentiments* of this psalm, they are in any case remarkable, and that for several reasons. The quiet, didactic character of the psalm, naturally springs from its artificial structure. That it should reveal clear kinship with what is now frequently called Wisdom Literature, is not to be denied, but by no means betokens a late date for that reason. Before conceding that, it would be well to inquire from whom the Wisdom Literature first sprang; and the opinion may again be hazarded, as when we first observed a strain of this is Ps. 18, that probably it should be traced back to the prophet Samuel, as familiarised by him in his school for the sons of the prophets. If so, even apart from especial Divine illumination, we need feel no surprise at the occasional appearance of such sententious moralising in David's own psalms as we find here. When we next observe the air of lofty faith and calm joy which pervades this psalm, we begin to feel that we are treading upon holy ground. David had godly parents. His youth, spent in keeping his father's sheep, was given to devout meditation. He had come into contact with Samuel, whom doubtless he regarded with great veneration. Besides all which, since the holy oil of anointing had been poured on his head, he had known the mighty inworking of the Spirit of Jehovah. He had a great destiny in store for him, and he knew it; and however long he might have to wait for its realisation, he knew that those noble heights would ultimately be attained. All these were formative influences of no common order; and, therefore, while we admire the lofty devotion of this psalm, we refrain from incredulous wonder; and it no longer seems impossible to the elasticity of David's devout—as yet unspoiled—young manhood, and after several hairbreadth escapes, he should find the very cave of Adullam converted into a temple, as its spacious vaults echoed to his well-handled harp. We have not forgotten the motley crew that gathered about him in this romantic glen, nor do we doubt that it numbered some ne'er-do-

## PSALM THIRTY-FOUR

wells; but, on the other hand, we may well surmise, that it included some of the finest spirits in Israel. Under such conditions, this restrained acrostic psalm almost palpitates with the life and fire of an oration. We catch the singer's glance around as he exclaims—*Ascribe ye greatness to Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together.* Having made his own personal contribution to holy memories by saying—*I inquired of Jehovah, and he answered me,* he notes a group of witnesses to Divine faithfulness, and sings of them—*They looked unto him and beamed, and their faces were not abashed;* when, observing one signal trophy of Jehovah's faithfulness, standing or reclining near him, he subdues his voice to say—*This humbled one cried, and Jehovah heard, and out of all his distresses saved him.* And so forth: calling to a group of doubters—*O taste and see!* then to group of listless young men—*O come, sons, and hearken unto me!* tendering them some excellent advice. But he must needs nerve his comrades to enter boldly into the strife between sin and righteousness, and so rises to that trumpet-like stanza with which the psalm concludes. Happy was Hezekiah to have such a literary treasure in the Royal Library, to pair off with the 25th: adding to that the note of Redemption as an imperial need, and to this the answering not of Redemption in realisation.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. To read this psalm is to think that the psalmist is busy counting his blessings—name five blessings here listed. Show how they relate to life today.
2. So often we read the phrase “praise the Lord”—just what is involved in this practice?
3. Isn't it selfish to boast in the Lord because of what He has done for us?
4. There is a difference in being saved “out of your troubles” and being saved “from” your troubles—Discuss.
5. Verses nine and ten are surely unqualified in their promises—or are they?
6. Discuss the formula for a long life. Cf. vs. 12.
7. The “good man” of vs. 17 f.f. must be someone who does not sin—it this the meaning? Discuss.
8. The Lord takes an intimate interest in the lives of His children—is this always known only in retrospect?

## PSALM 35

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayers against Open and Concealed Enemies,  
followed by Promises of Praise.

### ANALYSIS

Three irregular stanzas. Stanza I., vers. 1-10, An Indignant Imprecatory prayer against False Accusers—especially against One. Stanza II., vers. 11-18. A Succession of Accusers, including Former Friends, Wound the petitioner to the Quick. Stanza III., vers. 19-28, A Probable Supplement contains a Prayer for Vindication against Concealed Enemies whose Chief Weapon is Insinuation.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Accuse O Jehovah mine accusers—  
war on them who war on me;
- 2 Grasp shield and buckler—  
and arise in my help;
- 3 Then draw the spear—  
and close up<sup>1</sup> against my pursuers:  
Say to my soul—"Thy salvation<sup>2</sup> am I!"
- 4 Put to shame and confounded be they who are seeking my  
life,<sup>3</sup>  
turned back and abashed be they who are devising my hurt:<sup>4</sup>
- 5 Let them become as chaff before the wind—  
with the messenger of Jehovah pursuing<sup>5</sup> them,
- 6 Let their way be dark and slippery—  
with the messenger of Jehovah thrusting<sup>6</sup> them down.
- 7 For without cause have they hid for me their net,  
without cause have they digged a pit for my life.<sup>6</sup>
- 8 May there reach him<sup>7</sup> a ruin he could not know,

1. Perh. supply "the way." Per. and others take *sgr* as a noun="battle-axe."

2. Or: "deliverance," "victory."

3. U.: "soul."

4. Cp. 70:2.

5. Most critics suspect here an accidental transposition in the Heb.

6. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

7. As if thinking of a chief individual—such as Doeg.

PSALM THIRTY-FIVE

and let his own net which he hath hidden capture him,—  
into the pit that he digged let him fall.

- 9 Then my soul will exult in Jehovah—  
will exult in his salvation.<sup>1</sup>
- 10 All my bones will say “Jehovah! who is like unto thee—  
rescuing the humbled from one stronger than he,  
yea, the humbled and needy, from his spoiler?”
- 11 There keep rising up witnesses promoting violence—  
of what I know not they question me:
- 12 They repay me evil for good—  
a bereavement to my soul.<sup>2</sup>
- 13 But as for me when they were mortally wounded my clothing  
was sackcloth!  
I humbled with fasting my soul,  
though my prayer on mine own bosom might return;<sup>3</sup>
- 14 Like as for a friend like as for mine own brother I bowed  
myself down,<sup>4</sup>  
Like as one mourning for a mother I gloomily walked to  
and fro.<sup>4</sup>
- 15 But when I stumbled they rejoiced and thronged together,  
there thronged together against me smiters and I knew not,  
they cried out<sup>5</sup> and were not silent:
- 16 Amidst profane praters of perversion<sup>6</sup> have they gnashed  
upon me their teeth.
- 17 My Sovereign Lord! how long wilt thou look on?  
Recover my soul from their ravages—  
from lions my solitary self.
- 18 I will thank thee in a large assembly,<sup>7</sup>  
amidst a numerous people will I praise thee.
- 19 Let not those rejoice over me who are my foes for false  
reason,  
nor those who hate me without cause wink the eye;
- 20 For no salutation do they utter,

1. Or: “victory.”

2. “Such conduct makes him feel as desolate as a childless mother”—Kp.

3. “And my prayer—may it return into mine own bosom” (“so true a prayer was it”)—Per.

4. *Gt.* “bowed down” and “walked to and fro” should be thus transposed  
—Gn.

5. Cp. *G.* Intro. 144.

6. Or: “as profane men, mockers for cake”—O.G.

7. As in 22:25.

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- but against the quiet of the land treacherous things do they devise;
- 21 And they have opened wide against me their mouth—  
they have said—“Aha! Aha! our eye hath seen!”<sup>1</sup>
- 22 Thou hast seen O Jehovah do not be silent;  
my Sovereign Lord! be not far from me:
- 23 Bestir thyself and wake up to my vindication O my God—  
yea my Sovereign Lord to my plea.
- 24 Vindicate me according to thy righteousness Jehovah my  
God,—  
and let them not rejoice over me.
- 25 Let them not say in their heart—“Aha! our desire!”<sup>2</sup>  
let them not say—“We have swallowed him up!”
- 26 Put to shame and at once abashed be they who are rejoicing  
at my hurt,  
Clothed with shame and confusion be they who are  
magnifying themselves against me.
- 27 Let them ring out their joy and be glad who are desiring my  
justification,  
and let them say continually—“Magnified be Jehovah<sup>3</sup>  
who hath taken pleasure in the prosperity of his servant!”
- 28 And my tongue shall talk to me of thy righteousness—  
all the day long of thy praise.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 35

O Lord, fight those fighting me; declare war on them for their attacks on me.

2 Put on Your armor, take Your shield and protect me by standing in front.

3 Lift Your spear in my defense, for my pursuers are getting very close! Let me hear You say that You will save me from them!

4 Dishonor those who are trying to kill me! Turn them back and confuse them.

5 Blow them away like chaff in the wind—wind sent by the Angel of the Lord.

1. Cp. 70:3.

2. Ml.: “our soul.”

3. Cp. 70:4.

## PSALM THIRTY-FIVE

6 Make their path dark and slippery before them, with the Angel of the Lord pursuing them.

7 For though I did them no wrong, yet they laid a trap for me and dug a pitfall in my path.

8 Let them be overtaken by sudden ruin, caught in their own net, and destroyed.

9 But I will rejoice in the Lord. He shall rescue me!

10 From the bottom of my heart praise rises to Him. Where is His equal in all of heaven and earth? Who else protects the weak and helpless from the strong, and the poor and needy from those who would rob them?

11 These evil men swear to a lie. They accuse me of things I have never even heard about.

12 I do them good, but they return me harm. I am sinking down to death.

13 When they were ill, I mourned before the Lord in sackcloth, asking Him to make them well; I refused to eat; I prayed for them with utmost earnestness, but God did not listen.

14 I went about sadly as though it were my mother, friend or brother who was sick and nearing death.

15 But now that I am in trouble they are glad; they come together in meetings filled with slander against me—I didn't even know some of those who were there.

16 For they gather with the worthless fellows of the town and spend their time cursing me.

17 Lord, how long will You stand there, doing nothing? Act now and rescue me, for I have but one life and these young lions are out to get it.

18 Save me, and I will thank You publicly before the entire congregation, before the largest crowd I can find.

19 Don't give victory to those who fight me without any reason! Don't let them rejoice<sup>1</sup> at my fall—let them die.

20 They don't talk of peace and doing good, but of plots against innocent men who are minding their own business.

21 They shout that they have seen me doing wrong! "Aha!" they say, "With our own eyes we saw him do it."

22 Lord, You know all about it. Don't stay silent! Don't desert me now!

23 Rise up, O Lord my God; vindicate me.

1. Literally, "Wink with the eye."

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24 Declare me "not guilty," for You are just.<sup>1</sup> Don't let my enemies rejoice over me in my troubles.

25 Don't let them say, "Aha! Our dearest wish against him will soon be fulfilled!" and, "At last we have him!"

26 Shame them; let these who boast against me and who rejoice at my troubles be themselves overcome by misfortune that strips them bare of everything they own. Bare them to dishonor.

27 But give great joy to all who wish me well. Let them shout with delight, "Great is the Lord who enjoys helping His child!"<sup>2</sup>

28 And I will tell everyone how great and good You are; I will praise You all day long.

## EXPOSITION

Probably the endeavour to get at the authorship of this psalm, will go further than the pursuit of any other line of enquiry, to place the meaning of the psalm within our grasp. The psalm as a whole is inscribed to *David*, nor is there the slightest perceptible reason to doubt the validity of this inscription, especially so long as we confine ourselves to Stanzas I. and II. When careful attention is bestowed on Stanza III., little by little we recognise a difference between the tone of this and that of the previous two; and this perception makes the Davidic authorship of what has gone before, still more evident than it was at first. There is a difference, however, even between Stanzas I., and II. also,—to lay hold of which is to become more completely penetrated than ever with the assurance that David wrote both these stanzas, but under the domination of two successive moods. The governing note of Stanza I. is indignation: that of Stanza II. is wounded love. The indignation is fiery, and finds vent in imprecation (Cp. on 69)—nothing is too bad to ask from Jehovah in avengement of the wrong the petitioner has received from his enemies at court, especially from one of them. But when, in the second stanza, his memory passes from the supreme wrong this one has done him, to other false witnesses that come up before his mind, and he recalls his intimate friendship with some of them, indignation melts into a wail of anguish, as he remembers how keenly *he* had suffered in

1. Literally, "Judge me according to Your righteousness."

2. Literally, "Servant."



## PSALM THIRTY-FIVE

their behalf when *they* were in trouble. He perceives all the meanness of their conduct—all the perfidy of it; but he does not imprecate. He looks their ingratitude and treachery full in the face; the enormous wrong they have done him is revolting, like the *ravages of lions*; but he cannot curse them. He has been robbed of the precious jewel of friendship, and he feels it as a mother feels the loss of her children. All he can do in resentment, is to ask how long his Sovereign Lord will look on. It is David all over: both stanzas are from David—if we know anything of David: David at the court of Saul, with jealous courtiers passing in and out before the king, suddenly asking ensnaring questions, throwing out innuendoes, to David's hurt to which no reply can at once be made. The most casual reader can see this situation reflected in the first stanza; nor does anyone need to be told how exquisitely fitted for friendship was the son of Jesse, and therefore how open to feel the anguish so graphically portrayed in the second stanza. It is not so easy at first to realise the change of situation which almost imperceptibly comes into view in Stanza III. Kirkpatrick recognises the change of tone, as is evident from his anticipatory summary of it: "19-28. Renewed prayer in a somewhat calmer tone." But something more than the "tone" here changes: very informally is here introduced a new situation. In a word, it is no longer David who writes; but rather Prince Hezekiah, in the latter years of his father's degenerate reign; as the prince's ripening godly manhood moves to concealed hatred the sycophants at his father's court. The writer notes with some vexation the withholding of a *salutation* which he was well-entitled to expect, he is intimate with *the quiet of the land*, learns the *treacherous things* that are *devised against them*, and hears the malicious insinuations thrown out regarding himself. The injured one is no longer the high-spirited warrior of Stanza I., nor the wounded personal friend of Stanza II., but one who can afford to wait a little and yet eagerly looks forward to *vindication*—a vindication which will cover his detractors with shame. If, *as prince*, the writer penned this stanza—or at least *lived* it, it may well have been *as king* that he added to it the beautiful climax which now brings it to a conclusion; and fitted it to be soon passed on *To the Chief Musician*. The Refrains to this psalm contribute something material towards the exegesis of the whole. In the first place they serve to mark real divisions in the psalm where otherwise the lines of transition would be less perceptible. It cannot,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

for example, be denied, that vers. 9, 10 form a natural resting-place. And this assists the perception that, although the second stanza, resumes the same general thought, yet it is with a difference: the one enemy is lost sight of by the succession of accusers which comes into view, bringing in those perfidious friends who cause such anguish to the psalmist's mind. Then the close of the second stanza, in vers. 17, 18, is especially arresting, inasmuch as each verse strongly reminds us of Ps. 22: the *lions* recalling vers. 13 and 21 of that psalm, and the *solitary self* its 20th verse; the *large assembly* also linking itself with the same not very usual designation in ver. 25 of Ps. 22;—small things in themselves, it may be thought; but if, as we saw reason to suppose, they came from David's pen in the earlier psalm, then the probability is increased that David wrote them here. Again, the strong climax here reached, distinctly awakens us to note with some surprise that, however well the psalm might have ended here, in point of fact it does not; and so, however quiet the transition to what follows and however neat the "seam" of attachment thereby formed, yet we really do enter upon a new situation as well as perceive a calmer tone. Needless to say the actual conclusion of the psalm, vers. 27, 28, are in every way worthy of that UPRIGHT KING whose harp (Isaiah 38:20) was solemnly enlisted to celebrate the triumphant *vindication* that ultimately came, and which, when it did come, awoke the respectful acknowledgements of all nations.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If we only understood the circumstances of this psalm, we would feel the writer was generous in his attitude toward his enemies—is this possible? Discuss.
2. There are several figures of speech used to describe the help of the Lord—(cf. vs. 2f.f.). Can we use them for today?
3. Read from verse one through eight—six or seven calamities are wished upon the wicked—have we ever lived in such a way that the Lord answered the wish of the psalmist in our lives? Discuss.
4. When we try to imagine all of the calamities that could have come our way we are constrained to ask why they didn't? Read verse 10 for some help in this question.
5. Here is a commentary on the schemes of sinners—notice the use of the God-given abilities to oppose God.

## PSALM THIRTY-FIVE AND THIRTY-SIX

6. In the midst of trouble David thanks God—what a lesson for us. How do we develop this capacity?
7. The words of Graham Scroggie are so good here—“Have you ever felt the thrill of doing something really great? If not, begin by singing a song in the night of your present, or next trouble.—*Feet of lead, and a sore head: but daring wings for him who sings.*” (*Psalms* p. 207, 208)

## PSALM 36

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Oracles False and True, Prompting Prayer and Praise.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Personified Transgression Deluding and Driving on its Victim. Stanza II., vers 5, 6, Jehovah's Kindness with its Associated Divine Attributes. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, Jehovah's Kindness Experienced by Men. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, Prayer for Protection, suddenly Giving Place to Triumph.

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(Lm.) By the Servant of Jehovah—by David.

- 1 An oracle of transgression<sup>1</sup> hath the lawless one in the midst of his heart,  
there is no dread of God<sup>2</sup> in the sight of his eyes;
- 2 For it flattereth him as to finding out his hateful iniquity:<sup>3</sup>
- 3 the words of his mouth are trouble and deceit—  
he hath ceased to act circumspectly:
- 4 To make trouble thoroughly he deviseth on his bed;  
he taketh his stand on a way not good—  
evil doth he not refuse.
- 5 Jehovah! in the heavens is thy kindness,  
thy faithfulness reacheth as far as the clouds:
- 6 thy righteousness is like the mountains of GOD,  
and thine act of justice are a great deep,—  
Man and beast thou savest Jehovah!

1. Graphic: Transgression deified, enthroned in the heart of the lawless one, uttering misleading oracles.

2. The lowest form of respect for Divine things—absent.

3. For various explanations of this verse, see Per.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 7 How precious is thy kindness O God!  
and the sons of men in the shadow of thy wings take refuge:  
8 They are satisfied<sup>1</sup> with the rich provisions of thy house,  
and of the full stream of thine own delights thou causest  
them to drink;  
9 For with thee is the fountain of life.  
when thou shinest<sup>2</sup> light appeareth.<sup>3</sup>  
10 Prolong thy kindness to them who know thee,  
and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.  
11 Do not suffer to invade me the foot of pride,  
nor the hand of lawless ones to make me a fugitive.<sup>4</sup>  
12 There are fallen the workers of iniquity,<sup>5</sup>  
thrust down and not able to rise!

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 36

Sin lurks deep in the hearts of the wicked, forever urging them on to evil deeds. They have no fear of God to hold them back.

2 Instead, in their conceit, they think they can hide their evil deeds and not get caught.

3 Everything they say is crooked and deceitful; they are no longer wise and good.

4 They lie awake at night to hatch their evil plots, instead of planning how to keep away from wrong.

5 Your steadfast love, O Lord, is as great as all the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds!

6 Your justice is as solid as God's mountains. Your decisions are as full of wisdom as the oceans are with water. You are as concerned<sup>6</sup> for men and animals alike!

7 How precious is Your constant love, O God! All humanity takes refuge in the shadow of Your wings!

8 You feed them with blessings from Your own table and let them drink from Your rivers of delight.

1. *Ms.*: "saturated."

2. "Lettest the light shine from thy face, as *Pss.* 4:7, 44:4, 89:16—*Br.*

3. With *Br.*, read (niph'al) *nir'ah*, rather than (kal) *nir'eh*.

4. *Cp.* 31:22.

5. *Or.*: "trouble" ("naughtiness"—*Dr.*).

6. Literally, "You preserve."

## PSALM THIRTY-SIX

9 For You are the Fountain of Life; our light is from Your Light.

10 Pour out Your unfailing love on those who know You! Never stop giving Your salvation<sup>1</sup> to those who long to do Your will.

11 Don't let these proud men trample me. Don't let their wicked hands push me around.

12 Look! They have fallen. They are thrown down and will not rise again.

### EXPOSITION

It is easy to assert that this is a composite psalm, and yet fail to grasp its life-history. Composite it manifestly is, in that its component parts undoubtedly came into existence on distinct and successive occasions, but none the less does it now stand before us as a living unit. Starting with *David*, as in duty bound by the superscript line exhibiting a palace-library tradition behind which we cannot go; and with *David*—probably in his strength of devotion to Jehovah, as if by reason of some signal service rendered by his heroic faith, and so with *David* as emphatically *the servant of Jehovah*;—we awake to the perception that in Stanza I. we have such a startling picture of practical Atheism as could never have been sung alone. Acting as a moral tonic, this fragment prompts the mind that selected it, to appease Devotion's hunger, by finding a fragrant antidote to the poison of Lawlessness to which for some reason it was desired to give currency. This antidote is discovered in the beautiful Song, probably equally Davidic, which now forms Stanzas II. and III. of our psalm: a song, first glowing with all the beauty of Jehovah's *kindness*, as sustained and strengthened by the associate attributes of *faithfulness*, *righteousness* and *justice*; and then eliciting the appreciation of *the sons of men*, as they are thereby drawn *under the shadow of Jehovah's wings*, emboldened to partake of *the rich provisions of Jehovah's house*, and even to *drink of the full stream of Jehovah's delights*. A notable song, indeed; well serving as an antidote to the deadly *oracle of transgression* which here precedes it. But who could find these fragments,—who feel the need to risk the circulation of the poison, and yet lay ready hand on so effective a counter-

1. Literally, "Your righteousness."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

active? We can conjecture who it was, as soon as we can discover among David's sons a man who could see the chilling shadow of another Lawless One extending over the land; and yet, in the face of it, could still sing in faith the antidote Song: especially if, in this inheritor of the Sweet Singer's mantle, we can discover a CO-AUTHOR, who has the gift to adapt these fragments to a new and urgent occasion, and the authority to get them sung. Thus prompted, we eagerly scan the final stanza of this psalm; and by the time we have read its first couplet and found all the previous praise turned into PRAYER, we bethink us of the man who *knew* Jehovah, who was undoubtedly *upright in heart* but still had urgent need to PRAY! the name of the man is on our lips! But before we pronounce it, we read another couplet; and since this couplet apprehends *invasion* and deprecates *the flight of a fugitive*, we hesitate no longer to pronounce the name: it is HEZEKIAH! But there is this more to be said. The entire life-history of this psalm is chequered. This final stanza, we must believe, at first only mounted a little higher in prayer, or concluded with trustful benediction. Soon was the prayer answered; soon, the trustful benediction vindicated; and the same hand that wrote it, gladly erased enough to make way for the thrilling announcement:—

*There are fallen the workers of trouble,  
Thrust down, and not able to rise!*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Romans 3:18 and consider the New Testament application of the first verse of this psalm. How does the "fear of God" relate to today's world?
2. Isn't it possible that many men have hidden their evil deeds—and died with the secrets untold? Discuss.
3. What presses the evil man to so urgently to do wrong when doing right would be less trouble for everyone? Please do not answer—"Satan does"—we want the reasoning of Satan in our answer; give it!
4. List the qualities of God which call forth admiration—which one obtains from you the highest admiration? Why?
5. Name and discuss at least two "Rivers of delight" from which all humanity drinks.

## PSALM THIRTY-SEVEN

### PSALM 37

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Alphabetical Exhortation to Patience in Well-Doing, notwithstanding the Temporary Prosperity of the Lawless.

#### ANALYSIS

It is not easy to resolve this psalm into any other stanzas than those small ones formed by the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet. The Chief Burden of the psalm is the Seeming Inequity of the Divine Treatment of the Righteous and the Wicked: for the removal of which a Time-Solution is mainly relied on (see "Exposition"), while various Other Qualifying Considerations are Suggested.

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(Lm.)—By David.

- 1 Do not burn with vexation because of evil-doers,  
be not envious of the workers of perversity;
- 2 For like grass will they speedily wither,  
and like fresh grass will they fade.
- 3 Trust in Jehovah and do good,  
settle down in the earth<sup>1</sup> and pasture with confidence;
- 4 So shalt thou find exquisite delight in Jehovah,  
and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.
- 5 Roll on Jehovah thy way,  
trust thou also in him,—and he will effectually work;
- 6 So will he bring forth as the light thy righteousness,  
and thy justice<sup>2</sup> as noon-day.
- 7 Be still<sup>3</sup> as to Jehovah, and wait longingly for him;  
do not burn with vexation at him who is making prosperous  
his way,  
at the man who is bringing wicked devices to pass.
- 8 Desist from anger and forsake wrath,  
do not burn with vexation at the doing of evil;<sup>4</sup>

1. Or: "land," and so throughout, vers. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34. All depends on the breadth of the outlook.

2. Or: "vindication."

3. Dr.: "resigned."

4. So w. Br.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 9 For evil-doers shall be cut off,  
but they who wait for Jehovah—they shall inherit the earth.
- 10 Yet a little then and the lawless one will not be,  
though thou attentively consider his place yet will he not be;
- 11 But humble ones shall inherit the earth,  
and find exquisite delight in the abundance of prosperity.
- 12 Plotting is a lawless man against a righteous,  
and gnashing at him with his teeth:
- 13 My Sovereign Lord will laugh at him,  
for he seeth that his day will come.
- 14 A sword have lawless men drawn out,  
and have trodden their bow;  
to bring down the humbled and needy,  
to slaughter the upright in life:<sup>1</sup>
- 15 Their sword shall enter their own heart,  
and their bows shall be broken.
- 16 Better the little of a righteous man  
than the abundance of many lawless;
- 17 For the arms of lawless men shall be broken,  
but an upholder of righteous men is Jehovah.
- 18 Jehovah knoweth the days of the blameless,  
and their inheritance to the ages<sup>2</sup> shall be:
- 19 They shall not be put to shame in the time of calamity,  
but in the days of famine shall they be satisfied.
- 20 For the lawless shall perish,  
and the enemies of Jehovah shall be cut off:  
Yea while in high esteem while exalted have they vanished,  
like smoke have they vanished.<sup>3</sup>
- 21 A lawless man borroweth and doth not repay,  
but a righteous man is gracious and giveth.
- 22 For such as are blessed of him shall inherit the earth,  
but such as are accursed of him shall be cut off.
- 23 Of Jehovah are a man's steps rendered firm,  
when in his way he taketh pleasure:
- 24 Though he fall he shall not be cast headlong,  
for Jehovah is upholding his hand.
- 25 Young have I been, and now am old,

Cp. 1. Or: "behaviour." *Ms.*: "way." Some *cod.* (*w.* *Sep.* and *Vul.*): "heart."  
7:10—*Gn.*

2. *Ms.* "to concealed duration."

3. So in the main, *w.* *Br.*, after *Sep.*



## PSALM THIRTY-SEVEN

- yet have I not seen a righteous man forsaken  
 or his seed begging bread:
- 26 All day long is he gracious and bending,  
 and his seed is for a blessing.
- 27 Depart from evil and do good,  
 and settle down to the ages;<sup>1</sup>
- 28 For Jehovah loveth justice,  
 and will not forsake his men of kindness.  
 To the ages<sup>1</sup> have perverse men been destroyed,<sup>2</sup>  
 and the seed of lawless men hath been cut off:
- 29 Righteous men shall inherit the earth,  
 and settle down to futurity thereon.
- 30 The mouth of a righteous man talketh to him<sup>3</sup> of wisdom,  
 and his tongue speaketh of justice:
- 31 The law of his God is in his heart,  
 his steps shall not slide.
- 32 A lawless man spieth upon a righteous,  
 and seeketh to put him to death:
- 33 Jehovah will not leave him in his hand,  
 nor condemn him when he is judged.
- 34 Wait thou for Jehovah and observe his way,  
 and he will exalt thee to inherit the earth:  
 on the cutting off of lawless men shalt thou gaze.
- 35 I have seen a lawless man ruthless,<sup>4</sup>  
 and spreading himself out like a cedar of Lebanon;<sup>5</sup>
- 36 Then have I<sup>6</sup> passed by and lo! he was not,  
 yea I sought him and he was not to be found.
- 37 Mark the blameless man and behold the upright,  
 for there is a future for the man of peace;<sup>7</sup>
- 38 But transgressors have been destroyed together,  
 the future of lawless men hath been cut off.
- 39 But the salvation of righteous men is from Jehovah,  
 their stronghold in the time of distress;

1. *ML.*: "to concealed duration."

2. So it shd. be (*w. Sep., Vul.*); cp. v. 38—*Gn.*

3. *Or.*: "soliloquiseth."

4. "As a terrible one"—*Dr.*

5. So it shd. be (*w. Sep., Syr.*); cp. Hosea 14:6—*Gn.*

6. So it shd. be (*w. Aram., Sep., Vul.*)—*Gn.*

7. By general consent, this is the true construction of the sentence: "the man of peace" is the "subject," of whom something is affirmed. As to what that something is, see above rendering and the "Exposition."

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40 And Jehovah will help them and deliver them,  
will deliver them from lawless men and will save them,  
because they have taken refuge in him.

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 37

Never envy the wicked!

2 Soon they fade away like grass and disappear.

3 Trust in the Lord instead. Be kind and good to others;  
then you will live safely here in the land and prosper, feeding  
in safety.

4 Be delighted with the Lord! Then He will give you all  
your heart's desires.

5 Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him to help  
you do it and He will.

6 Your innocence will be clear to everyone. He will vindicate  
you with the blazing light of justice shining down as from  
the noonday sun.

7 Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him to act. Don't  
be envious of evil men who prosper.

8 Stop your anger! Turn off your wrath. Don't fret and  
worry—it only leads to harm.

9 For the wicked shall be destroyed, but those who trust  
the Lord shall be given every blessing.

10 Only a little while and the wicked shall disappear. You  
will look for them in vain.

11 But all who humble themselves before the Lord shall be  
given every blessing, and shall have wonderful peace.

12, 13 The Lord is laughing at those who plot against the  
godly, for He knows their judgment day is coming.

14 Evil men take aim to slay the poor; they are ready to  
butcher those who do right.

15 But their swords will be plunged into their own hearts  
and all their weapons will be broken.

16 It is better to have little and be godly than to own an  
evil man's wealth;

17 For the strength of evil men shall be broken, but the  
Lord takes care of those He has forgiven.<sup>1</sup>

1. Literally, "the righteous."

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18 Day by day the Lord observes the good deeds done by godly men,<sup>1</sup> and gives them eternal rewards.

19 He cares for them when times are hard; even in famine, they will have enough.

20 But evil men shall perish. These enemies of God will wither like grass, and disappear like smoke.

21 Evil men borrow and "cannot pay it back"! But the good man returns what he owes with some extra besides.

22 Those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the earth; but those cursed by Him shall die.

23 The steps of good men are directed by the Lord. He delights in each step they take.

24 If they fall it isn't fatal, for the Lord holds them with His hand.

25 I have been young and now I am old. And in all my years I have never seen the Lord forsake a man who loves Him; nor have I seen the children of the godly go hungry.

26 Instead, the godly are able to be generous with their gifts and loans to others, and their children are a blessing.

27 So if you want an eternal home leave your evil, low-down ways and live good lives.

28 For the Lord loves justice and fairness; He will never abandon His people. They will be kept safe forever; but all who love wickedness shall perish.

29 The godly shall be firmly planted in the land, and live there forever.

30, 31 The godly man is a good counselor because he is just and fair and knows right from wrong.

32 Evil men spy on the godly, waiting for an excuse to accuse them and then demanding their death!

33 But the Lord will not let these evil men succeed, or let the godly be condemned when they are brought before the judge.

34 Don't be impatient for the Lord to act! Keep steadily along His pathway and in due season He will honor you with every blessing,<sup>2</sup> and you will see the wicked destroyed.

35, 36 I myself have seen it happen: a proud and evil man, towering like a cedar of Lebanon, but when I looked again, he was gone! I searched but could not find him!

37 But the good man—what a different story! For the good

1. Literally, "knows the days of the upright."

2. Literally, "to possess the land."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

man—the blameless, the upright, the man of peace—he has a wonderful future ahead of him. For him there is a happy ending.

38 But evil men shall be destroyed, and their posterity shall be cut off.

39 The Lord saves the godly! He is their salvation and their refuge when trouble comes.

40 Because they trust in Him, He helps them and delivers them from the plots of evil men.

## EXPOSITION

While the artificial character of this psalm as an *alphabetical acrostic*, and its practical aim to encourage saints in well-doing, fully account for all that is discursive in it; it is obviously weighted with the great moral problem—How to account for the undeniable facts, that the lawless are often prosperous in life, whereas the righteous are not infrequently called to pass through adversity. How these facts can be reconciled with the gracious equity of God, is a problem which in all ages has perplexed observant and thoughtful minds; and many parts of Holy Scripture are devoted to endeavours to solve the problem; among them, the book of Job and several psalms are conspicuous. Among such psalms, this one and Pss. 49 and 73 are worthy of special mention; the present one being remarkable for its buoyant courage in confronting the difficulty; the 49th, for the beauty of its form in stating the problem and the unexpected and irregular way in which its solution is proposed; and the 73rd, for the revelation it makes of a soul's struggles before it successfully rises above doubt. They are indeed a remarkable triad of psalms, specially devoted to this very grave, but yet most fascinating theme.

This psalm boldly meets the difficulty by presenting *time* as the chief solution. Subsidiary mitigations, no doubt, are simultaneously presented, to console the suffering saint; and among them is discovered the enhanced delight found in Jehovah himself which significantly anticipates the same mighty consolation which comes out so triumphantly in Ps. 73 the third of the series. But the dominant exhortation here turns on the question of *time*: the burden of the advice tendered being this: "Wait! All will come right in the end. The triumph of the flourishing lawless will be short. When he has been *cut off*, thou, O patient wronged one, will be inheriting the earth." This is the note

## PSALM THIRTY-SEVEN

struck at the beginning of the psalm, and this carries us through up to the climax at its close: a climax which confessedly comes with all the greater force when the crowning words are adequately translated: *There is a future for the man of peace; But transgressors have been destroyed together, the future of lawless men hath been cut off.* This forms a worthy climax to the psalm, and adequately meets the difficulty calling for solution. Only grant that there is a *future* for the patient well-doer; and that, for the lawless, however long they may live and flourish, there is *no future* worthy of the name,—and the solution is felt to be complete.

It is true, indeed, that the edge of the psalmist's argument has been rather blunted by critics of note through their acceptance of the term "posterity," in place of *future*, in vers. 37 and 38. To such a weakening of the solution it may be permitted us to object, for two or three reasons: *first*, that the main current of the psalm points to survival in person rather than by proxy; *second*, that in the parallel use of the same word (*aharith*) in Ps. 73:17 it is impossible to accept "posterity" as an adequate translation, seeing that, there, the writer's resolve is to enter "the great sanctuary" for the purpose of considering, not the "posterity" of the lawless but their own *latter end* or *hereafter* or *future*, as the sequel to that passage conclusively shows; and *third*, that the prophetic word itself elsewhere—notably in Jer. 31:29, 30 and Eze. 18:1-4—expressly discounts the principle of punishment by proxy, so making it exceedingly unlikely that this far-seeing and forth-reaching psalm intends us to be content with either substitutionary punishment or substitutionary reward. Hence, as "posterity" is by no means the primary or customary meaning of *aharith*, we can confidently rely on the solid reasons above given for declining it; and for preferring the well-sustained rendering which concludes the psalm with such fine effect.

Will it be objected, that the rewards of the righteous appear in this psalm to be too earthly to be eternal, and the punishment of the lawless to be too summary to be final? Such objection may be safely dismissed as virtually demanding that no Old Testament rays shall penetrate the great Hereafter unless they flood it with all-revealing light. What if the heaven of the Old Testament, as well as that of the New, should prove to be a heaven upon earth? and what if the expansion of the hints here discovered should, after all, find room for all the details subsequently revealed? If we at all apprehend that God hath yet

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more light to break forth from his word, let us beware of closing up the very avenues by which that light may reach us!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Never envy the wicked". This is well enough to say—how do we know we are envying, or not envying the wicked? Discuss.
2. The seeds of self-destruction are planted in the actions of the wicked—so what is the responsibility of the believer?
3. Waiting is the most difficult of our responses to God's will—why?
4. Anger—wrath—worry—fretting—all these lead to harm. Name and discuss the specific harm involved.
5. The promises to the godly are numerous notice verses: 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23—here are ten and we are only half-way through the psalm—so what?
6. There was a man in the Old Testament who faced and answered the basic problem of this psalm—what was his name and what was his answer?
7. Someone well said that "evil is mortal, and righteousness is immortal"—what are the implications of this truth?
8. God has a sense of humor—read verses 12 and 13 to see what makes God laugh—is He laughing at our problem? Cf. Psalms 2:9.
9. If the moral principle of retribution was not at work, history would have no meaning and the present-day utter pessimism would have real relevance—Discuss.
10. Read verses 32-40 to obtain a summary and final answer to the problem here discussed.

## PSALM 38

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer for Deliverance from Disease and from Enemies.

### ANALYSIS

Part I. *Against Disease.* Stanza I., vers 1, 2, Jehovah's Anger Depreciated. Stanza II., ver. 3-5, The Psalmist traces his Disease to his Sin. Stanza

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III., vers. 6-8, Describes Effect of Disease on Himself. Stanza IV., vers. 9-11, On his Friends.

Part II. *Against Enemies*. Stanza I., vers 12-14, Enemies' Perfidy—How Treated by Psalmist. Stanza II., vers. 15-18, Reasons for so treating it. Stanza III., vers. 19-22, The Character and Strength of his Enemies move the psalmist to Importunity in Prayer.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David—To bring to Remembrance.  
(Part I.)

- 1 Jehovah! do not in thy vexation correct me,  
nor in thy wrath chastise me;<sup>1</sup>
- 2 For thine arrows have sunk down in me,  
and thy hand hath sunk down upon me.
- 3 There is no soundness in my flesh by reason of thine  
indignation,  
no wholeness in my bones by reason of my sin;
- 4 For mine iniquities have passed over my head,  
like a burden that is heavy they are too heavy for me:
- 5 My weals stink they fester,  
by reason of my foolishness.
- 6 I am bent I am bowed very low,  
all the day have I gloomily walked;
- 7 For my loins are filled with shame,<sup>2</sup>  
and there is no wholeness in my flesh;
- 8 I am benumbed and crushed exceedingly,  
I have roared with the growl of a lion.<sup>3</sup>
- 9 Sovereign Lord! before thee is all my desire,  
and my sighing from thee is not hid.
- 10 My heart fluttereth<sup>4</sup> my strength hath forsaken me,  
and the light of mine eyes<sup>5</sup>—even they are not with me;
- 11 My lovers and my friends from before my stroke<sup>6</sup> stand aloof,  
and my neighbours at a distance remain.

1. Cp. 6:1.

2. "That which is contemned"—Br. (after ancient versions). Or: "burning"; so Dr., Del., Per. Leaser ("burning disease").

3. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*: and so Br.

4. "Palpitates"—O.G. "Is in a ferment"—Br. "Throbbeth violently"—Del.

5. Cp. Eze. 24:16.

6. Note the word: *nega'*—"esp. of a disease, regarded as sent by divine chastisement"—O.G. and note its occurrences in Lev. 13, 14; 2 S. 7:14, Ps. 38:11, 39:10, 89:32, Isa. 53:8. "The word is especially used of the plague of leprosy"—Kp.

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(Part II.)

- 12 And they who seek my life<sup>1</sup> have laid snares,  
and they who study my hurt have threatened engulfing ruin;  
and deceitful things all the day do they mutter.
- 13 But I am as one deaf—I do not hear,  
and as one dumb who openeth not his mouth.<sup>2</sup>
- 14 Thus have I become as a man who cannot hear,  
and in whose mouth are no replies.
- 15 Because for thee have I waited,  
thou thyself wilt answer Sovereign Lord My God.
- 16 Lest mine enemies rejoice over me,—  
when my feet slipped against me they did great things.
- 17 Because I to stumble am ready,  
and my pain is before me continually;
- 18 Because mine iniquity must I declare,  
I am anxious by reason of my sin.
- 19 Since mine enemies without cause have become strong,  
and multiplied are they who hate me for false reason;
- 20 And they who repay evil for good  
are mine adversaries because I pursue good
- 21 Do not forsake me Jehovah,  
my God! be not far from me:
- 22 Oh haste thee to my help,  
Sovereign Lord! my salvation!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMM.) To Jeduthun.<sup>3</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 38

O Lord, don't punish me while You are angry!

2 Your arrows have struck deep; Your blows are crushing me.

3, 4 Because of Your anger my body is sick, my health is broken beneath my sins. They are like a flood, higher than my head; they are a burden too heavy to bear.

5, 6 My wounds are festering and full of pus. Because of my sins I am bent and racked with pain. My days are filled with anguish.

1. U: "soul."

2. Cp. Isa. 58:7.

3. Prob. leader of Male Choir, having "thanks and confession" specially under his care. Other Jeduthun psalms are 61, 76. "Sheminith" prob. indicates the same choir. Cp. Intro. Chap., II., 3.



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7 My loins burn with inflammation<sup>1</sup> and my whole body is diseased.

8 I am exhausted and crushed: I groan in despair.<sup>2</sup>

9 Lord, You know how I long for my health once more. You hear my every sigh.

10 My heart beats wildly, my strength fails, and I am going blind.

11 My loved ones and friends stay away, fearing my disease. Even my own family stands at a distance.

12 Meanwhile my enemies are trying to kill me. They plot my ruin and spend all their waking hours planning treachery.

13, 14 But I am deaf to all their threats; I am silent before them as a man who cannot speak. I have nothing to say.

15 For I am waiting for You, O Lord my God. Come and protect me.

16 Put an end to their arrogance, these who gloat when I am cast down!

17 How constantly I find myself upon the verge of sin;<sup>3</sup> this source of sorrow always stares me in the face.

18 I confess my sins; I am sorry for what I have done.

19 But my enemies persecute with vigor, and continue to hate me—though I have done nothing against them to deserve it.

20 They repay me evil for good and hate me for standing for the right.

21 Don't leave me, Lord! Don't go away!

22 Come quickly! Help me, O my Savior.

## EXPOSITION

Our analysis suggests that this psalm is divisible into two parts; not because there are any outward signs of such division, but solely for the purpose of drawing attention to the fact, which becomes clear on examination, that there are two distinct strains of thought in the psalm, however closely they are conjoined. For three stanzas the prayer is solely for the removal of disease, without any allusion to enemies. Then, for three more stanzas, there is a sustained reference to enemies, with only a bare allusion to disease. In both parts of the psalm the

1. Implied.

2. Or, "Because of the pains in my heart."

3. Literally, "I am ready to fall."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

writer acknowledges that he has sinned; but this confession is naturally more frank and solemn in the former part than in the latter. The whole psalm may well have been indited by David, even as it is inscribed to him: the only surprising—but by no means incredible—thing is, as we are beginning to discover, that David was severely chastised for his great sin by the direct infliction, from Jehovah's own hand, of a loathsome disease, concerning which the history in Samuel and Chronicles is silent. However surprising such silence may at first sight appear, it is so far from being incredible that on reflection it seems natural, or at least excusable. No royal scribe would feel called on to record the damaging fact in the public chronicles; and it may well have been that even the faithful prophetic historian of the time felt relieved of any duty to insert in his narrative an account of an affliction endured in almost unbroken silence by the erring but still beloved monarch. Notwithstanding which, however, now that, after all these centuries, we look back on those distant times, and realise afresh the dishonour done by David to the name of Jehovah and to the sanctity of his ways,—we cannot fail to discover something more than poetic justice, that the terrible secret should long ago have come out; and THAT in just the very best way conceivable,—namely, by disclosure from the offending monarch's own mouth,—slightly veiled by poetic allusion rather than by blunt narration, and divulged amidst the solemnities of the worship of Him who is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity, yet still plainly confessed and sorely lamented. If anything were yet wanting to impart a finishing-touch of moral and aesthetic fitness to the manner of the revelation, it would be found in the reflection, which Dr. Thirtle has brought home to us, that we probably owe it to David's loving son Hezekiah that these Davidic confessions of Divinely inflicted disease ever saw the light. When once Hezekiah had himself groaned under a similar Divine infliction—though not perhaps for the like cause— and been again mercifully raised up from his couch of tears, then was prepared a joint-author of psalmody of sufficiently refined and sanctified culture to be entrusted with the delicate task of deciding that these snatches of leper-songs should find place in Temple worship. He, finding the leper-wail of Uzziah in the palace library, could be trusted to find place for it in his gallery of sufferers in Ps. 31, where it could serve to strike a preliminary note and thus prepare us—as the sixth

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psalm had in a measure prepared us—for the fuller and more personal confessions of the psalm now before us, and then for the further confessions of Ps. 39, in both of which the leper-wail is heard and leper-disfigurement is seen; after which the renewed confessions of Pss. 40, 41, 51 and others no longer surprise us. Henceforth, it may be surmised, we shall handle these reminiscences of an exciting creative age in Israel, with a tender reverence which only a measurably adequate appreciation of their spiritual origin could have inspired. After this, it seems but commonplace to observe, as before noted, that David's wail over a Divinely inflicted disease, as a direct punishment for his sin, is pointed with a franker and more explicit confession of his transgressions, than are his complaints of the treacherous friends who had now turned against him. Doubtless, it was due to his sin that they were permitted thus to wrong him, and it was well even in this connection, that he should *declare his iniquity* and be *anxious by reason of his sin*; but we can well understand that the royal transgressor felt that many of the wounds he was now receiving from his enemies were such as *they*, at least, had no right to inflict, of which infliction therefore he had good cause to complain. If these things are noted, the psalm will be ready to all the greater and more varied edification. We have only to add that the *Chief Musician's* assignment of this pathetic psalm to *Jeduthun*, as leader of the Male Choir, commends itself as most appropriate, and would probably hold good for the similar psalm that follows.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does this psalm tell us of God's punishment of David? Discuss.
2. The psalmist surely associates his sickness with his sin—why?
3. Can affluent America ever recognize her sin? Will it take physical sickness—pain—weakness—even poverty to bring us to repentance? Discuss.
4. David (or whoever is involved in the psalm) never lost hope—why?
5. The person-to-person relationship—i.e. as it relates to God and the psalmist is a very big part of all the psalms—haven't we depersonalized everything including God? Discuss.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 39

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Lament and Prayer of a Divinely Stricken One.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, How the Stricken One's Resolve to be Silent is Broken. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, Lament that Life, already Short, should be further Shortened. Stanza III., vers. 7-11, Prayer for Pardon and Healing, with a recognition of the Marring Effect of the Disease. Stanza IV., vers. 12, 13, Supplementary and Subdued Prayer for Help.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 I said—"Let me take heed to my ways—  
that I sin not with my tongue,  
Let me restrain my mouth—<sup>1</sup>  
while a lawless man is before me."
- 2 I was dumb with silence—  
I abstained from blessing;  
But my pain had been stirred—
- 3 hot was my heart within me:  
As I murmured there was kindled a fire—  
I spake with my tongue.
- 4 "Let me know O Jehovah mine end—  
and the measure of my days what it is:  
I would fain know why forsaken<sup>2</sup> am I.
- 5 Lo! as handbreadths thou hast given my days,  
And my life-time was as nothing before thee:
- 6 Only a vapour is any man though set firm,  
Only in semblance doth any man march to and fro,  
Only a vapour that he should make a commotion:  
He heapeth things up and knoweth not who shall carry them  
off!"
- 7 Now therefore for what have I waited Sovereign Lord"<sup>3</sup>  
as for my hope thine it is!

1. *MI.*: "Let me put (so *Gt.*—*Gn.*) to my mouth a muzzle."

2. Same word as "rejected" in *Isa.* 53:3. Cp. *Thirtle*, *O.T.P.*, 186; and see *Ps.* 38:10, 11.

3. Some *cod.* (w. 2 *ear. pr. edns.*, *Aram.* and *Syr.*): "Jehovah"—*Gn.*

## PSALM THIRTY-NINE

- 8 From all my transgressions rescue me,  
the reproach of the vile<sup>1</sup> do not make me.
- 9 I am dumb I will not open my mouth—  
for thou didst it!
- 10 Remove from off me thy stroke,<sup>2</sup>  
through the hostility of thy hand I am spent.
- 11 When by rebukes for iniquity thou hast corrected a man  
then hast thou consumed as a moth his comeliness.  
Only a vapour is any man!
- 12 Oh hear my prayer Jehovah!  
and unto my cry for help oh give ear!  
at my tears do not be silent;  
For a sojourner am I with thee,  
a settler, like all my fathers.
- 13 Look away from me that I may brighten up,  
ere yet I depart and be no more.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 39

I said to myself, I'm going to quit complaining! I'll keep quiet, especially when the ungodly are around me.

2, 3 But as I stood there silently, the turmoil within me grew to the bursting point. The more I mused, the hotter the fires inside. Then at last I spoke, and pled with God:

4 Lord, help me to realize how brief my time on earth will be! Help me to know that I am here for but a moment more.

5, 6 My life is no longer than my hand! My whole lifetime is but a moment to You. Proud man! Frail as breath! A shadow! And all his busy rushing ends in nothing. He heaps up riches for someone else to spend.

7 And so, Lord, my only hope is in You.

8 Save me from being overpowered by my sins, for even fools will mock me then.

9 Lord, I am speechless before You. I will not open my mouth to speak one word of complaint, for my punishment is from You.<sup>3</sup>

1. Or: "senseless"—Dr.

2. See note on 38:11 (same word here).

3. Literally, "for You have done it."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

10 Lord, don't hit me anymore—I am exhausted beneath Your hand.

11 When You punish a man for his sins, he is destroyed; for he is as fragile as a moth-infested cloth; yes, man is frail as breath.

12 Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry! Don't sit back, unmindful of my tears! For I am Your guest! I am a traveler passing through the earth, as all my fathers were!

13 Spare me, Lord! Let me recover and be filled with happiness again before my death.

## EXPOSITION

The first thing in this psalm to arrest our attention is its likeliness to the previous psalm; and then, the next thing, its unlikeness; which, indeed, is so great as to divert attention from its similarity. To describe this psalm, as some have done, as merely an Elegy on The Vanity of Life, is quite to miss its especial characteristic. First and foremost it is the Wail of one who has been Stricken of God with a plague on account of Transgression. The Vanity of Life is merely the background of the picture, to enhance the pity of it, that one who in any case had but a short life to live should have his *comeliness* disfigured and his life made shorter still. The plague—probably leprosy—which appeared in Ps. 38, re-appears here in Ph. 39: that is the striking but greatly overlooked fact. As will be seen, the same technical word (*nega'*) which was used in ver. 11 of the previous psalm, is again used in ver. 10 of this; and as, there, a descriptive confirmation was found (vers. 10 and 11) giving unmistakable effect to the suspicious word, so here an equally sure confirmation of it is discovered in the unquestionable allusion to his own marred looks in ver. 11. To catch this reference to his own lamentable bodily condition, is to feel a new point in his plea that he might have declared to him the *measure of his days*. He already knew the ordinary brevity of human life, and feels it so strongly that he employs it as a refrain; but, for that very reason, he was not likely, in an ordinary way, to make it the point of a special petition. But now, as the case is, he would be glad to know the worst. Hence it can be no longer open to question that, as in the previous psalm, so in this,—the petitioner has fallen under the punitive *stroke* of Divine displeasure.

## PSALM THIRTY-NINE

It is just when this similarity has been put beyond further question, that our apprehension of the wide contrast between the two psalms becomes keen and inquisitive. Is this *another* plague-stricken psalmist; or if the same, what has happened to impart such a different tone to his present effusion? The similarity being conceded, the contrast is so great as to become almost startling. There, enemies were in evidence: here, there are none. There, all was excitement and turmoil: here, all is as restful as it is sad. There, no general reflections on the brevity of life were indulged in: here, they abound, and are set forth so forcibly as to mislead the casual reader into the mistake of regarding this composition as a dirge to the note of "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" Besides all which, there is a tone of resignation here, and an extreme moderation of request, which are in the greatest contrast with the previous psalm.

How is this contrast to be accounted for? Is the writer of this psalm *another man* than he that wrote the previous? But for the inscription, we should quite readily have come to that conclusion; and should have unhesitatingly fixed upon the leper-king Uzziah as the probable author. We should have called attention to the probable fact that Uzziah was smitten for life—which would have accounted for his resignation and for his seeming to say: "And if there may be no complete and early *removal* of the *stroke*, let there be at least a *brightening up* before I go hence." This, too would have given especial point to the seeming apprehension of the sufferer that he might, in his distress be overheard by an attendant apparently *sinning with his tongue*. The previous psalm, however, warns us against being hasty in concluding against the authorship of David, even here. According to that psalm, his wives withdrew from him, his lovers and friends stood aloof, his neighbours kept at a distance; and, under these circumstances, although David may not have been formally banished to a "several" house like that to which Uzziah had to retire, he may have been confined to his own apartments during his sickness, and may have had ample opportunities to *bridle his tongue* while uncertain attendants were *in his presence*. Then, moreover, it must be remembered that sick people are proverbially subject to moody fluctuations—fiery one day; subdued the next; besides which, time works wonders,—by giving space for reflection; and reflection, on a sensitive mind like David's, may have added to the wonder, by soon trans-

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

forming the high-spirited and resentful statesman of the 38th psalm, into the resigned and patient moraliser of the 39th; especially may this have in part come about by influences due to changing circumstances in the state: as, for instance, by a recrudescence of the bodily plague, after Absalom's rebellion had become a thing of the past, when the sadder but wiser king had ample time and increased motive to dwell, as he had never done, on the vanity of human life. It is, in any case, significant, that, in his pathetic address on the consecration of the offerings for the building of Solomon's temple as recorded in 1 Ch. 29:15, the venerable monarch should, in fellowship with his people, have used language *precisely similar* to that which closes this psalm: language which we shall do well to keep in mind, as suggesting that Messianic hope did not always run high in Israel, and, indeed, by the very reaction of its occasional brilliance was apt to make it appear that only in this life had those ancients hope in Jehovah their God—that they were, indeed, for a brief span, *sojourners* and *settlers* with their God in the enjoyment of the good things of his house; and then departed into the land of forgetfulness.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are so many books to help you in your study of the psalms. Many of them will ask you to divide the psalm into many divisions and sub-divisions—how would this psalm divide? What is the theme of this psalm?
2. What was it that stirred David so intently? Wasn't it the awful inequalities of life? Read verses one thru three with the thought of two or three of our present day problems. One might begin with the fantastic outlay of money for material advantages while the cause of Christ limps along for want of finance—or is this the problem? Discuss.
3. Are verses four through six the expression of what finally burst forth?—it hardly seems so. Discuss.
4. If we had the date of our death before us—would it help? If we could hold the two dates usually inscribed upon the tombstone—if we could hold these dates in our hand while we lived in the Spirit World of eternity—of infinity we might relax our feverish efforts. Is this the thought of verse four? Discuss.



## PSALM THIRTY-NINE AND FORTY

5. The brevity of life is described with some very graphic figures: (1) A hand breadth (2) A breath (3) A shadow. Discuss the meaning to life now.
6. The *only hope* of man is in the Lord. How eternally—presently—personally true this is! Discuss by reading verses seven through eleven.
7. David says of man that he is a “house guest” of God. Read verses 12 and 13 and discuss.

## PSALM 40

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Three Stirring Reminiscences of King David's History.

### ANALYSIS

Part I., Significant Memorials of David's Coronation. Stanza I., vers. 1-3, A highly Figurative Description of David's Deliverance from being an Outlaw to being King. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Felicitations to All who Trust in Jehovah, prompted by David's Own Experience, awaken Glad Memories of the Past, and Adoring Anticipations of the Future. Stanzas III. and IV., vers. 6-9, 10, 11, David's Profound Apprehension of his Kingly Calling makes of him a Proclaimer of Jehovah's Righteousness to an ever-Enlarging Assembly.

Part II., A Significant fragmentary Memento of David's Sin, ver. 12.

Part III., King David in Trouble. Stanza I., vers. 13-15, Prayer against his Enemies. Stanza II., vers. 16, 17, Prayer in Favour of his Friends. In both stanzas the Note of Urgency is struck.

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(Lm.) By David—Psalm.<sup>1</sup>  
(Part I.)

- 1 I waited intently for Jehovah—  
and he inclined unto me,<sup>2</sup>
- 2 And brought me up out of the roaring<sup>3</sup> pit—  
out of the swampy mire;  
And set up on a cliff my feet—  
making firm my steps;

1. Some cod.: “Psalm—By David”—Gn.

2. M.T. adds: “and heard my cry for help.”

3. See Intro., Chap. III., “Earth.” According to a slightly different reading: “destroying.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 3 And put in my mouth a new song—  
praise unto our God:  
Many will see and revere—  
and trust in Jehovah.
- 4 How happy the man  
who hath made Jehovah his trust,  
And hath not turned aside to vanities—<sup>1</sup>  
nor to such as are falling away to falsehood!
- 5 Many things hast thou done—  
thou Jehovah my God!  
Thy wondrous works and thy plans—<sup>2</sup>  
there is no setting in order:<sup>3</sup>  
I would tell and would speak—  
they are too numerous to be told.
- 6 Peace-offering and grain-offering thou didst not delight in—  
then was there a covenant for me,<sup>4</sup>  
Ascending-sacrifice and sin-bearer thou didst not ask—  
then didst thou command<sup>5</sup> me:
- 7 Lo! I am come—  
in the written scroll is it prescribed to me,
- 8 Thy pleasure I delight in—  
and thy law is in my deepest affections,<sup>6</sup>
- 9 I have heralded the good-tidings of righteousness<sup>7</sup> in a large  
assembly—<sup>8</sup>  
behold my lips!
- 10 I will not withhold O Jehovah thou knowest—  
thy righteousness  
I have not covered in the midst of my heart—  
thy faithfulness and thy salvation;  
I say—I have not concealed thy kindness and thy truth—  
from a large assembly:<sup>9</sup>

1. Or: "vain idols"—reading (w. Br. and O.G.) *h b l* instead of *r h b*.  
M.T.: "the proud."

2. M.T.: "for us"; but not in Sep.

3. M.T.: "unto thee"; and then render (w. Del. and Dr.): "there is none to be compared unto thee." But not in Sep.

4. So, in substance, Br., endeavouring to get behind, and account for, the divergence between M.T. ("ears hast thou digged for me") and Sep. ("a body hast thou fitted for me") quoted Heb. 10:5.

5. So Br., by a very slight change from M.T. For such use of 'amar, see 105:31, 34, 2 Ch. 29:24.

6. Ml.: "in the midst of mine inwards."

7. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "righteousness."

8. Cp. 22:25, 35:18, and ver. 10 below.

9. Cp. ver. 9 above.

## PSALM FORTY

- 11 Thou Jehovah wilt not withhold thy compassions from me,  
Thy kindness and thy truth will continually preserve me.

(Part II.)

- 12 Surely there closed in upon me misfortunes—  
till they were without number,  
Mine iniquities overtook me—  
and I could not see,  
More numerous were they than the hairs of my head—  
and my heart failed me.

(Part III.)

- 13 Be pleased Jehovah to rescue me—  
Jehovah to help me oh make haste!
- 14 Put to shame and abashed together be they who are seeking  
my life<sup>1</sup>  
Turned back and confounded be they who are taking pleasure  
in my hurt,
- 15 Astounded as a reward of their own shame be they who are  
saying of me—"Aha! Aha!"
- 16 Glad and joyful in thee be all who are seekers of thee,  
Let them say continually—"Jehovah be magnified" who are  
lovers of thy salvation.
- 17 Since I am humbled and needy may my Sovereign Lord<sup>2</sup>  
devise for me!  
Since my help and deliverer thou art my God! do not tarry.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 40

I waited patiently for God to help me; then He listened and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out from the bog and the mire, and set my feet on a hard, firm path and steadied me as I walked along.

3 He has given me a new song to sing, of praises to our God. Now many will hear of the glorious things He did for

1. U.: "soul." M.T. adds: "to snatch it away." Not in 70:2.

2. Some cod. (w. 7 ear. pr. edns.): "may Jehovah"—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

me, and stand in awe before the Lord, and put their trust in Him.

4 Many blessings are given to those who trust the Lord, and have no confidence in those who are proud, or who trust in idols.

5 Our Lord my God, many and many a time You have done great miracles for us, and we are ever in Your thoughts. Who else can do such glorious things? No one else can be compared with You. There isn't time to tell of all Your wonderful deeds.

6 It isn't sacrifices and offerings which You really want from Your people. Burnt animals bring no special joy to Your heart. But You have accepted the offer of my lifelong service.<sup>1</sup>

7 Then I<sup>2</sup> said, "See, I have come, just as all the prophets foretold.

8 And I delight to do Your will, my God; for Your law is written upon My heart!"

9 I have told everyone the Good News that You forgive men's sins.<sup>3</sup> I have not been timid about it, as You well know, O Lord.

10 I have not kept this Good News<sup>2</sup> hidden in my heart, but have proclaimed Your lovingkindness and truth to all the congregation.

11 O Lord, don't hold back Your tender mercies from me! My only hope is in Your love and faithfulness!

12 Otherwise I perish, for problems far too big for me to solve are piled higher than my head. Meanwhile my sins, too many to count, have all caught up with me and I am ashamed to look up. My heart quails within me.

13 Please, Lord, rescue me! Quick! Come and help me!

14, 15 Confuse them! Turn them around and send them sprawling—all these who are trying to destroy me. Disgrace these scoffers with their utter failure!

16 But may the joy of the Lord be given to everyone who loves Him and His salvation. May they constantly exclaim, "How great God is!"

17 I am poor and needy, yet the Lord is thinking about me right now! O my God, You are my helper; You are my Savior; come quickly, and save me. Please don't delay!

1. Literally, "My ears You have dug."

2. This verse was quoted by Christ as applying to Himself. See John 4:34.

3. Literally, "Your righteousness."

## PSALM FORTY EXPOSITION

Not only is there no sufficient internal evidence to throw doubt upon the Davidic authorship of this psalm; but the assumption of the correctness of the superscription *By David* probably leads to a clearer insight into the bearing of the different parts, and a firmer grasp of the unity of the whole, than can by any other means be obtained. Who ever *waited* more *intently* for anything than David for the kingship of Israel? How could more suitable images be found to picture the trials through which he had to pass on his way to the kingdom, when endlessly harassed by King Saul, than those of the *swampy mire* and the *engulfing pit*? How can he better represent the completeness of his deliverance from these trying delays, than to represent him as having his feet at length *set high upon a cliff* and a *new song put into his mouth*,—his exaltation being seen and known of all men? Moreover the very figures employed strongly remind us of David's great song preserved in Psalm 18. Assuredly David could speak from experience of the *happiness* of *trusting* in *Jehovah*—he never turned aside to the *vanities* and *falsehood* of *idolatry*; and, when once finally delivered, how *many things* had he to tell of signal mercies in the past—things already done,—and *wonderful plans* yet to be carried forward into fulfilment! It is, however, when we reach the stanza (III.) regarding *sacrifices*, that we are most impressed. It was on this rock of sacrifice, that David's predecessor Saul struck his foot to his grievous injury: he could not trust *Jehovah's will* as prophetically made known to him through Samuel, and so he took the priestly law into his own hand, and brought on himself the severe reprimand of Samuel:—

Doth that which is pleasing unto Jehovah consist in  
ascending-offerings and sacrifices,  
So much as in hearkening unto the voice of Jehovah?  
Lo! to hearken is better than sacrifice,  
And to give heed, than the fat of rams.

We must surely be short-sighted not to discover in these ringing tones of remonstrance the very *motif* of the stanza before us: the which, indeed, sounds like a glorified revulsion from the sin of Saul. For a king after his own heart, Jehovah has other and nobler work to do, than the slaughter of animals in ritual worship. He has to set before priests and people the sublimer

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example of loving Jehovah's will supremely, and doing it; *delighting* in it, embedding it *in his deepest affections*, and heralding the good-tidings of it to such a *large assembly* as a king could easily command, whether at Hebron or at Jerusalem. This, indeed, had been prescribed to him in the *written scroll*: how he was to write out the law, that he might have it ever by him, and read therein daily, and revere Jehovah his God, and keep his statutes, and not be lifted up above his brethren (Deu. 17:18-20); and now he solemnly *covenants* that he will do it—that it will be his *delight* to do it; yea, moreover, he *proclaims* his delight in an *assembly so large*, that those who cannot hear his voice may at least witness the movements of his covenanting lips—*Behold my lips!* Moreover, the very *righteousness* which he pledges himself to proclaim is glorified on his covenanting lips; for it is no longer merely the obedience of Israel to the law, but the *faithfulness* of God to Israel. First and foremost, it is Jehovah's faithfulness to himself, in giving him the kingship at last, after so long keeping him waiting for it. And so law is turned into Gospel: David declares that the righteousness which he will herald, will be *good-tidings*. And so it will; and therefore his eagerness to proclaim it overflows into another stanza: that he may call Jehovah to witness that he will not *conceal* such a *righteousness* as falls nothing short of *kindness, faithfulness and salvation*. Sure the singer is: That if he *withhold* not his testimony to Jehovah's law and providence, so neither will Jehovah *withhold* his *compassions, his kindness, his truth, his preservation*. And if that does not amount to a Coronation Oath and a Kingly Covenant,—we may boldly ask what would. And before a *large assembly* too!

Thus freely have we woven into our Exposition the word *covenant* as shrewdly conjectured by Dr. Briggs to have been the word originally employed by the psalmist in the place where now the M.T. and the Sep. unfortunately differ; and, indeed, when the consonants of *krth* and *brth* (which are in question in the doubtful place in the text), are compared in Hebrew as coming extremely near to each other, there need be little surprise felt that such a transcriptional error should have crept in. At any rate, the word *covenant* bids fair to fill so effectively the place here assigned it, that still another covenant strain of thought is now in addition suggested, as extremely pertinent to this very juncture in David's life and this precise place in his writings: *then had I a covenant*. When David came to the

## PSALM FORTY

throne, then was granted to him the covenant concerning his seed—reaching out to and including the Messiah—which the prophet Nathan propounded according to 2 Sam. 7. As much as to say: The grand purpose of Jehovah, even in ordaining sacrifices, being to educate Israel to love and practise his will; and then, in providing an approved King, his purpose being still the same; there was vouchsafed to that King the covenant to bring forth out of his family the Messiah, who should still further throw animal sacrifices into the shade, and still further commend and advance the grand principle of doing and delighting in Jehovah's will, as his people's highest satisfaction and blessedness. So much for the first Part of our psalm.

Turning now to the second Part (ver. 12), which we have not hesitated to call a mere fragment,—it is obvious to observe what an important fragment it is, and what an essential link it furnishes in any comprehensive survey of David's reign. *Misfortunes closed in upon him*, even after he had become Israel's king:—wherefore? Alas! *his iniquities overtook him*; and the sad fact was that he had committed them. And they dimmed his spiritual vision—*he could not see*. It may be, that the larger offences brought to mind the smaller which had opened the door to the larger; and were in turn followed by the smaller though very grievous sins of persistence, impenitence, denial, prevarication, hardness of heart, disparagement of spiritual blessedness; until at length, now that remorse is setting in, they appear *more numerous than the hairs of his head*. And when to all things else the humbled man adds his confession that *his heart failed him*, we are probably to understand—not merely that his courage failed him, which may very well have been included, but—that his *mental powers* failed him, for such is the comprehensiveness of the Hebrew word for *heart*. And, perhaps, it is precisely to this dimming of spiritual vision, this failure of mental power, that we are to attribute that spiritual vacillation—that failure to hold steadfastly to Messianic hopes—which at the close of Ps. 39 struck us as so remarkable.

Happily, the humbled and forgiven soul returns to its God; and though troubles abound, and enemies appear, and base souls point the tongue and finger of scorn at the late offending monarch, yet prayer is once more brought into active exercise; and if there are men who rejoice in iniquity, there are also men who sympathisingly rejoice in the truth: the scoffers may, to their shame, cry "*Aha! Aha!*"; but the godly and considerate

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exclaim, to the increase of holy joy, *Jehovah be magnified!* And so the *humbled and needy* king is encouraged to seek with new faith and hope for *speedy help* from the God of his *salvation*.

Satisfactory as it thus appears to trace each successive part of the psalm to David's own composing, it is by no means certain that David himself brought them together into one psalm as they now appear. In fact the selection of the pieces for permanent Temple worship, and the welding them into one, seem naturally to fall to Hezekiah, whose practised judgment would on the one hand suggest that Parts I. and III. required Part II. to unite them; and on the other hand recommend the detachment of Part III. as now Ps. 70 for occasional separate use.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The fortieth psalm above many others lends itself to what should be, and could be the testimony of every Christian. Discuss this possibility.
2. In what horrible pit had David found himself? There are two outstanding possibilities. Show how God delivered him. The deliverance was not by man's time, nor method.
3. David had often sung of God's deliverance—but this time it was to be a "new" song. Discuss the uniqueness of this song. Cf. Ps. 18.
4. There is no power like that of the personal testimony of deliverance from the power of sin. Men of the world have from the beginning "marvelled"—Does this have meaning for everyone? How did this especially apply to David?
5. We can catch a glimpse of the type of man God had in David—it would have been easy to listen to the promptings of pride that he, David, had done nothing amiss in the pursuit by Saul—and therefore the only language Saul could understand was to meet force with force—why didn't David thus respond? Discuss.
6. Read John 4:34, as related to this psalm—and also Rotherham's comments as they relate these verses (6-8) to David. Discuss their possible two-fold application.
7. "The Lord asks not for oblation, but for obedience". Read Hebrews 10:5-9 for an example. Why do we hesitate to obey? Is it too dull to obey and too exciting not to? Will we miss something if we do not disobey? Discuss this: The Devil's biggest and oldest lie.



## PSALM FORTY AND FORTY-ONE

8. The words of Scroggie are so good as related to the last section of this psalm—(11-17)—“If life were but one battle (and how we often wish it were) we could put off our armor when it was won, but as life is a campaign we can never afford to do that; we must be *ever* watchful, and *ever* prayerful, an *dever* hopeful.” (*Ibid* p. 235) Read these verses and discuss how the above comment applies.

## PSALM 41

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Regretting that Enemies and Friends should meanly Rejoice in his Sickness, the Psalmist nevertheless Perseveres in Prayer for Pardon and Recovery.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, The Blessings that Might have been Won by being Considerate to a Sick Man. Stanza II., ver. 4, The Sick Man Prays for Pardon and Healing. Stanza III., vers. 5-9, How both Enemies and a Particular Friend have turned against him in his Affliction. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, Prayer for Restoration Rises to Strong Assurance. *Doxology* (ver. 13).

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 How happy is he who is considerate towards the helpless!<sup>1</sup>  
in the day of calamity Jehovah will deliver him,  
2 Jehovah will preserve him and keep him alive—  
he shall be called happy in the land.  
Do not then give him up to the desire<sup>2</sup> of his enemies!  
3 Jehovah will sustain him on a bed of sickness:  
All his lying down hast thou transformed in his disease!  
4 I have said—“Jehovah! be gracious unto me,  
heal thou my soul<sup>3</sup> for I have sinned against thee.”  
5 Mine enemies keep saying—“It is bad with him!<sup>4</sup>  
when will he die and his name perish?”

1. “Or, perhaps, *the weakly*”—Dr. “The afflicted”—Del.

2. U.: “Soul.” Cp. Intro. Chap. III., “Soul.”

3. Or: “person.” “The soul is the man’s whole ‘self’; the living personality which results from the union of spirit and flesh”—Kp.

4. M.T. “me.” Only the difference (in the length of a stroke) between *yod* and *waw*.

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- 6 And if one hath come in to see me unreality<sup>1</sup> he speaketh,  
his own heart gathereth mischief<sup>2</sup> to itself:  
7 he goeth forth outside—he telleth everything.  
Against me whisper together all that hate me,  
Against me reckon they—"It is bad with him,—<sup>3</sup>  
8 an infliction of the Abandoned One hath been fixed<sup>4</sup> on him;  
and now that he hath lien down he will not again rise!"  
9 Even the great man I used to salute—in whom I trusted—  
accustomed to eat my bread hath lifted against me a high  
heel!<sup>5</sup>  
10 But thou Jehovah be gracious unto me and raise me up,  
and I will repay them!  
11 By this I know that thou delightest in me.  
that mine enemy shall not shout over me.<sup>6</sup>  
12 But as for me in my blessedness<sup>7</sup> hast thou held me fast,  
and hast caused me to stand before thee to the ages.  
13 Blessed be Jehovah God of Israel,  
From antiquity even unto futurity!<sup>8</sup>  
Amen and Amen!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the sons of korah—"the patriarchs of song."<sup>9</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 41

God blesses those who are kind to the poor. He helps them out of their troubles!

2 He protects them and keeps them alive; He publicly honors them and destroys the power of their enemies.

3 He nurses them when they are sick, and soothes their pains and worries.<sup>10</sup>

1. That is: insincerity.

2. Or "trouble" ("naughtiness" Dr.)

3. M.T. "me." Only the difference (in the length of a stroke) between *yod* and *waw*.

4. Ml.: "molten," "cast."

5. Cp. 55:12, 20.

6. Cp. 55:23.

7. Or: "devotion," "whole-heartedness," "integrity": ml. "my wholeness," "entirety."

8. Ml.: "From the age (concealed duration in the past) even unto the age (concealed duration in the future)."

9. These two instructions transposed and brought here by readjustment of titles based on Thirtle. Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

10. Literally, "You make all his bed in his sickness."

## PSALM FORTY-ONE

4 "O Lord," I prayer, "be kind and heal me, for I have confessed my sins."

5 But my enemies say, "May he soon die and be forgotten!"

6 They act so friendly when they come to visit me while I am sick; but all the time they hate me and are glad that I am lying there upon my bed of pain. And when they leave, they laugh and mock.

7 They whisper together about what they will do when I am dead.

8 "It's fatal, whatever it is," they say. "He'll never get out of that bed!"

9 Even my best friend has turned against me—a man I completely trusted; how often we ate together.

10 Lord, don't You desert me! Be gracious, Lord, and make me well again so I can pay them back!

11 I know You are pleased with me because You haven't let my enemies triumph over me.

12 You have preserved me because I was honest; You have admitted me forever to Your presence.

13 Bless the Lord, the God of Israel, who exists from everlasting ages past—and on into everlasting eternity ahead. Amen and Amen!

## EXPOSITION

By substituting the word "helpless" for "poor" in the first line of this psalm, we at once obviate the appearance of self-righteousness, which would have been seen and been in no wise welcome as a commencement to the psalm. It would have appeared to say, "I have always been considerate of the 'poor,' and therefore might have hoped for better treatment than I am receiving." The word "poor" would have seemed to refer to others than himself, and so the line would have looked like sounding his own praise. But the moment we substitute the equally correct rendering "helpless," then we detect a pathetic reference to himself as confessedly in a deplorably "helpless" bodily condition, and can credit the psalmist with a genuine feeling of regret that he had not received such commiseration under his "stroke" as would have called forth from him the blessings on his comforters which in this stanza he amplifies.

It must be admitted, however, that although this corrected keynote seems well fitted to introduce the psalm, yet the sound

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of the keynote appears rather muffled by lines 4 and 6; because line 4 sounds like a wish weakly inserted amidst assurances strong enough to bear out the initial exclamation "How happy:" "How happy—because Jehovah will deliver him," &c., &c. Line 6 seems to disturb the stanza for an opposite reason: it is too strong: it is too much an announcement of prayer already answered: as a further reason for felicitating the considerate man it equally disturbs the stanza. One has only to think of Hezekiah as adapting the psalm to his own circumstances, and interpolating first line 4, and then, after his recovery, adding line 6,—to feel how naturally these disturbances might have occurred, and yet how unspeakably too precious they are to be removed for mere symmetrical reasons.

The emphasis on the pronoun "I" at the head of ver. 4 has, after the foregoing introduction, a welcome effect. It appears to stand out in anticipatory contrast with what his enemies have to say, as recorded in the following verse: as much as to imply—"Whatever mine enemies have to say about me, what before thee, O Jehovah, I have to say of myself, is this, That I have sinned, and implore the healing which thou alone canst bestow." This, indeed, is a welcome note to catch from the psalmist. His sin has many times of late come before us, and it materially contributes to our edification to observe that, however naturally he resents blows from enemies and friends which they might have spared him, yet at the same time, before God there is no equivocation, no sparing of himself. Before Jehovah, he lies in the dust crying for mercy.

The picture given of the visits of perfidious enemies coming to visit the psalmist with hypocritical professions of friendship on their lips, their malicious eyes closely noting everything that might be construed to the Royal Sufferer's disadvantage, and then their lips divulging every damaging appearance and incident to those outside waiting for the verdict,—is far too lifelike to need much comment. That a trusted counsellor—for doubtless it was Ahithophel—should have given his late Master an insidious blow—this was one of the hardest things to bear; and the thing which most tended to make David, as shamefully betrayed, a type of his Son and Lord (John 13:18 and 17:12).

We should be glad to think, with Dr. Briggs, that the purpose of retaliation expressed in ver. 11 was an interpolation; but there is just enough reason to suppose that, in his public capacity, David felt compelled to punish so glaring an offence, to make us

## PSALM FORTY-ONE

hesitate to omit a clause which the ancient versions with the Massoretic text retain; and therefore we are content to remind ourselves that *we* may not curse, but must overcome evil with good!

Before closing our comments on this series of psalms, satisfaction may be expressed that so able an expositor as Kirkpatrick admits how weak are the objections which can be urged against the belief that King David really did suffer the terrible infliction of bodily disease which sufficiently comes to light in these psalms. He says: "It is true that the narrative in 2 Samuel makes no reference to an illness such as here described; but that narrative necessarily passes over many details. Such an illness would account for the remissness in attending to his official duties, which Absalom's words to the suitors for justice seemed to imply (2 Sam. 15:3). It would account also for the strange failure of David's natural courage which his flight from Jerusalem at the first outbreak of the rebellion appears to indicate. Unnerved by sickness, in which he recognized a just punishment for his sins, David watched the growing disloyalty of his courtiers, and in particular of Ahithophel, without feeling able to strike and crush the conspiracy before it came to a head. Compare generally Psalm 55." Compare, further, the "Exposition" of Ps. 38, *ante*. In a word, it is impossible to overestimate the moral gain to revealed truth rendered by restoring David to his proper place in these penitential psalms. Every one knows how grievously David sinned: nothing can blot out the sad story from the historical records of the time. Let everyone equally know how ignominiously he suffered; how severely he had to be chastised before he repented. Let us be permitted in these psalms to hear his groans, not indeed to our pleasure, but to our lasting profit. Our honour—the honour of our God—the honour of the whole history of Redemption—is bound up with the sincerity of David's repentance. Grant us, then, the melancholy and yet salutary opportunity of becoming witnesses to its genuineness and its depth. There is no gain, but much loss, to be had by transferring these penitential psalms bodily to the nation, as their primary subject. And therefore we hope that those critics who have been teaching us to date their origin in and after the exile, will show willingness to revise their conclusions; will not only admit how greatly transmissional and historical evidence is against them, but also how strongly exegetical considerations appeal to us to find their *authors* in men

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

whom we know, and in *occasions* clearly indicated for us by evidence which can be no longer overlooked.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read II Samuel, chapters eleven through sixteen. Also Psalms 32 and 51, to give adequate background for this psalm.
2. Certain circumstances almost necessitate a sickness on the part of David as a punishment for his sin with Bathsheba. Read I Samuel 15:3 to catch another detail.
3. Rotherham has a most clever way of relating this whole psalm to the personal experience of David. How does he relate verses one through three to David? Do you agree?
4. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee" (vs. 4). How full of meaning this verse is for everyone—notice: (1) Until we admit and confess our sin there can be no healing. (2) We must accept mercy—no justification or vindication or rationalization—just guilt and mercy. Mercy is the personal application of forgiveness. (3) Our soul needs healing much more than our bodies—The soul is the heart—the essential part of man—unless we are whole within we shall be sick without—make me clean—pure—whole within. (4) It is against the one who has made us; who died for us;—who loves us better than any other that we have sinned—Sin as here defined (or applied) is an action against nature—we have taken poison into our system—when will we begin to define sin as the "unnatural" thing to do? The laws of nature are the laws of God. The laws of moral conduct are the laws of nature (God)—we do not break them, we simply break ourselves by violating them. Present day doctors will agree that 75% or more of physical sickness is caused by the sin of the soul.
5. David was suffering the results of his sin—why complain about the attitudes of those who came to visit him? Discuss.
6. Verse nine is a prophesy—fulfilled in John 13:18. The writers of the New Testament were so saturated with the Old Testament, that at least 180 references or allusions are made to the psalms in the N. T.—97 of the 150 psalms are quoted. Every New Testament book but I Thess., II John, Philemon and Jude contain references to the psalms—is this an example or ideal for us? Discuss.

# THE PSALMS

## BOOK THE SECOND

### PSALM 42, 43

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Debarred Worshipper Mastering his Sorrow.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, A Debarred Worshipper, Nursing his Grief, nevertheless Strives to Rise Above it. Stanza II., vers. 6-11, Deeply Feeling his Personal Condition, the Sufferer Encourages Himself by Recalling a Past Deliverance, and begins to Pray Hopefully, though Sorely Dismayed by Outward Troubles. Stanza III. (43), vers. 1-5, Looking his Public Troubles in the Face, the Psalmist Prays for a Triumphant Deliverance.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm.

- 1 As a hind cometh longing up to channels of water  
so my soul longeth for thee O God!
- 2 Athirst is my soul for God—for a GOD who liveth,—  
when shall I enter in and see<sup>1</sup> the face of God?
- 3 My tears have served me for food day and night,  
through its being said unto me all the day—"Where is thy  
God?"

1. So it shd. be—G. Intro., 458; and so it is in some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn., Aram., Syr.)—Gn. "It is probable that in the original it was 'see the face of Yahweh'"—Br.

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- 4 These things would I fain remember and pour out upon my  
my soul—  
how I used to pass over in a throng—  
used to lead them in procession unto the house of God,  
with the sound of jubilation<sup>1</sup> and thanksgiving—  
a crowd keeping festival!
- 5 Why shouldst thou despair O my soul and groan upon me?  
Wait thou for God, for yet shall I thank him,—  
as the great salvation<sup>2</sup> of my<sup>3</sup> person<sup>4</sup> and my God.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 Over myself<sup>6</sup> my soul keeps despairing<sup>7</sup> therefore will I  
remember thee,—<sup>8</sup>  
from the land of Jordan and the Hermons—from Mount  
Mizar,—
- 7 Deep unto deep calling out to the sound of thy waterfalls:  
all thy breakers and thy billows over one passed.
- 8 By day may Jehovah command his kindness and by night  
his song,  
with me a prayer to the God of my life.<sup>9</sup>
- 9 I would fain say to God—"O my Cliff! wherefore hast thou  
forgotten me?  
wherefore should I gloomily walk through the oppression of  
an enemy?"
- 10 Like<sup>10</sup> a shattering in my bones have mine adversaries  
reproached me,  
through their saying unto me all the day, "Where is thy  
God?"
- 11 Why shouldest thou despair O my soul and why groan upon  
me?  
Wait thou for God, for yet shall I thank him,—  
as the great salvation<sup>11</sup> of my person and my God.

(Nm.)

1. Or: "of a ringing cry."
2. Pr. "intensive."
3. M.T.: "his"—clearly in error for "my": cp. vers. 11 and (43) 5.
4. So O.G. 447a. Or: "the health of my countenance"; or: "the victory of my presence." The same alternatives apply to vers. 11 and (43) 5.
5. "Should probably be added"—Dr. To the same effect—Del.
6. Stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence.—Kp., Del.
7. Frequentative. "Is cast down" blunts the point.
8. That is, "what I learned of thee."
9. Specially fitting, if the writer was thinking of an occasion when God saved his life. Some cod. however read: "to a living God"—Gn.
10. So some cod. M.T.: *beth*, "With the effect of"; or "At the cost of"—O.G. 90a, "g."
11. Cp. ver. 5.



PSALM FORTY-TWO AND FORTY-THREE  
PARAPHRASE

PSALM 42

As the deer pants for water, so I long for You, O God.

2 I thirst for God, the living God. Where can I find Him to come and stand before Him?

3 Day and night I weep for His help, and all the while my enemies taunt me. "Where is this God of yours?" they scoff.

4, 5 Take courage, my soul! Do you remember those times (but how could you ever forget them!) when you led a great procession to the Temple on festival days, singing with joy, praising the Lord? Why then be downcast? Why be discouraged and sad? Hope in God! I shall yet praise Him again! Yes, I shall again praise Him for His help.<sup>1</sup>

6 Yet I am standing here depressed and gloomy; but I will meditate upon Your kindness to this lovely land where the Jordan River flows and where Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar stand.

7 All your waves and billows have gone over me, and floods of sorrow pour upon me like a thundering cataract.<sup>2</sup>

8 Yet day by day the Lord also pours out His steadfast love upon me, and through the night I sing His songs and pray to God who gives me life.

9 "O God my Rock," I cry, "why have You forsaken me? Why must I suffer these attacks from my enemies?"

10 Their taunts pierce me like a fatal wound; again and again they scoff, "Where is that God of yours?"

11 But O my soul, don't be discouraged! Don't be upset! Expect God to act! For I know that I shall again have plenty of reason to praise Him for all that He will do! He is my help! He is my God!

PSALM 43

(Nm.)

1 Vindicate me O God and plead my cause against a nation without kindness,  
from a man of deceit and perversity wilt thou deliver me!

1. Literally, "for the help of His countenance."

2. Literally, "deep calls to deep at the noise of Your waterfalls."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 For thou art my protecting God—<sup>1</sup> wherefore hast thou rejected me?  
wherefore should I gloomily wander<sup>2</sup> through the oppression of an enemy?
- 3 Send forth thy light and faithfulness—let them lead me, let them bring me into thy holy mountain<sup>3</sup> and unto thy habitations!
- 4 So would I enter in unto the altar of God—unto the God who gladden my youth,<sup>4</sup>  
so will I thank thee with a lyre Jehovah<sup>5</sup> my God!
- 5 Why shouldst thou despair O my soul and why groan upon me? Wait thou for God, for yet shall I thank him,—  
as the great salvation<sup>6</sup> of my person and my God.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the sons of korah—"the patriarchs of song."  
Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 43

O God, defend me from the charges of these merciless, deceitful men.

2 For You are God, my only place of refuge. Why have You tossed me aside? Why must I mourn at the oppression of my enemies?

3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth—let them lead me. Let them lead me to Your Temple on Your holy mountain, Zion.

4 There I will go to the altar of God my exceeding joy, and praise Him with my harp. O God—my God!

5 O my soul, why be so gloomy and discouraged? Trust in God! I shall again praise Him for His wondrous help; he will make me smile again,<sup>7</sup> for He is my God!

1. Ml.: "My God of stronghold."

2. Or: "march to and fro." "Go mourning"—Del. "Why go I about in dark attire"—Dr.

3. Cp. 2 Ch. 3:1, 33:15, Isa. 30:29, Jer. 26:18, Mi. 3:12.

4. So the Sep.—a beautiful and suggestive reading.

5. So Sep., preferred by Kp. and others.

6. Cp. 42:5.

7. Literally, "He is the help of my countenance."

## PSALM FORTY-TWO AND FORTY-THREE EXPOSITION

The crowning feature of this (double) psalm is its lofty and intense spirituality: A soul athirst for God; moved by strong desire for fellowship with God—to be conscious of his nearness, to be face to face with him; assured that such a realisation will be as satisfying as for a thirsty animal to drink of the cooling stream.

The next thing noticeable in this (double) psalm, is the beauty of its form—in three stanzas, each with a refrain repeated in identical words; and easily detected when this structure is observed, a gradual advance from sheer sorrow, to circumspect petition, and then to bold entreaty.

Perhaps the third thing to arrest our attention is, the psychological wonder of a Sufferer striving to master his sorrow and to rise above it.

Probably the surest way to observe these three leading features with interest and profit is to institute an investigation into the probable authorship of the psalm.

David has been thought of: though we are no longer under any obligation to presuppose that he wrote it, inasmuch as this psalm is really an "orphan" psalm, since undoubtedly "the sons of korah" were singers, or a class of singers, and not authors. Nevertheless, it is an interesting fact, that David has been regarded as the probable writer of this pathetic composition; several circumstances combining to give this hypothesis an air of probability—chiefly his intense love for the worship of Jehovah's house in Jerusalem, and his flight from the holy city on occasion of Absalom's rebellion. That David crossed over the Jordan, and then turned north, ascending the high lands of Gilead as far as Mahanaim, and so came into full view of Mount Hermon on the north is another circumstance rather favourable to this conclusion. The objections to this view are: *first*, That, even so, David did not go far enough north to get among the "waterfalls" of the Upper Jordan; and, *second*, That he was surrounded by faithful friends, all the time, and not by enemies who would keep mocking him with the taunt, "Where is thy God?"—to which we may add, *third*, That, formidable as was Absalom's rebellion, David would scarcely refer to it as "the oppression of an enemy." These considerations preclude our deciding for David. Some would add, that the very absence of David's name from the head of the psalm should, among other

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reasons, count for something, why David could not have penned this psalm,—seeing the many evidences of care to place his name wherever it had any right to stand.

Under these circumstances, some have thought of an unknown Levite as author, on account of the memory, so vividly preserved by the writer, of having headed processions to the Temple in happier days. This conjecture has little else to support it; and, in short, it can scarcely be said that any Levite occupied so important and central a position as this psalm requires. The desperate suggestion that this psalm may have been written by King Jehoiachin on his way to Babylon, may safely be dismissed; since the writer, at any rate, hoped soon to return to the holy city; and we must not go out of our way to court failure for the hope of the psalm.

It is time to say: That for no man, as author of this psalm, can such numerous and strong reasons be advanced as for King Hezekiah, notwithstanding one or two apparent reasons to the contrary. Let us look at the reasons for and against.

In favour of this conclusion the following weighty reasons may be alleged:—First, the writer appears to be suffering from two chief causes: one personal to himself, and one of a more public character. He is apparently suffering from some personal disease, which amounts to a disfigurement of his *face* or disablement of his *person*. Hence the force of his description of God as *the health of his countenance; or the salvation of his person, or the triumph of his presence*. And then there is an *enemy*, under whose oppression he has to groan, whose taunts he has to bear. Now the significant thing is: That in Hezekiah both these causes of suffering met: He was struck for death with leprosy, and the Assyrian army was at the gate of Jerusalem:—the Assyrian, a mighty and oppressive nation indeed— well answering to the description, “A nation without kindness,” whose foul-mouthed representative the villain Rabshakeh was, who mercilessly hurled his taunts against Hezekiah, and deceitfully perverted facts to degrade Hezekiah in the eyes of his own people. To these leading reasons in favour of the authorship of Hezekiah, there are several others to be added: Such as his “tears”—mentioned here, and mentioned in the history; his “lyre”—of which also we read both here and in the history; his enthusiastic participation in the worship of the Temple, in reference to which it may safely be said that the very word in the 4th verse (of

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Psalm 42) "passed over" or "crossed over" is exquisitely adapted to describe the king's procession from the Royal Palace to the Temple, since there was a splendid viaduct connecting the two. It is extremely unlikely that such a combination of reasons for any other author can be found.

The one objection that may be urged can easily be obviated. The writer, it may be said, was not merely a "debarred" worshipper but a *banished* worshipper; since he prays to be led back into the holy mountain, proving that he was away from Jerusalem. Standing alone, that objection might have been plausible, though not conclusive; seeing that the language is perfectly consistent with mere enforced banishment from Mount Moriah—"the mountain of the house" (Cp. 2 Ch. 3:1, 35:15, Isa. 2:2, 30:29, Jer. 26:18, Mi. 3:12), and we know that Hezekiah regarded it as an *ascent* to visit Jehovah's temple (Isa. 38:22). From that holy place, while his plague was upon him, he was debarred. Perhaps a still stronger objection to the claims of Hezekiah to be regarded as the author of this psalm, will be framed upon the assumption that the writer was far away from Jerusalem when he penned it—that, in fact, he was still among the *waterfalls* of the upper Jordan. But this assumption is quite to mistake that allusion—quite to lose grip of the fact that that allusion was a memory; a memory not recalled while he was in the north, but a memory of a thrilling experience which befell him when he was in the north. To be sure of this, we have only to adhere to an accurate rendering of 42:6: "*Over myself—over my own deplorable bodily condition, my soul keeps despairing—keeps falling into fits of despondency: therefore—because of this, that I may repress altogether this tendency to hopelessness, I will remember—I will recall an incident which befell me when I was a young man visiting the Upper Jordan: I will remember thee—in thy 'marvellous kindness' which was then 'made wonderful to me' by rescuing me from drowning in the rapids of the Upper Jordan. A storm came on; the waters, rolling down the mountain sides, caused a 'spate'; the waterfalls were roused to activity; the lakes into which their waters descended answered to each other, deep calling unto deep. I was in personal peril, all thy breakers and thy billows passed over me—all seemed lost, when I found myself landed on a cliff; the flood that engulfed me, saved me, it carried me to a safe spot—my feet*

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were on a rock: the waters abated, and I was saved! Yea, O my Cliff, O thou God of my life, the gladdener of my youthful days,—thus will I remember thee, and fortify myself against these fits of despondency." The beauty of the poet's picturesque reference can with difficulty be suppressed, however slovenly the translator's rendering, however dull the expositor's imagination. Nevertheless, it may perhaps be remarked, without presumption, that, for lack of a correct historical point of observation, the psalmist's graphic allusion has been deplorably enfeebled. The words have been inexactly rendered; the incident has been represented as part fact and part figure, to the enfeebling of both, instead of being first taken as a connected whole in its literal completeness, and then employed as a whole in its metaphorical application to the sufferer's now present bodily condition—as by no means excluding hope; the preposition *mem*, "from," has been assumed to bind the writer to be at the Jordan when he remembers, instead of leaving him free afterwards to recall the incidents from the Jordan: and thus, in fine, one of the most beautiful things in the Psalms has dwindled into very small dimensions indeed, and become unavailable for any practical purpose. Whereas, on the other hand, the treating of the whole thing as a memory, throws into delightful vividness both the singular designation of Jehovah as the writer's Cliff, and the peculiarly touching allusion to Jehovah as the gladdener of his youth. And thus, in fact, we are getting back not only Hezekiah's name into the authorship of the Psalms; but, as a consequence, we are recovering precious snatches of his autobiography.

Thus refreshed by our study, let us turn back again and make the first thing noticed, also the last thing to abide in our hearts. This we may do by the trite observation that we do not thirst for things of which we have no knowledge. To thirst for God as a living God, we must first know him to be such; and know the incomparable satisfaction to be thence derived. Hezekiah knew the living God of Israel: he had seen his face—only figuratively, representatively, adumbratively, it may be. But there was divine reality in it. The cloud of glory was there—behind the veil: the fire consumed the sacrifices: the Urim and Thummim gave responses: the prophets brought messages. The character of God gave the soul perfect satisfaction—his might gave protection—his promises imparted hope—his

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pardon inspired love. These things, Hezekiah had known and enjoyed; and, though for the present there was a hiding of Jehovah's face, the memory of the brightness and blessedness of its revelation was not lost. What he had once enjoyed he desired to enjoy again—desired with an intensity of desire and keen sense of need which only the figure of *thirst* could represent. We, too, must know God in order to thirst for him. May the blessed sense of nearness to him abide with us in all the freshness and force of the fuller revelation of himself which he has made in Christ Jesus our Lord!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you agree with the reasons of Rotherham for rejecting David as the author of this psalm? Discuss.
2. Discuss the arguments in favor of attributing this psalm to Hezekiah. (It would seem that Hezekiah is the master-organizer of many psalms—why is Rotherham so strong in this preference?)
3. Whoever wrote this psalm, his deep desire for God is a marvelous example for us. This is in a special way a psalm for all sometimes apathetic Christians. Read verses one through five for the attitude that will return us to our first love.
4. Suppose at sometime in our experience we were prevented from assembling—we were physically hindered from holding religious services—would the words of the psalmist in verses 4 and 5 relate to us? Discuss.
5. What is your estimate of Rotherham's interpretation of verses 6 and 7 as that of: "I will recall an incident which befell me when I was a young man visiting the upper Jordan."—? Discuss.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why are these two psalms here inseparably considered?
2. What were the charges made against the psalmist by the "merciless deceitful men"?
3. In what sense has God ever "tossed" anyone aside?
4. How can the highly figurative language of "send forth thy light and faithfulness"—have any bearing on our needs? Discuss.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 44

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel Suffers for God.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-8, The Psalmist, Encouraging himself by Jehovah's Past Favour in Giving Israel their Land, Emboldens himself to Expect Further Victories. Stanza II., vers. 9-16, Sudden Reverses Confound Israel, and cause the Psalmist to feel the Deepest Shame. Stanza III., vers 17-22, Expostulation based on Israel's Fidelity. Stanza IV., vers. 23, 24, and V., vers., 25, 26, Impassioned and Plaintive Appeals for Divine Interposition.—Psalm probably written by David on a defeat of Israel by Edom (inferred from a comparison of 2 Sam. 8:13 with I K. 11:15, and the inscription to Ps. 60), and Adapted to a Later Occasion by Hezekiah.

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#### (Lm.) An Instructive Psalm.

- 1 O God! with our own ears have we heard—  
our fathers have told us,  
the work thou didst work in their days—  
the days of aforetime:
- 2 Thou thyself with thine own hand didst dispossess nations  
and plant them,  
didst afflict peoples—  
and spread them out.
- 3 For not by their own sword possessed they the land,  
nor did their own arm win victory for them;  
But thine own right hand and thine own arm,  
and the light of thy face, in that thou didst take pleasure in  
them.
- 4 Thou thyself art my king, my God,  
the commander<sup>1</sup> of the victories<sup>2</sup> of Jacob.
- 5 By thee at our adversaries will we thrust,  
in thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
- 6 For not in mine own bow will I trust,  
nor can mine own sword give me victory.

1. So Sep., Syr., Br. and others.

2. Or: "great salvation" (pl. intensive).



PSALM FORTY-FOUR

- 7 For thou hast saved us from our adversaries,  
and them who hate us hast thou put to shame.
- 8 In God have we boasted all the day,  
and unto thy name unto the ages will we give thanks.
- 9 But nay! thou hast rejected and confounded us,  
and art not going forth with our hosts;
- 10 Thou turnest us back from the adversary,  
and they who hate us have plundered at will:
- 11 Thou dost give us up like sheep to be devoured,  
and amongst the nations hast thou scattered us:
- 12 Thou dost sell thy people for no-value,  
and hast not made increase by their price:
- 13 Thou dost make us a reproach unto our neighbours,  
a mockery and derision to them who are round about us:
- 14 Thou dost make us a by-word among the nations,  
a shaking of the head among the peoples.
- 15 All the day is mine ignomy before me,  
and the shame of my face hath covered me:
- 16 At the voice of him who reproacheth and revileth,  
At the face of the foe and avenger.<sup>1</sup>
- 17 All this hath come upon us yet had we not forgotten thee,  
neither had we dealt falsely with thy covenant:
- 18 Our heart had not turned away backward,  
neither had our steps declined from thy path:—
- 19 That thou shouldst have crushed us down in the place of  
jackals,  
and covered us over with deep darkness.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God,  
and had spread forth our palms to the GOD of a foreigner
- 21 Would not God have searched into this,  
since he knoweth the secrets of the heart?
- 22 Surely for thy sake have we been slain all the day,  
we have been accounted as sheep for slaughter.
- 23 Oh arouse thyself!—wherefore shouldst thou sleep Sovereign  
Lord?<sup>2</sup>  
oh awake! do not reject altogether.
- 24 Wherefore thy face shouldst thou hide?  
shouldst forget our humiliation and our oppression?
- 25 For our soul hath sunk down to the dust,

1. Cp. 8:2.

2. Some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns): "Jehovah"—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

our body<sup>1</sup> hath cleaved to the earth.

26 Oh arise as succour for us,  
and ransom us for thy kindness' sake.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For lilies = Passover. For the sons of korah =  
"patriarchs of song."

Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 44

O God, we have heard of the glorious miracles You did in the days of long ago. Our forefathers have told us how You drove the heathen nations from this land and gave it all to us, spreading Israel from one end of the country to the other.

3 They did not conquer by their own strength and skill; but by Your mighty power and because You smiled upon them and favored them.

4 You are my King and my God. Decree victories for Your people!

5 For it is only by Your power and through Your name that we tread down our enemies;

6 I do not trust my weapons! They could never save me.

7 Only You can give us the victory over those who hate us.

8 My constant boast is God. I can never thank You enough!

9 And yet for a time, O Lord, You have tossed us aside in dishonor, and have not helped us in our battles.

10 You have actually fought against us and defeated us before our foes. Our enemies have invaded our land and pillaged the countryside.

11 You have treated us like sheep in a slaughter pen, and scattered us among the nations.

12 You sold us for a pittance. You valued us at nothing at all.

13 The neighboring nations laugh and mock at us because of all the evil You have sent.

14 You have made the word "Jew" a byword of contempt and shame among the nations, disliked by all.

15, 16 I am constantly despised, mocked, taunted and cursed by my vengeful enemies.

1. Ml.: "belly." Heb. *betan*. Cp. 31:9.

## PSALM FORTY-FOUR

17 And all this has happened, Lord, despite our loyalty to You. We have not violated Your covenant.

18 Our hearts have not deserted You! We have not left Your path by a single step.

19 If we had, we could understand Your punishing us in the barren wilderness and sending us into darkness and death.

20 If we had turned away from worshiping our God, and were worshiping idols,

21 Would God not know it? Yes, He knows the secrets of every heart.

22 But that is not our case! For we are facing death threats constantly because of serving You! We are like sheep awaiting slaughter.

23 Waken! Rouse Yourself! Don't sleep, O Lord! Are we cast off forever?

24 Why do You look the other way? Why do You ignore our sorrows and oppression?

25 We lie face downward in the dust.

26 Rise up, O Lord, and come and help us. Save us by Your constant love.

## EXPOSITION

It is quite possible that, in the course of adaptation and transmission, this valuable psalm has suffered some disturbances of its outward form as regards both metre and stanza. It is doubtful, however, whether successful attempts can now be made to restore the original symmetry which may well have existed. For example, it is not unlikely that the psalm was a trimeter throughout, including the opening lines, which now appear as pentameters. But it would not only take a bold hand to reduce the lines to a severer metre, but that bold hand might strike off accretions which are equally authentic with the original verse, as may appear when once the principle of joint-authorship is admitted. If Hezekiah's harp could adapt itself to those grand pentameters which open the psalm as we now have it—and, we may add, which appear to have offered themselves to the ancient Greek translators—who are we, and what know we of any rigidity in harping exigencies, that we should deliberately lop off syllables which, at all events, are very ancient. Similar caution must stay our hand from undue meddling with the stanzas. They are slightly irregular, as it is, undoubtedly; but

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

we may justly refuse to mutilate the psalm, especially when the very lines we should sacrifice might prove of the highest value in bringing the historical occasion of its production into clear perspective.

That this psalm was written by David, notwithstanding the absence of his name from the inscription, at once becomes in the highest degree probable by merely comparing it with Ps. 60, which bears witness to the occasion which gave it birth. Then, when we ponder the weighty fact that, when this psalm was written, Israel was *free from the taint of idolatry*; and come to realize, for *that* reason, our choice lies between a very early and a very late date—the time of David, on the one hand, and the time of the Maccabees, on the other; we shall perhaps find, at every step, how reasons multiply for preferring the early date. The very changes which literary criticism plausibly suggests, and the adaptations to after occasions which historical criticism more strongly claims, all required time before they originally appeared. Public texts are not modified in a day: especially where copies are few, and for the most part are jealously preserved in royal libraries. So that, if we assume that changes had already been made in the days when the Septuagint was executed, it is but reasonable to allow those changes ample time in which to appear—which requires us rather to push back authorship than to draw it forward. Besides all which the more the Davidic authorship of this psalm is candidly examined, the more does it commend itself.

Let us now recall the undoubted fact, that the work of Joshua was left for David to complete. What more natural, then, than that David should strengthen himself in God for the arduous work that remained, by steeping his spirit in remembrances of the work Divinely done now so long ago? Those brave ancestors drew the sword, indeed; but it was their God who gave them the victory: *Not by their own sword possessed they the land; but thine own right hand—thine own arm—the light of thy face*—these were the sources of strength by which Joshua and his men had gone on from victory to victory. And David realises that it still is so:

Thou thyself art my King my God,  
The commander of the victories of Jacob.

It is David all over:—the intense personal faith—the fellowship with his brethren: in swift alternation, first the man, then his

## PSALM FORTY-FOUR

people, then himself again: *our adversaries, our assailants; mine own bow, mine own sword.* The stripling who before Goliath strengthened himself in his God, and boasted of him, do so still.

In God have we boasted all the day.

And unto thy name unto the ages will we give thanks.

Then comes the sudden reverse, the astounding fact of disaster: in the portrayal of which some otherwise excellent critics have failed to see David. In particular, they think that the language of the second stanza indicates something more than temporary defeat. Thus Perowne says: "The language of the psalm is altogether too large to be applied to a sudden attack. It describes a more serious and lasting calamity." But it is respectfully submitted that this estimate of the poet's language results from some failure to apprehend the psychological elements in the situation. David was nothing if not intense. He believed his mission to be Divine. If *his God* failed him, no general could save him. If Jehovah failed him *once*, he might fail him *again*: if he continued to fail him, all would be lost. The present reverse was evidently most serious: David's men had been slain and captured and sold as slaves. The small surrounding nations were on the watch, ready to join in the fray as soon as they deemed it safe. The larger nations at a distance were being kept well-informed and ready to point the finger of contempt at valiant little Israel. Then see how the profoundly moved monarch took it all home to himself:

All the day is mine ignominy before me,  
The shame of my face hath covered me;  
At the voice of him who reproacheth and revileth,  
At the face of the foe and avenger:

using the very language of the 8th psalm. Moreover, the 19th verse, graphic as it is, describes rather one terrible defeat than a long series of reverses. One can see the individual battle-field, whereupon the defeat happened: the carcasses of David's men consumed by *jackals*: calamitous enough to David—who was only used to victory, and only expectant of it—to make him feel how *deep* was the *darkness* which for the moment *covered* Israel: "for the moment!" yes, but that moment was equal to days of mortal agony. Intensifying the agony and turning it into

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

temporary despair, was the mystery of it: there had been no unfaithfulness on the national *covenant*—no drawing back to idolatry.

And so was learned the lesson, to be learned again and again through the ages, that Israel may be called upon to suffer even where Israel has not sinned. It is comparatively a new lesson, leading up to a higher level than that hitherto frequented by mortal feet; but it is a lesson which God's saints are to be privileged to learn; and, therefore, so beloved a man as David must have his share. By-and-by, one of his descendants will be called upon to drink more deeply of the cup of undeserved—and therefore Divine—suffering; and, finding this psalm in the royal library, will be able to appreciate its teaching, and will be moved to add to it a few words growing out of an experience of which David has had little or no share: words pointing to the peculiar combination of sorrows due to the fact that when *the soul hath sunk down to the dust* under the weight of public calamity, *the body also hath cleaved to the earth* under a loathsome though only temporary and comparatively undeserved disease; imparting an additional pathos to the plea that God would arise to *succor and ransom* by a new display of his well-known *kindness*. On the whole, we may deem this to have formed a grand passover psalm, in the musical execution of which *the patriarchs of song* could most appropriately take a conspicuous share.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider this outline of the psalm: (1) *Praise* for past deliverance. vs. 1-3; (2) *Hope* for the future deliverance. vs. 4-8; (3) *Disappointment* at present defeat. vs. 9-16; (4) *Innocence* claimed of guilt for present trouble, vs. 17-22; (5) Prayer for help. vs. 23-26.

(As adapted from G. Scroggie)

Does this outline have any similarity to our experience? Who hasn't followed this same pattern? Discuss.

2. Supposing this did happen to David—When and where? Discuss. Read Psalm 60 for a suggestion.
3. Why would anyone feel this psalm was written in the Maccabean period? Read verses thirteen and fourteen for a suggestion. Discuss.

## PSALM FORTY-FOUR AND FORTY-FIVE

4. Read verses 22 through 26, and discuss the two-fold application.
5. Read verses 10-14, and notice the use of the term "thou". What circumstances are attributed to God?

## PSALM 45

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Royal Marriage.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, The Psalmist bespeaks Attention to his Poem. Stanza II., ver. 2, The King's Surpassing Beauty and Gracious Discourse bring down upon him an Abiding Divine Blessing. Stanza III., vers. 3-7, The King is Suddenly Summoned to War: his Throne, Sceptre, Character and Anointing. Stanza IV., vers. 8, 9, Ready for the Marriage Ceremony. Stanza V., vers. 10-12, Address to the Bride. Stanza VI., vers. 13-15, The Queen and her Attendants brought into the King's Palace. Stanza VII., vers 16, 17, Final Words to the Queen and to the King.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—a Song of Love.

- 1 Astir is my heart with a theme that is good,  
Recite I my poem concerning a king:  
My tongue be the pen of a scribe that is skilled!
- 2 Beautiful beautiful!<sup>1</sup> thou art, beyond the sons of men!  
a gracious charm hath been set on thy lips;<sup>2</sup>  
Therefore hath God blessed thee to the ages.
- 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh O hero!  
in thy majesty and thy state:

1. The same word as that used of the Queen in ver. 11, but here reduplicated.

2. "Graciousness is shed over thy lips"—Dr. "Over his lips there is poured, viz., from above, *hen*, charm or graciousness, inasmuch, as even without his having to speak, the very form of his lips and every one of their motions awaken love and trust; but it is self-evident that from such lips, full of *charis* ('grace'), there must also proceed *logoi tees charitos* ('words of grace'), Lk. 4:22, Ec. 10:12"—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 4 Tread the bow<sup>1</sup> succeed ride on!  
for the sake of truth and the humiliation of righteousness,<sup>2</sup>  
And thy right hand will teach thee fearful things.
- 5 Thine arrows are sharp—peoples under thee fall:—<sup>3</sup>  
in the heart of the foes of the king.
- 6 Thy throne O God is to the ages and beyond,  
A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom;
- 7 Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness:  
Therefore hath God thy God<sup>4</sup> anointed thee  
with the oil of gladness above thy partners.
- 8 Myrrh and aloes—cassias—are all thy garments,  
out of the palaces of ivory tones of strings have delighted  
thee.
- 9 Kings' daughters are among thy female servants,<sup>5</sup>  
stationed<sup>6</sup> is the queen at thy right hand in gold of Ophir.
- 10 Hearken O daughter and see, and bow down thine ear,—  
and forget thine own people and the house of thy father;
- 11 And the king will long for thy beauty,  
for he is thy lord!<sup>7</sup>
- 12 Homage to him will the daughters of Tyre with gifts render,  
thine own face will the rich men of the people appease.
- 13 All glorious! daughter of a king!<sup>8</sup>  
pearls<sup>9</sup> in chequer work of gold her clothing!
- 14 On tapestry of divers colours is she conducted to the king:<sup>10</sup>  
virgins in her train her companions are brought to her,  
15 with gladness and exulting are they conducted to her,  
brought into the king's palace to her.<sup>11</sup>

1. So, following the Sep.

2. Or: "righteousness with humility"—nearly with Del. Or: "the afflicting of righteousness"—Br.

3. "The poet has the field of battle present to him as if he were an eye-witness"—Del.

4. Doubtless for an original "Jehovah thy God"—So Del.

5. So the majority of MSS. which Ginsburg had consulted—G. Intro. 268.

6. In Sep. *parastao*, as in Eph. 5:27. See Exposition.

7. Thus the Sep. See Exposition.

8. In this exclamatory form, this clause may be a father's fond note of comparison; as if—"any king's daughter."

9. *Peninim*, "pearls," by some critics preferred to *penimah* "within," which just here seems premature and disturbing.

10. Perowne has offered strong reasons for this rendering.

11. The foregoing three lines have been conformed to Dr. Briggs' "restored" Heb. text. The assonance of their endings has a pleasing effect.



## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

(To the Bride.)

- 16 Instead of thy<sup>1</sup> fathers be thy<sup>1</sup> sons!  
thou wilt make them rulers in all the earth.

(To the Bridegroom.)

- 17 I will memorialise thy name through all succeeding  
generations,  
Therefore peoples will thank thee to the ages and beyond.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the sons of korah along with maidens.<sup>2</sup>

PSALM

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 45

My heart is overflowing with a beautiful thought! I will  
write a lovely poem to the King for I am as full of words as the  
speediest writer pouring out his story.

- 2 You are the fairest of all;  
Your words are filled with grace;  
God Himself is blessing You forever!
- 3 Arm Yourself, O Mighty One,  
So glorious, so majestic!
- 4 And in Your majesty  
Go on to Victory,  
Defending truth, humility, and justice.  
Go forth to awe-inspiring deeds!
- 5 Your arrows are sharp  
In Your enemies' hearts;  
They fall before You.
- 6 Your throne, O God, endures forever.  
Justice is Your royal scepter.
- 7 You love what is good  
And hate what is wrong.  
Therefore God, Your God,  
Has given You more gladness  
Than anyone else.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. These pronouns (which are pointed as masculine in M.T.) shd. be  
feminine (w. Syr.)—Gn.

2. Cp. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

8 Your robes are perfumed with myrrh, aloes and cassia. In your inlaid palaces of ivory, lovely music is being played for your enjoyment.

9 Kings' daughters are among your concubines.<sup>1</sup> Standing beside you is the queen, wearing jewelry of finest gold from Ophir.

10, 11 "I advise you, O daughter, not to fret about your parents in your homeland far away. Your royal husband delights in your beauty. Reverence him, for he is your lord.

12 The people of Tyre, the richest people of our day, will shower you with gifts and entreat your favors."

13 The bride,<sup>2</sup> a princess, waits within her chamber, robed in beautiful clothing woven with gold.

14 Lovely<sup>3</sup> she is, led beside her maids of honor to the king!

15 What a joyful, glad procession as they enter in the palace gates!

16 "Your sons will some day be kings like their father. They shall sit on thrones around the world!

17 I will cause your name to be honored in all generations; the nations of the earth will praise you forever."

## EXPOSITION

Two things at the outset may be taken for granted: first, that the ultimate Hero of this psalm is the Messiah; and, second, that if we can find a Type of the Messiah in fair measure answering to the terms of the psalm, it will be a gain to allow that type to speak to us of the Antitype—as far as it may: this limitation being intended to remind us of the caution thrown out in dealing with Ps. 2, to the effect that we must not assume that the Spirit of Prophecy may not leave the type behind, and reach forth to greater things than any shadow can express. Adequately to fill up the terms of the psalm must be our governing aim: using the type as a help, and not becoming enslaved to it.

In the present instance the *type* and the *writer* are associated in a remarkable way. Dr. Thirtle has suggested (O.T.P., 49f, 318) that Hezekiah is the type; and instantly our deepest interest is excited. By all means Hezekiah, provided that the

1. Literally, "honorable women."

2. Literally, "The king's daughter."

3. Literally, "embroidered work."

## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

requirements of the psalm are thereby fairly met: much rather Hezekiah than Solomon, Joram, Jehu, or any of the rest whose names have been mentioned as probable; for, of these, we either know too little to feel drawn to them, or else what we do know renders them decidedly unacceptable for the honour of adumbrating the Messiah in a psalm of such pure and lofty idealism as this. Hezekiah, by all means: subject to necessary conditions. The one objection to his name, probably will turn out to be a commendation. We know that Hezekiah married a wife named Hephzibah, and Jewish tradition has it, that she was daughter to Isaiah the prophet. Hezekiah's trusty friend. Delightful, indeed, to think of the good King Hezekiah as marrying Isaiah's daughter. But then the psalm, it is thought, indicates that the Bride, in this marriage, is of Gentile descent. Nor can it be denied that to such a bride the advice would be peculiarly appropriate. *Forget thine own people, and the house of thy father.* Still, this indication alone can scarcely be said to be decisive; since "people" may mean, less widely, tribe, clan, or general circle of relatives; as to which it may be said that, not being of the royal family, the spirit of the advice would still be appropriate. Moreover, this measure of inferiority in the type may be regarded as sufficient to hint at a larger measure of inferiority in the Antitype: the non-royal element in the ancestry of Hezekiah's bride being regarded as enough to suggest the non-Israelitish strain in the Bride of the Messiah. Leaving these suggestions for the consideration of the thoughtful, it may be frankly admitted that the name of Hezekiah has an undeniable fascination—if for this reason only: The Jewish tradition that the Hephzibah who became Hezekiah's wife was Isaiah's daughter, naturally raises the question whether Isaiah himself was not the author of this psalm. Who so likely as he, to have been delighted with the restored monarch's "beauty"? Who so likely, to have admitted by implication, that the Queen's beauty was less striking than the King's? Who so likely and so fitting to have addressed the Bride in the *fatherly* terms with which the writer of the psalm is credited: *Hearken, O daughter?* And, finally, if some commentators have concluded that Isaiah wrote the psalms immediately succeeding this, why may he not have written this also, when for this task he presumably had such a mighty impulse and such supreme qualifications? Isaiah's genius as a poet was transcendent; but is not this magnificent epithalamium worthy of it? And, to go for a moment deeper than to poetic genius,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

from whose pen could so appropriately have come the surprising words of the psalm, *Thy throne, O God*, as from his who declared that the Messiah's name should be called *El gibbor*—"God hero"? (Isa. 9:6, 10:21).

It is easy to admit that Hezekiah does not completely fill up the terms of the psalm: *who, as type does?* But this at least may be maintained: That, on the whole, Hezekiah goes further than Solomon, and much further than Jehoram, Jehu, or any of the rest, to fill the outline required. Suffice it, that there is nothing incongruous in the type, as such, so long as we think of the good king, Hezekiah.

That every possible type comes short of fully answering to the large terms of the psalms,—that, no matter who may be fixed on as probable, it must finally be allowed that he falls behind the description in almost every particular,—THIS is the contention herewith most earnestly made, and for the consistent maintenance of which the preliminary caution was submitted, against being bound down by types when interpreting the prophetic word. Allowance must ever be made for the possible bearing away of the prophet under the mighty afflatus of the Divine Spirit of wisdom and knowledge. In interpreting the Holy Scriptures, we have to reckon, not only upon their sight of things present, but also upon their foresight (Gal. 3:8) of things to come; and, therefore, if we are to expound them congenially, we must be prepared to see with their eyes. If it be said, that if God is at all to speak to man, then we must presuppose his condescension to the employment of human speech, with its limitations,—it may be said in reply: Granted; and yet the impress of a new genius and a new spirit on the old forms may at any time appear; and though types may be accepted as a species of Divine-human alphabet, to which we must needs submit our minds, and which we have no right to suppose that the Spirit of Prophecy will discard or wholly transcend, yet may we venture to challenge any man's claim to confine to a *single type* the reachings forth of that Spirit towards the Antitype. For anything we know to the contrary, there may yet lie in the future an August Union in consummation of the tenderness and purity of Divine Love, which it may tax all the purest Royal Marriages in Israel only faintly to foreshadow. Still, we are glad of the types: without them we could not hope to spell out the revealed mind of God. In the present instance, for the foreshadowing of royal magnificence, we might prefer Solomon; for

## PSALM FORTY-FIVE

proved skill as an archer, we might prefer Jehu; for the yet higher qualities of faith and suffering nobleness—yea and possibly of deferred marital blessedness—we might greatly prefer Hezekiah: all we protest against is a crude and over-stringent typology. Let our Divine Father speak to us as he pleases.

But what, precisely, have we here, in the psalm now before us? Let us make sure of our facts, as far as we can.

First and foremost (Stanza I.) we have a poet deeply moved by his theme; and if he knows that his mind has ever travailed in birth with grand and godly conceptions almost too big for utterance, he is conscious that it is so now.

Next (Stanza II.) we have an observable inversion of the usual delicacy of male preference for female beauty: here it is the King's surpassing beauty which throws its radiance over all the canvas; the queen's beauty being only incidentally alluded to later on. Either the poet is a sycophant; or he has before him a King most wonderful. Nor is it beauty of form and feature alone which attracts his admiration. To beauty of appearance is added the worthy concomitant consisting in graciousness of discourse: charming the ear and delighting the mind at the same time that the eye rests upon the pleasing vision of his person. That is all: no more is said for the present. These two things, the poet feels, must please God as well as man. *Therefore hath God blessed thee to the ages.* The first and most natural sense of the word *therefore* is, that these qualities satisfy God and evoke his abiding benediction. Such a king he will delight to bless for so long a time that the poet cannot see beyond it. Short is this stanza, but it is complete; and the refrain marks that it is so.

A surprise now awaits us (Stanza III.) in the sudden summons of the beautiful and eloquent king to make ready for war. Had the poet merely clad his hero with armour, and bade him ride in his chariot for display and for impressive suggestion of what on occasion he might be trusted to achieve,—we could have admired the poet's art, and been ready to pass on to the next scene. But it is far otherwise. An occasion for war has arisen. The king has to vindicate his *faithfulness* to the implied obligations of his kingship. *Righteousness* has been *humiliated* within his domain, and *for this cause* he is summoned to interpose. An enemy has arisen on whom avengement must be inflicted, involving *fearful* punishment. No plan of campaign can be assigned the avenging monarch: his own skilled *right hand* will

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teach him what to do, first and last. No companion warriors are named, yet the king's arrows are sharp and their execution is so widespread that *peoples* fall under them; and the overthrow of the king's foes is so sudden that the description is broken, that the reader may behold it. As intimated, not only is the issue of the battle seemingly immediate; but the summons to wage this war is inferentially unexpected. So, at least, the poet's art suggests; since, to permit of this royal campaign, the royal marriage is postponed. This may, in exegesis, mean little; but it may mean much, and the poet's skill will be best vindicated should it appear to have been carefully designed. The foreseen issue of this war furnishes the poet with an occasion to speak the praises of the Warrior's *throne, sceptre, and character*; and then to crown this view of the King with another logical refrain, longer and larger than the first. *His throne* is an abiding throne, says the poet; and he takes pains to negative the thought of its overthrow or removal or disuse, by adding a word to his time reference: *to the ages and beyond* shall that throne stand! It may be naturally inferred, that it is the King's promptitude and prowess in making the war for the vindication of down-trodden righteousness, already noticed, which occasion the poet's reflection on the stability of his throne. And the same may be said of the notice of his sceptre. But this is now distinctly traced to the King's character: *He loveth righteousness and hateth lawlessness*—the which, indeed, is thrown into the form of direct address, and stated in the complete tense which is fitted to comprehend an abiding quality with its recent manifestation. *Therefore*—because of this, the triumphant hero is *anointed with the oil of gladness above his partners*. It is a Divine anointing: Jehovah his God has bestowed it. It is a festive gift: causing joy to its recipient. This joy is superlative in degree: *above thy partners*—whoever these may be, which is not yet declared. Placed where this anointing is: after the war—before the marriage: it looks in both directions. The Hero is made supremely glad, inasmuch as he has been able to deal so decisive a blow to lawlessness: being so made glad, he is ready for his Bride.

The marriage approaches (Stanza IV.). Again the King most wonderful comes into view, not now clad in armour, but with flowing robes redolent of sweetest spices, as though woven of nothing else. In the near distance music is heard: reminding

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him of the happy occasion, in response to which his heart leaps for joy. *King's daughters* are proud to serve as menials in his household. And now the *Queen*, his Bride, is *stationed at his right hand*, place of highest honour; clad in gold-decked raiment. The poet recites these facts in language addressed to the King: *thy garments—delighted thee—thy servants—thy right hand*. This prepares us for a marked change of address, which is thereby rendered impressive.

For hearken! the venerable poet (Stanza V.), who may be regarded as at once giving away the Bride and solemnising the nuptials, presumes to *address* the Queen. His address is familiar, for he calls the Bride *daughter*; but his words are few, and much to the point—if the Lady whom he accosts has either been brought from a foreign land or promoted from a lowly station: one caution, one inference, one sanction. One caution: let the Bride be supremely devoted to her husband, comparatively *forgetting* all else. One inference: *thus will the king long for thy beauty*. One sanction: *he is thy lord*—he owns thee, thou art his, he will be within his rights. No more. That short line from the Septuagint is splendidly eloquent in its stern reticence. Nothing can be added without spoiling it. How the harpist would deal with so short a line, is a minor question: we recall several such short lines, left short for emphasis (1:1, 4, 8:1, 9, 150:6); or the musician by a simple *repeat* could expand this line into a tetrameter, a measure which is characteristic of this psalm. Let the *bowing down in homage* be reverently (with the Septuagint) handed on for the *daughters of Tyre*, and so help to form a well-balanced line to match the respectful suit for the Queen's favour pressed by the *rich men* of the honoured nation to whom the King is related.

After this address to the Queen, it is at least poetically correct to conceive of all eyes as now (Stanza VI.) directed to *her*, and to have her resplendent appearance made the subject of admiring exclamations. Ere the King finally disappears in his palace, and the Queen is conducted to him, and her companions follow in her train, appropriate good wishes are by the poet addressed to them both (Stanza VII.): first, as Dr. Ginsburg has pointed out, to the Queen; to whom is assigned the privilege, in the event of the fulfillment of the good wishes, of furnishing rulers for *all the land*, or as better suiting the wide

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outlook of the psalm, *all the earth*, a wish not more notable for its delicacy than for its boldness; and then, finally, the address passes over to the King—good wishes for whom take the form of a positive intention, as the avowed motive on the poet's part. It might have passed as an obvious and natural compliment, to have merely said, that he, the poet, hoped to *memorialise his hero's name to all succeeding generations*: but, when he goes on to foretell that the *thanks* of all coming time will, by virtue of this marriage-song, be tendered to his hero by peoples or nations, then we feel that the poet is either guilty of extravagance or is assuming the *role* of a prophet. Only by assuming that he is a prophet, and that the Messiah is his ultimate theme, can we acquit him of such suspicion. Shall we lower our estimate of holy men of God, or shall we elevate our conceptions of their message? This question brings us to the crux of the interpretation of this psalm.

The foregoing survey of the actual contents of the psalm will have served its purpose, if it should now be deemed needless to urge with any prolonged tenacity any question concerning the Types: it is time that all our interest should converge on the Antitype. No mere type can stay the psalm from collapsing on our hands. It is a good start, in quest of the Antitype, to find Jewish expositors frankly admitting that Messiah himself is THE hero of the psalm (The Targum paraphrasing ver. 2 thus: "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, exceeds that of the children of men; a spirit of prophecy is bestowed on thy lips")—Kp.; but it is a sorry finish, to find any of them protesting, that no other Messiah than Hezekiah need be looked for by their nation ("Rabbi Hillel" saying, "Israel shall have no more Messiah: for they have had him in the days of Hezekiah"—Talmud, quoted by Thirtle, O.T.P., 277). In truth, the key to the psalm is in the Christian Expositor's hands; and it is merely a question of degree, how far his use of the key can be pronounced satisfactory. All Christians are agreed in finding in Jesus of Nazareth the King most beautiful, most wonderful, of whom this psalm speaks. He is, indeed, most beautiful in their eyes: they admire and love him with a passionate devotion which has led myriads of them to die for his sake. So far the solution is perfect. But Christian Expositors have been driven against two rocks which have well-nigh shattered their exegesis. In the first place, they have wrong-



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fully applied the war-picture, which delays the marriage, to the gracious delivery—by their King's heralds to the nations of the wooing message of his love, which they rightly call their "gospel." Had they restricted this feature of their exegesis to the apostolic prediction of their Messiah's personal onslaught on "The Lawless One" by direct interposition from heaven (2 Thes. 2), and resolutely thrown forward the alleged fulfillment of that prediction into the future when "that Wicked One" shall incontestably have appeared, this rock would have been avoided, and we should have been spared the humiliation of being chargeable with such a gross misapplication of terms as that which *confounds the Messiah's sudden overthrow of his enemies on a fearfully vast scale, with the gently elective process by which he wins individual friends and disciples from among the nations.* The second rock on which Christian exegesis has been well-nigh wrecked, is the double error of failing to regard the Church, considered as Messiah's Bride, in the light of an absolutely spiritual incorporation, to be rendered spotless before being presented beside her Lord; and concomitantly with that, failing to regard "the Marriage of the Lamb" as a future consummation, consisting of the blessed union with its Head, in immortal glory, of the Corporate Body, the completed Ecclesia. This rock also escaped, there is nothing to hinder the triumphant sailing of Christian Interpretation into the harbour of an invincible application of this psalm to its true prospective realisation. Kirkpatrick well says that "Such poems as this . . . are ennobled and consecrated by being thus made the vehicle for lofty thoughts and the type of spiritual mysteries (Eph. 5:23ff)"; but the way in which some expositors excuse themselves just where, as it might be supposed, the type ought to be regarded as profoundly significant, probably proves neither more nor less than the loss of the correct prophetic point of view from which to interpret a psalm like the present. Let all thoughts of the Messiah's Bride, as realisable in the Church, be resolutely held fast to the following most obvious and most necessary restrictions—that by "the Church," in such a connection, we mean the Church *collective*, and therefore no mere individual soul, the Church *final*, and therefore no temporary organization, and consequently the Church *immortal*, freed from all the desires of earth, from whose communion with her Lord is banished every thought of fellowship other than the heavenly and

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spiritual communion in the high interests of the kingdom of God; only let these restrictions be observed, and there need be no shrinking from the broad and bold expectation, that the consummating crisis which lies between this Dispensation and the next will be fruitful in blessedness to the nations of the earth, in providing them with "rulers" worthy and capable of sharing with the Messiah the honour and responsibility of reigning over all the earth in righteousness, and ruling it in justice (Isa. 32:1). Patience, dear suffering souls. Keep the word intact—and wait!

Nothing now remains but to add: That the provision of an Elect Assembly—consisting chiefly of Gentiles—as the Bride of the Messiah, is indeed a Sacred Secret, unrevealed in the olden prophetic days (Eph. 3:3-7, 5:32; Col. 1:26, 27); and, therefore, that had it been plainly disclosed in this psalm—the sagacity at least of the Apostle Paul, to whom we are indebted for our knowledge of it, would have been shown to be at fault. But such a thought cannot be entertained, inasmuch as a fair treatment of the psalm leaves it absolutely true that it contains nothing beyond a *veiled allusion* of the Queen's gentile descent, with no reference at all to her corporate character. We thank the authors of the Targum for suggesting, on ver. 10, that Messiah's Bride was to be a "congregation," and not an individual. But, as Christians, we cannot but be content to follow the guidance of our beloved Apostle Paul in his identification of the one pure Bride designed for the Messiah (Eph. 5:25ff)—for whom in an especial sense he gave up his life. And again we have to thank the ancient Greek Translators for providing our Apostle with a word (*pareste*), of which he has not failed to make good use in his triumphant note to the Ephesians (*para-stese*) which we have been very dull in not sooner discerning to mean this: "that HE might *present—with himself—all glorious—the ecclesia.*" "*With himself*" (*heauto*); for so, assuredly, should it be rendered, seeing that *there it is*, in the psalm, before our eyes: the King, with the Queen *placed at his right hand*. Dull, indeed, must we have been, if we have not before seen this, and have not found our exact Pauline parallel in Col. 3:4:—

As soon as the Christ shall be made manifest—our Life!

Then ye also, together with him, shall be made manifest in glory. In view of these fruitful suggestions, we can afford to wait and see how near to mortal view the Queen will be brought, before

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we permit ourselves to be entangled in any small questions as to how far literal and how far figurative the language may be which describes *the daughters of Tyre as bowing down in homage* to our King, and *the rich men of the people* (of Israel) as seeking a smile on the fair face of his Queen. Enough has already been fulfilled in the King, in pursuance of this magnificent psalm, and enough has been suggested as already in preparation with regard to the Queen, to make us patiently expectant of the solving and harmonising effects of complete accomplishment. To be of any use beforehand, the general drift of prophecy should be plain; but it must be left to fulfillment to solve questions of detail. In deference to the severe "beauty of holiness" demanded in the Messiah's Ecclesia, we may well expect that the first exclamation, on occasion of her unveiling will be—*All glorious!* and that the discovery of the Divine Fatherhood of the Ecclesia will occasion a second acclaim—*Daughter of a King!* After which it will be fitting that the Hallelujahs of heaven should burst upon the World's astonished ear, and that Earth should respond with a loud "AMEN!"

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please notice carefully the outline of this psalm—whatever understanding of this psalm we obtain, it will be based on the outline—it is progressive as well as cumulative : (1) The bridegroom. vs. 1, 2; (2) The battle. vs. 3-5; (3) The throne. vs. 6-9; (4) The bride. vs. 10-14; (5) The beautiful home and rule. vs. 15-17. Who is the bride and groom? Discuss.
2. Our hearts should overflow with the beautiful thought here described. Apply this psalm to Christ, and His bride the Church. Since we are that bride, there is much to learn. Discuss.
3. The king or groom is presented in verses one and two—His battle and His throne are described in verses three through nine. Please apply these qualities to our Lord and make present day application.
4. The bride of Christ or the Church could be described in verses ten through fourteen. Please make two or three comparisons for our learning and application.
5. There are several hymns that discuss the beauty of this psalm. Name and discuss at least two of them.

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### PSALM 46

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Trust in God, Joyfully Maintained in Face of Peril,  
Speedily Rewarded.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Trust in God held fast in presence of National Troubles that are likened to the Catastrophes of Nature. Stanza II., vers. 4-7, With His secret Water-supply and her God Himself in her midst, the Besieged City is kept Glad and Safe, and is Speedily Delivered. Stanza III., vers. 8-11, An Invitation to View Jehovah's Doings in Forcibly bringing Wars to an End; and a Divine Warning, bringing Hope to the Nations of the Earth. A *refrain* celebrates Israel's Confidence in her God.

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#### (Lm.) Song.

- 1 God for us is a refuge and strength,  
a help in distresses most willingly found.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Therefore we will not fear though the land should roar,<sup>2</sup>  
and the mountains stagger into the midst of the seas:
- 3 Seas<sup>3</sup> may roar the waters thereof foam,  
mountains may shake at the swelling of the stream,—  
(Jehovah of hosts is with us,  
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.<sup>4</sup>)
- 4 His channels make glad the city of God,  
the Most High hath kept sacred<sup>5</sup> his habitations:
- 5 God is in her midst—she shall not stagger,  
God will help her at the approach of the morning:
- 6 Nations have roared—kingdoms have staggered,  
he hath uttered his voice—earth melteth:—
- 7 Jehovah of hosts is with us,  
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.

1. *ML.*: "letting himself be found exceedingly."

2. So *Br. M.T.* "show change."

3. *Prob.* omitted by oversight in *M.T. Cp. Br.*

4. The refrain of vers. 7, 11, *prob.* omitted here by oversight. So *Del., Kp.,* and others. *Per.* thinks the omission designed.

5. So it should be (*w. Sep. & Vul.*)—*Gn.*

## PSALM FORTY-SIX

- 8 Come view the doings of Jehovah,<sup>1</sup>  
who hath set desolations<sup>2</sup> in the earth:  
9 Causing wars to cease unto the end of the earth,  
the bow he breaketh and cutteth asunder the spear.  
waggons he burneth with fire,  
10 "Desist and know that I am God,—  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."  
11 Jehovah of hosts is with us,  
a lofty retreat for us is the God of Jacob.  
(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For the sons of korah.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength, a tested help in times of trouble.

2 And so we need not fear even if the world blows up, and the mountains crumble into the sea.

3 Let the oceans roar and foam; let the mountains tremble!

4 There is a river of joy flowing through the City of our God—the sacred home of the God above all gods.

5 God Himself is living in that City; therefore it stands unmoved despite the turmoil everywhere. He will not delay His help.

6 The nations rant and rave in anger—but when God speaks, the earth melts in submission and kingdoms totter into ruin.

7 The Commander of the armies of heaven is here among us. He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us.

8 Come, see the glorious things that our God does, how He brings ruin upon the world,

9 And causes wars to end throughout the earth, breaking and burning every weapon.

10 "Stand silent! Know that I am God! I shall be honored by every nation in the world!"

11 The Commander of the heavenly armies is here among us! He, the God of Jacob, has come to rescue us!

1. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): "God." Cp. 66:5—Gn.

2. "Wastes," "horrors"—O.G.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS EXPOSITION

The three psalms now coming before us are nearly connected, and yet differ considerably from each other. Ps. 46 immediately reflects some historical event—possibly the invasion of Judaea in the days of Jehoshaphat as recorded in 2 Ch. 20, but more probably the later invasion by Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah, as narrated in 1 Kings 18, 2 Ch. 32, Isa. 36. Ps. 47, while doubtless suggested by the same event, is an ideal prediction and prophetic celebration of Jehovah's reign over the earth through Israel; and Ps. 48, which again reflects the past deliverance of the Holy City, is probably as much prophetic as it is historical; and strongly presses forward towards the final establishment of Jerusalem as the Metropolis of the World.

The spirit of Ps. 46 is that of stout-hearted trust in God. God is nearer than any enemy, and more powerful to relieve from danger than the enemy is to inflict it. The images employed in the psalm are bold, being formed by depicting such convulsions of nature as are seldom or never witnessed, yet are easily conceived. The terrible *roar* of the *land* in an earthquake, when *the mountains* are seen *staggering into the midst of the sea*, and the resentful sea is witnessed dashing its mighty waves on the *mountains* that overhang the shore: such is the scene which the poet's art presents as a figure of disturbed nations. At first this picture is presented without express application; amid even these convulsions, *God is our refuge and lofty retreat*. In the second stanza the national application is made prominent. They are *nations* that *roar*, *kingdoms* that *stagger*: still our trust is in the mighty God who governs nature, holding its tremendous forces in check, and who in like manner controls kings and peoples. But before this application is made, a contrast in natural images is introduced, which is the more effective because a literal realisation in the holy city is assumed to be well known to those who sing this anthem of deliverance. The God of the mighty sea is also the God of the springs which supply water to the holy city. These springs have lately been captured by Hezekiah through the formation of channels and enclosing walls which direct all the water to the city itself, while concealing and denying the supply from the enemy. The springs form the city's Divine supply; the wit and wisdom which have utilised them to the utmost and conserved them with so much care, being regarded as God's gifts, it could be well said that

## PSALM FORTY-SIX AND FORTY-SEVEN

*his channels make glad the city*; and not only glad, but patient, bold and defiant (Isa. 37:22) in presence of the besieger. Louder than the roar of nations is the *voice* of God; at the resounding of which *earth melteth* and the courage of her most valiant sons becomes weak as water. The minds of the singers of this song are left to supply the rest. Assyria has been overthrown in the land. The scene is one of terrible devastation. We are invited to view it, and to learn its great lesson. Wars will cease when Jehovah inflicts such *wastes* and *horrors* on those who wage them, that they will be compelled to stay the carnage. He will say *Desist* in such manner that they will *know* that He who speaks is *God* and must be obeyed. Then will he be *exalted among the nations*: "scattering those who in war take delight" (Ps. 68:30) and giving the nation rest and peace.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be a close association in the next three psalms —what is it?
2. Read again the paraphrase of verses one and two, and see the very real relevance of this psalm to our present day dilemma.
3. Allow the term "Jerusalem" in this psalm to mean the church, or "the city of our God". What then would be the river flowing through the city? Discuss.
4. Read Romans 8:31-39, and compare with verses two and three. Discuss.
5. Read the verses of the hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, and compare with this psalm.

## PSALM 47

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel Invites the Nations to Rejoice in the  
Universal Kingship of Her God.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Invitation Itself, announcing the Central Fact of Jehovah's World-wide Sovereignty. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Israel Claims her God-given Supremacy over the Nations. Stanza III. and IV., vers. 5, 6;

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and 7, 8, God's Ascension to his Holy Throne calls for Thoughtful Praise, with Instrumental Accompaniment. Stanza V., ver. 9, Gentile Nobles Gather Themselves Together, with the Hebrew Nation, in Acknowledgment of the Ownership and Enthronement of Abraham's God.

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### (Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 All ye peoples! clap the hand,  
shout to God with the voice of jubilation;<sup>1</sup>
- 2 For Jehovah Most High fear-inspiring  
is a great king over all the earth.
- 3 He subdueth peoples under us,  
and races of men under our feet:
- 4 He chooseth for us our inheritance,  
the pride of Jacob whom<sup>2</sup> he loved.
- 5 God hath ascended with a sacred shout,  
Jehovah with the sound of a horn.
- 6 Make melody unto God make melody,  
make melody to our king make melody.
- 7 For God is king of all the earth,  
make melody with contemplation:
- 8 God hath become king<sup>3</sup> over the nations,  
God hath taken his seat<sup>3</sup> on his holy throne.
- 9 The nobles of the peoples have gathered themselves together  
with the people of the God of Abraham;  
For to God belong the shields of the earth:  
very high hath he ascended.<sup>4</sup>

(Lm. To the Chief Musician—accidentally omitted.)

(CMm.) For the sons of korah.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 47

Come everyone, and clap for joy! Shout triumphant praises to the Lord!

1. Or: "of a ringing cry."

2. Or: "which."

3. "The verbs express not merely a fact but an act. God was King, but He has given fresh proof of it. He has caused Himself to be acknowledged King, and taken His seat upon His throne to judge and rule (103:19). Cp. Rev. 11:15"—Kp. Similarly—Dr.

4. *Niphal*, conjugation of *'alah*—the verb used in *kal* in ver. 5, the relation with which should be shown. Cp. for same form of verb 97:9; also, for force of cong. *niphal*, Num. 9:17, 21, 22, and in particular Eze. 9:3.



## PSALM FORTY-SEVEN

2 For the Lord, the God above all gods, is awesome beyond words; He is the great King of all the earth.

3 He subdues the nations before us,

4 And will personally select His choicest blessings for His Jewish people<sup>1</sup>—the very best for those He loves.

5 God has ascended (into heaven)<sup>2</sup> with a mighty shout, with trumpets blaring.

6, 7 Sing out your praises to our God, our King. Yes, sing your highest praises to our King, the King of all the earth. Sing thoughtful praises!

8 He reigns above the nations, sitting on His holy throne.

9 The Gentile rulers of the world have joined with us in praising<sup>3</sup> Him—praising<sup>3</sup> the God of Abraham—for the battle shields of all the armies of the world are His trophies. He is highly honored everywhere.

### EXPOSITION

The scope of this psalm is our surest guide in the settlement of questions which mere verbal criticism cannot set at rest. Ought we to render, in the second stanza,—“He subdued,” “He subdueth,” or “He will subdue”; “He chose,” “He chooseth,” or “He will choose”? The mere circumstance that the tenses here used are imperfects, with an incipient, initialling, or repeating force will not determine this point—strange as this may seem to those who are accustomed only to Western grammars. In such cases, the known facts, or the main scope, are our best guides. Now it cannot be overlooked that this psalm is first and last an invitation to the nations of the earth to rejoice in the newly assumed Divine Sovereignty over the whole earth. This at once strongly impresses on the psalm a future reference: not only a *then* future but a *still* future reference. For if it is difficult to see how the overthrow of the Assyrians under Sennacherib could form the basis of an invitation to all nations to come and acknowledge themselves under Jehovah and at the same time under the feet of Israel; still more difficult must it be to discover such a ground of joyful submission, in the action of Israel when in the time of the Maccabees she took up arms against foreign nations. Briggs sees and frankly admits this difficulty; and his words are worth quoting. Against the witness of the Heb., Greek, and

1. Literally, “the pride of Jacob.”
2. Implied.
3. Implied.

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Latin, in support of the pronouns *under us*, *under our feet*, and in favour of a conjectural emendation, "under Him," "under His feet," he truly says: "The triumph of the people of Israel . . . certainly would have been no ground for the rejoicing of foreign nations . . . which in fact had no realisation until the Maccabean times. Then the victories were so exclusively national and hostile to other nations, that no one would have thought of asking them to share in Israel's triumph." But the remarkable thing is that even this purely conjectural change in the text, leaves the broad outlook of the psalm untouched: it still remains an enthusiastic invitation to all nations to acknowledge with gladness the newly assumed, or newly proclaimed, sovereignty of the God of Abraham over all the earth. And though "under Him," "under His feet," may look less repugnant to the nations than the present authentic reading, yet will the broad testimony of the prophets as illustrated by such passages as Isa. 14:2, 60:12, Mi. 4:8, remain unsilenced as a standing protest in favour of Hebrew supremacy in the coming kingdom, and against tampering with the witness of this psalm. Such supremacy, we must indeed suppose, will ultimately be so obtained as to make reasonable Israel's invitation to the nations of the earth to clap their hands over the new assumption of world-wide sovereignty by Israel's God. All we have any right to say, in face of the inviolable Scriptures of God, is: That, if Israel has never yet been in circumstances to tender such an invitation with any chance of its being accepted, then, in the providence of Him who is "excellent in counsel and wonderful in working," she will yet have it put in her power to sing this psalm with such sincerity and force of appeal that it shall evoke a willing response from the nations. Under the influence of considerations such as these, we may very well content ourselves to represent Israel as saying with the abiding force of a recurrent truth: *He subdueth—He chooseth*. "I am inclined, therefore," says Perowne, "with Ewald, Hengst., and Bunsen, to take both verbs as *presents* (which the previous context seems to require), either as referring to a recent act of God, or (as Delitzsch) to a continued act—'God is ever choosing Israel's inheritance anew, inasmuch as He shows Himself to be the true and mighty Protector thereof.' The *present* may be used, as in 104:2, where the act of creation is spoken of as present, because its results are present. Comp. Is. 14:1, where Israel's restoration is described as another choosing."

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The same breadth of outlook which has assisted us in the interpretation of the second stanza of this psalm, may perhaps throw light on the reference of the third, and help us to just thoughts regarding the *ascension* there spoken of: To what throne hath God ascended? On what occasion—one or many? Instead of urging either of these questions at present, it may be better to confine ourselves to two elementary facts: first, that no argument can be based upon the difference between “gone up” and “come up”—it is *either*, and therefore the neutral word “ascend” is better; second, that a form of the Hebrew word ‘*alah*, “to ascend,” is used both in ver. 9 of this psalm and in Ps. 97:9, “Very high hath he ascended above all messengers divine”; which forcibly suggests that the ascension intended is not so much local, as relative to other beings—God’s manifest placing of inferior rulers beneath himself. This of itself subordinates the mere question of locality to more important considerations. The grand *fact* celebrated is Divine rule manifestly supreme; the *act* particularised is the assumption of proclamation or demonstration of that rule. The event forms an epoch in history. It takes place at a particular time. It can be joyfully celebrated. All nations can be called upon to celebrate it. That is what is done in this psalm. Therefore the psalm is unfulfilled. Fulfilment will settle all questions of detail. Meanwhile, side-lights of probability may fall on the general question of Divine Ascension from other sources. Cp. Exposition on Ps. 2, and see Intro., Chap. III., “Kingdom.”

There is but one other matter of interpretation here needing attention: The Massoretic text of the second line of ver. 9, says Kirkpatrick, “must be rendered ‘To be the people of the God of Abraham’ . . . ‘Unto the people’ is scarcely legitimate . . . The consonants of the word ‘*am*, ‘people,’ are identical with those of ‘*un*, ‘with’ . . . It is a natural conjecture that we should restore the preposition and render:

*The princes of the peoples are gathered together,  
Along with the people of the God of Abraham.*

The title (God of Abraham recalls the promises of blessing to the nations through Abraham (Gen. 12:2f, etc.) . . . Princes are called (the shields of the earth) as the protectors of their people. Jehovah is their overlord, and they come to acknowledge their dependence. The title *shield* is often applied to God, and sometimes to the kings and princes of Israel (Hos. 4:18, Ps. 89:18).”

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It would be well here to quote the wise words of W. G. Scroggie as to the two views of the Kingdom: "Two distinct views are taken by students of the Scriptures of the Messianic Kingdom. One is, that it is now in progress of realization in the world through the Church; and the other is, that it is to be realized in the future in the world through restored Israel. In the one view, it is entirely spiritual, and in the other, it is also temporal. The Scriptures and the course of events must decide which of these is the right view. (*Ibid.* p. 268) It is not difficult to determine which view is held by Rotherham. What is your view?
2. There *will* be a time when all people will recognize the sovereign rule of God. There *will* be a time when all nations (—or at least some out of each) will clap their hands for joy at this rule and reign of God?—When will this be?
3. Despite whatever reading we give this—(or what commentator we read) this psalm does sound like the universal triumph and rule of God—how?—when?
4. Is there some way in which this psalm could be given a spiritual application to the church today?
5. Will the church of our Lord ever conquer all nations to the extent here described? Discuss.

P S A L M 4 8

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Jehovah Worthy to be Praised in his Holy City, whose History rebounds to the Honour of her Shepherd-King, who will yet Lead Israel against Death.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Jehovah's Greatness in his Holy City calls forth Praise for Himself and World-wide Gladness at the Elevation of his Earthly Dwelling. Stanza II., vers. 3-7, The Deliverance of His City Dramatically Described. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, A Thoughtful Recognition of the Leading

## PSALM FORTY-EIGHT

Characteristics of Jehovah's Dealings with His People. Stanza IV., vers. 12-14, A Challenge to Verify the Story and Note its Great Lesson.

(Lm.) A Song—A Psalm.

- 1 Great and highly to be praised in the city is our God,
- 2 His holy mountain is beautiful for elevation the joy of all the earth.  
Mount Zion on the northern ridge<sup>1</sup> is the city of a king,
- 3 Jehovah hath striven<sup>2</sup> in her citadels hath let himself be known as a lofty retreat.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 For lo! the kings met by appointment—crossed over together,
- 5 They themselves saw—forthwith were amazed—dismayed—alarmed;
- 6 Trembling seized them there—anguish as of a woman in travail;<sup>4</sup>
- 8 “As we had heard so have we seen<sup>5</sup>—Jehovah establisheth her to the ages.”
- 9 We have pondered O God thy kindness in the midst of thy temple,
- 10 As is thy name O God so is thy praise to the ends of the earth:
- 11 With righteousness is filled thy right hand let Mount Zion be glad,  
Let the daughters of Judah exult because of thine acts of vindication.
- 12 Go about Zion and encircle her, count her towers,—
- 13 Apply your heart to her rampart distinguish her citadels; That ye may tell to the generations following:—
- 14 That such a God is our God to the ages and beyond,  
He will lead us against death!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For the sons of korah.

1. “The temple being on the north-eastern corner or back of Mount Zion”—Br.

2. So, taking *rb* as Heb. verb.

3. Nearly thus Br. The chief departures from the M.T. are different groupings of the Heb. words, securing a better balance of clauses and lines.

4. M.T. adds, as ver. 7: “With an east wind thou shatterest the ships of Tarshish.” Doubtful, as interrupting the sense! unless as a marginal note.

5. M.T. again adds: “In the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God.” Yet seems to stand interruptingly in the midst of what otherwise commends itself as the speech of the panic-stricken kings.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 48

How great is the Lord! How much we should praise Him.  
He lives upon Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

2 What a glorious sight! See Mount Zion rising north of the city<sup>1</sup> high above the plains for all to see—Mount Zion, joy of all the earth, the residence of the great King.

3 God Himself is the defender of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

4 The kings of the earth have arrived together to inspect the city.

5 They marvel at the sight and hurry home again,

6 Afraid of what they have seen; they are filled with panic like a woman in travail!

7 For God destroys the mightiest warships with a breath of wind!

8 We have heard of the city's glory—the city of our God, the Commander of the armies of heaven. And now we see it for ourselves! God has established Jerusalem forever.

9 Lord, here in Your Temple we meditate upon Your kindness and Your love.

10 Your name is known throughout the earth, O God. You are praised everywhere for the salvation<sup>3</sup> You have scattered throughout the world.

11 O Jerusalem,<sup>4</sup> rejoice! O people of Judah, rejoice! For God will see to it that you are finally treated fairly.

12 Go, inspect the city! Walk around and count her many towers!

13 Note her walls and tour her palaces, so that you can tell your children!

14 For this great God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide until we die.

### EXPOSITION

As critically revised above, this psalm as a whole does not seem of very difficult interpretation. It naturally follows the previous psalm, by detaining the reader's thoughts on *the palace*

1. Literally, "on the sides of the north."

2. Literally, "God has made Himself known in her palaces for a high tower."

3. Literally, "Your right hand is filled with righteousness."

4. Literally, "Mount Zion."

## PSALM FORTY-EIGHT

where "the nobles gather themselves together with the people of the God of Abraham"; and this naturalness reacts, so as to account for the informal way in which it is here first named as "the city." But being now *the joy of all the earth*, it is to be expected that "the nobles" should delight to visit her, and when they approach should be struck with her *beauty*, though chiefly attracted by her King. Moreover, the fourth line of this fourth stanza, at once forges for itself a link with Ps. 46. Jehovah had indeed *striven in her citadels* by the "devastations he had wrought in the earth" from thence, thereby proving himself *a lofty retreat* for his beleaguered people.

This naturally brings on the second stanza, the extreme graphic beauty of which, of course, every eye can see. It should, however, be remarked in all candour, that the scene there depicted is highly idealised—that is, assuming that the reference is to the historical fact of the miraculous overthrow of the hosts of Sennacherib. For though the proud Assyrian monarch might call his "generals kings," it scarcely follows that a Hebrew bard would so name them, unless he were being guided to make his language fit a later and larger scene. It looks very much as though those *ships of Tarshish* had brought the confederate kings to the holy land, in which case the panic into which they are thrown is the more readily understood. In passing, it may be noted they do not "hasten away," as some render the last word in ver. 5; for they cannot get away, but are arrested on the spot—*there!* as the poet graphically declares. They have just time in their *anguish* to gasp out that opposition to the holy city is hopeless. All of which may excuse the conclusion that this wonderful picture of consternation is as much prophetic as it is historic.

After the storm comes the calm: after the shrieks of anguish comes the voice of praise. Worshippers in the temple have quiet and impulse to *ponder* well the mighty doings of their God. Jehovah has fulfilled *his name* so undeniably in the sight of all nations as to call forth *praise to the ends of the earth*. This again imparts a prophetic tone to words which, though poetically justifiable as suggested by the Assyrian overthrow, are large enough to prompt comparison with predictions yet unfulfilled. The *righteousness* with which Jehovah's *right hand is filled* being *vindictory*, gives cause why *Mount Zion should be glad* and the *daughters, or cities, of Judah should exult*.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

The time being now one of peace, with no enemy near to threaten, dwellers in Zion, and visitors with them, can deliberately *go about Zion, count her towers*, and, recalling her chequered history, can learn the lessons of the past and hand them on to the future: language singularly inappropriate had it been spoken of a heavenly Zion, rather fantastic if referred to ecclesiastical Zions, but very forcibly rooting itself in the past, as a mould of the chief ideas suggested, if connected with the thrilling events which signalled the reign of King Hezekiah. Death, as a king of terrors, gazed both on the nation and, by a special and concurrent providence, on her king—Israel's God as a Shepherd led both king and people through the valley against the monster—and he fled, overcome! Of course not, then, finally; for Hezekiah died afterwards, and the nation has been invaded and carried into captivity since. But in little—in shadow—in outline—in prophecy—Jehovah *led them against death!* Significant words. They will find an echo in the very next psalm; or rather perhaps a clearer note will there be struck; and if Isaiah wrote this psalm, then about this time he is elsewhere renewing the theme (Isa. 25:6-9, 26:19).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It is almost essential that the reader have several commentaries on the Psalms to give him more than one viewpoint—We respect and admire Rotherham's scholarship and exposition, but then there is C. H. Spurgeon who says of this Psalm: "It would be idle dogmatically to attribute this song to any one event of Jewish history. Its author and date are unknown. It records the withdrawal of certain confederate kings from Jerusalem, their courage failing them before striking a blow. The mention of the ships of Tarshish may allow us to conjecture that the Psalm was written in connection with the overthrow of Ammon, Moab, and Edom in the reign of Jehoshaphat; and if the reader will turn to II Chron. XX., and note especially verses 19, 25, and 36, he will probably accept the suggestion. Verses 1, 2, 3, are in honour of the Lord and the city dedicated to his worship. From 4-8 the song records the confusion of Zion's foes, ascribing all the praise to God; 9, 10, 11 extolling Zion, and avowing Jehovah to be her God for evermore."



## PSALM FORTY-EIGHT AND FORTY-NINE

2. If we do not consider Mount Zion as the church, how shall we apply verses 1 through 3? Discuss possibilities, but forget not: when there is no application of the scripture text to the heart of the reader there is no eternal value in it!
3. How shall we represent "the kings of the earth" who came to inspect the city? Please be specific—an idle thoughtless answer is a refusal to take the interest in God's Word it deserves!
4. Will this idealized picture of the triumph of the city of our God ever become a reality? Has it already occurred?
5. If we were to consider Mount Zion as the church, verses 12 through 14 might suggest a very careful walk through the pages of the New Testament. How do you apply these verses?

## P S A L M 49

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Death and Redemption: Oppressed Saints Comforted  
and Oppressors Rebuked.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I, vers. 1-6, An Introduction, consisting of the Proem and the Problem. Stanza II, vers. 7-12, Answer first, Personality more Precious than Possessions. Stanza III, vers. 13-20, Answer second: The Unrelieved future of the Oppressor in Contrast with the Redeemed Future of the Psalmist. The *Refrain* Charges Home the Byword.

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### (Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 Hear ye this all ye peoples,  
give ear all ye dwellers in this passing world;<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Both sons of the low and sons of the high,  
together both rich and needy.
- 3 My mouth shall speak forth wisdom,  
and the soft utterance of my heart be understanding:
- 4 I will bend to a by-word<sup>2</sup> my ear,  
I will open on the lyre mine enigma:—<sup>3</sup>

1. Or: "age"—"aion not kosmos"—O.G.

2. See vers. 12 and 20. "An aphorism"—Del.

3. Or: "hard question," "riddle": Sep. "problem."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 5 Why should I fear in the days of evil,  
 when the iniquity of my circumventors encloseth me,  
 6 who are trusting in their wealth,  
 and in the abundance of their riches do boast themselves?  
 7 But<sup>1</sup> no man can really effect a ransom  
 and give unto God his ransom-price—  
 8 of such worth is the ransom of men's self<sup>2</sup>  
 it has failed to the ages—  
 9 That one should live on continually,  
 should not see the pit.  
 10 For one must see that wise men die,  
 together with foolish and brutish they perish;  
 they leave to successors their wealth:  
 11 Graves<sup>3</sup> are their houses to the ages,  
 their habitations to generation after generation,—  
 Though their names had been given to landed-estates!  
 12 A man who will not understand his own worth  
 Bringeth on him the by-word—No better than brutes!<sup>4</sup>  
 13 This is their way—in their folly!  
 and this their future—<sup>5</sup> who with their present portion<sup>6</sup> are  
 so pleased.  
 14 Like a flock to Hades are they assigned—  
 Death will tend them!  
 So let them descend smoothly to the grave,<sup>7</sup>  
 and their image<sup>8</sup> be for Hades to consume out of his dwelling.  
 15 But God will ransom my soul,  
 out of the hand of Hades will he surely<sup>9</sup> take me.  
 16 Do not fear when a man groweth rich,  
 when the splendour of his house increaseth;  
 17 For when he dieth he can take nothing,  
 his splendour cannot descend after him:—

1. So—'ak, "but," instead of 'ah "brother"—in some cod.—Gn. Better here, since the problem is whether a man can really redeem at all—even himself. Not at the hands of God, though from man he may (Exo. 21:29, 30).

2. Ml.: "their soul."

3. So *Gt.* (k-b-r-m or k-r-b-m)—Gn.

4. Ml.: "Brutes they resemble."

5. With Br. substituting *th* ( ) for *h* ( ): thus bringing this psalm into verbal relation w. 37:37, 38 and 73:17.

6. Ml.: "their mouth." Cp. O.G. 805, 5b.

7. So *Gt.*—Gn.

8. Or.: "form."

9. Cp. O.G. 472, 1, e; 474, "note."

## PSALM FORTY-NINE

- 18 Though his own self<sup>1</sup> while he lived he used to bless,  
and thank it because it was doing well for itself.  
19 He will enter<sup>2</sup> as far as the circle of his fathers,—  
never more can they see daylight!  
20 A man who will not understand his own worth  
Bringeth on him the by-word—"No better than brutes!"<sup>3</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 49

Listen, everyone! High and low, rich and poor, all around the world—listen to my words,

3 For they are wise and filled with insight.

4 I will tell in song accompanied by harps the answer to one of life's most perplexing problems:

5 There is no need to fear when times of trouble come, even though surrounded by enemies!

6 For they trust in their wealth and boast about how rich they are!

7 Yet not one of them, though rich as kings, can ransom his own brother from the penalty of sin! For God's forgiveness does not come that way!<sup>4</sup>

8, 9 For a soul is far too precious to be ransomed by mere earthly wealth. There is not enough of it in all the earth to buy eternal life for just one soul, to keep it out of hell.<sup>5</sup>

10 Rich man! Proud man! Wise man! You must die like all the rest! You have no greater lease on life than foolish, stupid men. You must leave your wealth to others!

11 You name your estates after yourselves as though your lands could be forever yours, and you could live on them eternally!

12 But man with all his pomp must die like any animal!

13 Such is the folly of these men, though after they die they will be quoted as having great wisdom!

14 Death is the shepherd of all mankind. And "in the morning" those who are evil will be the slaves of those who are good. For the power of their wealth<sup>6</sup> is gone when they die; they cannot take it with them.

1. U.: "his sould." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

2. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn.

3. MI.: "Brutes they resemble."

4. Implied from text.

5. Literally, "so that he should not see the Pit."

6. Literally, "their beauty shall be for Sheol to consume."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

15 But as for me, God will redeem my soul from the power of death, for He will receive me.

16 So do not be dismayed when evil men grow rich and build their lovely homes.

17 For when they die they carry nothing with them! Their honors will not follow them.

18 Though a man calls himself happy all through his life—and the world loudly applauds success—

19 Yet in the end he died like everyone else, and enters eternal darkness.

20 For man with all his pomp<sup>1</sup> must die like any animal!

### EXPOSITION

This psalm is one of great beauty and power. Its *breadth* is at once evidence; since it appeals to men everywhere, of all sorts and conditions; *peoples—low, high, rich, needy*. Its *elevation* is clear; inasmuch as it implies that the present order of things is temporary—a mere *passing world*, during which *the days* may be *evil*, and the wealthy *iniquitous, overbearing and boastful*; but beyond which *God* may interpose in *redemption*. Its *insight* is penetrating; for it pierces through to man's *true worth*, which *money* cannot measure. Its *structure* is simple: one stanza, containing proem and problem, and two stanzas of argument, crowned each by an identical refrain. Its *unity* is complete; rendering the psalm, to a large extent, self-interpretive. But, withal, its chief characteristic is, that it is *parabolic, enigmatic and ironical*: its sarcasm is as biting as it is benevolent. It has its surface meanings, and its deeper intentions. It plays upon words. Its *wise men* are only *clever*: they *perish*, or at least they pass into the *land of shadows*. They are *brutes* in behaviour; yet, if they were really only brutes, they would not thus be blamed. They think much of themselves; and yet how little! if they would only think more of themselves, they would not think so little of their poor neighbours. Such is the style; and it is this which makes successful translation and exegesis difficult. The more difficult these are, however, the more need is there that the unity of the psalm should be held fast, and the interpretation be made as self-consistent as possible.

1. Literally, "but without insight." It is uncertain whether this phrase was part of the original text.

## PSALM FORTY-NINE

The *proem* or exordium, so far from being an afterthought of a later date, strikes the key-note of the psalm. It is the utterance of a man who is conscious of having something weighty to say, and is inwardly compelled to give it expression. He has glimpses of a coming better time, or he would not speak of the present as a *passing age*; esteems his solution radical, or he would not propound it for the consideration of all classes. He bespeaks attention to a *by-word*, and warrants our expectation of finding one in the sequel. He promises to *open his enigma*, by the help of his harp; and therefore justifies us in looking for a real solution of his problem—his music should at least do something to calm the troubled breast.

The *problem* itself is stated in terms sufficiently explicit to reveal its bearings. It is not the brevity of life which perplexes the psalmist, for of that he makes no mention. Nor are the inequalities of life what chiefly trouble him; but mainly the iniquitous scheming and vainglorious boasting of those who have the larger share of this world's goods. They plot and they plunder; they do as they please, and boast that so they will continue to do. Such neighbors are as formidable as they are unscrupulous. They may well be feared. And if the writer nevertheless asks *why he should fear*,—it can only be because he has good reasons for not being afraid of the injuriousness which he is powerless to arrest. It cannot be merely that these boasters will *soon* be in the graves; for the same, in the ordinary course of things, may be said of those who are suffering such wrongs.

The *solution* strikes home, though it takes the form of a paradox. The injurious boasters do not really think enough of themselves: it is for their adventitious wealth that they have such an inordinate affection. If they more highly esteemed their essential *selves*, they would more highly esteem their poor neighbours. If they would but think of it, they themselves are *so precious*, that not all their wealth can bribe God to add to their life a single day—how much less to extend their life indefinitely? And is not every other man essentially *as precious* as they? They deem themselves *wise*, and they *are* very *clever*; but—as any one can see—*clever people die* as well as the *foolish* and *brutish*. And the clever rich afford contrasts, when they die, which their poor neighbours do not occasion: the large mansion, and the

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

little grave—how different they appear! and the tenants of these “long homes” have left their *names* on *broad acres*! Ah! if these, whose helpless relics are thus *housed*, had only risen to the high level of esteeming themselves aright, they would have esteemed all others as essentially their equals; and would have scorned to brow-beat them with the *brute-force* of wealth. But now the scorners are scorned. These men lowered themselves to do as the brutes; they intimidated and trampled on the weak. They forgot that they themselves were men!

The poet returns to the charge. His sarcasm bites more bitterly. Look on their late *way* of self-gloriousness—as the folly of it; and look on the *end* of the way—the *future* at which they have arrived. They are My Lord Hades’ *small cattle*, under the care of his *shepherd—Death!* Begrudge them not ease, comfort, plenty, on the road to such an inglorious end. Let them down *gently*. Let them take with them their *good looks*—which will soon enough fade!

“But who art thou, O scornful poet? What of thyself? Shalt not thou, too, soon become weak as we?” might not these shades of the rich reply? The poet’s answer is ready:—“God,” saith he, “will do for me, what your money could not do for you,”—and the words are suited to the time of waiting for Messiah’s first advent,—*God will ransom my soul—my person—my essential self.—from the hand of Hades will he surely take me.* The words have just that measure of ambiguity which fits them to their time; but they have all the point and force needed to adjust them to their context. They are ambiguous so far as this: That they may denote either the fore-stalling of the grasp of Hades by TRANSFORMATION; or the rescuing out of the hand of Hades by RESURRECTION. But they have all the point and force which the context requires. “God” will place me in such a position of realised immortality, that I shall *live on continually, and not see the pit*,—which is what riches have never yet accomplished. And, looking forward, as I do, for such Divine redemption,—*I will not fear* the worst that *iniquitous circumventors* can do unto me during the *days of evil*.

But this final stanza is not yet complete. Having given conclusive reason why *he* should not fear, the poet counsels others to be equally bold: *Do not fear!* But as, in his first reply, he descended from argument to irony, so does he, in this his second

## PSALM FORTY-NINE

answer: only, as the argument is stronger now than then, so is the irony keener and more prolonged. Then the argument was drawn from the inherent worth of man: now it is derived from the redeeming purpose of God. And, accordingly, we are here treated to an exquisite picture of the rich man's pampering and flattering of his superficial self, which is terminated only by the fall of a curtain of thick darkness—suited to those pre-messianic times, when the future of the wicked was as yet unrevealed. The "shade" of the once great man may penetrate as far into the dark vault of Hades as to bring him into the circle of his fathers; but—no more at present can be said: silence reigns—and the familiar *by-word* is once more heard. The clever but foolish tyrant has brought it on himself—*no better than brutes!*

In finally reviewing the psalm, one is struck with its numerous points of contact with other scriptures. Kirkpatrick well says: "The theme of the psalm is akin to that of Psalms 37 and 73." It "reminds us of the parables of Rich Fool (Luke 12:16ff) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19ff)." Moreover, this psalm "contains numerous parallels of thought and language to the Books of Job and Proverbs." "There seems to be an allusion in ver. 11 to the vast estates which are condemned by Isaiah and Micah." See Isa. 2:9, 11, 17, 3:14, 15, 5:8, 15, 59:9-15; Mi. 2:1, 2, 3:1-3. But perhaps the most significant reference should be to Mat. 6:26.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This should be a very vital and interesting psalm to every American because it discusses money and its influence. With this theme in mind read back through the psalm.
2. There are two answers to the problem of the use and abuse of money: one in verses 7-12, and the other in 13-20. State these answers in your own words.
3. Why is there a tendency to bow down before the worldly rich? Let a man be known as a millionaire and the attitude of people changes toward him—why?
4. Does verse eleven suggest that there is a vast difference between the two homes of the rich man? What are they?
5. There is here described a strange and awful flock and shepherd—who are they?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 50

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Judgment on Israel Pronounced amid the Solemnities  
of an Audible and Visible Divine Manifestation.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-7, Preparations for Judgment: consisting of a Divine Announcement and Appearing, and a Summons to Heaven and Earth to Declare the Righteousness of the Judge, who now Opens his Address to His People. Stanza II., vers. 8-15, Formalists Admonished to Supplement their Offerings by Gratitude, Faithfulness, and Prayer in the Day of Distress. Stanza III., vers. 16-23, Secret Deserters Denounced for Hypocrisy and Lawlessness. *First Refrain*, a Summons; *Second Refrain*, an Admonition; *Third Refrain*, a Proclamation.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Jehovah<sup>1</sup> hath spoken and called the earth,  
from the rising of the sun unto the going in thereof
- 2 Out of Zion the perfection of beauty  
God hath come shining forth.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 A fire before him devoureth,  
and around him it stormeth exceedingly:
- 4 He calleth to the heavens above and unto the earth,—  
in order to minister judgment to his people.
- 5 “Gather unto me my men of kindness,  
the solemnisers of my covenant over a peace-offering,”
- 6 And let the heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is about to judge.
- 7 “Hear O my people and let me speak,  
O Israel and let me admonish thee:—  
God thy God<sup>3</sup> am I

1. M.T.: “El, Elohim, Jehovah,” as in Josh. 22:22; but prob. (w. Br.) due to accidental repetition; and the subsequent restoration of the displaced name “Jehovah.”

2. M.T.: “Let our God come and not keep silence”—wh. has the appearance of an added pious wish. Yet see Dr., Tenses, 58.

3. Prob. an elohistic substitute for “Jehovah thy God.” Cp. 45:7.



## PSALM FIFTY

- (who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.)"<sup>1</sup>
- 8 "Not concerning thy peace-offerings will I reprove thee  
nor concerning thine ascending-offerings before me  
continually;"<sup>2</sup>
- 9 I will not take out of thy house a bull,  
out of thy fields he-goats;
- 10 For mine are all the beasts of the forest  
the cattle on the mountains in their thousands,<sup>3</sup>
- 11 I know all the birds of the heavens<sup>4</sup>  
and that which moveth in the plains is with me:<sup>5</sup>
- 12 If I were hungry I would not tell thee  
for mine is the world and the fulness thereof:
- 13 Shall I eat the flesh of mighty oxen  
or the blood of he-goats shall I drink?
- 14 Sacrifice unto God a thank-offering,<sup>6</sup>  
and pay to the Highest thy vows;
- 15 And call unto me in the day of distress,  
I will rescue thee and thou shalt glorify me."
- 16 But to the lawless one<sup>7</sup> saith God:—  
"What hast thou to do with telling my statutes  
and taking up my covenant on thy mouth?
- 17 Since thou hast hated correction  
and cast my words behind thee?
- 18 If thou sawest a thief thou didst run<sup>8</sup> with him  
and with adulterers hath been thy chosen life:
- 19 Thy mouth hast thou thrust into wickedness  
and thy tongue weaveth deceit:
- 20 Thou wouldst sit down—against thine own brother wouldst  
thou speak  
in thine own mother's son<sup>9</sup> wouldst thou expose a fault:—
- 21 These things hast thou done and I have kept silence,  
thou deemest I should really be like thyself.

1. Prob. a copyist's abbreviation, words in brackets understood by pious Jew—Br. Cp. 81:10, Exo. 20:2.

2. Or: "And thine ascending-offerings are continually before me"—(w. Del., Dr., Per., R.V., text, Leeser, Kp.).

3. Some read [omitting one letter]: "mountains of God," as in 36:6—O.G. 49.

4. So Sep.

5. "In my mind"—Dr. (comparing Job 10:13, 13:11.)

6. So Br. "Thanksgiving"—Del., Per., Dr.

7. Cp. 1:1 note, 25:5.

8. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "wast pleased."

9. Felt to be still more mean in polygamous society.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 22 I will convict thee and set it forth to thine eyes,  
pray consider this ye forgetters of God.<sup>1</sup>
- 23 He that sacrificeth a thank-offering<sup>2</sup> glorifieth me.  
and him who is consistent<sup>3</sup> in behaviour<sup>4</sup> will I cause to view  
with delight the salvation of God."

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 50

The mighty God, the Lord, has summoned all mankind from east to west!

2 God's glory-light shines from the beautiful Temple<sup>5</sup> on Mount Zion.

3 He comes with the noise of thunder,<sup>6</sup> surrounded by devastating fire; a great storm rages round about Him.

4 He has come to judge His people. To heaven and earth He shouts.

5 "Gather together My own people who by their sacrifice upon My altar have promised to obey Me."

6 God will judge them with complete fairness, for all heaven declares that He is just.

7 O My people, listen! For I am your God. Listen! Here are My charges against you:

8 I have no complaint about the sacrifices you bring to My altar, for you bring them regularly.

9 But it isn't sacrificial bullocks and goats that I really want from you!

10, 11 For all the animals of field and forest are Mine! The cattle on a thousand hills! And all the birds upon the mountains!

12 If I were hungry, I would not mention it to you—for all the world is Mine, and everything in it.

13 No, I don't need your sacrifices of flesh and blood!

14, 15 What I want from you is your true thanks; I want

1. M.T. adds: "Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

2. So. Br. "Thanksgiving"—Del., Dr.

3. Or: "whole-hearted." *Gt.*: *tam*, instead of *sham* or *sam*—Gn.

4. *ML.*: "way."

5. Literally, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty."

6. Literally, "comes, and does not keep silence."

7. Literally, "who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

## PSALM FIFTY

your promises fulfilled. I want you to trust Me in your times of trouble, so I can rescue you, and you can give Me glory!

16 But God says to evil men: Recite My laws no longer, and stop claiming My promises,

17 For you have refused My discipline, disregarded My laws.

18 You see a thief and help him, and spend your time with evil and immoral men.

19 You curse and lie, and vile language streams from your mouths.

20 You slander your own brother.

21 I remained silent—you thought I didn't care—but now your time of punishment has come, and I list all the above charges against you.

22 This is the last chance, for all of you who have forgotten God before I tear you apart—and no one can help you then.

23 But true praise is a worthy sacrifice; this really honors Me. Those who walk My paths will receive salvation from the Lord.

## EXPOSITION

This impressive psalm includes many things which require and will repay careful consideration. It is clear that the Judgment it describes is held on Israel as a nation. This being the case, it is the more remarkable that *earth* and *heaven* are summoned to interest themselves in the proceedings: thus teaching the momentous character of the issues involved, the Divine Equity and Grace in desiring that whatever can be said in Israel's favour shall be advanced, and the Divine Determination that right shall be done. That the Divine Glory comes shining forth *out of Zion*, intimates that the issues to be tried are connected with Jehovah's settlement as King in Israel, and grow out of the worship established in Jerusalem. That the Divine Majesty comes forth with *fiery tempest* and *raging storm* betokens that God's holy anger with his people is roused, and therefore that the time is one of national degeneracy. The summons to *gather* Israel does not perhaps imply that the greater Dispersions have yet taken place, so much as simply that the gathering is to be national, one of the whole people, on the largest scale possible, so that all classes may be reached, and a general verdict on the nation be pronounced. The description of the nation in the summons as *the men of Jehovah's kindness* is probably de-

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

signed to remind the people of what by their national calling they ought to be (Cy. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness"); and though, in a suitable context, the further description of the people as *those having solemnised Jehovah's covenant over a peace-offering*, might very well have directly pointed to Moses and the Elders who so accepted the covenant at Mount Sinai, according to the sublime account in Exo. 24,—yet it would seem less imaginative, and more pointedly practical, rather to think of some recent confirming of the Sinai Covenant, such as we read of in the history of Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Ch. 29:10, 34:31). To go no further than Hezekiah, we can easily see from the very opening of Isaiah's prophecies, how easy it was for Israel to sink from national reform into national formalism. And, truth to tell, heavy as are the charges against Israel which follow in this psalm, they do not go beyond the corrupt state of things which at that time characterised the people as a whole. The voluntative moods of the verbs which open the climax to this stanza (*let me speak, let me admonish*) may usefully remind us of the patience of Jehovah in listening so long in silence to the calumnious speeches of men; while the assertion by Jehovah of his relation to Israel as her Redeemer may remind us of the reasonableness of all Divine demands, seeing that they are based on privilege already bestowed (cp. Isa. v.: "my vineyard—what more could I have done to it?").

The great lesson of the second stanza appears to be, that stated and especially national worship is apt to degenerate into formalism; and, what is still worse, may lead worshippers to feel as though by its regular maintenance they were conferring a favour upon the Object of their worship. Hence the indignant protests of Jehovah of his independence of any material service which men can render him (cp. Acts 17:24, 25). What he desires is men's gratitude; and as *thank-offerings* are personal and spontaneous, and so more certain expressions of gratitude than stated public offerings, they are here preferred—especially where they have been promised by *vows*; in which case faithfulness as well as thankfulness is involved. It seems to be further taught that thankful returns for the more common of special blessings, laid a basis for the outcry of the soul to God in the severer trials of life. Thus may days of sunshine prepare us for days of storm; and pervading thankfulness may slowly generate the confidence in God needful to draw us near to him in times of *distress*. *Deliverance then* will prompt the soul to a public *glorifying* of the Deliverer.

## PSALM FIFTY

In a soil of formalism the germs of apostacy may take root. Men may become so accustomed to repeating "the commandments," that they may keep up the appearance of piety even when the practice of profanity is seducing them into rebellion and unutterable meanness. This appears to be the underlying thought of Stanza III. The Apostle Paul might have had this stanza in mind when he wrote, "Thou that proclaimest—Do not steal! Art thou stealing?" (Rom. 2:21). Presuming on God's silence as though it were indifference, is a sure way to become *forgetters of God*; and to forget Him is to be startled and *convicted* when he pleases to speak. The climax of the third stanza seems to fold back on the whole foregoing psalm: the *thank-offering* counselled at the end of the second stanza, is now invested with the dignity of a standing proclamation of habitual truth; and whereas thankfulness appeared in vers. 14, 15 as only the beginning of a course which would end in glorifying God, it is now (ver. 23) said to be in itself a rendering of glory to the Divine Majesty. There is frequently a difficulty in suitably rendering in English the small Hebrew word *tam*, which Ginsberg here prefers to *sham* ("there") or *sam* ("put" or "place"). It means "wholeness," "completeness"; and so in some contexts may be translated "wholehearted," "devoted," "perfect." Perhaps, here, "consistent," "all-of-a-piece" sufficiently represents it. Taking the word *derek*, "way," as here equivalent to "way-of-life," "behaviour," and connecting the two, we get the simple and practical conception—which admirably folds back over this third stanza—*him who is consistent in behaviour*: who does not profess one thing and practise another, who does not uphold the national covenant in words and then deliberately break its great and vital commands one after another,—*him will I cause to view with delight the salvation of God*: a very remarkable ending. It is not: "he is already saved"—from the point of view of Hebrew twilight and imperfection, that could hardly be said. Besides, there may be a forward glance towards a great national deliverance. We know of some who were spared to view with delight *the salvation of God* when the Assyrians were overthrown; and who doubtless rang out the words, "Lo our God is this! We waited for him that he might save us,—This is Jehovah! We waited for him. Let us rejoice and exult in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9). And even the Christian may remind himself that as yet he is only "saved in hope"—that he yet "waits for the redemption of the body,"

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and "for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). But to return for a moment to *him who is consistent in behaviour*, it is clear that he need not be a work-monger, or a self-righteous person; but that there are such things as "works meet for repentance"—that, though sincerity cannot save, yet there can be no saving without sincerity; that, in short, though the kingdom of heaven can only spring from the word of the kingdom, which is the seed, yet the very heart to receive that seed is the "noble and good" heart that feels its emptiness and poverty.

Into what historical situation does this psalm, by its terms and tenor, fit itself? It is the first of the psalms attributed *To Asaph*; but who was he? Was there a seer of that name in Hezekiah's days as well as one in David's? Dr. Thirtle (O.T.P., 91) thinks there was; but the evidence he submits does not appear conclusive. Yet he may be right; and the more we reflect on the inner elements of the situation revealed by this psalm, the more it identifies itself with the state of things known to have existed in Hezekiah's days. In David's time there may have been some formalism; but we have no ground to think there was any apostacy, even incipient; nor—to be quite candid—is formalism just the sin we should have charged on Israel in the days of David. But, in Hezekiah's time, there was not only rampant formalism, as Isaiah so pungently witnesses, but there was that sort of lawlessness which wavered in its adherence to the worship of Jehovah? That "villain" Rabshakeh doubtless appealed to faltering hearts in Israel. His bold plausibilities and blasphemies and insinuations were bearing fruit in some restive and resilient hearts. Gross corruption and practical atheism had eaten out the moral life of some places in Israel, as the fourteenth psalm disclosed to us. The *day of distress* was near; and some would soon need all the comfort derivable from the promise of *deliverance*. The day of secret apostacy had come. These elements constitute a situation which strikingly suits this psalm.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the theme or title of this psalm? Who is to be judged—by relating ourselves to Israel we shall learn *much* from this psalm.
2. Who is the judge? What are the two charges? (see verses 7-15 and 16-21).

## PSALM FIFTY AND FIFTY-ONE

3. Read verses 1-3 as introducing the judge. Vs. 4-6 as the opening of the judgment.
4. Who are the spectators at this trial?
5. Do you conclude that the first charge in this trial is *Formalism*? Just what is involved in this?—Is this a serious flaw?
6. God *wants* expressions of worship, but He *does not* need them for Himself—why are they given?
7. Read verses 14 and 15 as a description of the true worship of God. Cf. John 4:24.
8. To see just how far hypocrisy can go, read carefully verses 16-21. It is possible to speak against stealing and at the same time be a thief! Discuss the psychological development of this tragic condition.
9. What commandments of the ten commandments were taught against and then performed by the very ones who taught against them.
10. God did nothing while such open rebellion was practiced—how did these people interpret the silence of God? Cf. Rom. 2:1-4.

## PSALM 51

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Prayer of a Penitent.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Petitions for Pardon and Cleansing sustained by Confessions, Condemning Self and Vindicating God. Stanza II., vers. 5-9, In Further Pleading for Pardon, the Psalmist Confronts his own Deep Need and God's Just Requirements, passing on to Consenting Petitions and Petitions pure and simple. Stanza III., vers. 10-14, Petitions for Renewal, against Banishment and Deprivation, for Restoration and Upholding; urged, with Alternating Hopes and Fears. Stanza IV., vers. 15-19, Assured that Only his Divine Lord can open his Lips, the psalmist Depreciates Accustomed Sacrifices as Inadequate to meet his Own Desperate Case, but prays for Such Prosperity in behalf of Jerusalem as shall make Right Offerings Acceptable.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David—When Nathan the prophet went unto him, when he had gone in unto Bathsheba.

- 1 Be gracious unto me O God according to thy kindness,  
in the multitude of thy compassions blot out my  
transgressions;
- 2 Thoroughly wash me from mine iniquity,  
and from my sin make me pure.
- 3 For my transgressions I myself acknowledge,  
and my sin is before me continually:
- 4 Against thee only thee have I sinned,  
and that which is wicked in thy sight have I done,—  
That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,  
be clear when thou enterest into judgment.
- 5 Lo! in iniquity was I born,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Lo! truth thou hast desired in the inward parts,  
and in the hidden part thou wouldst cause me to know  
wisdom.
- 7 Thou shalt<sup>1</sup> cleanse me from sin with hyssop that I may be  
pure  
thou shalt<sup>2</sup> wash me that I may be whiter than snow.
- 8 Thou shalt<sup>3</sup> satisfy<sup>3</sup> me with joy and gladness,—  
the bones thou hast crushed will exult.
- 9 Hide thy face from my sins,  
and all mine iniquities blot out.
- 10 A heart that is pure create<sup>4</sup> for me,<sup>5</sup>  
and a spirit that is steadfast renew.<sup>6</sup>
- 11 Do not cast me away from thy presence,  
and thy Holy Spirit do not take from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,  
and with a generous spirit shalt thou uphold me.
- 13 I would fain teach transgressors thy ways,  
and sinners unto thee would return.

1. Literally, "purge me with hyssop." See Exodus 12:22, Hebrews 9:18-22.

2. These verbs "thus give utterance to the psalmist's faith that God can and will restore him—Kp. We might almost call these "consenting petitions,"

2. So *Gt.* Cp. 90:14—Gn.

4. Does not imply creation out of nothing—Br.,—true: "always used strictly of the creative power of God"—Pe.,—equally true. "The whole spiritual being of the man had fallen into chaos"—Pe. Yet in chaos are the elements which "the creative power of God" can turn into kosmos.

5. M.T. adds: "O God."

6. Or: "make anew." M.T. adds: "within me."



## PSALM FIFTY-ONE

- 14 Snatch me away from the guilt of bloodshed<sup>1</sup> O God,<sup>2</sup>  
my tongue will ring out thy righteousness.
- 15 Sovereign Lord! my lips shalt thou open,  
and my mouth will declare thy praise.
- 16 For thou wilt not delight<sup>3</sup> in peace-offering,<sup>4</sup>  
Ascending-sacrifice will not please:<sup>5</sup>
- 17 The peace-offerings of God are a spirit broken,—  
a heart broken and crushed<sup>6</sup>  
thou wilt not despise.<sup>7</sup>
- 18 Do good in thy favour unto Zion,  
thou shalt build the walls of Jerusalem:
- 19 Then wilt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness,<sup>7</sup>  
then shall ascend on thine altar young bulls.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 51

*(Written after Nathan the prophet had come to inform David of God's judgment against him because of his adultery with Bathsheba, and his murder of Uriah, her husband.)*

O loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgressions.

2 Oh, wash me, cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again.

3 For I admit my shameful deed—it haunts me day and night.

4 It is against You and You alone I sinned, and did this terrible thing. You saw it all, and Your sentence against me is just.

5 But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

1. Ml.: "from bloods." "Guilt of" seems necessarily implied; as neither "killing" nor "being killed" can be meant as something impending.

2. M.T. adds ("for emphasis"—Del.) "thou God of my salvation." Too long a line for Br., who conjectures "Yahweh" instead of "O God." The additional words are in both Sep. and Vul.

3. As futures, these verbs readily lend themselves to the restriction: "in my case."

4. M.T. adds: "that I should give it."

5. M.T. adds: "O God."

6. How natural, that friends of the injured should "despise" a repentance which, however sincere, could never be the restoration of innocence and life.

7. M.T. adds: "ascending-sacrifices and entire-offerings."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

6 You deserve honesty from the heart; yes, utter sincerity and truthfulness. Oh, give me this wisdom.

7 Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood<sup>1</sup> and I shall be clean again. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 And after You have punished me, give me back my joy again.

9 Don't keep looking at my sins—erase them from Your sight.

10 Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires.

11 Don't toss me aside, banished forever from Your presence. Don't take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me again the joy of Your salvation, and make me willing to obey You.

13 Then I will teach Your ways to other sinners, and they—guilty like me—will repent and return to You.

14, 15 Don't sentence me to death. O my God, You alone can rescue me. Then I will sing of Your forgiveness,<sup>2</sup> for my lips will be unsealed—oh, how I will praise You.

16 You don't want penance;<sup>3</sup> if You did, how gladly I would do it! You aren't interested in offerings burned before You on the altar.

17 It is a broken spirit You want—remorse and penitence. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not ignore.

18 And Lord, don't punish Israel for my sins—help Your people and protect Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

19 And when my heart is right,<sup>5</sup> then You will rejoice in the good that I do<sup>6</sup> and in the bullocks I bring to sacrifice upon Your altar.

## EXPOSITION

The lesson of the First Psalm is, Blessed is the man who has not sinned. The lesson of the Thirty Second, is, Blessed is the man who, though he has sinned, has been forgiven. The lesson of this psalm is, That the removal of sin by pardon and purification is so difficult, that none but God can accomplish it. This ultimate lesson is here so taught as to make it deeply impressive.

1. Literally, "purge me with hyssop." See Exodus 12:22, Hebrews 9:18-22.

2. Literally, "righteousness."

3. Literally, "a sacrifice."

4. Literally, "Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem."

5. Implied.

6. Literally, "then you will delight in the sacrifice of righteousness."

## PSALM FIFTY-ONE

There is in this psalm no cheap promise of amendment—in fact no promise at all, until, by every form of supplication, God himself has been importuned to grant deliverance from the condemnation and stain and power of sin.

Of all the one hundred and fifty Psalms, this is pre-eminently *the Penitential Psalm*. There are others; but this is the chief. In fact, throughout all the Bible, this prayer for pardon stands pre-eminent. It is all prayer, and its prayer is so personal, so comprehensive, so sustained, that it naturally serves for all time as a fund of feeling and storehouse of words, to help all petitioners who are craving for pardon at the hands of Infinite Love. It includes no fewer than seventeen distinct petitions, two of which are repeated, so as to total nineteen; and these are urged with great fulness and urgency of pleading. Many of the petitions are winged with considerations which at once embolden the petitioner and present pleas for a favourable answer: *according to thy kindness—in the multitude of thy compassions—that I may be pure—that I may be whiter than snow*; coming down to physical results, *the bones thou hast crushed will exult*; going out to the good of others, *sinner unto thee would return*.

The STRUCTURE of the psalm is worth notice. After the historical *occasion*, which the whole psalm sustains, the petitioner leads off with four petitions, the first general, then three specific, touching *transgressions, iniquity, sin*. These are followed by frank *confession*, the psalmist condemning himself, and vindicating his Divine Judge, before whom he feels himself to be arraigned; succeeded by two *discoveries* (*lo! lo!*) both of which form an aggravation of the condition of the suppliant—he comes of a corrupted stock, and has to do with a God whose requirements are exacting. He is thus driven back to *petitions* for Divine mercy and help as his only hope, three of which are “consenting petitions”—*thou shalt cleanse, wash, satisfy*, which have all the appearance of being a laying hold of promises expressed or implied, and an accepting of the Divine method of restoration; the two remaining petitions being the bare imperatives of urgency—*Hide, blot out*.

Having devoted two stanzas (twenty lines) mainly to entreaties for pardon, the psalmist now goes more deeply into the need for renewal. His need is for a *heart*—mind, inner man—that is *pure* from the trail and stain of sin; and for a *spirit*—a directing inward energy—that is *constant* in its action, in holding him unwaveringly to the higher ends of life. The supply of a

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need so deep must come from God: the offender has no hope in himself. Hence his prayer: *create, renew or make anew*. The precise nature of such Divine action need not preplex us. It may be said, that to re-create a man is a greater work than to create him. And yet, if creation itself does not necessarily include the production of new material, but rather the new disposal and fashioning of the old, as the history of *bara'* plainly shows (see especially Num. 16); much more must it be so in re-creation, which is the new fashioning of the same man, and not the making of another independent being. Personal identity *must* remain. But herein lies the supreme wonder of the new creation—that with the preservation of personal identity, should be harmonised the new fashioning of its moral character. To remember the sin of the past, and yet no longer to feel its fascination: this is indeed a wonderful thing. To own responsibility for the past, and yet no longer to dread capital punishment: this is another wonder, equally great. Both wonders demand the creative energy of God for their production.

Probably this is no mere academical discussion; although, it must be owned, that the succeeding deprecatory petitions of the psalmist form links with a better past than with most men can be assumed to have existed; for it is much to be feared that heaven does *not* lie about *all* human beings in their infancy. The psalmist, at any rate, knew what it was to live in God's *presence*; hence his prayer not to be *cast away from* it: knew what it was to possess God's *Holy Spirit*; hence his cry not to be *bereft* of it: knew by experience *the joy of God's salvation* hence his entreaty to have it *restored* to him. And doubtless this happier past colours all he has yet to say: suggests the *generous* care for others which flows therefrom, which *would fain teach transgressors* the right way, and would work for them with a hope of inducing them also to *return*. But now suddenly starts up a spectre—the horrible spectre of conscious *blood-guiltiness*. It is as though in the realm of the spirit could be seen a Blood-Avenger in hot pursuit. *Snatch me away*, he cries, to God himself. Nothing so vivid could have sprung to a brave man's lips as to any of the ordinary dangers of war; and of any feeling of revenge, moving to the shedding of any other man's blood, there is certainly no trace in this psalm. Hence we are psychologically compelled to endorse the avowed occasion of the psalm which stands at its head. It is not surprising that the psalmist should reveal his assurance that such a display of Divine mercy would

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be sure to result in a public outburst of thankfulness,—an assurance well vindicated by the composition of Ps. 32, which was evidently written after this; but the wonder is, that God's *righteousness* should be signalised as the Divine attribute to be celebrated. Had he here written, "My tongue will ring out thy COMPASSION," we should not have been surprised; but *righteousness!* that is another matter, and demands thought; for the great demonstration of Divine rectitude, even when forgiving offenders, had not then been displayed (Rom. 3:25, 26). Still, of course, it *is right* that God should exercise his *right* to forgive. He will not, cannot, exercise it wrongfully. It is well that we should at least see how thorough was this offender's repentance.

The *opening* of David's *lips* is instructive; for they had doubtless been significantly closed, first in obstinacy (32:3), and then in shame. Now that they are opened once more, it is to good purpose. The Levitical sacrifices were never intended to cover wilful and flagrant sin. David ought to have been cut off from among his people. His double crime richly deserved it. But then, who could set the law in motion against him? He could only be left in the hands of that Heavenly Lord whose vicegerent he himself was; and if He, in loving severity, had already been chastising him, as from several psalms (such as 32, 38, 39) we have seen reason to believe was the case,—who are WE that we should wish to stay the hand of Divine Mercy? Admitting all this, it is fitting that we should see how little disposed the Royal Penitent was to daub with untempered mortar his own desperate case; which he would have been doing, had he piled up animal sacrifices to atone for his awful guilt. Of unspeakably more worth than they, for the purpose of restoring fellowship with God, was that offering which David had left him to render,—the presentation of *a broken spirit*,— of *a broken and crushed heart*. These, *men* might *despise*—excusably despise, but David's merciful God would know how to value them, as being in fact beyond all price. It is any great wonder that, for such a truly humbled spirit, there should come a rebound? that the feet of a man thus uplifted out of the abysses of degradation and despair should already show signs of being consciously placed on a rock (40:2)? Hence we need not restort, with many critics, to the hypothesis of a later origin for the conclusion of this psalm. With Dr. Briggs, we prefer to regard the psalm as a consistent whole; only, unlike him, we cannot for a moment think that in the first instance this penitent suppliant was a nation: the

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conscience of a nation, though not to be despised, is a very conglomerate product, compared with an individual conscience with such exquisitely delicate folds in it as this which quivers and groans and is made glad in this psalm. In any case, the walls of Jerusalem were as yet unfinished, as the history plainly shows (1 K. 3:1); and it seems like a natural outburst of patriotism that the true worth of the Temple ritual should now at length come into the view of the better self of that King David whom we otherwise know to have been so profoundly interested in the orderly ritual worship of Jehovah his God.

There are still a few words and phrases scattered throughout this precious psalm, which will repay us for a parting recognition. The reader is presumably familiar with the words *transgression*, *iniquity*, *sin* here used, as "meaning respectively, (1) defection from God or rebellion against Him: (2) the perversion of right, depravity of conduct: (3) error, wandering from the right way, missing the mark in life"—Kp. The phrases to express the removal of sin are also worthy of note: (1) *blot out*, twice employed (vers. 1, 9), which regards sin as a debt recorded in God's book which needs to be erased or cancelled—who then can cancel it but God? (2) *wash*, which it is remarkable properly applies to clothes, yielding the profound suggestion, that no mere skin-deep cleansing meets the sinner's case; but that, as garments become ingrained with filth, so the very fibers of our minds become defiled, so that a process of much treading and rinsing is needed to detach and remove sin therefrom—again who can thus "wash" but God? (3) *cleanse*, for which we lack a literal rendering in English, seeing that the Hebrew word is an intensification of the verb "to miss the mark," or "lose," or "sin," and we have no such word as *unsin*, which Edersheim suggests. (4) To render *pure*, physically, ceremonially, morally—the Levitical association of this and the foregoing with the removal of leprosy, being another profound suggestion, calling to mind the corroding and contaminating and generally loathsome nature of that which has to be removed. (5) But perhaps the association of *hyssop* with the process of "unsinning," is most striking of all—far more significant than would at first sight appear. Hyssop is "a well-known aromatic plant which grows on walls (1 K. 5:13); and when bound in bunches serves as a brush or fan in sacred sprinklings (Exo. 12:22; Lev. 14:4-6, 49, 51)." Its significance lies in the fact that, when employed in ceremonial sprinkling, it was always closely or remotely connected with blood-shedding;

## PSALM FIFTY-ONE

closely, when dipped in blood (Exo. 12:22) or in blood and water (Lev. 14:6, 7, 49-52), remotely though not less really when dipped in the water of separation (Num. 19); when thus remotely then even the more impressively, as furnishing the singular idea of sacrifice perpetuated any length of time, and individually applied to any person or thing. It is surely remarkable, that in this very psalm in which the penitent declares the inapplicability of animal sacrifices to his case, he should nevertheless employ terms so intimately bound up with the sacrificial system. This, at least, may be said: that when a Christian intelligently rejoices that his "heart has been sprinkled from an evil conscience," his gladness is intensified by the realisation of an individual bringing home to him of an offering made once for all away in the past whose efficacy has not yet been lost. This survey of the sacrificial and cleansing terms employed in this psalm, especially as bringing leprosy into view, may perhaps throw a welcome sidelight on the word "righteousness, which rather puzzled us when we came across it in our general survey of this psalm. "Righteousness," as faithfulness to promise, we can easily understand; but had God then ever promised the forgiveness of deadly sin to David? In literal explicitness—no; by gracious construction of his plighted word—yes! In his covenant with David by the mouth of Nathan the prophet concerning David's descendants (2 Sam. 7) Jehovah had promised never to remove his kindness from David as he had removed it from Saul. If his sons should commit iniquity—alas! the father himself has done that now: Jehovah would correct them with the rod of men—David is even yet smarting under that rod: and with the stripes, the plague-strokes, or leprosy-strokes, of the sons of common men—even these we have already seen have not been withheld from David. What a mercy! David himself has thus been brought within the very terms of the covenant formulated for his sons. And now, if God will only answer David's outcry for mercy: that mercy will be the *righteousness* which fulfills the Divine word to the letter:—

*My tongue will ring out thy righteousness!*

Righteous in smiting—righteous in sparing: a covenant-keeping God is Jehovah "the Becoming One," who thus "becometh" the gracious interpreter of his own covenant; so as to treasure up unlooked-for grace, and, when unveiling it, shewing it to be at the same time unsullied *righteousness*.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

One thought more. David—as we have seen—had enjoyed the presence of the Holy Spirit, or he could not have prayed, *Take it not from me*. Was that Spirit, not hallowing, as well as illuminating and revealing? Can we really enter into the undercurrent of this psalm, without perceiving that a hallowing Divine Presence had lain at the roots of the writer's spiritual life; without recognising that this anxious petitioner is craving, not only again to sing psalms, but also and mainly to live a pure life? By how much soever this is clear, by so much also must it be clear that the Evangelist spoke *comparatively* when he said (Jn. 7:39) that the Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified. If then the inward presence of the Holy Spirit meant so much to David, how much more, as a dynamic working out righteousness, ought it not to be to ourselves unto whom the ages have reached forth their gifts!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the one essential lesson of this psalm?
2. Rotherham says there are no fewer than seventeen distinct petitions in this psalm. Find them and list them—how many of them express your own need?
3. There are qualities in our Lord which give us boldness at the throne of grace. Name three mentioned in this psalm.
4. As to the structure of this psalm: there are four petitions—a “frank confession”, and two “discoveries”, and finally three more petitions called “consenting petitions”, and then two imperative petitions. Please, please for your own soul's development: work out this structure for yourself.
5. In this tragic sin there is a desperate need for “renewal”—what two elements of man must be re-created? How is this to be done? Please note the wonder of it all.
6. David lost two or three wonderful possessions that he sadly missed and wanted back—name at least two of them.
7. David was “blood guilty”—what does this mean?
8. Oh, that we could believe with David that God is the one who sees and knows all we do and therefore cannot be unfair in judgment—how shall we develop this capacity?
9. Define: “transgression”; “blot out”; “wash”; “cleanse”.
10. Define: “pure”; the use of “hyssop”; “righteousness” as used of God to David.



## PSALM FIFTY-TWO

### PSALM 52

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Doeg the Edomite Denounced.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers 1-5, Doeg Remonstrated with, Described, and Threatened.  
Stanza II., vers. 6-9, The Laugh of the Righteous over him.

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(Lm.) Instructive-psalm—By David—When Doeg the Edomite entered and told Saul and said to him, David entered the house of Ahimelek.

- 1 Why wilt thou boast thee in wickedness O mighty man all the day?<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Engulfing ruin thou devisest—thy tongue is like a whetted razor.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 Thou lovest evil rather than good—falsehood than righteousness.
- 4 Thou lovest all devouring words—O<sup>3</sup> deceitful tongue!
- 5 God also will pull thee down—for ever snatch thee away, will pluck thee up tentless—and uproot thee out of the land of the living.
- 6 So will the righteous both see and revere—and over him will laugh:—
- 7 “Lo! the mighty man<sup>4</sup> who made not God his stronghold, But trusted in the abundance of his riches—was strong in his wealth!”
- 8 But I am like a luxuriant olive-tree in the house of God. I have put my trust in the kindness of God to the ages and beyond.
- 9 I will thank thee to the ages that thou didst effectually work,
  1. M.T.: “the kindness of God all the day.” Sep.: “lawlessness all the day.”
  2. M.T. adds: “O thou worker of deception”—Dr.
  3. So Per.; others—“a” or “the deceitful tongue.”
  4. Vocalised as in ver. 1.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

I will proclaim<sup>1</sup> thy name that it is good, before thy men of kindness.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For Dancings.<sup>2</sup>

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 52

*Written by David to protest against his enemy Doeg (I Samuel 22), who later slaughtered 85 priests and their families.*

You call yourself a hero, do you? You boast about this evil deed of yours against God's people.<sup>3</sup>

2 You are sharp as a tack in plotting your evil tricks.

3 How you love wickedness—far more than good! And lying more than truth!

4 You love to slander—you love to say anything that will do harm, O man with the lying tongue!

5 But God will strike you down and pull you from your home, and drag you away from the land of the living.

6 The followers of God will see it happen. They will watch in awe. Then they will laugh and say,

7 "See what happens to those who despise God and trust in their wealth, and become ever more bold in their wickedness."<sup>4</sup>

8 But I am like a sheltered olive tree protected by the Lord Himself. I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

9 O Lord, I will praise You forever and ever for Your punishment.<sup>5</sup> And I will wait for Your mercies—for everyone knows what a merciful God You are.

### EXPOSITION

It would be a fair inference from the superscription of this psalm alone, that there *was* a man of the name of Doeg, bearing the character here described, when David wrote this psalm. But seeing that, in I Sam. 21:7, 22:9-19, we find a man of that name, evidently capable of the baseness here attributed to him, there is

1. *Gt.*: "utter" or "proclaim." *M.T.*: "wait on."
2. So Thirtle, reading *meholoth* instead of *mahalath*.
3. Literally, "the lovingkindness of God continually."
4. Literally, "strengthened himself in his wickedness."
5. Literally, "because You have done it."

## PSALM FIFTY-TWO

no excuse for declining the identification. By some, indeed, it has been regarded as a matter of surprise, that the psalmist should go no further than notice Doeg's mischievous tongue, and should not also have alluded to his atrocious cruelty in slaying the priests of Nob. This difficulty is removed by pushing the writing of the psalm just far enough back to make way for the easy supposition—which the very wording of this superscription favours—that Doeg privately gave Saul the information about David, before he publicly proclaimed it in the presence of all Saul's servants. He *entered* and told Saul, before he openly proclaimed it. Doeg was overheard; and David informed of this private communication. That hypothesis exactly meets the case. It is to be observed from David's words to Abiathar on receiving from him the news of the massacre (1 Sam. 22:22) that he already knew enough of Doeg's character, to be at once apprehensive when he met him at Nob that he would go and tell Saul. The spirit of prophecy at once seized David and moved him to write as he here does. To the known facts may be added two expressions in the psalm itself slightly confirmatory of its superscriptional origin. Doeg was a foreigner, but had *not* come, like Ruth (2:12), to take *refuge* under the wings of the God of Israel. The tabernacle was at this time at Nob, which "was thè nòrthern summit of Olivet, a mountain which derived its name from the olives and olive-yards with which it once was clothed"—Per. Hence with peculiar aptness the psalmist says: *But I am like a luxuriant olive-tree in the house of God.*

Of the psalm itself, there remains little to be said. By its pointed denunciation of a particular man, it comes into line with Isaiah's denunciation of Shebna (Isa. 22) and Jeremiah's denunciation of Passhur (Jer. 20) and of Hananiah (Jer. 28).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Since this is a psalm given over to a denunciation and description of one man—it will be essential that the reader know him. Read I Samuel 21:7—22:22.
2. Why not mention the slaughter of the priests?
3. What specific punishment did God promise Doeg?
4. Why is the reference to the olive tree especially appropriate?
5. Doeg can teach us a good lesson—what is it?

STUDIES IN PSALMS

PSALM 53, 54

PSALM 53

(Lm.) An Instructive-psalm—By David.

(N.B.—For Title, Analysis and Exposition of this psalm, see Psalm 14, with which this psalm is practically identical—this being an Elohist recension of that.)

- 1 Said a vile person in his heart—"No God here!"  
their conduct is corrupt their practice abominable there is  
no well-doer!
- 2 God out of the heavens looked down over the sons of men,  
to see whether there was one that shewed understanding in  
seeking after God:—
- 3 "The whole have turned aside drawn back<sup>1</sup> together become  
tainted:  
there is no well-doer there is not so much as one!"
- 4 Have not<sup>2</sup> the workers of iniquity<sup>3</sup> learned anything?—  
devourers of my people!  
they have devoured food God<sup>4</sup> have they not invoked!
- 5 There dreaded they a dread, when God scattered them,  
their plan was put to shame, when God rejected them.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 Oh that out of Zion were granted the deliverances<sup>6</sup> of Israel!  
When God<sup>7</sup> restoreth the prosperity<sup>8</sup> of his people  
let Jacob exult let Israel be glad.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) With stringed instruments.

1. So Br., uniting the two verbs found, the one in 14:3 and the other in 53:3.
2. In some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "none of": cp. Ps. 14:4—Gn.
3. "Naughtiness"—Dr.
4. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. edn.): "Jehovah"—Gn.
5. So Br., as in 14:5, 6:  
There dreaded they a dread—there was no dread!  
for God had scattered the bones of the besieger.  
Thou hadst put him to shame for God had rejected them.
6. Or: "great salvation" (pl. intensive). In some cod. (w. Sep., Syr.): "salvation" (sing.). Cp. Ps. 14:7, G. Intro., 148.
7. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr.): "Jehovah." Cp. 14:7—Gn.
8. So Br., also O.G. 986, esp. Ps. 126:1, 4.

## PSALM FIFTY-THREE AND FIFTY-FOUR

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 53

Only a fool would say to himself, "There is no God." And why does he say it?<sup>1</sup> Because of his wicked heart, his dark and evil deeds. His life is corroded with sin.

2 God looks down from heaven, searching among all mankind to see if there is a single one who does right and really seeks for God.

3 But all have turned their backs on Him; they are filthy with sin—corrupt and rotten through and through. Not one is good, not one!

4 How can this be? Can't they understand anything? For they devour My people like bread and refuse to come to God.

5 But soon unheard-of terror will fall on them. God will scatter the bones of these, your enemies! They are doomed, for God has rejected them.

6 Oh, that God would come from Zion now and save Israel! Only when the Lord Himself restores them can they ever be really happy again.

## PSALM 54

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer Prompted by the Hostile Action of the Zephites.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers 1, 2, Prayer for Salvation and Vindication; supported by a *Refrain*, ver. 3, describing the psalmist's Enemies. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5, Coming Help Welcomed and its Effects Anticipated. Stanza III., vers. 6, 7, Willing Sacrifice Promised and Thanks Formulated.

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(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By David—When the Ziphites entered and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself with us?"

1 O God by thy name save me,  
yea by thy heroic strength shalt thou vindicate me.

1. Implied.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 O God hear thou my prayer,  
Do give ear to the sayings of my mouth.
- 3 For aliens<sup>1</sup> have arisen against me,  
and ruthless ones have sought my life:<sup>2</sup>  
they have not set God before them.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Lo! God is bringing help to me,  
my Sovereign Lord is among the upholders of my life.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 Let him turn back the mischief upon my watchful foes,  
in thy truth exterminate them.
- 6 Willingly will I sacrifice unto thee,  
I will thank thy name<sup>5</sup>—"For he is good";
- 7 For out of every distress hath he rescued me,  
and on my foes hath gazed mine eye."

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMM). With stringed instruments.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 54

*Written by David at the time the men of Ziph tried to betray him to Saul.*

Come with great power," O God, and save me! Defend me with Your might!

2 Oh, listen to my prayer.

3 For violent men have arisen against me—ruthless men who care nothing for God are seeking my life.

4 But God is my helper! He is a friend of mine!

5 He will cause the evil deeds of my enemies to boomerang upon them. Do as You promised and put an end to these wicked men, O God.

6 Gladly I bring my sacrifices to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good.

7 God has rescued me from all my trouble, and triumphed over my enemies.

1. Some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Aram.): "insolent men." Cp. Ps. 86:14—Gn.

2. U.: "soul." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Soul."

3. "Whoever at that time in Israel feared God more than man could not have made himself the instrument of the blind fury of Saul. God had already plainly enough acknowledged David"—Del.

4. U.: "soul."

5. M.T.: "Jehovah"—not in Sep.

6. Literally, "Your name."

7. Literally, "The Lord is of them that uphold my soul."

## PSALM FIFTY-THREE AND FIFTY-FOUR EXPOSITION

It is easy to see how psalm-collectors would be unwilling to let these little personal snatches of song die, and equally obvious how in after times these minor compositions could be adapted to occasions bearing some similarity to those which gave them birth. The wonder is, not that they found their way into the psalm-books of Israel, but that they were ever originated under the romantic circumstances which their superscriptions set forth. Yet it would be an irreparable loss to the history of revelation if we were to allow our wonder to land us in scepticism. Rather ought we to say:—This is the sort of man David was—at least in his unsullied youth and young manhood, while yet waiting for the kingdom: hunted, fleeing, hard-pressed, deceived by men who acted as spies and informers, circumvented at the royal headquarters by hirelings and foreigners and envious old companions now turned traitors; yet all the while maintaining his faith in his Divinely given destiny, cast down by fresh troubles, cheered by new mercies; discovering in a loving message from Jonathan, or in the arrival of a few fresh adherents tokens that *God was bringing him help*, that his *Sovereign Lord was among the upholders of his life*—not, of course, as one upholder among many, but chief mover and upholder of them all.

As for these officious Ziphites, we know too little of them to say much. The inhabitants of a little town fifteen miles to the southeast of Hebron,—though within the bounds of Judah, may very well have included some influential men of *alien* birth or at least of *insolent* disposition; and as for *tyrants*, there may have been several at Court, like Doeg and Cush, deserving of that name; among whom the writer may have mentally included the arch-tyrant Saul himself, though not more pointedly alluding to him.

The more thoroughly we enter into David's especial circumstances, the more easily shall we be able to see how naturally—nay almost inevitably—he could only conceive of the removal of such enemies from a kingdom over which he was to reign, by looking forward to their *extermination*. Even Israel as a nation might afterwards feel justified in appropriating the same language, without excusing Christians from the supreme duty of forgiving their enemies. “The ‘salvation’ for which the psalmist prays is a temporal deliverance, which can only be effected at

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

the expense of the implacable enemies who are seeking his life; and it will be a vindication of God's faithfulness and a proof of His righteous government at which he cannot but rejoice"—Kp.

"The perfect tense" *hath rescued, hath looked*, "looks back from the hour of thanksgiving upon an answered prayer"—Kp. as also Per.; and therefore in the above rendering these clauses have been included in the quotation marks.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Give some possible explanation as to why psalm 53 and 14 are practically identical.
2. The paraphrase of 53:1 seems to suggest that the reason some deny God is because an admission of Him would interfere with the kind of life they want to live—is this a common cause for infidelity? Discuss.
3. Are we to understand from 53:2, 3 that among the aborigine races of the world that there is not one earnest sincere seeker after God among them? Discuss.
4. Verse 5 of the 53rd psalm is difficult of interpretation—it is different than the 5th verse of the 14th. Read the K.J. translation—How do you interpret it?
5. David was in a very real personal, physical perial at the hands of the Ziphites—is God to be called upon on such occasions or does He not feel we should use our own so called "common sense" and get out of such positions of peril? Discuss.
6. Here is a quote from an ecclesiastical commentary: "The church has taken a clear view in appointing this one of the Pslams (the 54th )in commemoration of the passion of Jesus. It is seen with greatest effect as a simple prophecy of Christ"—there surely is a danger in so interpreting this psalm or any other portion of scripture . What is the danger? Discuss.

## PSALM 55

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Bitter Complaint of the Treachery of an Intimate Friend.



## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

### ANALYSIS

(Of the Psalm as Reconstructed.)

Stanza I., vers. 1-7, Invocation of God under great Nervous Excitement, leading to a Desire to Escape like a Dove. Stanza II., vers. 8, 16-19, Refuge sought in Prayer for Personal Deliverance and for the Punishment of Traitors. Stanza III., vers. 12-14, 20, 21, Vivid Delineation of Treacherous Friend. Stanza IV., vers. 9-11, 15, 23a, b, Graphic Picture of Civic Disorders and Terrible Imprecations on the Authors of them. Stanza V., vers. 22, 23c, The Psalmist Admonishes Himself and Regains his Confidence in Jehovah.

(Lm.) An Instructive-psalm—By David.

- 1 Do give ear O God to my prayer—  
and do not hide thyself from my supplication:
- 2 Do attend to me and answer me—  
I may wander<sup>1</sup> in my murmuring<sup>2</sup> and may moan—
- 3 At the voice of an enemy—  
because of the pressure<sup>3</sup> of a lawless one;  
For they keep dislodging<sup>4</sup> on me trouble—<sup>5</sup>  
and in anger bear me a grudge.
- 4 My heart continues writhing within me—  
and terrors of death have fallen upon me:
- 5 Fear and trembling ever and anon enter me—  
and there overwhelmeth me a shudder and I say:—
- 6 “Would that I had pinions like a dove—  
I would fly away and settle down:
- 7 Lo! afar would I flee—  
I would lodge in a wilderness.”
- 8 I would await a deliverer for me—<sup>6</sup>  
from rushing wind from storm:
- 16 I unto God would cry—  
and Jehovah should save me;
- 17 Evening and morning and noon—  
would I murmur and moan:—<sup>7</sup>

1. Or: “shew restlessness.”

2. Or: “soliloquy.”

3. *Gt.*: “outcry.” O.G. 734 prefer “pressure.”

4. Or: “letting fall.”

5. Or: “iniquity.”

6. So Sep. On marginal notation of verses, see Exposition.

7. M.T. adds: “that he might hear my voice.”

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 18 "Ransom thou in peace my soul—  
that none may approach me;<sup>1</sup>  
for in multitudes have they come—  
who are against me."
- 19 May GOD hear who aforetime sat enthroned,  
and may he humble them<sup>2</sup> who have no reliefs—<sup>3</sup>  
since they revere not God.
- 12 For it is not an enemy who keeps reproaching me—  
or I might bear it;  
Nor one who had been hating me who against me hath  
magnified himself—  
or I could hide myself from him;
- 13 But thou a man mine equal—  
mine associate and mine intimate,—
- 14 So that together we were wont to find sweet counsel—  
in the house of God used we to walk in the throng.
- 20 He hath thrust forth his hand against them who were wont  
to salute him—  
hath violated his covenant:
- 21 Smoother than curds was his face—<sup>4</sup>  
yet war was in his heart;  
Softer were his words than oil—  
yet they were drawn swords!
- 9 Confuse Sovereign Lord divide their tongue,  
for I have seen Violence and Strife in the city;
- 10 Day and night they go round on her walls,  
and Trouble<sup>5</sup> and Mischief are in her midst,—
- 11 Engulfing ruin is in her midst,  
and there depart not from the broad place (within her gate<sup>6</sup>)  
Oppression and Deceit.
- 15 Desolations<sup>7</sup> on them! let them go down to hades alive<sup>8</sup>!  
for wicked doings have their dwelling place within them.

1. Cp. O.G. 897b.

2. So nearly—Gn. and Dr. (note).

3. Or: "changes."

4. So Br. after Sep.

5. "Naughtiness"—Dr.

6. Where the court of justice usually sat, and where Justice and Truth should have been conspicuous.

7. Or (dividing one word into two): "May death pounce on them." Then, as if recalling that wish to make it stronger: "Let them go down," etc.

8. Cp. Num. 16:30, 33.

## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

- 23 But thou O God! bring them down to the well of the pit:  
men of bloodshed and deceit let them not live out half their  
days!
- 22 Cast on Jehovah thy lot, and he will sustain thee:  
he will not suffer to the ages that a righteous man be shaken.  
I therefore will trust in thee O Jehovah!<sup>1</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the dove of the distant terebinths.<sup>2</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 55

Listen to my prayer, O God; don't hide Yourself when I cry  
to You!

2 Hear me, Lord! Listen to me! For I groan and weep  
beneath my woe.

3 My enemies shout against me and threaten me with death.  
They surround me with terror and plot to kill me. Their fury  
and hatred rise to engulf me.

4 My heart is in anguish within me. Stark fear overpowers  
me.

5 Trembling and horror overwhelm me.

6 Oh, for wings like a dove, to fly away and rest!

7 I would fly to the far off deserts and stay there.

8 I would flee to some refuge from all this storm.

9 O Lord, make these enemies begin to quarrel among them-  
selves—destroy them with their own violence and strife.<sup>3</sup>

10 Though they patrol their walls night and day against  
invaders, their real problem is internal—wickedness and dis-  
honesty are entrenched in the heart of the city.

11 There is murder and robbery there, and cheating in the  
markets and everywhere one looks.

\* \* \* \* \*

12 It was not an enemy who taunted me—then I could have  
borne it; I could have hidden and escaped.

13 But it was you, a man like myself, my companion and  
my friend.

1. In Sep.: "kyrie."

2. See Intro., Chap. I., Obs. 3, "Fourthly."

3. Literally, "for I have seen violence and strife in the city."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

14 What fellowship we had, what wonderful discussions as we walked together to the Temple of the Lord on holy days.

\* \* \* \* \*

15 Let death seize them and cut them down in their prime, for there is sin in their homes, and they are polluted to the depths of their souls.

16 But I will call upon the Lord to save me—and He will.

17 I will pray morning, noon and night pleading aloud with God; and He will hear and answer.

18 Though the tide of battle runs strongly against me, for so many are fighting me, yet He will rescue me.

19 God Himself—God from everlasting ages past—will answer them! For they refuse to fear Him or even honor His commands.

\* \* \* \* \*

20 This friend of mine betrayed me—I who was at peace with him. He broke his promises.

21 His words were oily smooth, but in his heart was war. His words were sweet, but underneath were daggers.

\* \* \* \* \*

22 Give your burdens to the Lord. He will carry them. He will not permit the godly to slip or fall.

23 He will send my enemies to the pit of destruction. Murderers and liars will not live out half their days. But I am trusting You to have me.

## EXPOSITION

The abrupt transitions observable in this psalm seem to have been noticed by all expositors, by some of whom dislocation has been suspected and transpositions accordingly proposed. It is comparatively easy to *translate* fragments, though always with risks due to losing the thread; but, in the present case, as soon as a resolute attempt was made at continuous *interpretation*, the irresistible conclusion was brought home that some ACCIDENT must have happened in the early history of this psalm, as violent as that which may be expected to result from the tearing out of a leaf and its re-insertion in the wrong place. Such readers as cannot be induced to believe that such an accident might happen, can restore the psalm to its traditional form by following the marginal notation of verses; and by the same means open-minded critics can trace and test the endeavour here made to

## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE

present the psalm in an intelligible and profitable shape. Perfect success is not claimed for the result; but it is hoped that the candid will at least benefit by the endeavour now made—an endeavour reluctantly begun and cautiously executed.

The problems confronted by the exposition of this psalm on its merits, become absorbingly interesting in proportion as they are understood. It is possible that David wrote this psalm? and if he did, what light is thrown on the events of his reign, additional to that which is obtainable elsewhere? For some, indeed, the bare fact of the ascription of this psalm *To David* will be conclusive evidence that he wrote it. Others there are, who, while regarding that fact as presumptive evidence of the Davidic authorship, are not at all disinclined to the testing of such presumption by internal evidence; and at least are prepared to give a candid consideration to any difficulties which can be legitimately shewn to stand in the way of such conclusion. There seems to be a general consent that *if* David wrote the Psalm, then AHITHOPHEL, his counsellor, must have been the treacherous friend who is so vividly portrayed in it. But then it is said by some, that a king could never have so emphatically called his servant his *equal*. Surely those who raise this objection underestimate the generosity of David's nature; and assuming, as we must, that David's counsellor was an exceedingly able man, and believing, as we well may, that he had until lately readily promoted the public interests which he knew lay near his master's heart, it is easy to think that the more David's' kingly position put a distance between himself and many of his subjects, the more would his heart be drawn out to the gifted man whose counsels he had learned to prize. The difficulty then may be dismissed as imaginary. A far more plausible objection may be based on the unlikelihood that David could ever have written of Jerusalem in such terms as are here employed of the city in which the psalmist finds himself—especially considering David's undoubted responsibility for the condition of the city. "It is difficult to believe, says Kirkpatrick with great force, "that Jerusalem can have been such a hotbed of discord and disorder and iniquity as the psalm describes; and still more difficult to imagine that David should use the language of this psalm in regard to a state of things for which he was largely responsible." The great responsibility of David in such a case no one can question. Whether, *if* such a deplorable state of things existed, David would have been likely so frankly to confess it, is a

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psychological problem depending for its solution on the play of some of the most subtle capabilities of the human heart. If we can imagine, as we readily may, that the unhappy king was now in a state of mind predisposed to make a clean breast of everything, and at least to look the ugliest facts full in the face; then, even though he is not now consciously weighing his own responsibility, but rather inclining to dwell on the responsibility of others, we may credit him with the *rising courage* to abate nothing of the truth, and therefore to give frank expression to his convictions, however appalling. Besides, all that was noblest in David's ideals of what Jerusalem ought to be, and all that he had to be most proud of in his past endeavours to bring her up to those ideals, would now tend to make him—if otherwise in a likely state of mind—a severe critic of Jerusalem's present condition. So that the only serious question we have to confront is whether Jerusalem's moral condition was in *as bad a way* (or nearly as bad, allowing something for unconscious exaggeration, due to morbid apprehensions) as is so forcibly set forth in this psalm. Alas! it may. The evidence is growing upon us—that it may. The connected study of foregoing psalms has been gradually preparing us to perceive the alarming possibility—that it may. What are the principal factors of the situation? They are these. David has for years been the chief judge in Jerusalem; and he has now for a good long while been neglecting his judicial duties. His people have grown used vainly to look for him in the gate of the city. Grievances and wrongs have been unredressed. Justice delayed has been justice denied. Unvisited offences have fast begotten others, and worse. The chief judge absent, his subordinates have grown remiss. Even Kirkpatrick admits that "David's administration of justice seems to have been lax or inadequate (2 Sam. 15:2ff.). A well-grounded admission! *How long* has this royal remissness been working out its consequences? We cannot exactly say; but we have several baleful influences to reckon with, for the play of which allowance must be made: the adultery—the murder—the impenitence: indisposing for attention to duty; the leper-stroke—the pain—the disfigurement—the shame, naturally and inevitably increasing and prolonging such indisposition. And then the habit of neglect would breed excuse for further neglect. All these influences would be additional to those absences from home on warlike expeditions, which would all tend indefinitely to prolong David's absence from his post as judge in Israel. So that it is a natural surmise, that David's

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neglect of his judicial functions in Jerusalem had extended to many months' complete absence from his post in the gate of the city; and that, during those weary months, civic disorders had been growing apace. He awakes at length to the stern realities of Jerusalem's internal condition; institutes inquiries, receives information, compares the notes of his informants; and this is what he sees; and, being a poet, this is the graphic picture drawn by his muse: *Violence, Strife, Trouble, Mischief, Engulfing Ruin, Oppression, Deceit*, walking abroad, stalking through the city, circumambulating her walls, by day, by night—causing a rapid and awful moral deterioration and even devastation. Alas! in the circumstances, it is not too bad to be true; but it is a terrible revelation. Instead, therefore, of being content, with Kirkpatrick, with a "negative conclusion," by saying we cannot tell who wrote this psalm, much rather are we entitled to revert to David's terrible fall, and to discover here, drawn by his own hand, this further effect of his sin.

Further: it just like *him*,—not as though he were essentially a revengeful man, but as undoubtedly a passionately devoted lover of Zion and an inborn hater of perversity,—that, on surveying the picture his own hand has drawn, he should break out in terrible imprecations on those who had done so much to degrade the city of his love! *Desolations on them!*

But is it fully as much like him, to have—if not whined like a whipt cur—at least mournfully cooed like a timid, disconsolate *dove*? This too is life-like—under the circumstances, the peculiarities of which should not for a moment be forgotten. Months of suffering and shame have wrought havoc on his personal condition. He is fitful, moody, morbidly imaginative. He is so conscious of his disturbed mental condition, that, when he begins to compose this psalm, he anticipates he shall *wander*. *The voice of an enemy*, which he overhears, alas! is the voice of an old friend. He can perceive, acting on his old friends, *the pressure of a lawless one*, and enigmatic phrase, most apt and illuminating when understood as an allusion to the as yet absent Absalom,—whose name, we have before noted David's reluctance to mention. Ahithophel has set the ball of calumny rolling. One damaging fact after another has been whispered in conclave; so that, to David's heated imagination, his enemies are rolling down *boulders* upon him! No wonder, then, that for a few moments, he longs for the strong *pinions of a dove* in the vain

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hope of leaving all trouble behind him—at least till the *tempest* of rebellion has passed. For a few moments only! For although the timid spirit of the dove still lingers on him, after he has in his own imagination finished his flight far away, yet his *cooing* soon turns to *cursing*, especially when fired with dark memories of Ahithophel.

It has been too hastily concluded, from 2 Sam. 15:31, that David could not have known of his counsellor's treachery when he wrote this psalm. That, however, is not in evidence. He may have been well aware of that some time before Absalom's Insurrection had become an accomplished fact.

The suicide of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23) comes into a most suggestive relation to ver. 23 of this psalm; and, on the whole, the ancient Jewish expositors seem to have had a truer insight into this relation than modern Christian interpreters. "The Talmud and Midrashim occasionally refer to him (Ahithophel). In the latter he is classed with Balaam as an instance of the ruin which overtakes wisdom that is not the gift of Heaven; and in the former (*Baba bathra*, b 7) the great lesson of his life is said to be, 'Be not in strife with the house of David, and break off from none of its rule'"—Hastings' "Bible Dictionary," Vol. I., p. 57.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The "abrupt transitions" of this psalm are worked out in the paraphrase—how does Rotherham account for such change of thought? Do you agree? Discuss.
2. Spurgeon interestingly remarks "The Spiritual eye ever and anon sees the Son of David and Judas, and the chief priests appearing and disappearing upon the glowing canvas of this psalm." See if you can exercise your spiritual eyes.
3. To what period in David's life is this psalm usually referred? (Read II Sam. 15-18) Who is David's close friend who became his bitter enemy?
4. In what area of rule was David evidently sadly remiss? How does this relate to the psalm?
5. David fled Jerusalem from Absalom with out resistance—why? If the conditions described here prevailed in Jerusalem who was at fault?
6. Rotherham becomes increasingly convinced that David did indeed write this psalm—what led him to this conclusion?



## PSALM FIFTY-FIVE AND FIFTY-SIX

7. The psalmist longs to fly away "like a dove"—is this a healthy attitude? Discuss.
8. Why did Ahithophel commit suicide? How does this relate to the psalm? (Cf. vs. 23 and II Sam. 17:23)
9. Read verse 17 of this psalm and pause to ask yourself—"when did we lose the holy habit of regular private worship"? The early church practiced it—Discuss.
10. There is a marvelous provision and promise in verse 22—what is it?—how can we make it ours?

## PSALM 56

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song by David in Captivity.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, In a few words, David Describes his Captive Condition, and Composes a *Refrain* of Praise. Stanza II., vers. 5-11, After a Fuller Description of his Captors, the Prisoner prays for their Subjugation because of their Iniquities, Asks that His Own Sufferings may be recorded, Anticipates Future Victory over his Enemies, and Repeats and Enlarges his *Refrain*. Stanza III., vers. 12, 13, The Captive, Remembering his Vows, Promises to Fulfil them; and Anticipates Freedom for his Spared Life.

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(Lm.) By David—A Tablet—

When the Philistines seized him in Gath.

- 1 Be gracious unto me O God, for mere man hath crushed me:  
all the day a warrior keeps on oppressing me.
- 2 They who are watching me have crushed me all the day.  
for multitudes are warring on me loftily.
- 3 What day I am afraid I unto thee will direct my trust.
- 4 In God will I boast as my theme,<sup>1</sup>  
In God do I trust without fear,—  
What can flesh do unto me?

1. The M.T. and versions have "his" word or theme; but as the difference in Heb. is merely the length of a single fine stroke, "my" is preferred here, as better preparing for the omission of the pronoun in ver. 10.

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- 5 All the day my words<sup>1</sup> do they wrest,  
against me are all their plots:  
6 For mischief they gather, lie hid,  
they themselves mark my footprints,<sup>2</sup>  
as they have waited for my life.  
7 Because of iniquity there is no<sup>3</sup> deliverance for them:—  
in anger bring down peoples O God!  
8 My wandering thou thyself hast recorded:  
put thou my tears in thy wine-skin,  
are they not in thy scroll?  
9 Then shall my foes turn back—on the day I proclaim.<sup>4</sup>  
this I know for God is for me!  
10 In God will I boast as a theme,  
In Jehovah will I boast, as a theme;  
11 In God do I trust without fear:  
What can a son of earth do unto me?  
12 Upon me O God are thy vows,  
I will pay back thankofferings to thee;  
13 For thou hast rescued my soul from death,  
wilt thou not (rescue) my feet from thrusts<sup>5</sup>?  
that I may walk to and fro before God in the light of the  
living?<sup>6</sup>

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) Do not destroy.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 56

Lord, have mercy on me; all day long the enemy troops press in. So many are proud to fight against me; how they long to conquer me.

3, 4 But when I am afraid, I will put my confidence in You. Yes, I will trust the promises of God. And since I am trusting Him, what can mere man do to me?

5 They are always twisting what I say. All their thoughts are how to harm me.

6 They meet together to perfect their plans; they hide beside the trail, listening for my steps, waiting to kill me.

1. Or: "affairs."

2. Ml. "my heels"—perh. "to trip me up."

3. So *Ge.*, and so Baethgen, in O.G. 812b.

4. That is: Either proclaim myself King, or proclaim war against them.

5. Ml.: "from thrusting": *i.e.*, by an enemy to trip me up. See 116:8.

6. "In the light of the land of the living." Cp. 116:9—Br.

## PSALM FIFTY-SIX

7 They expect to get away with it. Don't let them, Lord. In anger cast them to the ground.

8 You have seen me tossing and turning through the night. You have collected all my tears and preserved them in Your bottle! You have recorded every one in Your book.

\* \* \* \* \*

9 The very day I call for help, the tide of battle turns! My enemies flee! This one think I know: God is for me!

10, 11 I am trusting God—oh, praise His promises! I am not afraid of anything mere man can do to me! Yes, praise His promises.

12 I will surely do what I have promised, Lord, and thank You for Your help.

13 For You have saved me from death and my feet from slipping, so that I can walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

## EXPOSITION

Nothing is lost, but much is gained, by letting this bright little psalm into the niche provided for it by its superscription. It can still be regarded as subsequently employed in national worship, with the obvious gain of bringing up afresh into the memories of the people the story of their beloved hero-king. Any analogies between the chequered experiences of the nation and those of David, would leave intact those snatches of Davidic autobiography thus preserved, which become increasingly precious when dovetailed into each other so as to furnish an inner history, illuminative of the outer facts with which we are already familiar in the study of David's life.

It has been assumed by critics, with good reason, that David's first sojourn with the King of Gath, as narrated in 1 Sam. 21, 22, though half voluntary in the impulse to risk it as a method of escaping from Saul, was nevertheless in the experience of it a species of "durance vile," which sufficiently answers to the circumstances assumed by the psalm to be existent. But, in truth, there need be no feverish anxiety on our part to reach absolute certainty in our attempts to fix on the particular seizure of David by the men of Gath, presupposed by this psalm. After the slaying of Goliath by the young Bethlehemite, it must always have been a tempting thing to the Gittites to get that famous but yet perhaps personally unknown stripling into their hands,

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and to wreak on him some of the vengeance, the chief volume of which nevertheless was pent up for bursting on the more formidable head of King Saul. We cannot therefore be sure that David individually did not find himself more than once a captive in Gath.

It is more to the point to open our eyes to perceive the realistic fitness of the language of this psalm to apply to such a captivity. We no sooner do this, than we see the whole thing set vividly before our eyes. With his living faith in Jehovah, these stalwart Gittites are, in David's sight, no more than *mere men*. Nevertheless, for the time, they *have crushed him*. *All the day long a warrior-guard annoys and vexes him, needlessly making him feel how irksome are his chains. Outside are watchers, taking good care he shall not escape. Multitudes of warlike men, carrying, loftily their heads, are ready to slay him. Is he afraid? He takes up his harp, and directing his trust to Jehovah, improvises thus: In God will I boast, as my theme.* How much of his language his warders understand at its full value, we know not, but he holds on: *All the day my words do they wrest; and so on, gathering strength, he proceeds. If they do attend, and can decipher his words; one while, they may well tremble as he alludes to their iniquity, or laugh him to scorn as he foretells their turning back before his face in the yet coming days when he shall proclaim war against them; another while, they may almost relent, as they catch him confessing his tears.* Again, he rings out his Refrain, made more strong and more bold; nor forgets to promise how in happier times he will make good his *vows*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Twice David was in Gath—but neither time seems to fit this psalm. How shall we explain the circumstances here described?
2. "But when I am afraid, I will put my confidence in you." If we had our confidence in the Lord, would we be afraid? Discuss.
3. There are three natural divisions to this psalm—review the *Analysis* and show how these divisions are progressive and accumulative.
4. ". . . You have collected all my tears and preserved them in Your bottle! You have recorded everyone in Your book"

## PSALM FIFTY-SIX AND FIFTY-SEVEN

(vs. 8). This verse offers tremendous insight into the nature of God. Discuss.

5. Supposing God does *not* deliver us from our enemies? Does this mean our enemies are in the right? That we are wrong? That there is no God? Discuss.

## PSALM 57

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Reminiscence of David's Early Troubles when Pursued by Saul,  
Subsequently Adapted to Brighter Times.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I, vers. 1-5, Prayer for Deliverance from Outward Trouble, marked by Resignation during its Continuance. Stanza II, vers. 6-11, Further Reference to the Trouble speedily gives place to Joyful Praise. A *Refrain*, vers. 5, 11, of Comprehensive Beauty Lights up the Whole Psalm.

(Lm.) By David—A Tablet—

When he fled from the face of Saul into a cave.

- 1 Be gracious unto me O God be gracious unto me,  
for in thee hath my soul taken refuge:  
yea in the shadow of thy wings do I take refuge,  
until the storm of ruin shall pass.
- 2 I will cry unto God Most High—  
unto GOD who is carrying through my cause for me.
- 3 He will send out of the heavens to save me,  
he hath given to reproach<sup>1</sup> one who would trample upon me.  
God will send forth his kindness and his truth.
- 4 My soul is in the midst of lions,  
I must lie down amidst such as consume the sons of men:  
their teeth are spears and arrows,  
and their tongue is a sharp sword.
- 5 Be exalted above the heavens O God!  
above all the earth be thy glory!
- 6 A net made they ready for my steps  
bowed down was my soul:

1. So Sep.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- They digged before me a pit,  
they fell into the midst thereof.
- 7 Steadfast is my heart O God, steadfast is my heart:  
I would fain sing and would play!
- 8 Oh awake my glory! oh awake lute and lyre!  
I would fain waken the dawn!
- 9 I will thank thee among the peoples Sovereign Lord,  
I will celebrate thee in psalm<sup>1</sup> among the races of men;
- 10 For great unto the heavens is thy kindness,  
and unto the skies<sup>2</sup> thy truth.  
Be exalted above the heavens O God!
- 11 above all the earth be thy glory!
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) "Do not destroy."

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 57

O God, have pity, for I am trusting You! I will hide beneath the shadow of Your wings until this storm is past.

2 I will cry to the God of heaven who does such wonders for me.

3 He will send down help from heaven to save me, because of His love and His faithfulness. He will rescue me from these liars who are so intent upon destroying me.

4 I am surrounded by fierce lions—hotheads whose teeth are sharp as spears and arrows. Their tongues are like swords.

5 Lord, be exalted above the highest heavens! Show Your glory high above the earth.

6 My enemies have set a trap for me. Frantic fear grips me. They have dug a pitfall in my path. But look! They themselves have fallen into it!

7 O God, my heart is quiet and confident. No wonder I can sing Your praises!

8 Rouse yourself, my soul! Arise, O harp and lyre! Let us greet the dawn with song!

9 I will thank You publicly throughout the land. I will sing Your praises among the nations.

10 Your kindness and love are as vast as the heavens. Your faithfulness is higher than the skies.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Or: "make melody unto thee."

2. Or: "fleecy clouds."

## PSALM FIFTY-SEVEN

11 Yes, be exalted, O God, above the heavens. May Your glory shine throughout the earth.

### EXPOSITION

It is with confidence submitted that the early portion of this psalm abundantly sustains its ascription *To David*. The latter part was probably added at a later period: hence its duplicate appearance as the early portion of Ps. 108,—a conclusion confirmed by the unshadowed brightness of vers. 7-10. The singular reappearance of trouble in ver. 6, after the first occurrence of the joyful refrain in ver. 5, raises some doubt as to the preservation of this part of the psalm. But, for the moment, it seems fitting to give ourselves up to the undisturbed persuasion that in vers. 1-4, not excluding ver. 6, we have a genuine Davidic fragment. It is just like David; and, by several delicate strokes, exactly reflects the peculiar position he occupied in those early days when he was harassed by Saul. He is not in a fighting mood; but is hunted, seeks refuge, is prepared to wait for deliverance. His cause is in God's hands, who (ver. 2) will *carry through his cause for him*: an expectation which finds fitting use for the unusual word *gmr*, which has given the critics trouble—it is exactly the happy word. Then, too, ver. 3 vividly reminds us of Ps. 18:16; and the allusion to Saul himself in ver. 3b is so unmistakable, and yet so delicate, as to sustain the conviction that it was conceived just to suit such a reference; 3c being almost as vivid an assurance that the breastplate of the high-priest would not fail him (Cp. I Sam. 23:9-12); while the *spears* and *tongues* of Saul's warriors, in the midst of which he now was, formed a closely compacted series of dangers, which David was the last man to underrate. Even the awkwardly recurring danger of ver. 6 is too apt not to have originally belonged to the Davidic representation. Although it may, plausibly, be alleged that this part of the psalm fitted the troublous days before Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem, yet that does not stop us from saying that here, in David's own unique situation and experience, we discover the actual genesis of the words. Their subsequent adaptation to a different set of circumstances, bearing some resemblance to the original, was a comparatively easy matter.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

With respect to the latter half of the psalm—namely, the joyful portion of it,—it is quite natural to conclude it to have been of later origin than the former half. This, however, is no reason why David himself should not have written it, after his position was secured. Or Hezekiah may have penned it. Even Isaiah may have supplied it. It is of small importance; and the evidence is perhaps too scanty to warrant a conclusion. This may be said: That ver. 9 reminds us of 18:49 and vers. 5 and 11 are similar to vers. 1 and 9 of Ps. 8. We may be sure that in the earlier days of David's reign over all Israel, a great joy filled his heart; and congenial influences would predispose him to just such an outburst of song as here delights us: when the sweet singer would anticipate the *dawn*, *awaken* it with song to the accompaniment of *lute* or *lyre*, give expression to his messianic hopes for the *nations* of the earth, and mount to the *skies* in his grateful recognition of the *kindness* and *faithfulness* of his God.

With all those memories and hopes of his noble ancestor to inspire him in the dark days of Sennecherib's invasion, HEZEKIAH could most appropriately commit this psalm to his *Chief Musician* with the injunction to associate it with the sentiment *Do not destroy*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The subjective element is such a strong factor in the thought that only half of this psalm belongs to the pen of David. Discuss the reason for the use of the subjective element.
2. Read these words from Spurgeon concerning this psalm: "When he fled from Saul in a cave. This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein". How could two men read the same psalm and come to so wide a difference in understanding? Discuss.
3. This is one of the "golden psalms"—the title also contains the admonition: "destroy not".—What golden truth can you discover in this psalm? (As an example consider the twenty-one times God is referred to in the eleven verses of this psalm.) If this psalm was destroyed what would we lose? Be specific.



## PSALM FIFTY-EIGHT

### PSALM 58

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Significant Warning to Corrupt Judges.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Corrupt Judges Apostrophised, Described in their Evil Doings and Training, in the Harm they Do and the Hopelessness of Trying to Reform them. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, 11, the Judgment which has Overtaken them, by the Advent of a Righteous King. (A Maccabean cry for vengeance, ver. 10.)

(Lm.)—By David—A Tablet.

- 1 Do ye indeed ye mighty ones<sup>1</sup> speak righteously?  
with equity do ye judge the sons of men?
- 2 Nay! ye all<sup>2</sup> do work perversity,  
throughout the land it is violence that your hands weigh out.
- 3 Lawless men have been estranged from birth,  
they have gone astray from nativity speaking falsehood:
- 4 They have poison like the poison of a serpent,  
like a cobra deaf and stopping his ear;
- 5 That will not hearken to the voice of whispers,  
when the wise one is casting his spells.
- 6 God hath broken<sup>3</sup> their teeth in their mouth,  
the incisors of young lions hath Jehovah knocked out.<sup>3</sup>
- 7 Let them flow away like water let them disperse of  
themselves,  
are they luxuriant as grass? so let them fade!<sup>4</sup>
- 8 Like a snail that melteth away as it goeth:  
there hath fallen fire they have not viewed the sun:
- 9 Before they perceive it they have become like brambles,  
while they are yet green<sup>5</sup> in hot anger he sweepeth them away.<sup>6</sup>

1. So *Gt.*; cp. Exo. 15:11—Gn.

2. So it shd. be (w. Syr.)—Gn.

3. Tenses changed by mere change of vowel-points.

4. So w. Sep. and Br. in this and following lines.

5. *ML.*: "living."

6. *M.T.*: (prob. Maccabean addition):—

10 Let a righteous man rejoice that he hath seen an avenging,  
His feet let him bathe in the blood of the lawless one.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 11 A son of earth then may say—Surely there is fruit for a righteous man!  
Surely there are messengers divine who are judging<sup>1</sup> in the land!  
(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) Do not destroy.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 58

Justice? You high and mighty politicians don't even know the meaning of the word! Fairness? Which of you has any left? Not one! All your dealings are crooked: you give "justice" in exchange for bribes.<sup>2</sup>

3 These men are born sinners, lying from their earliest words!

4, 5 They are poisonous as deadly snakes, cobras that close their ears to the most expert of charmers.

6 O God, break off their fangs. Tear out the teeth of these young lions, Lord.

7 Let them disappear like water into thirsty ground. Make their weapons useless in their hands.<sup>3</sup>

8 Let them be as snails that dissolve into slime; and as those who die at birth, who never see the sun.

9 God will sweep away both old and young. He will destroy them more quickly than a cooking pot can feel the blazing fire of thorns beneath it.

10 The godly shall rejoice in the triumph of right;<sup>4</sup> they shall walk the blood-stained fields of slaughtered, wicked men.

11 Then at last everyone will know that good is rewarded, and that there is a God who judges justly here on earth.

### EXPOSITION

So little excuse is there for discrediting the superscription of this psalm by *David*, that we no sooner accept for it the proffered historical setting, than we become conscious of a powerful appeal to our sense of the fitness of things. There is nothing inherently improbable in the supposition, that, when David began to reign,

1. Plural in Heb., warranting reference to 82:1, 97:7, also Exo. 21:6, 22:8, 9, 28.

2. Literally, "you deal out the violence of your hands in the land."

3. Or, "Let them be trodden down and wither like grass."

4. Literally, "when he sees the vengeance."

## PSALM FIFTY-EIGHT

he found occupying the position of judges throughout the land, men utterly unfit for it: wealthy, overbearing, careless; accustomed to falsehood from their youth up. Carry forward the state of things known to have existed from the time of "the judges"; recall how little the sons of Eli and of Samuel did to inculcate a high standard of national righteousness; notice how conspicuous by their absence are any efforts by King Saul to elevate the practical godliness of the nation; then remember how, as we have lately seen (Ps. 55), a comparatively short period of royal remissness, somewhere after this time, brought forth an enormous crop of noxious weeds in Jerusalem itself—and the conclusion will no longer seem far-fetched, if we assume that, when David came to the throne, he discovered judicial conditions so corrupt as to cause to flame out his known passion for righteousness. We know, from Ps. 101, the purity he deemed essential to his court; and, from Ps. 82, the estimate formed by his Chief Singer Asaph of the enormous wrongs easily inflicted on the helpless by a lax administration of justice. Hence we need feel no surprise to find him, in this psalm, equal to the occasion of giving corrupt judges notice, in solemn psalmody, of the drastic treatment which their perversion of righteousness might expect at his hands: no surprise to discover what a mighty instrument he was thus employing to create a purified and elevated public sentiment, likely to aid him in subsequent detailed endeavours to make Israel a law-abiding and holy people.

From this point of view, survey this psalm; and how fitting an instrument it appears for the forwarding of these noble ends. It grips these high-placed evil-doers with a will; sets their wrong-doing plainly before their faces; shows them that their characters have been thoroughly reckoned up; warns them that little is expected of them by way of reform—even the *spell* of a psalm is unlikely to save them from the consequences of their inborn and long-practised depravity. Such is the purport, under poetic guise, of the first Stanza of this psalm. The warning is veiled; but men must be stupid as well as stubborn if they cannot see through it.

The King, however (Stanza II.), has them in his power; and he knows it. They may yet be as fierce as lions; but in setting over them his righteous servant David, *God has* already, in effect, *broken their teeth in their mouth*; yea, let the young magnates, who are prepared to exceed their fathers in high-handed injustice, know, that *Jehovah hath* already *knocked out*

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

their *terrible incisors!* The best thing they can do, is to disappear *like water* that drieth up; *like grass* for which the sun is too hot, whose luxuriating hours are done; *like snails* crawling away and wasting as they go. Otherwise, if they will not be admonished, let them beware lest they be suddenly made like unto *thorns*; yea, even though they be like *green brambles*, lest the *fierce fire* and *strong wind* of Divine wrath scorch and scatter them as in a storm of retribution!

Is it terrible? Yea, but it is just? Is it unmerciful? Nay, for they are thus publicly warned. The tempest will clear the air, and bring about health and peace. Justice is the foundation of grace. The common *man* has to be cared for. Well-doers must be encouraged—must have given back to them the conviction, that *there is fruit for a righteous man*: that, as there are visible *representatives of God judging in the land*, so there is an invisible God judging on the earth and in heaven.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If we relate this psalm to David who are the judges here described? . . .
2. Does verse three teach “hereditary total depravity”? If not what does it teach?
3. W. Graham Scroggie divides this psalm into three parts: (1) The sin, vs. 1-5; (2) The sentence, vs. 6-9; (3) The satisfaction (of the righteous at the overthrow of the wicked) vs. 10, 11. List and discuss the various characteristics and cause for the sin of injustice as set forth in verses one through five.
4. The sentence of David against such corrupt leaders is indeed “terrible”; is it “just”—even “merciful”? Discuss.
5. We must not, we cannot, we will not read vindictiveness into the justice of God—why not? What then shall we say? Discuss—especially as related to verses ten and eleven.

## PSALM 59

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Beleaguered Psalmist Prays for Rescue and Avenging.

PSALM FIFTY-NINE  
ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, In Praying for Rescue, the Psalmist Describes the Character and Conduct of his Enemies, and Protests his Own Innocence. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, Further Describing his Enemies, he Anticipates a Divine Mockery of the Nations, and Rises to a *Refrain* of Praise for Divine Protection. Stanza III., vers. 10-13, In his Confidence, he Prays for the Monumental Preservation, and Ultimate Destruction of his Enemies, to the Praise of Jehovah as Universal Ruler. Stanza IV., vers. 14-17, With the Disappointment of his Enemies, he contrasts His Own Anticipated Joy, and Repeats his *Refrain* of Praise.

(I.m.) By David—A Tablet—when Saul sent,  
and they watched the house to kill him.

- 1 Rescue me from my foes, O my God,  
from them who rise up against me shalt thou set me on high:
- 2 Rescue me from the workers of iniquity,<sup>1</sup>  
and from the men of bloodshed save me.
- 3 For lo! they have lain in wait for my life,<sup>2</sup>  
mighty ones keep gathering against me,—  
not for transgression of mine; nor for sin of mine O Jehovah!
- 4 Without iniquity of mine do they run and station  
themselves,—  
oh rouse thyself to meet me and see:
- 5 Yea thou Jehovah of hosts God of Israel<sup>3</sup>  
oh awake to visit all the nations,—  
do not be gracious unto any mischievous traitors.
- 6 They return at even they growl like a dog they surround the  
city.
- 7 Lo! they pour forth with their mouth,  
swords are in their lips,—  
“For who can hear?”
- 8 But thou Jehovah wilt laugh at them,  
thou wilt mock at all nations,<sup>4</sup>
- 9 O my<sup>5</sup> Strength! unto thee will I make melody,<sup>6</sup>  
for God is my lofty retreat.

1. Or: “mischief” (“naughtiness”—Dr.).

2. U.: “soul.” Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Soul.”

3. M.T. (as rendered by Dr.): “And thou, Jehovah God of hosts, the God of Israel.” Br. has simply: “Thou Yahweh, Sabaoth.”

4. Cp. 2:4.

5. So some cod. *read* (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn.

6. So it shd. be. Cp. ver. 17—Gn. M.T.: “over thee will I keep guard”—Dr.; “upon thee will I wait”—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 10 My God of kindness will come to meet me,  
God will let me gaze on my watchful foes.
- 11 Do not slay them lest my people forget,  
cause them to wander by thy hosts<sup>1</sup> and prostrate them,—  
our Shield! Sovereign Lord!
- 12 The sin of their mouth is the word of their lips,  
let them then be captured in their pride,—  
both for the oath and for the deception they recount.
- 13 Bring to a full end in wrath, bring to a full end that they  
may be no more:  
that (men) may know there is a God in Jacob  
who is ruling to the ends of the earth.<sup>2</sup>
- 14 Then let them return at even let them growl like a dog let  
them surround the city.
- 15 They will be suffered to prowl about for food,  
and if not satisfied then let them whine!
- 16 But I will sing thy strength,  
I will ring out in the morning thy kindness;  
For thou hast become a lofty retreat for me,  
and a place to flee to when I am in a strait.
- 17 O my strength! unto thee will I make melody,  
for God is my lofty retreat my God of kindness.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the "lily of testimony" = The feast of weeks.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 59

*(Written by David at the time King Saul set guards at his home to capture and kill him. I Samuel 19:11)*

O my God, save me from my enemies. Protect me from those who have come to destroy me.

2 Preserve me from these criminals, these murderers.

3 They lurk in ambush for my life. Strong men are out there waiting. And not, O Lord, because I've done them wrong.

4 Yet they prepare to kill me. Lord, waken! See what is happening! Help me!

5 (And O Jehovah, God of heaven's armies, God of Israel,

1. Or: "army," "force"—earthly or heavenly.

2. "That the God of Jacob ruleth the ends of the earth"—Sep.

## PSALM FIFTY-NINE

arise and punish the heathen nations surrounding us.) Do not spare these evil, treacherous men.

6 At evening they come to spy, slinking around like dogs that prowl the city.

7 I hear them shouting insults and cursing God, for "No one will hear us," they think.

8 Lord, laugh at them! (And scoff at these surrounding nations too.)

9 O God my Strength! I will sing Your praises, for You are my place of safety.

10 My God is changeless in His love for me and He will come and help me. He will let me see my wish come true upon my enemies.

11 Don't kill them—for my people soon forget such lessons—but stagger them with your power and bring them to their knees. Bring them to the dust, O Lord our shield.

12, 13 They are proud, cursing liars. Angrily destroy them. Wipe them out. (And let the nations find out too that God rules in Israel and will reign throughout the world.)

14, 15 Let these evil men slink back at evening, and prowl the city all night before they are satisfied, howling like dogs and searching for food.

16 But as for me, I will sing each morning about Your power and mercy. For You have been my high tower of refuge, a place of safety in the day of my distress.

17 O my Strength, to You I sing my praises; for You are my high tower of safety, my God of mercy.

## EXPOSITION

Most of this psalm answers well to the historical occasion named in its superscription; and though, both in form and in substance, it suggests subsequent and adaptations and additions, yet these are comparatively unimportant, and need not divert us from the fruitful reflections which spring from the origin of this striking composition as a whole.

The writer is beset by enemies: just such enemies as we know David had in the court of King Saul—*workers of iniquity, men of bloodshed, foreigners* who had taken the *oath* of allegiance to Israel and yet could boast of the *deception* they had practised in accepting it; probably, like Doeg, the Edomite, rich and powerful, with ready access to the ear of Saul, and more willing than

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

David's fellow-Hebrews to become the tools of that fickle and jealous monarch. Such men, in David's intensely patriotic eyes, would appear like unclean *dogs*, ravenous, cruel, dangerous.

At the hands of these enemies, the writer is now in imminent danger. They have been *lying in wait* for him, keep *gathering together against* him, saying *false and cruel things* about him, thereby converting their *tongues* into *swords*; they not only gather against him, but *watch*, one or two by day and a larger number by night, *surrounding the city*, so as to guard every avenue of escape. So far, a graphic picture of the way in which Saul's emissaries would seek David for the purpose of *killing* him.

There is surely little cause for wonder that so much importance should be attached to the active use of their *tongues* in hunting for David. For though scouts and watchers when thus on duty would naturally do that part of their work in silence and by stealth; yet the most effective part taken by these men, would be their use of their tongues when they had Saul's ear, and when rallying their own and David's fellow-servants to join in the pursuit and the waylaying. No doubt there would be times of actual watching, when their policy would be silence; but there would be times of discovery that they had lost their prey, when volleys of cursing would be *poured forth by their mouth*; and when compelled to return to their master with the confession that the young Bethlehemite had escaped them, it is likely that their crestfallen looks and abject words made them appear not a little like curs *whining* as if in fear of a beating. And, if David could foresee their shame overtaking them, he might very well say: *If not satisfied, then let them whine!* Whether it be supremely dignified or not, at least it is life-like! So far, both the conditions presupposed by the psalm, and the movements evident therein, are unmistakably such as suit the crisis named in the superscription.

But, in two places of the psalm, it must be admitted to be open to question whether we have an original sentiment, or a later addition. These two places are at vers. 5 and 8 respectively. At the former point, there is the outburst of the prayer—*Awake to visit all nations*; and at the latter, there is the positive assurance—*But thou, O Jehovah, will laugh at them, Thou wilt mock at all nations*. Here it may, plausibly, be contended, we have traces of a later time. And it may be so. It may be, that it is too soon yet for the antagonism of Gentile nations to Jehovah



## PSALM FIFTY-NINE

and of His antagonism to them to be thus anticipated. Such a forecast would more naturally become the later times of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib came against Israel with his Assyrians; or of Jeremiah, when Nebuchadnezzar was coming with his Babylonian hosts; or, still more, the troublous times of the return from the Exile when the little Gentile nations around Israel were so persistent and so malicious in their conspiracies and attacks on Israel. These outbursts in the psalm against Gentiles may very plausibly be attributed to such a later time. And there we might be content to leave the problem; especially as not raising any real objection against the Davidic authorship of the main body of the psalm, when the known habit of adapting psalms to later occasions has due allowance made for it.

On this point we should not have lingered, but for the desire of protesting that even this concession to the probability of a later date for a few lines in this psalm cannot be compelled. It is probable—no more. It may have been given to David himself, thus early in his prophetic career, to catch glimpses of later events in the history of Israel: to be led on to catch such glimpses from nothing more developed than the antagonism and treacheries of a few Doegs among the retainers of Saul.

Worthy of observation is that unique prayer in ver. 11 of this psalm: *Do not slay them, lest my people forget, cause them to wander.* On the one hand this reminds us of Pharaoh, who instead of being at once slain, was preserved to permit him to develop all the obstinacy that was in him—to the brighter manifestation of the glory of Jehovah; and, on the other hand, it quickens our inquisitiveness to learn from later prophecies whether or not the restored Israel of the future may not be similarly *kept in mind* by the monumental sparing of enemies who would otherwise be summarily destroyed (cp. Dan. 7:12).

“They—let them whine; but I will sing”: a contrast, almost harsh in its sharpness; yet how suggestive. Ours be the faith in the Right, and in the God of Rightness, that by detestation of all meanness, and the wholehearted love of nobleness, we may know how to escape the *whine* and ensure the *song*.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What particular experience of David forms the background for this psalm? (Cf. I Sam. 19:11-18) Discuss the problem of verses five and eight where mention is made of “nations”.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

2. Consider carefully the *Analysis* of this psalm and then read this from Scroggie: "In structure the Psalm is highly artificial. There are two main divisions, 1-9 and 10-17. Each of these ends with a refrain in which the Psalmist speaks of God as his *strength* and *high tower* (9, 17). Each of these main divisions has two stanzas divided by a *Selah* (5, 13) and the second stanza in each division begins in the same way (6, 14). The two main divisions closely resemble one another, but each has its characteristics" (*Ibid.* p. 55). Discuss the structure of this psalm.
3. Discuss the import of the description the psalmist gives of his enemies—as in verses one through five and verses six through nine?
4. What is meant by the little phrase in verse eleven "slay them not lest my people forget"? Discuss its application to our day.
5. When does God laugh? (Cf. vs. 8) What kind of laugh is it? Discuss.

## PSALM 60

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Outcry of Anguish, Expostulation and Entreaty,  
under a Severe Reverse.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Lamentation over a Defeat. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Prayer for Victory, based on an Ancient Oracle. Stanza III., vers 9-12, In Order to Victory, Divine Guidance and Presence Besought.

(Lm.) A Tablet—By David—To instruct—When he waged war with Aramneharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 O God thou hast rejected us—hast broken out upon us,  
Thou hast been angry—wilt thou not take us back?<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Thou hast shattered the land—hast split it open,  
Heal thou the fractures thereof—for it hath tottered.

1. Cp. 44, text and Exposition.  
2. So O.G. 998b.

## PSALM SIXTY

- 3 Thou hast sated<sup>1</sup> thy people with hardship,  
 hast let them drink reeling as wine.<sup>2</sup>
- 4 Thou hast given to them who revere thee a signal,  
 in order to take flight before the bow!<sup>3</sup>
- 5 That thy beloved ones may be rescued  
 oh give victory with thy right hand and answer me.<sup>4</sup>
- 6 God spake in his sanctuary:—<sup>5</sup>  
 "Let me exult let me apportion Shechem,  
 And the vale of Succoth will I measure out:
- 7 Mine is Gilead and mine Manasseh:  
 But Ephraim is the defence of my head,  
 Judah is my commander's staff:<sup>6</sup>
- 8 Moab is my wash-bowl,  
 Unto Edom will I cast my sandal:<sup>7</sup>  
 Over Philistia will I<sup>8</sup> raise a shout of triumph."
- 9 Who will conduct me to the city entrenched?  
 who will lead me as far as Edom?
- 10 Wilt not thou O God (who hast) rejected us?  
 yea wilt thou not O God go forth in our hosts?
- 11 Grant to us help out of distress!  
 since unreal is a victory<sup>9</sup> by man.
- 12 In God we shall do valiantly,  
 he himself therefore shall<sup>10</sup> tread down our adversaries.
- (Lm. To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For stinged instruments.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 60

*(Written by David at the time he was at war with Syria, with the outcome still uncertain; this was written when Joab, captain of his forces, slaughtered 12,000 men of Edom in the Valley of Salt.)*

1. So Gt.—Gn.
2. So O.G. 947.
3. As if with the irony of astonishment.
4. *Written* "us"; but *read* "me." Some cod. (w. 4 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.), both write and read "me"—Gn.
5. Or: "holiness."
6. Sep.: "my king."
7. Thus assigning to both Moab and Edom a menial position.
8. So Gt.—Gn.
9. Or: "deliverance," "salvation."
10. A consenting petition: "We are willing to accept his terms, and give him the glory." Cp. Exposition on 51:7, 8.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

O God, You have rejected us and broken our defenses; You have become angry and detested us. Lord, restore us again to Your favor.

2 You have caused this nation to tremble in fear; You have torn it apart. Lord, heal it now, for it is shaken to its depths.

3 You have been very hard on us and made us reel beneath Your blows.

4, 5 But You have given us a banner to rally to; all who love truth<sup>1</sup> will rally to it; then You can deliver Your beloved people. Use Your strong right arm to rescue us!

6, 7 God has promised to help us! He has vowed it by His holiness! No wonder I exult; "Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh—still are Mine!" He says. "Judah shall continue to produce kings, and Ephraim great warriors.

8 Moab shall become My lowly servant, and Edom My slave. And I will shout in triumph over the Philistines."

9, 10 Who will bring me in triumph into Edom's strong cities! God will! He who cast us off! He who abandoned us to our foes!

11 Yes, Lord, help us against our enemies, for man's help is useless.

12 With God's help we shall do mighty things, for He will trample down our foes.

## EXPOSITION

By reference to Ps. 44, text and notes, it will be recalled that this psalm as well as that was written in the interval of suspense that occurred between the alarming raid of Edomites while the main portion of David's army was in Syria, and the effective relief obtained by Joab's sanguinary defeat of these their troublesome neighbours. The exact circumstances have to be inferred from a few known facts; but, notwithstanding the disadvantage under which we thus labour, this psalm offers a few outstanding features, which are not a little impressive and instructive. It is needless to speak of the temporary alarm, almost amounting to panic, which is so often caused in the history of warfare, by reverses which are serious enough at the time, but soon overcome and forgotten. It is not often that their effect is so vividly described as in the opening stanza of this psalm: this raid from the south seemed for the time like the driving home of a wedge

1. Literally, "that it may be displayed because of the truth."

## PSALM SIXTY

splitting open the whole fabric of the nation; like the administering of a poisoned draught stupefying the senses of the people. It is seen at a glance how both weal and woe are ever closely associated with Jehovah's providence over Israel. It is specially observable how the psalmist bases his plea for restored success to his arms on the records of the past. As we have had repeated occasion to remark, David's wars were first and foremost a resumption and continuance of those of Joshua. Here is an old record, dating from the conquest, from which the inferiority of Edom's assigned relation to Israel is clearly foretold. And is *Edom* thus to seize a favorable chance to overrun the whole land? This can never be tolerated: *Who will conduct me to the fortified city among the rocks?* We cannot say whether Joab, in his terrible slaughter of Edomites, exceeded his commission, or made more than necessary reprisals, but this we can see—that David, at least, desired, from the outset of this southern expedition, to act in unreserved submission to Divine guidance. To the student of prophecy it is enough to say, Watch *Edom*, for developments not even yet complete! To the humble saint, who cannot well grasp national and world-wide problems, it may suffice to address the watch-words: *Who will conduct me? Vain is a victory by Man! In God we shall do valiantly.* May no readers of these lines have *adversaries* other than those whom *God himself will tread down!*

“Shechem at the foot of Mt. Gerizim, the chief gathering-place in the time of Joshua, stands for the country west of the Jordan: cp. Josh. 24:1. The Valley of Succoth, in the valley of the Jordan on the eastern side, near the Jabbok . . . stands for the country east of the Jordan . . . Gilead, as distinguished from Manasseh, must indicate with it the two chief divisions east of the Jordan, as Ephraim and Judah, the two chief divisions on the west. Accordingly Gilead here is for the southern portion assigned to Reuben and Gad, Nu. 32:1-29, and Manasseh for the northern portion, or the land of Bashan. . . . Moab was the troublesome neighbour of Israel, occupying the region east of the Dead Sea. He is to be so reduced that he becomes the wash-basin which is carried by a slave to pour water over his master's hands or feet. . . . Edom, the troublesome neighbour of Judah on the south-east, was also so reduced as to become another slave to whom the master kicks off the sandals when he would have them removed to wash his feet”—Br.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. At what possible time did verses one through three apply to the nation of Israel?
2. From the superscription of this psalm we could assume that David fought against the Syrians in the far north. Read II Sam. 8:13, 14; I Kings 11:15, 16 and I Chron. 18:12, 13. While David was away from Jerusalem the Edomites took advantage of his absence and invaded Palestine. News came to David—he sent Joab to defend the homeland. In the interval David wrote this psalm. What did Joab do? Read verse nine and notice the faith of David. Discuss.
3. What is “the banner” given to them that fear thee? Cf. vs. 4.
4. Moab and Edom were to be treated in a strange way—“Moab is my washpot” and “Upon Edom will I cast my shoe”. What is the meaning of these figures of speech?
5. Has God ever led in war or has He merely used it as a rod of correction after man initiated it?

PSALM 61

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Psalmist, in Banishment, Prays for Restoration.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Prayer for Restoration based on Past Mercies. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Prayer for Long Life, grounded on Public Blessings, and closing with a Promise of Perpetual Praise.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Do hear O God my piercing<sup>1</sup> cry,  
oh attend unto my prayer:
- 2 From the end of the land unto thee will I cry when my heart  
fainteth,  
into a rock too high for me (to climb) shalt thou lead me.

1. “Plaintive”—Del.; “ringing”—Dr.

## PSALM SIXTY-ONE

- 3 For thou hast been a refuge for me,  
a tower of strength from the face of the foe.  
4 I would fain be a guest in thy tent to the ages,  
I would take refuge in the hiding-place of thy wings.  
5 For thou O God hast hearkened to my vows,  
thou hast given a possession to the reverers of thy name.  
6 Days unto the days of a king shalt thou add,  
his years as of generation after generation:  
7 He shall be enthroned to the ages before God,  
Kindness and Truth appoint thou to preserve him.  
8 Thus will I make melody of thy name to futurity,  
that I may pay my vows day by day.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For Jeduthun.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 61

O God, listen to me! Hear my prayer!

2 For whatever I am, though faraway at the ends of the earth, I will cry to You for help. When my heart is faint and overwhelmed, lead me to the mighty, towering Rock of safety.

3 For You are my refuge, a high tower where my enemies can never reach me.

4 I shall live forever in Your tabernacle; oh, to be safe beneath the shelter of Your wings.

5 For You have heard my vows, O God, to praise<sup>1</sup> You every day, and You have given me the blessings You reserve for those who reverence Your name.

6 You will give me<sup>2</sup> added years of life, as rich and full as those of many generations, all packed into one!

7 And I shall live before the Lord forever. Oh, send your lovingkindness and truth to guard and watch over me,

8 And I will praise Your name continually, fulfilling my vow of praising You each day.

## EXPOSITION

No better origin in David's life for this sweet little psalm need be sought, than when the psalmist was at Mahanaim; Absalom's rebellion having been crushed, and the King waiting

1. Implied from verse 8.

2. Literally, "to the days of the king."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

to return to Jerusalem. It is only a snatch of song, revealing but a glimpse into the experiences of the Monarch; but it is striking, and well worthy, not only of preservation, but of occasional use in the liturgy of the Temple.

Far from home, far from the services of the Sacred Tent, the petitioner cries out to be permitted to return. He is occasionally depressed, but finds solace in his harp, whereon he formulates his plea. He recalls past mercies, and the memory of them emboldens his present requests. To be again Jehovah's *guest* and to realize the sense of *nestling* under His protection, is his foremost wish.

Reverting to the past, he remembers that those past mercies had been granted in answer to *vows* previously made; and, in particular, that to his brethren as well as to himself, the Sanctuary had been granted as a priceless *possession*. Continued *life* then comes into the field of his desire; and, at this point, he is carried away in what we may describe as a Messianic Ecstasy; asking for such a prolonged continuance of *days* as far transcended ordinary human existence. What mortal, though crowned, could reasonably expect to live *generation after generation*? to be *enthroned age-abiding before God*? It may be that, as some interpret, David was thinking rather of his dynasty (according to 2 Sam. 7) than of his own person. But the mind soon tires of the thought of a mere dynasty abiding, while the members who in succession sustain it, are all, one after the other, swept away by death. At all events it is a welcome and instructive relief to find the ancient Targum-writing Rabbis discovering, in the prospect of the dynasty, the brighter prospect of a Final Holder of dynastic promises—the Messiah? Thus on ver. 8: "Very pathetic is the paraphrase of the Targum (= *interpretation* or *translation*). 'So will I pay my vows in the day of the redemption of Israel, even in the day when King Messiah is anointed to reign'"—Kp.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read II Samuel, chapter eighteen and discuss this psalm with the background of David's exile in Mahanaim.
2. David's faith—confidence—love for God is beautifully expressed in this psalm. To David God is: (1) "A rock that is higher than I"; (2) "A refuge for me"; (3) "A strong



## PSALM SIXTY-ONE AND SIXTY-TWO

tower"; (4) "a refuge in the covert of thy wings"; (5) "I shall dwell in Thy tent". Discuss these figures as they relate to us.

3. There is a prophecy in verses six through eight—what is it?

## PSALM 62

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Restful Resolution, Exposing the Treacherous and Encouraging the Timorous, traces both Power and Kindness to God the Judge of All.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Counselling himself to be Patient, the Psalmist Remonstrates with False Friends. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Again (by *Refrain*) Counseling Himself to be Patient, he seeks to Restore the Confidence of the People. Stanza III., vers. 9-12, exposing False Grounds of Confidence, he traces all Power and Kindness to the Supreme Judge.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David.

- 1 Surely<sup>1</sup> unto God be thou still<sup>2</sup> my soul,  
for<sup>3</sup> from him is my salvation:
- 2 Surely he is my rock and my salvation my lofty retreat,  
I shall not be greatly shaken.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 How long keep ye rushing at a man,  
continue crushing all of you,—<sup>5</sup>  
as at a leaning wall as at a bulging fence?
- 4 Surely from his dignity have they counselled to thrust him  
out,  
they delight in falsehood:  
With his mouth doth each of them bless,  
but inwardly they curse.
- 5 Surely unto God be thou still my soul,  
for from him is mine expectation:

1. Or "only"; and so in vers. 2, 4, 5, 6, 9.

2. M.T.: "silence (is) my soul."

3. So some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.); cp. ver. 5—Gn.

4. "Be shaken"—Br.

5. According to another vocalisation: "All of you shall be crushed."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 6 Surely he is my rock and my salvation my lofty retreat,  
I shall not be shaken.
- 7 On God depend my safety<sup>1</sup> and mine honour,  
my rock of strength and my refuge are in God.<sup>2</sup>
- 8 Trust in him all ye congregation<sup>3</sup> of the people,  
pour out before him your heart,—  
God is a refuge for us.
- 9 Surely mere breath<sup>4</sup> are men of low degree,  
falsehood men of high degree:  
in balances going up they are of breath<sup>5</sup> altogether.
- 10 Do not trust in extortion nor on robbery set vain hope,  
as for wealth when it beareth fruit do not regard (it).
- 11 One thing hath God spoken,  
Two things (there are) which I have heard:—  
that power belongeth unto God,
- 12 and thine Sovereign Lord is kindness;  
for thou repayest each one according to his doing.<sup>6</sup>

(Nm.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 62

I stand silently before the Lord, waiting for Him to rescue me. For salvation comes from Him alone.

2 Yes, He alone is my Rock, my rescuer, defense and fortress. Why then should I be tense with fear when troubles come?

\* \* \* \* \*

3, 4 But what is this? They pick on me at a time when my throne<sup>1</sup> is tottering; they plot my death and use lies and deceit to try to force me from the throne.<sup>7</sup> They are so friendly to my face while cursing in their hearts!

5 But I stand silent before the Lord, waiting for Him to rescue me. For salvation comes from Him alone.

6 Yes, He alone is my rock, my rescuer, defense and fortress—why then should I be tense with fear when troubles come?

1. Or "salvation."

2. Or (taking *beth* as *beth-essential*): "is God."

3. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

4. Or: "a mere vapour."

5. Or: "of vapour."

6. Cp. Job 34:11, Prov. 24:12, Jer. 32:19, Eze. 7:27, Mt. 16:27, Ro. 2:6, 2 Cor. 5:10, Eph. 6:8, Col. 3:25, 1 P. 1:17, Rev. 22:12.

7. Implied.

## PSALM SIXTY-TWO

7 My protection and success<sup>2</sup> come from God alone. He is my refuge, a Rock where no enemy can reach me.

8 O my people, trust Him all the time. Pour out your longings before Him, for He can help!

9 The greatest of men, or the lowest—both alike are nothing in His sight. They weigh less than air on scales!

10, 11 Don't become rich by extortion and robbery. And don't let the rich men be proud.

12 He is loving and ~~kind and rewards~~ each one of us according to the work we do for Him.

### EXPOSITION

Successfully to adjust this unique psalm to the life of David requires some alertness of apprehension in regard to psychological possibilities. If, however, we assume that the great sin of his life is in the past; that the sore smiting has been borne; that the deep repentance has been felt; that assured pardon has come; and that, in the strength of renewed spiritual health, the mind of this man of God has now become attuned to public duty: if we then further assume that the first consternation on discovery of Absalom's unfaithfulness, has driven the King to his God, with strong crying and tears, and that thus the monarch's soul has been calmed to face the situation as best he may;—we can possibly *then* bring, into the realm of the conceivable, the peculiar emotions evident in this psalm. The psalmist is being schooled to calm trust. He has poured out his complaint, wrestled with his fears, and he has tested the sweetness of fellowship with God in his present and prospective troubles; yet not so assuredly, but that he feels the need of again and again girding up the loins of his mind, and fully settling it that now, at length, there is no becoming attitude of mind Godward other than one of *silence*, the *silence* that is resolved to distrust no longer—so that instead of repeating petitions identical with those already offered, he is determined calmly to await the issue. This resolve is what we see crystallising itself into the remarkable introductory refrain to this psalm. The piling up of epithets—*my rock, my salvation, my lofty retreat*—shows the mind actively at work upbuilding its confidence; needless to say, these epithets are strikingly Davidic. But duty has to be faced; and, to this end,

2. Literally, "glory."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

is confidence carefully husbanded. The king must make no mistakes about the real situation: his own position has for some time appeared weak in the eyes of his faltering friends,—a little more, and the *leaning wall* will sway over and go down; and there are those who are ready to give a concerted *rush* at it and overthrow it. It is *his dignity* from which they would *thrust* him, that they may set up another in his place. In some given conclave, he learns that he has not a true friend left. Some, in that conclave, who still maintain the appearance of friendliness, are showing treachery in act: *With his mouth doth each of them bless, but inwardly they curse.* So ends the first stanza.

But there is another danger: the *people* are wavering! The first need is to let them see that *the king* does not waver; and therefore, after repeating his self-assuring refrain with its inspiring array of Divine epithets, he deliberately declares his *expectation* to be firm as a rock. Would *the congregation of the people* share this *trust*? let them seek it as the psalmist has done, by *pouring out their heart* before *God* so as to find in him a *refuge*. It will be noticed that the prelude to this stanza is made stronger than when it was set before the first: *then* the psalmist was sure he should not be *greatly shaken*, *now* he is confident that he shall not be *shaken*! This is, at least, very life-like!

Finally, the writer of this psalm strongly asserts the stability of Divine order in contrast with human rebellion against it. What is man in opposition to God. *Mere breath* or worse; Whether of *low degree* or of *high degree* in these *balances* he kicks the beam. And man is mere man when he resorts to *extortion* and *robbery*; moreover David by this time was *wealthy*; and though we have no reason to think that he unworthily *regarded* his riches, yet can it easily be conceived that base promises were being quietly circulated, as to the gains to be secured by a transfer of allegiance from David to Absalom. There may be some flavour of Wisdom Literature in the noble moralising with which this psalm is concluded; but that literature did not grow up in a day, and David may well have been a link in the chain of writers that, starting from Samuel, gave it birth; as we were reminded by certain sententious sayings in Ps. 18. Certainly, nothing could seem to be more fitting for imparting a strong finish to this psalm, than to be oracularly reminded that *power belongeth unto God*, to bestow as he pleases. David had

## PSALM SIXTY-TWO AND SIXTY-THREE

not sought power; through prophetic channels it had sought him (1 Sam. 16) and been confirmed to him (2 Sam. 7). It is especially life-like, as if with a bright gleam of Davidic inspiration, that the thought of *power* bestowed should be coupled with an appreciation of the *kindness* that moved to the gift (cp. 2 Sam. 7:15 w. Isa. 55:3); and, if any little stroke were wanting to make it seem the more natural, it might be found in the irregularity of suddenly passing from speaking of God to the speaking to God; and *thine, Sovereign Lord, is kindness!* It appears to come warm from a heart accustomed to sun itself in "the kindness of God" (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness") Remarkable, too, it is, that *judgment* should be logically linked with *kindness*—of course it is "vindicatory righteousness" (cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness") which is chiefly prominent in such cases. Still, it is a precious association of ideas; and it is extremely satisfactory that it is, as clothed with such an association, that the closing words of this psalm meet with such an extended response, as our numerous references reveal, throughout the Bible.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Once again read the historical setting of David's experience in exile—II Sam. 18:1-33. How shall we relate this psalm to this period of time.
2. Who is pictured as a "leaning wall" or a "tottering fence?"
3. David is waiting in silent exile while God works out His will through the rebellion of David's beloved son Absalom. What quality of character would be developed by this experience?
4. Anxiety and worry are the root of many ills—name several. The antidote is found in this psalm—apply it!
5. Men trust in so many false gods—name several as noticed in verses nine and ten.

## P S A L M 63

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Banished Soul, Athirst for God, Anticipates  
Satisfaction and Vindication.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, The Psalmist Avows and Describes his Longing for God. Stanza II., vers. 2, 3, He Traces it back to Sanctuary-worship. Stanza III., vers. 4-8, He Promises himself a Life of Glad, Satisfying and Trustful Devotion. Stanza IV., vers. 9, 10, His Enemies, he foresees, are Doomed to Destruction. Stanza V., ver. 11, His Own Joy Anticipates that of Others over the Divine Silencing of Falsehood.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David—

When he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

- 1 O God! my GOD art thou—I earnestly seek thee:<sup>1</sup>  
thirsty for thee is my soul faint for thee is my flesh,  
in<sup>2</sup> a land that is dry and weary for want of water.
- 2 Thus in the sanctuary gained I vision of thee  
to see thy power and thy glory.
- 3 Because better is thy kindness than life  
my lips shall extol<sup>3</sup> thee.
- 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live,  
in thy name will I uplift mine open hands:
- 5 As with fatness and richness shall my soul be satisfied,  
and with lips of jubilation<sup>4</sup> shall my mouth utter praises.
- 6 If I remember thee on my couch  
in the night-watches will I talk to myself of thee.
- 7 Because thou hast become a succour to me  
therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I tarry.<sup>5</sup>
- 8 My soul hath come clinging to thee,  
on me hath laid hold thy right-hand.
- 9 Since they unto ruin seek for my life<sup>6</sup>  
they shall enter into the lowest parts of the earth:<sup>7</sup>
- 10 He shall be given<sup>8</sup> over to the power of the sword,  
the portion of jackals shall they become.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God:

1. Or: "I long for thee."

2. Some cod. (w. Syr.): "like"—Gn.

3. Or: "laud"—as in 117:1, 145:4.

4. "Uttering ringing cries"—Dr.

5. So *Gt.*, Gn. M.T.: "ring out my joy."

6. U.: "soul."

7. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Hades."

8. *Ml.*: "they will give him"—perh. "they," the unseen agents of providence, as in Lk. 12:20.

## PSALM SIXTY-THREE

every one who sweareth by Him will glory,  
for the mouth of such as speak falsehood shall be stopped.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 63

*(A Psalm of David when he was hiding in the wilderness of Judea.)*

O God, my God! How I search for You! How I thirst for You in this parched and weary land where there is no water! How I long to find You!

2 How I wish I could go into Your sanctuary to see Your strength and glory!

3 For Your love and kindness are better to me than life itself. How I praise You!

4 I will bless You as long as I live, lifting up my hands to You in prayer.

5 At last I shall be fully satisfied; I will praise You with great joy!

6 I lie awake at night thinking of You—

7 Of how much You have helped me—and how I rejoice through the night beneath the protecting shadow of Your wings.

8 I follow close behind You, protected by Your strong right arm.

9 But those plotting to destroy me shall go down to the depths of hell.

10 They are doomed to die by the sword, to become the food of jackals.

11 But I<sup>1</sup> will rejoice in God! All who trust in Him exult, while liars shall be silenced.

### EXPOSITION

This is a psalm to be experienced rather than expounded. Apart from experience it seems unreal. It has but little framework to sustain it, though what little there is helps us to get to the inner sense. The king is in banishment, passing through a dry and weary land—probably the northern border of the wilderness of Judah, on his way to the Jordan. Had his mind been moving on a lower level than at present, he would naturally

1. Literally, "the king."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

have lamented his absence from the sanctuary, and longed to return. But, for the time, he is borne up to a higher altitude. He has brought with him *a vision* of God, obtained in *sanctuary-worship*, but outliving it. He has brought with him an assurance, that "the God of vision" there, is still with him here; ready, even under these altered circumstances, to verify the foregoing vision, by revealing his *strength* to sustain him here in the wilderness, and his *glory* to bring him home again.

God's *kindness* has been seen in his life, but it is felt to be *better than life*; and therefore shall call forth abiding praise. He has begun a life of praise, and banishment cannot silence his praise: he will keep on praising *as long as he lives*. His *lips* shall make the welkin ring: here, in the open, he will solemnly *lift up his hands* in prayer, and so find a new and larger sanctuary under the spacious dome of heaven.

Such worship will not be barren. *His soul* will be *fed to satisfaction*, and *his lips* in *jubilant* strains will break forth anew. The night may come on, and its shadows close him in as he reclines on his tent-bed; but he will not be alone. Should he awake in the night, and inviting theme of meditation will await him, even the inspiring theme of his ever-present God of kindness—a theme he can never exhaust; it will move him to soliloquy, perchance entice him to song.

A sense of safety will encompass him. He will be *under the shadow* of *Divine wings*, and there will he *tarry*. He thus speaks, not as to an absent God: *My soul hath come clinging to thee*. Not in vain, does he thus come: *On me hath laid hold thy right hand*.

This is the glory of the psalm: that the worshipper brings his sanctuary with him—his thoughts, his feelings, his trust are filled with God. To this extent it is a psalm for all time—for every dispensation—for every place—in assembly or out of it—at home or abroad—in prosperity or adversity. It may be an ecstasy, but it is real, and bears abiding fruit. Such an ecstasy would appear all the more astonishing were we to suppose that it was experienced on occasion of his restoration from his terrible fall; and yet it is in that direction that the time-indication points. The psalmist may soon have to descend to a lower level, but the mountain heights will leave precious memories behind. The valley cannot swallow up the mountain.

In truth, the last two stanzas of this psalm may in a general way serve a useful purpose. As Bp. Perowne well says: "We



## PSALM SIXTY-THREE

pass all at once into a different atmosphere. We have come down, as it were, from the mount of holy aspirations, into the common everyday world, where human enemies are struggling, and human passions are strong. Yet this very transition, harsh as it is, gives us a wonderful sense of reality. In some respects it brings the psalm nearer to our own level."

Still, we must remember, that "the common everyday world" of the psalmist was not quite the same as ours. Our lives are not in continual danger, as was his life; nor are we warranted to assume that the doom of our enemies will be their consignment to the lowest hades, the finding of their way thither through the terrors of the battlefield. Nevertheless, our own joy is enhanced by *the joy of every righteous king who rejoices in God*; and whether, like our Lord, we accept of an oath-taking which we cannot prevent, and "swear not at all" of our own free will, or like the ancient Hebrews and the Apostle Paul sometimes voluntarily solemnly swear by God,—this at least may furnish us with a prospect to *glory in: that the mouth of such as speak falsehood shall sooner or later be stopped, and truth be triumphant.*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The longing of David's heart for God is such an example for all men of all time. Discuss how such a desire is developed.
2. Into what "sanctuary" did David go? How did he there behold the strength and glory of God? What part of the meeting house is the sanctuary?
3. Please discuss in a very practical sense how the steadfast love of God is better than life. Read verse three.
4. Have we ever in our so-called "more enlightened age" found the complete satisfaction in God that David did? Discuss.
5. The ability to meditate is so sadly lacking—or is it? We can meditate on the means of making money, or exercise this capacity in lasciviousness. There is a deeper need than that of meditation. Discuss.
6. Confidence and satisfaction in God—these two qualities were very real to David; they should be even more so to the Christian. How can this psalm help to develop these qualities?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### PSALM 64

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer against the Evil Tongues of Conspirators,  
who are Destroyed by Their Own Weapon.

#### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4a, Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies, whose Chief Weapon is described. Stanza II., vers. 4b-6a, Plotting to Employ the Weapon with Crushing Effect. Stanza III., vers. 6b-9, Sudden Overthrow of the Enemies by their Own Instrument to the Astonishment of Onlookers and the Glory of God. *Refrain*, calling for Joy and Praise.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David.

- 1 Hear O God my voice in my complaining,<sup>1</sup>  
from dread peril by the foe shalt thou guard my life:
- 2 Thou shalt hide me from the council of evil-doers,  
from the conspiracy<sup>2</sup> of the workers of iniquity:<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Who have sharpened like a sword their tongue,  
have made ready their arrow—a bitter word:
- 4 to shoot in secret places at the blameless.  
Suddenly they shoot at him without fear:
- 5 They strengthen for themselves a wicked thing,  
they recount the hiding of snares:<sup>4</sup>  
they say—"Who will look at them?"<sup>5</sup>
- 6 They devise acts of injustice—have hidden<sup>6</sup> a plot.  
It is plotted—each one draweth near with deep mind;
- 7 And God shooteth at them—suddenly have appeared their  
wounds,
- 8 yea he maketh stumble each one—against themselves is their  
tongue!

1. Or: "soliloquy."

2. Cp.=Br. on 2:1.

3. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.).

4. Or: "lures."

5. That is: the snares, well-concealed as they are. Some transpose the Heb. words, and render: "They say to themselves—Who will see?"

6. So some cod. Others: "completed"—Gn.

## PSALM SIXTY-FOUR

- 9 All looking on them wag the head<sup>1</sup> and all men fear,  
and declare the doing of God his work<sup>2</sup> they ponder.
- 10 Glad be the righteous man in Jehovah when he hath taken  
refuge in him,  
Now may glory all the upright in heart.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 64

Lord, listen to my complaint: Oh, preserve my life from the conspiracy of these wicked men, these gangs of criminals.

3 They cut me down with sharpened tongues; they aim their bitter words like arrows straight at my heart.

4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent. They meet in secret to set their traps. "He will never notice them here," they say.

6 They keep a sharp lookout for opportunities of crime. They spend long hours with all their endless evil thoughts and plans.<sup>3</sup>

7 But God Himself will shoot them down. Suddenly His arrow will pierce them.

8 They will stagger backward, destroyed by those they spoke against. All who see it happen will scoff at them.

9 Then everyone shall stand in awe and confess the greatness of the miracles of God; at last they will realize what amazing things He does!

10 And the godly shall rejoice in the Lord, and trust and praise Him.

## EXPOSITION

It is easy to see that at times David suffered severely from false and venomous tongues. This method of assailing him was naturally most employed before the power of suppression came into his hands; also when for the time he had lost it, or it was already slipping from him. Doeg (52) represents the former period of exposure to this weapon, and Ahithophel (55, 62) the latter. Probably the former period was the more extended,

1. Or: "take flight"—O.G.

2. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "works." (pl.)—Gn.

3. Literally, "And the inward thought and the heart of everyone is deep."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and offered the more numerous occasions of defamation to David's detractors. It is possible to say how soon the earlier crusade of the tongue against David began: probably as soon as Saul showed himself ready to listen to evil reports concerning him, and therefore while yet Jonathan stood between his father and the young Bethlehemite; and therefore Jonathan may naturally have been an unknown and unsuspected instrument Divinely made ready for putting evil tongues to shame. We cannot, of course, dogmatise, where we are without detailed information; but it is, to say the least, quite conceivable, that when the detractors had succeeded in gaining Saul's ear, and had been pouring into it carefully and maliciously concocted stories to David's hurt, the appearance of his son on the scene, with newer and more authentic information, might have served to blow to the winds the cobwebs of venomous slander, and for the time being at least bring down on the slanderers' heads the wrath of the monarch thus baulked of his prey. Some such climax as this seems to be required to give a realistic verisimilitude to this remarkable psalm. One can almost see the conspirators *drawing near* to Saul with *plots hidden* in their *inscrutable minds*, suddenly dismayed as by an *arrow from God*, by the unexpected appearance and report of a man whom with all their cunning, they had left out of their account. Their surprise and confusion would naturally *turn their tongues against themselves*, and complete the failure of their *deep-laid plots*. Coming to the young harpist's knowledge, what more natural than that he should embalm the memory of these early God-given triumphs in song! The difficulty perhaps is, to people those early days with the needful factors of such experiences. And yet, human nature must then have been very different from what it is now, if there were not several Doegs among Saul's retainers; and if, under every appearance to the contrary, David had not several rivals at heart. There were probably several aspirants for Merab's hand and for Michal's; and, young as he was, the son of Jesse was probably well advised by his native good sense and caution when he suspected foul play, as he appears to have done, in being incited to aspire to wed one of the king's daughters (1 Sam. 18:23).

From some such point of view as that suggested by these reminiscences, we can reperuse this psalm with added interest. Unused to the wicked ways of the world, the youthful courtier may well have felt keenly those early slanders as so many

## PSALM SIXTY-FOUR AND SIXTY-FIVE

*sharpened swords*—as envenomed *arrows*. But even slanders must be made colourable; and so, to give effect to the *bitter word*, there must be invented a *wicked thing*. A plausible story must be worked out of incidents false and true: the unsuspecting object of envy must be entrapped unawares into sayings and doings which can easily be made to appear suspicious; and so the *bitter word* is let fly as part of a *plot*. Sayings and doings are interwoven with sufficient cunning to fit the story to do fatal damage; until, by God, they are suddenly exploded, and the slanderers are held up to infamy. Such decisive victories of truth have many a time—in David's history, in Israel's history, and in our own—made *righteous men glad in Jehovah*, and sustained in just *glorying the upright in heart*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham offers a reasonable supposition for the time and place of the writing of this psalm. Discuss his position.
2. This is a psalm about the power of the tongue. Please notice the graphic descriptions of David's evil speaking enemies. Do we have such today?
3. What is the difference between slander and gossip? Discuss.
4. What specific requests to God does David make concerning these evil talkers? Are we justified in asking the same for those who speak against us?
5. David has not only a complaint but a confidence. Can we always be confident that the innocent or the righteous will not be slain with the tongue of the wicked? Discuss.

## PSALM 65

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Israel's Temple-Song of Praise, on behalf of Herself and all Nations, chiefly in Grateful Acknowledgment of Seedtime and Harvest.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Preparations for Worship. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The God of Israel is the God of All the Earth. Stanza III., vers. 9, 10, Praise for Seedtime. Stanza IV., vers 11-13, Praise for Harvest.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

(Lm.) Psalm—By David—Song.

- 1 To thee is recited a song of praise<sup>1</sup> O God in Zion,  
and to thee in Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> shall be rendered the vow:
- 2 Thou hearer of prayer! unto thee all flesh shall come.
- 3 Reports<sup>3</sup> of iniquities have been too strong for me.  
As for our transgressions thou thyself shalt<sup>4</sup> put a propitiatory cover over them.<sup>5</sup>
- 6 How happy the man thou dost choose and bring near,  
he shall inhabit thy courts:  
We would be satisfied with the blessedness of thy house,  
the holiness<sup>6</sup> of thy temple.
- 5 By fearful things in righteousness shalt<sup>7</sup> thou answer us  
O God of our Salvation,—  
who art the trust of all the ends of the land and of the sea  
far away,<sup>8</sup>
- 6 who settest fast the mountains by thy<sup>9</sup> strength being girded  
with might,
- 7 who stillest the noise of the seas the noise of their billows  
and the tumult of populations;
- 8 Thus are moved to reverence the dwellers in the uttermost  
parts by thy signs:  
The goings forth of morning and evening thou makest ring  
out their joy.
- 9 Thou hast visited the earth and given it abundance  
full of<sup>10</sup> dost thou enrich it,—  
The channel of God is full of water;  
Thou preparest their grain when thus thou preparest the  
land:<sup>11</sup>

- Kp. 1. So Br. "For thee praise waiteth"—Per. "Praise beseemeth thee"—
2. So in some MSS. of Sep. and P.B.V.
  3. "Instances"—Del. "Manifold"—Dr.
  4. For "consenting petitions," cp. 5:17, 8 note.
  5. "Thou wilt cancel them"—Del. "Is always used in a fig, sense of *covering morally*. . . . In the Levitical law the priest is usually the subject; and then the meaning is that he *covers up* sin by means of a propitiatory rite upon ground of which God consents to overlook it; in this sense, it is the word which is often reduced to *make atonement* (Lev. 1:1, 4:20, 26, 31, &c.)"—Dr., Glossary, I.
  6. Or: "holy place."
  7. Or: "dost," w. Del. and Dr.
  8. "The most distant sea"—Del. "Read perhaps, *and of isles* (or *coasts*) *afar off* (Isa. 66:19)"—Dr.
  9. So Sep.
  10. Cp. 129:1, 3.
  11. Ml.: "her"—the land. Cp. O.G. 466, 2a.

## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

- 10 The furrows thereof drenching settling the ridges thereof,  
with myriad drops dost thou soften it  
the sprouting thereof dost thou bless.
- 11 Thou hast set a crown on thy year of bounty,  
and thy tracks drop fatness;
- 12 They drop on the pasture of the wilderness,  
and with exultation the hills do gird themselves;
- 13 Clothed are the mountains<sup>1</sup> with the flock,<sup>2</sup>  
the valleys also cover themselves with corn:  
they shout to each other for joy, yea they sing.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. PSALM 65

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 65

O God of Zion, we wait before You in silent praise, and thus fulfill our vow. And because You answer prayer, all mankind will come to You with their requests.

3 Though sins fill our hearts, You forgive them all.

4 How greatly to be envied are those You have chosen to come and live with You within the holy tabernacle courts! What joys await us among all the good things there.

5 With dread deeds and awesome power You will defend us from our enemies,<sup>3</sup> O God who saves us. You are the only hope of all mankind throughout the world and far away upon the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

6 He formed the mountains by His mighty strength.

7 He quiets the raging oceans and all the world's clamor.

8 In the farthest corners of the earth the glorious acts of God shall startle everyone. The dawn and sunset shout for joy!

9 He waters the earth to make it fertile. The rivers of God will not run dry! He prepares the earth for His people and sends them rich harvests of grain.

10 He waters the furrows with abundant rain. Showers soften the earth, melting the clods and causing seeds to sprout across the land.

11, 12 Then He crowns it all with green, lush pastures in the wilderness; hillsides blossom with joy.

1. So, conj., w. Br.; and in antithesis to the "valleys" (*harim* for *karim*).

2. =small cattle, sheep and goats.

3. Literally, "will answer us in righteousness."

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13 The pastures are filled with flocks of sheep, and the valleys are carpeted with grain. All the world shouts with joy, and sings.

### EXPOSITION

It is difficult to say which feature of this psalm is most worthy of admiration: whether the beauty of its twin-pictures of seed-time and harvest; or the broad and sympathetic setting which turns these in combination into a song for all nations; or the quiet presuppositions which place Israel at the head of the nations in rendering this tribute of praise. When we have satisfied our powers of discriminations in tracing these features of the psalm, we have still to congratulate the joint-author that he had such gems at his disposal as the two snatches of song for the ever recurring seasons to which he here gives such an appropriate setting; and still more that, having them in his repertoire, he had so signal an occasion as we assume he had for weaving his materials into such a complete and beautiful whole.

To begin at the end of these points of observation, we can assume, with the general concurrence of comentators so far as our observation extends, that the occasion for which this psalm was prepared for temple-service was a no less remarkable occasion than the first full harvest reaped in Palestine after the Assyrians had been either destroyed in the land or driven from it as it was foretold by Isaiah that they should be (Isa. 37:30). Surely never was a harvest-song composed with so many grateful hearts bursting with eager joy to waft to heaven its strains. Assuming this as the occasion, we instinctively think of King Hezekiah as the poet-musician who acted as co-author in constructing this psalm and adapting it for actual use in the temple at Jerusalem. Just as naturally do we think of David as the composer of the seed-time and harvest gems, here so happily brought together; and we do so for the two good reasons,—first, that David's name is at the head of the psalm; and, second, that he, rather than Hezekiah, was a son of the soil, born on the land, familiar from boyhood with its hills and glens, its pastures and its prairies, its waggon-tracks and its sheep-walks, its sowing-seasons and its harvest-times, its want of water and its bountiful supplies; he, rather than his descendant of princely birth, had enjoyed many a quiet opportunity of admiring the mountain and



## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

hills as enrobed in the flocks which were spread over them, and of hearing valley answering to valley with voices calling forth and answering his own songs; he, moreover, having elsewhere given his night-view (8) and his day-view (19) of the heavens, and glimpses of flocks peacefully resting beside still waters (23); and being, as we know, skilled with his harp, and therefore fond of it, and therefore oft sweeping its strings, what more likely in the nature of things than that he should have left behind him these hitherto unused fragments, which we are the more entitled to call "fragments," if, according to Dr. Briggs, the one consists of "five tetrameters," and the other is "a trimeter heptastich"—just the polished gems that Hezekiah knew how to appreciate and on fitting occasion to employ. The setting is not David's. Other times, other manners. The temple has now been reared; and by the best minds (Isa. 56:7) has come to be regarded as "a house of prayer for all nations." And so, while *Zion* and *Jerusalem* are placed in the forefront of this psalm, there is an immediate reference to Jehovah as a *hearer of prayer to whom all flesh shall come*. But Hezekiah had been born in a decadent reign, and had known what it was to be slighted as prince (35), to be thwarted as king (Isa. 22); and therefore no wonder that, before his enthusiastic gratitude (Isa. 38) for recovery from sickness and deliverance from Sennacherib could find full and fitting public expression, he should feel his praise a little *belated* and should complain that *reports of iniquity* from all parts of the land (14, 53) *had been too strong for him*; and that, in fact, his own *transgressions* and those of his people only *God himself* could *effectually remove*. Thinking thus of *propitiation*, he thinks of the priests—*chosen, brought near, inhabiting the temple-chambers*; and prays that he and his people may be *satisfied with the blessedness of God's house, the holiness of his temple*. By characteristic features judged, this first Stanza is certainly from the pen or by the suggestion of King Hezekiah.

And now see how again the psalm widens out. It can take in, as familiar, the thought of chastisements to be *revered*, because hard to bear, like his own and his people's, yet administered in *righteousness*; and there are more such answers to come (Isa. 39:6, 7). Nevertheless, the *God of Israel's salvation* is exalted; and the more, in humble submission to him, King and people realise their national calling as "a kingdom of priests" (Exo. 19:6) the more are they qualified to fear and to rejoice

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

with the nations of the earth—in common alarms and common reliefs. And so the psalmist—this co-author, as he plainly is—looks out on nature and up to nature's God with a feeling of real fellowship with the peoples dwelling in *the ends of the land and of the sea far away*; he looks on the same strong *mountains*, and hearkens to the same surging and thundering *seas* as they do. Just like Hezekiah to have added, *and the tumult of populations*. Moreover, on this common ground, their *signs* are ours, and ours are theirs; and they, in their measure and way, *revere* the same great manifestations of Divine power as do we. And so we help them to express the reverence we all feel. But, besides the common *signs*, inspiring *fear*,—the storm, the flood, the earthquake, the popular *tumults*,—there are the common blessings of life, the sweet and gentle ministries of nature, which with us they share. They rise with the lark, refreshed; and sing as do we; they return to their homes after their toil is done and sing in their homes like ourselves. It is the good God who gladdens all. Wars make terrible upheaving and pour out an awful roar; but the music of morning and evening is more constant as well as more sweet. "Therefore praise we thee, in thy temple, O Jehovah;—for ourselves, for the nations who, with less clear vision, behold thy glory and thy love."

That the first stanza of this psalm distinctively celebrates "seed-time" rather than "harvest," though still of course with a view to harvest, becomes evident as soon as candidly examined with this idea in mind. It begins with the early rains that prepare for the seed, and culminates with the sprouting of the seed when sown. There it stops; which it scarcely could have done had not seed-time been, so far, its one dominant topic. That seed-time has harvest in view, is a matter of course; but very beautifully does the main thought turn back on the preparing of the land; and this is pictured in a few graphic touches as the detailed way in which the grain itself is prepared. You see the plough at work, scooping out furrows and turning up ridges by one and the same process: and the Divine Co-operator dealing with both according to need and capacity. The *furrows* are naturally receptive of the streams which flow in abundance from those upper and invisible *channels of God* which are *full of water*; and what they thus receive, they hold and convey to the roots of the young plants. The turned-up *ridges* need to be *settled* down and closed well in upon the precious seed which they

## PSALM SIXTY-FIVE

have received. The same rain that does the one does the other: fills the furrows, settles the ridges. Divine agriculture is economic of means, various in adaptations. But soon the surface becomes encrusted, and might imprison the tender blade, did not the gentler after-showers with their myriad drops come to soften the soil and make it easily permeable. And so, as eyes of wonder look on, and discreet judgment calculates how many dangers have been passed as the green crop carpets the earth, Devotion exclaims, *The sprouting thereof thou dost bless.*

It is harvest, however, that is set as a crown on the head of the year of bounty: harvest largely viewed as presenting in perfection the result of earlier processes. The very thought of a crown gives a glimpse of the golden grain. As if in special recognition of the latter rains, securing a full harvest, the laden clouds are conceived as the chariot of God leaving in its tracks fruits of fatness and plenty. The refreshed pastures of the open lands—the wilderness or prairie land—will shew the tracks of the chariot of God. The hills made vocal with the tuneful voices of harvesters seem to lift up a loud voice of exultation. The mountains, nearly to their summits, are well-nigh hidden by their robe of goats, sheep and lambs: the vales, running between the hills are clad with a rich mantle of corn; and happy voices, shouting and echoing and ringing and singing, celebrate the Divine Coronation of the year.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be two writers for this psalm—discuss who they are and the portion written by each.
2. Scroggie suggests that this psalm could be divided into three divisions: (1) God's Grace, vs. 1-4; (2) God's Greatness, vs. 5-8; (3) God's Goodness, vs. 9-13. Please read these verses and see if you agree on this division.
3. What are the indications of God's grace or favor as seen in vs. 1-4?
4. God's greatness is seen in His concern and in His works as observed in verses five through eight. Mark these out for yourself from these verses.
5. The *Harvest Song* of verses 9 through 13 contains an expression of God's goodness. This does not say that "mother nature" did all these things. Mark the use of the pronoun "Thou".

# PSALM 66

## DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Invitation to All the Earth to Join in Israel's Song of Praise.

## ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Invitation based on Display of Divine Power. Stanza II., vers. 5-7, Examples of God's Ancient Doings, leading up to his Abiding Rule. Stanza III., vers. 8-12, Renewed Invitation based on Recent Deliverance. Stanza IV., vers. 13-15, Individual Resolve to Fulfil Personal Vows. Stanza V., vers. 16-20, a Record of Personal Experience.

### (Lm.)—Song—Psalm

- 1 Shout unto God all the earth,
- 2 celebrate in psalm<sup>1</sup> the glory of his name,  
establish ye the glory of<sup>2</sup> his praise.
- 3 Say unto God—"How fear-inspiring are thy works!<sup>3</sup>  
through the abounding of thy power will thy foes come  
cringing unto thee<sup>4</sup>;
- 4 All the earth will bow down to thee and make melody unto  
thee,  
will celebrate in psalm thy name.
- 5 Come and see the doings of God,<sup>5</sup>  
Fear-inspiring is he in act towards the sons of men:—
- 6 He turned the sea into dry land,  
through a stream passed they on foot,—  
there let us be glad in him!
- 7 Ruling in his might to the ages  
his eyes over the nations keep watch:  
as for the rebellious let them not show exultation against him!
- 8 Bless O ye peoples our God,<sup>6</sup>  
and cause to be heard the sound of his praise:

1. Or: "make melody unto."

2. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Syr.)—Gn.

3. Or: "doings."

4. Or: "feign obedience unto thee." Cp. for same significant word, 18:44 (2 S. 22:45), 81:1.

5. Cp. 46:8.

6. Some cod. (w. Aram., Syr.) simply: "God"—Gn.

PSALM SIXTY-SIX

- 9 Who hath set our soul<sup>1</sup> among the living,  
and not suffered to slip our foot.<sup>2</sup>
- 10 Surely thou hast tried us O God,  
hast refined us like the refining of silver:
- 11 Thou didst bring us into the net;  
didst lay a heavy load<sup>3</sup> on our loins,  
12 didst let mere men ride over our head,—<sup>4</sup>  
we came into fire and into water;  
and then thou didst bring us forth into a spacious place.<sup>5</sup>
- 13 I will enter thy house with ascending-sacrifices,  
I will render unto thee my vows,—  
14 What my lips uttered,  
and my mouth spake in the strait I was in:
- 15 Ascending sacrifices of fatlings will I cause to ascend unto  
thee,  
with the perfume of rams:  
I will offer cattle with he-goats.
- 16 Come hearken and let me tell all ye that fear God  
what he hath done for me:—<sup>6</sup>
- 17 Unto him with my mouth did I cry,  
with high praise under my tongue,—<sup>7</sup>
- 18 Iniquity<sup>8</sup> had I cared for in my heart  
my sovereign Lord had not heard,—
- 19 In truth God hath heard,  
hath attended to the voice of my prayer.
- 20 Blessed be God—  
who hath not turned away my prayer (from before him<sup>9</sup>),  
nor his kindness from being with me.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) With stringed instruments.

1. Some cod. (w. 7 ear. pr. edns.): "souls" (pl.)—Gn.
2. Some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns.): "feet"—Gn.
3. Or: "constraint"—Br. and others.
4. Some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Vul.): "heads" (pl.)—Gn. Cp. Isa. 51:23.
5. So it may be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.). Cp. 18:19—Gn.
6. Ml.: "my soul," but undoubtedly Br. is right: "The *naphshi* is as usual a poetic expression for the person, and does not refer to the soul as distinguished from the body." Notwithstanding, the definition of Dr. is apt; a pathetic circumlocution for the personal pronoun"—Dr. PP. Glos. I.
7. "Ready to burst forth in speech"—Br.
8. "Naughtiness"—Dr.
9. Cp. 88:2, 13, 102:1, 119:170. This personification of prayer, as coming in before God, helps to explain the one application of the verb rendered *turned away* to both *man's prayer* and *God's kindness*.

STUDIES IN PSALMS  
PARAPHRASE  
PSALM 66

Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

2 Sing of His glorious name! Tell the world how wonderful He is.

3 How awe-inspiring are Your deeds, O God! How great Your power! No wonder Your enemies surrender!

4 All the earth shall worship You and sing of Your glories.

5 Come, see the glorious things God has done. What marvelous miracles happen to His people!

6 He made a dry road through the sea for them. They went across on foot. What excitement and joy there was that day!

7 Because of His great power He rules forever. He watches every movement of the nations. O rebel lands, He will deflate your pride.

8 Let everyone bless God and sing His praises,

9 For He holds our lives in His hands! And He holds our feet to the path!

10 You have purified us with fire,<sup>1</sup> O Lord, like silver in a crucible.

11 You captured us in Your net and laid great burdens on our backs.

12 You sent troops to ride across our broken bodies.<sup>2</sup> We went through fire and flood. But in the end, You brought us into wealth and great abundance.

13 Now I have come to Your Temple with burnt-offerings to pay my vows.

14 For when I was in trouble I promised You many offerings.

15 That is why I am bringing You these fat he-goats, rams and calves. The smoke of their sacrifice shall rise before You.

16 Come and hear, all of you who reverence the Lord, and I will tell you what He did for me:

17 For I cried to Him for help, with praises ready on my tongue.

18 He would not have listened if I had not confessed my sins.

19 But He listened! He heard my prayer! He paid attention to it!

20 Blessed be God who didn't turn away when I was praying, and didn't refuse me His kindness and love.

1. Implied.

2. Literally, "You caused men to ride over our heads."

## PSALM SIXTY-SIX EXPOSITION

Instead of speaking of this psalm as "composite" (w. Br.), it would probably be more accurate to term it *various*, passing from scene to scene, from the remote past to the recent past, and from the nation to the individual; but threaded through with a clear and strong principal of unity; namely, the inspiring occasion that gave it birth. The overthrow of the Assyrians, and simultaneously therewith the recovery of King Hezekiah from sickness, form a cluster of events worthy of being the occasion to inspire this beautiful and significant psalm. It is indeed Israel's song of praise; but all nations are invited to join in singing it, and to make Israel's joys their own. The spirit of prophecy which inspired the predictions of Isaiah, Micah, and others, pulsates strongly throughout this song, imparting to it an outlook and an onlook adapted to justify it more effectively than a mere foreglance at immediately following events in Israel could have done. Its companion psalms are notably the 46th and 47th; and its ultimate sphere of fulfilment is nothing less than that manifest dominion of Jehovah, under the person of the Returned Messiah, which is the burden of prophecy, and which alone, from among all known or foretold combinations of events, supplies the conditions needed for the complete realisation of this psalm. Never during the Monarchy prior to the Exile, never during the stand made by the Maccabees after the Exile, and—needless to say—never since, has there been such a conjunction of events as could induce Israel's foes, or Jehovah's foes, to come cringing unto Him, while Earth as a whole was singing and harping to his name. Least of all, with any show of New Testament sanction, can cringing foes, feigning an obedience they dare not withhold, be regarded as possessing the essential qualifications for membership in the Christian Church. No: in its ultimate outlook, this is a song for the Coming Kingdom; while nevertheless the inspiration to compose it, and begin singing it, sprang, under God, from the significant deliverance in Hezekiah's days, a deliverance adumbrative of a larger deliverance from Antichrist's dread domination.

But, clear as is the general outlook of the psalm, there meet us in the study of it a few minor difficulties which it were to be wished could be removed; though possibly, since they may be due to accidents of transmission, they may for the present have to remain unresolved. In any case it will repay us to endeavour to

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

trace the changeful current of thought as it passes from stanza to stanza: before attempting which however, it may frankly be admitted that the stanzical division itself cannot probably be placed beyond question, without resorting to drastic changes and excisions for which we are by no means prepared; though happily the Selahs (☞ ☞), and the evident changes of person in the speaker, go some way to supply the defect. Submitting our division of the psalm as tentative and practical only, we proceed.

In Stanza I., an invitation is boldly given to *all the earth*, to join in the public worship of God, by the employment of the *teru'ah*, or sacred shout, the *lute* or *lyre* as leading in song, and therefore in accompanying words; and so, by shouting and harping and singing (implied) *to the glory* of God's name, to *establish the glory of his praise* on a basis of worldwide faith and unison. Words are then suggested for use in such worship by the formula: *Say unto God*; and the tenor of the words which follow shows two things: *first* that some fearful manifestation of *Divine Power* has recently been witnessed in the earth; and *second*, that, while *foes* will come crestfallen in submission, the *earth* as a whole will, to all appearance, join heartily in the praise.

In Stanza II., the *mighty deeds of God* are still the theme; but now, by examples from history, the past is called on for its testimony; which it renders by (probably *two*) conspicuous specimens, the one at the *Red Sea*, and the other at the *Jordan*. It cannot, indeed, be dogmatically affirmed that there are *two events*, rather than a duplicated narration of the one great event when Pharaoh was overthrown; but, in favour of including both passages through water, may be urged: that thereby the entire transfer of the nation into the promised land is comprehended; and more especially that thereby a point of connection is provided for the following line, which has given critics some trouble: *There let us be glad in him*. If the one journey out of Egypt into Canaan has been covered by the two lines preceding, then this line may be taken to apply to the Holy Land itself. *There*—namely in the land so reached, equivalent to “**HERE**, in our own land, into which we were so miraculously brought; **HERE**, in our own land in which we again realise that we are a free people now that the invading Assyrians have disappeared, *let us be glad in him*: with the old joy renewed.” Otherwise, if both the preceding lines refer to the transit through the Red Sea, then the line



## PSALM SIXTY-SIX

following ought to have read, as in most English versions: *There were we made glad in him*; which would indeed have brightly suggested the song of Miriam, but is strongly represented by Perowne as an ungrammatical rendering of the Hebrew word. It is barely possible that, in the ancient risks of copying, the whole line has been accidentally brought back from (say) the end of ver. 12, where slightly modified into "Here let us be glad in thee"—"Here," in this *spacious place*, it might well have stood; but, meantime, the previous suggestion is submitted to thoughtful readers: *There*—in the land so miraculously given to us (and now afresh made our own)—*let us be glad in him*.

However this small difficulty may be disposed of—and small relatively it certainly is—it is evident that the transit through *sea and stream* (or through the *sea* regarded as the same as the *stream*) is but a stepping-stone to the larger thought of the *age-abiding rule* of God. His work for Israel was not then ended, when he so brought Israel into this delightful land: he continues to care for Israel, and therefore *His eyes over the nations still keep watch*; first, for Israel's sake; but second, also to their own good; for only the *rebellious* among them have need to beware of *exalting themselves against* Israel's God.

In Stanza III., we perceive the inspiring spirit going forth to the non-Israelitish nations with new and stronger impulse, in order to impress upon them this lesson: that Israel's history is theirs, Israel's deliverances are ultimately fraught with blessing for them. Hence, now, this recent Divine interposition is brought forward and elaborated in seven lines of graphic life and power, which need no detailed comment. They are Hezekiah's reading of the event of the Assyrian invasion—the reading also of all the godly in Israel—in respect of the disciplinary improvement it was hoped would follow from that invasion and that deliverance. It was hoped that the nation was *refined as silver is refined through the fire*; and so undoubtedly, in a measure, it was. Nor did Israel only profit: even Gentile nations are still being instructed by those thrilling and exemplary events.

And now at length, in Stanza IV., there steps into view an INDIVIDUAL, whom we instantly recognize as Hezekiah himself. We know that Hezekiah's heart was set on going up to the house of Jehovah, when his sickness should be ended (Isa. 38:22); we know also the liberality of the provision of sacrifices which he made on other occasions (2 Ch. 29:20-35); and therefore we

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

instinctively feel that the resolution which is amplified in this stanza is like him and worthy of him. The most liberal offerings which he could now make would not be more than commensurate with his abounding gratitude.

And, finally, in the last stanza of the psalm, we are invited to hear him tell the story of his prayer in his sickness. He does not indeed tell us all. He makes no mention of the nature of his sickness. That is was nothing less than leprosy, we have already learned incidentally from various sources: *that*, however, he does not here divulge. Nevertheless, his language betokens that his complaint was of grave import, moving him to earnest supplication; and two additional touches enhance the interest of this his personal reminiscence: there was faith in his outcry, *and* no allowance of *iniquity* marred his prayer. There was faith; for this, cherished in a warmth of rising gratitude, is what is implied by the highly poetic representation: *With high praise under my tongue*—prayer *on* the tongue, praise *under* it! And there was a sincere renunciation of evil (2 K. 20:3, 2 Ch. 32:26, Isa. 38:3). Had he cloaked iniquity, or still tolerated in his heart an inclination towards it, his prayer would not have been heard. But his prayer *has* been heard—the leprosy has been removed; and so the happy event confirms the clear consciousness of renunciation of sin.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Isa. 36:1—38:22. In these chapters of Isaiah we probably have the historical setting for this psalm. Particularly notice Isa. 37:20, as compared with the first four verses of this psalm. Verses 16-20 compare well with Hezekiah's sickness and recovery as related in Isa. 38:1-22.
2. There are two distinct parts—one choral, vs. 1-12; the other solo, vs. 13-20 (both to be sung in the Temple). Notice the change of pronouns "we" and "our" in 1-12. "I" and "my" in 13-20. What is the purpose of the five "Selahs" used in this psalm?
3. We could well outline the first half of the psalm: (1) The God of all, 1-4; (2) The God of Israel, 5-7; (3) The God of Israel is the God of all, 8-12; (After Graham Scroggie). Answer the following questions on this section: (a) All the earth *should* praise God—will there ever be a time when it will be a reality? When? How? (b) Why mention the

## PSALM SIXTY-SIX AND SIXTY-SEVEN

crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan? (c) The God for all is revealed in these verses (8-12) as one who: (1) disciplines (2) delivers. Show where these two thoughts are developed.

## PSALM 67

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer for Blessing on Israel as a Means of  
Blessing to All Nations.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Priestly Prayer urged with a view to the Enlightenment of All Nations. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, The Peoples will Give Thanks for Governance and Guidance. Stanza III., The Fruitfulness of the Earth, and Divine Blessing on Israel, securing the Universal Reverence of the Divine Benefactor.

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(Lm.) Psalm—(By David)<sup>1</sup>—Song.

- 1 May God be gracious unto us and bless us,  
may he light up his face among<sup>2</sup> us.
- 2 That men may know throughout the earth thy way,  
among all nations thy victory.<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Peoples will thank<sup>4</sup> thee O God!  
peoples all of them will thank thee,
- 4 Populations will rejoice and ring out their joy:  
when<sup>5</sup> thou shalt judge peoples in equity,  
and populations throughout the earth thou shalt lead.<sup>6</sup>
- 5 Peoples will thank thee O God!  
peoples all of them will thank thee:
- 6 Earth hath given<sup>7</sup> her increase:

1. So in some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

2. So Per.; ml. "with."

3. Or: "salvation"; but cp. Pss. 96-98.

4. Cp. 6:5n.

5. Or: "because."

6. As in Exo. 15:13, Pss. 5:8, 23:3, 27:11, 73:24. So Kp. and Br. "Guidest"—Per.

7. As if on some recent occasion (65); but may be prophetic perfect of certainty: "shall have given."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

God our own God<sup>1</sup> will bless us.

- 7 God will bless us—  
and all the ends of the earth will revere him.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 67

O God, in mercy bless us; let Your face beam with joy as You look down at us.

2 Send us around the world with the news of Your saving power and Your eternal plan for all mankind.

3 How everyone throughout the earth will praise the Lord!

4 How glad the nations will be, singing for joy because You are their King<sup>2</sup> and will give true justice to their people!

5 Praise God, O world! May all the peoples of the earth give thanks to You.

6, 7 For the earth has yielded abundant harvests. God, even our own God, will bless us. And peoples from remotest lands will worship Him.

### EXPOSITION

The most marked characteristic of this psalm is its clear and quiet blending of Primary Blessing on Israel with Consequent Blessing on All Nations. The leading position of Israel is clearly indicated. The pronouns *us* and *they* (implied) at once strike the keynote of the relationship assumed to exist between the one nation and the many. "In the Messiah," there is neither Jew or Gentile: *under* the Messiah, there are both—blended but not confounded. Let the reader note how in this psalm the people who speak of themselves as "us" occupy the foreground. With a clear reminiscence of the blessing which Aaron and his sons were authorized to bestow on the sons of Israel (Num. 6:22-27) the fulfilment of that prayer-blessing is here first sought for Israel as the people on whom Jehovah had thus "put his name," and which formula He himself had promised to make good. Then immediately an outspread of blessing, proceeding from the one nation to the many, is besought: *That men throughout the*

1. Prob. an elohistic substitute for "Jehovah our God." See Table of Divine Names, *ante*.

2. Literally, "govern the nations."

## PSALM SIXTY-SEVEN

*earth may know thy way*, as exemplified in the long recorded history of Israel; and *thy victory first over them and then for them over their enemies*. Only in that long history, as prophecy enables us to complete it, can that *victory* be traced. Then, for a whole stanza the psalm is engrossed with the nations, so introduced. Not only for what they behold in Israel will they *thank God*, but also and more immediately for immeasurable benefits brought home to themselves: they themselves will be *judged*, that is *governed, in equity*; and He who governs them will *guide* them as a shepherd *leads* his flock (as a comparison of the references will show). When Israel gets her blessing, *the nations*, as nations, will get theirs; yea *all of them* will get it, as the poet is careful to repeat. He who thus *governs* and *guides* the nations will assuredly *lead* them to peace and industry and honesty, and thereby also to plenty: *Earth will give her increase*—no doubt a covenant promise to Israel (cp. Lev. 26:4, Ps. 85:12, Eze: 26, 27) but a promise doubtless overflowing to the teeming *populations* of earth. The blessings previously named—*governance, guidance*—rise up from the political into the spiritual realm, probably to a large extent annihilating the distinction between them; but this—like the “daily bread” petition in the prayer given by Jesus to his disciples—is undisguisedly temporal, as why should it not? Why should not national blessing *come down*: as do the dews of heaven and the showers that water the earth; as does redemption, that delivers first the soul from the bondage of sin, and then the body from the bondage of decay (Rom. 8:20); as will the Heavenly Jerusalem itself, so that “the Tent of God” may be “with men” (Rev. 21:3)? Therefore do we feel at home with one plainly temporal blessing in this comprehensive prayer. Yet—as here we are not on Church ground but on Kingdom ground—we are once more reminded that Israel is here the intercessor; and the circumference of blessing for the whole earth is set around the centre of the covenant-nation. “Jehovah our God” *will bless us: will bless us AND all the ends of the earth will revere him*.

What then is Jehovah’s *way*; and, especially, wherein will consist the *victory* which will yet thrill all nations and tune their hearts as well as their harps to this song? His *way* is seen in his dealings with the nation of Israel: trace it! Note their birth as a people; their enslavement in Egypt; their deliverance; their journeyings in the wilderness; their settlement in Canaan; their degeneracy; their captivities; their partial restorations; their

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treatment of their Messiah; their present long-continued banishment from their beautiful land; their sorrows, so heavily pressed on them; their sufferings, so often cruelly unjust; and, applying to the mind's eye the telescope of the prophetic word, note the issue of all this in national regeneration and restoration:—THERE, along that chequered course, is to be seen Jehovah's way, as nowhere else! And the *victory*—where and what is that? In psalms yet lying ahead of us, will it be repeatedly seen; but perhaps nowhere more brightly and suggestively than in the shortest psalm of this priceless psalter, the 117th. One word therein goes straight to the root of this matter of Jehovah's *victory*: it may be a victory over the jealousies and oppressions of Gentile nations, it may be a victory over the beleaguering forces of Antichrist; but it will be, first and last and foremost, a *victory* over the Hebrew nation itself. And when Israel can say to the nations, concerning Yahweh their God, *His kindness hath prevailed over us*, then those who listen to the story will no longer be slow to believe that *His faithfulness is age-abiding*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Did God intend for the nation Israel to be evangelistic—i.e. in telling other nations of their God? How does this psalm relate?
2. Someone referred to this psalm as “the Lord's prayer of the Old Testament”—why would this be appropriate?
3. Rotherham was sure this psalm's promise would be fulfilled—but how and when? Discuss.
4. What is the result of disobedience to the great commission? What was it for Israel? What will it be for us?

## PSALM 68

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Glimpses of Jehovah's Visible Reign over Israel and the Nations.

### ANALYSIS

(See Headlines inserted in text.)

## PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

(Lm.) By David—Psalm Song.

(DIVISION I.—THE KING: HIS PROWESS AND PERFECTIONS.)

- 1 God ariseth his foes are scattered,  
yea they who hate him flee from his presence:<sup>1</sup>
- 2 As smoke is driven about are they driven,<sup>2</sup>  
As wax is melted at the presence of fire  
the lawless perish at the presence of God;
- 3 But the righteous are glad they exult in the presence of God,  
and shew their joy with gladness.
- 4 Sing ye to God harp ye his name,  
raise ye (a song)<sup>3</sup> to him that rideth through desert plains:  
in Yah consisteth his name<sup>4</sup> then exult in his presence.
- 5 The father of the fatherless and the advocate of widows  
is God in his holy habitation:—
- 6 God who causeth the lonely to dwell in a home,<sup>5</sup>  
bringeth forth prisoners into prosperity;  
Howbeit the stubborn remain in a sunburnt land.

(DIVISION II.—THE MARCH: FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN.)

- 7 O God! when thou didst go forth before thy people,  
when thou didst march through the desert
- 8 Earth quaked yea the heavens dripped  
at the presence of the God of Sinai,  
at the presence of the God of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

(DIVISION III.—THE LAND:

THE HOME OF THE HUMBLED PEOPLE.)

- 9 A copious rain dost thou shed abroad O God on thine  
inheritance,  
when exhausted thou thyself hast restored it:
- 10 Thy living host hath dwelt therein,  
thou dost provide in thy bounty for the humbled one,<sup>7</sup> O God.

(DIVISION IV.—THE CONQUEST:

ENEMIES IN FLIGHT; ABUNDANT SPOIL.)

- 11 The Sovereign Lord giveth the word,<sup>8</sup>  
the herald bands are a mighty host.

1. Cp. Num. 10:35.

2. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

3. "Lift (a song)." "Cast up a highway"—O.G. 699b.

4. So O.G. 88, 7a. Cp. ver. 18.

5. *Gt.*: "who bring back lonely ones home"—Gn.

6. The Sep. has been followed in re-arranging these two clauses.

7. Or: "humiliated one."

8. "Will make the summons resound"—Del.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 12 Kings<sup>1</sup> of armies they flee! they flee!  
and she that stayeth<sup>2</sup> at home divideth the spoil.
- 13 When ye rest on the camping ground<sup>3</sup>  
the wings of the dove are covered with silver,  
and her pinions with green-shimmering gold.
- 14 When the Almighty scattereth kings therein  
it snoweth on Zalmon.<sup>4</sup>

### (DIVISION V.—THE MOUNTAIN:

#### UNLIKELY CHOICE; POSSESSION TAKEN.)

- 15 A mountain of might<sup>5</sup> is the mountain of Bashan,  
a mountain of peaks is the mountain of Bashan:—
- 16 Why steal ye envious glances ye mountains ye peaks  
at the mountain which God hath coveted for his seat?  
Surely Jehovah will dwell (there) evermore!
- 17 The chariots of God are in myriads thousands on thousands,<sup>6</sup>  
the Sovereign Lord hath come from Sinai into the  
sanctuary:—<sup>7</sup>
- 18 Thou hast ascended on high hast captured a body of captives,  
hast accepted gifts consisting of men<sup>8</sup> yea even the  
stubborn;<sup>9</sup>  
that thou mayest dwell (there) O Yah Elohim!

### (DIVISION VI.—THE PEOPLE: WHOSE DAILY BURDEN GOD BEARETH, WHOSE SAFETY HE SECURETH, WHOSE LIVES HE PRESERVETH, WHOSE BLOOD HE AVENGETH.)

- 19 Blessed be the Sovereign Lord!  
day by day he carrieth a load for us:  
GOD himself is our salvation.

1. Some cod.: "Messengers"—Gn.

2. "The beautiful one," as in Jer. 6:2—Br.

3. Ml.: "between the ash-heaps," *i.e.*, where encampments have been.

Cp. O.G. 1046.

4. So O.G. ("meaning obscure"). "Zalmon"—snow-capped mt.; prob. E. of Jordan—O.G. 854. "The point of the comparison lies either in the booty being abundant as snowflakes and in brilliancy like the dazzling snow, or in the white, pale corpses"—Del.

5. Ml.: "A m. of God."

6. So Kp. and others. "Innumerable, inconceivable thousands"—Del.

7. So *Gt.*—Gn. "The sense is perfectly plain when we resort to the primitive orthography"—G. Intro. 162.

8. Or: "mankind." "Among men"—Del., Per., Dr. and others (as of tribute); but Michaelis, Ewald, Cornill, as in text above; and see Exposition.

9. As in ver. 6, and Deu. 21:18, 20.



PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

- 20 GOD himself is for us a GOD of saving deeds,<sup>1</sup>  
and to Jehovah Sovereign Lord belong escapes in view of  
death.<sup>2</sup>
- 21 Surely God will shatter the head of his foes,  
the hairy crown that goeth on in his guilty deeds.
- 22 Said Adonai—"From Bashan will I bring back,  
I will bring back from the depths of the sea :
- 23 That thou mayest bathe thy foot in blood,  
the tongue of thy dogs from foes hath its portion."  
(DIVISION VII.—PROCESSION, CONGREGATION, AND  
SONG: ALL NATIONS INVITED TO SING.)
- 24 Men hath seen thy goings O God,  
the goings of my GOD my king into the sanctuary:
- 25 In front are princes<sup>3</sup> behind are harpers,  
in the midst of damsels sounding timbrels:—
- 26 In assemblies bless ye God,  
the Sovereign Lord among the elect<sup>4</sup> of Israel.
- 27 There is Benjamin the Diminutive—ruling them,<sup>5</sup>  
the princes of Judah their throng,<sup>6</sup>  
the princes of Zebulun the princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Command O God<sup>7</sup> thy strength,  
the strength O God which thou hast wrought for us.<sup>8</sup>
- 29 Because of thy temple over Jerusalem  
unto thee shall kings bear along a gift.
- 30 Rebuke thou the beast of the reeds,  
the herd<sup>9</sup> of mighty oxen among the calves of the peoples;  
trampling in mire the favoured ones, refined as silver:<sup>10</sup>  
Scatter thou<sup>11</sup> the people who in war take delight.

1. "Deliverances"—Dr.

2. So O.G. 426: ("lit. 'for' that is 'in view of' death,") Cp. esp. Ps. 48:14, and Isa. 26:18.

3. So some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "singers."

4. So it shd. be—Gn.

5. "The conqueror"—Br.

6. "A heap of them"—Br. "Their motley company"—Del.

7. So some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. And so Br. M.T.: "God hath commanded."

8. Cp. Isa. 26:12.

9. U.: "congregation."

10. Line as conjecturally emended by Br.: wit hwhich compare 66:10.

11. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "He hath scattered."

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- 31 There come high messengers<sup>1</sup> out of Egypt,  
the Ethiopian hasteneth his hands unto God.<sup>2</sup>
- 32 Ye kingdoms of the earth! sing ye unto God;  
harp ye tse Sovereign Lord:<sup>3</sup>
- 33 To him who rideth on the ancient heaven of heavens:<sup>4</sup>  
lo! he uttereth his voice a voice of strength.
- 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God,  
over<sup>5</sup> Israel is his majesty,  
and his strength in the skies,<sup>6</sup>
- 35 Fear-inspiring is God out of his sanctuary.<sup>7</sup>  
The GOD of Israel it is who giveth strength and abundant  
might to the people.  
Blessed be God!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) For lilies = passover.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 68

Arise, O God, and scatter all Your enemies! Chase them away!

2 Drive them off like smoke before the wind; melt them like wax in fire! So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

3 But may the godly man exult! May he rejoice and be merry!

4 Sing praises to the Lord! Raise your voice in song to Him who rides upon the clouds!<sup>8</sup> Jehovah is His name—Oh, rejoice in His presence.

5 He is a father to the fatherless; He gives justice to the widows; for He is holy.<sup>9</sup>

6 He gives families to the lonely, and releases prisoners

1. Meaning doubtful.

2. "As for Cush, his hands will run out to God," in the gesture of supplication . . . a prediction of the conversion of Egypt and Ethiopia in accordance with Isa. 19:19 seq., 43:3, 45:14, 60:5 seq., Zp. 3:10." Rather: a pred. that Egypt and Eth. will be represented in the coming kingdom.

3. "Praise ye the Lord with stringed instruments"—Del.

4. Ml.: "on the heavens of the heavens of aforetime (or antiquity)."

5. Or: "On." Cp. Isa. 4:5.

6. Or: "fleecy clouds."

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn.

8. Or, "deserts."

9. Literally, "in His holy habitation."

## PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

from jail, singing with joy! But for rebels there is famine and distress.

7 O God, when You led Your people through the wilderness,

8 The earth trembled and the heavens shook. Mount Sinai quailed before You—the God of Israel.

9, 10 You sent abundant rain upon Your land, O God, to refresh it in its weariness! There Your people lived, for You gave them this home when they were destitute.

11, 12, 13 The Lord speaks. The enemy flees. The women at home<sup>1</sup> cry out the happy news: "The armies that came to destroy us have fled!" Now all the women of Israel are dividing the booty. See them sparkle with jewels of silver and gold, covered all over as wings cover doves!

14 God scattered their enemies like snowflakes melting in the forests of Zalmon.

15, 16 O mighty mountains in Bashan! O splendid many-peaked ranges! Well may you look with envy at Mount Zion, the mount where God has chosen to live forever.

17 Surrounded by unnumbered chariots, the Lord moves on from Mount Sinai and comes to His holy temple high upon Mount Zion.

18 He ascends the heights, leading many captives in His train. He receives gifts for<sup>2</sup> men, even those who once were rebels. God will live among us here.

19 What a glorious Lord! He who daily bears our burdens also gives us our salvation!

20 He frees us! He rescues us from death.

21 But He will crush His enemies, for they refuse to leave their guilty, stubborn ways.

22 The Lord says, "Come," to all His people's enemies;<sup>3</sup> they are hiding on Mount Hermon's highest slopes and deep within the sea!

23 His people must destroy them. Cover your feet with their blood; dogs will eat them.

24 The procession of God my King moves onward to the sanctuary—

25 Singers in front, musicians behind, girls playing the timbrels in between.

1. Literally, "among the sheepfolds."

2. Implied from Ephesians 4:8.

3. Literally, "I will bring back from Bashan."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

26 Let all the people of Israel praise the Lord, who is Israel's fountain.

27 The little tribe of Benjamin leads the way. The princes and elders of Judah, and the princes of Zebulun and Naphtali are right behind.<sup>1</sup>

28 Summon Your might; display Your strength, O God, for You have done such mighty things for us.

29 The kings of the earth are bringing their gifts to Your temple in Jerusalem.

30 Rebuke our enemies, O Lord. Bring them—submissive, tax in hand.<sup>2</sup> Scatter all who delight in war.

31 Egypt will send gifts of precious metals. Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God in adoration.

32 Sing to the Lord, O kingdoms of the earth—sing praises to the Lord.

33 To Him who rides upon the ancient heavens, whose mighty voice thunders from the sky.

34 Power belongs to God! His majesty shines down on Israel; His strength is mighty in the heavens.

35 What awe we feel, kneeling here before Him in the sanctuary. The God of Israel gives strength and mighty power to His people. Blessed be God!

## EXPOSITION

The interpretation of this magnificent psalm is beset with difficulty; owing in part to its highly dramatic character, and in part to its subtle allusions to ancient history and song. Neither time nor space permits of even a statement of the differences of opinion to which it has given rise among expositors. The only thing which can here be attempted, is, if possible, to do something towards reducing those differences by earnestly endeavouring to hold fast to sound principles of exegesis, and by paying due regard to correct readings and renderings.

The first thing to be sought is the scope of the psalm as a whole: what is this theme? what its keynote? To set this forth has already been aimed at by the "Descriptive Title": "Glimpses of the visible reign of Jehovah over Israel and the Nations." That the reign is that of Jehovah, no one can doubt. That his

1. Implied.

2. Literally, "Everyone submitting himself with pieces of silver." An alternate rendering of verse 30 could be, "Trample upon those who lust after the tribute of smaller nations, and who delight in aggressive wars."

## PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

reign is first over Israel and then over the kingdoms of the earth, is plainly evident when the whole psalm is connectedly read. That the reign at first appears to be a visible dominion, will not be denied—so long as Israel only is taken into account. It is only when *the kingdoms of the earth* outside Israel come into view that the applicability of the term “visible” is likely to be questioned. It is therefore at once submitted, that only by the extension of the idea of visibility or *open manifestation* to the whole psalm, is consistency preserved and the entire trend of Prophecy duly regarded. Under this Divine Reign, there are *kingdoms*, recognised as such: in the Ecclesia of the Messiah, in other words in the Church of Jesus Christ, there are no kingdoms. In this psalm from first to last, Israel stands out peerlessly distinct from the other kingdoms of the earth: in the Church of the New Testament this distinction disappears. *Therefore* the Kingdom here is *not the Church*; and the essential idea intended to be conveyed by the qualifying term “visible” or “manifest” is seen to be needed to preserve the unity of the psalm. Only thus can the several seemingly disconnected glimpses afforded by this psalm be brought into relation as an organic whole. This conclusion, it is believed, will be found well sustained by a rapid survey of the seven divisions into which the psalm naturally falls.

DIVISION I.—As soon as the unity of the psalm is perceived, the dominate note of its first division is heard. The idea is not formally stated, but is incidentally—because dramatically—conveyed. It is helped out in clearness by a very slight modification of the language of Num. 10:35, out of which its first couplet is framed. The words of Moses are a prayer—“Arise, O Jehovah.” The words of the psalmist are either a prediction—“God will arise;” or, more probably, a generalised statement of fact—“God ariseth”: as much as to say—“When God ariseth, then are his foes scattered.” Who then is he whose mere *arising* disperses his enemies? The answer fills vers. 1-3: behold then his prowess! But note also his mercy, hidden behind his majesty: God is love, and, even in the Old Testament, this cannot be concealed. Therefore must come into view the mighty movement of tenderness which prompts God to arise and scatter his foes, the oppressors of his people. *In Yah=Jehovah=The Becoming One=consisteth his name.* Therefore must he become—the father of the fatherless, the advocate of the widow: a song to be sung,

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only with deep emotion by a people in *prisons* and in *exile*; and yet with searchings of heart, seeing that *the stubborn* may be left, for further chastening, *in a sun-burnt land*. Thus simply, yet broadly and grandly, is Israel's King portrayed. His character gives character to his reign. Here the whole psalm rests on stable foundations. No matter what *desert plains* may lie between Israel and her own land, here is a psalm fitted for the banished ones to sing.

DIVISION II—Visible reign: therefore manifest interposition when needed. It was needed and granted, to bring Israel out of Egypt. When Jehovah *went forth before his people*, in the pillar of cloud and fire, it was the *march* of a Divine Conqueror. Only unbelief hid this at any time from view. The poet sees it all now, and deftly expresses it: by one stroke revealing majesty; and then, by another, depicting tenderness: *Earth quaked, the heavens dripped*, how refreshing must the latter have been in the desert! That is all—all the stanza, all the "Division." But it is enough. Israel's God is no mere tribal Deity; but the Lord of earth and heaven. Creation subserves Redemption. The Unseen knows how to make his presence seen.

DIVISION III—The mention of an occasional *dripping* in the desert, suggests an even more essential dripping: the ever-recurring showers in the land to which the people came. This was Jehovah's *inheritance*, which, for needed discipline, was occasionally *exhausted* by drought, and was then *restored* by *copious rains* to its accustomed fruitfulness: the inheritance *wherein dwelt a living host* of animals and men, for all of whom *provideth* in his *bounty* Israel's God. Thus *provideth* he for the *humbled* people, once a family of slaves. The God of Redemption and Creation is also the God of providence.

DIVISION IV.—Here we must pick our path with care. It cannot perhaps be dogmatically determined whether the *original* "conquest" under Joshua here comes into view, or whether a *re-conquest* of a portion of it as under Deborah and Barak, may not be intended. The allusions to Deborah's song (Judges 5) are fairly evident; and it is possible that one such incident may stand for all similar interpositions. Still, the opinion may be hazarded that, while some of the language is taken from the song of the prophetess, it is here generalised to suit the entire conception of both conquering and re-conquering the land of Israel's inheritance. This conclusion is favoured by the turn given to ver. 13, which no longer seems framed to apply as a

## PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

well-merited reproach to home-loving cowards like Reuben (Judges 5:16), but rather to be intended as a simple congratulation on the abundance of spoil falling to the lot of the gentle "dove" of Israel when her enemies disappear before the manifested presence of her God. However this may be, and it is wise not to magnify the difficulty of following the allusion—the chief point evidently is, that success, whether in conquest or reconquest, depends upon the commanding *word of the Sovereign Lord* of the land. When he *gives the word* ("maketh the summons resound"), whether the mandate be regarded as past, present, or future, then decisive results follow: *herald bands*—probably not *women* as some venturously interpret, seeing that the word for *herald band* both here and in Isa. 40:9 may be feminine merely as a linguistic matter of course, and especially seeing that this very passage appears to give the hint that, in war, the place for woman is to *stay at home*—the *heralds*, whoever they may be, convey the King's word to his ready hosts; concerning whom it may be "taken as read" that they make their onset, but that victory so speedily follows that the next thing to be actually noted is, concerning the opposing *Kings*, that *they flee—flee!* Joshua's conquests were rapid; and there may lie concealed in the future flights more rapid still. The Almighty—if we hearken to prophecy—has not yet made an end of *scattering Kings therein*. The reference to the *falling of snow in Zalmon* is probably merely a proverbial way of depicting the fate of the hapless kings so scattered.

DIVISION V.—It would be uncandid not to admit some difficulty here respecting the original text. The Sep. shows a considerable divergence from the Massoretic Hebrew; and Dr. Briggs, in his own drastic way, has reconstructed the two stanzas of which this Division is constituted, so as to show a rather wide departure from what is familiar to us in this part of the psalm. The best way will be to give Dr. Briggs' result intact; and then say why we hesitate to follow him implicitly, and to point out how valuable a remainder survives criticism. Vers. 15-18, as revised and abbreviated by Dr. Briggs, appear thus:—

O mount of Yahweh, fertile mountain!  
 O mount of summits, fertile mountain!  
 Mount Yahweh desired for his throne!  
 Yahweh thou didst ride in thy chariot from Sinai  
 into the sanctuary.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Thou didst ascend up on high. Thou didst lead  
captives captive.

Thou didst accept gifts, to dwell among mankind.

In the first place, we are predisposed to admit that in many places where Dr. Briggs substitutes "Yahweh" for "Elohim" in this Elohist Book (Psa. 42-47) he is right; and that doubts as to particular passages become mere questions of detail, since no one denies that *both* Divine names *may* in many instances appear side by side. This matter affects the present passage thus: that whereas *mountain of Elohim* may mean no more than *mighty mountain*, *mountain of Yehweh* would naturally apply solely, in this connection, to Mount Zion. Now, since the Sep. goes on to speak of the mountain in question as "fertile mountain," as in Dr. Briggs' rendering above,—it is impossible not to feel that the ancient translators may have read, in their Hebrew exemplar, D SH N, "fertile," where we now read B SH N, "Bashan." To that extent there is legitimate room to doubt what was the true, most ancient text. In the second place, to other of Dr. Briggs' changes, we can only say—That as he goes behind all known texts and resorts to conjecture, we must reserve our consent till we see more difficulty than we do at present in the M.T. as needfully emended in a word or two. In the third place, it is especially satisfactory to find Dr. Briggs practically confirming Dr. Ginsburg's conclusion in favour of the beautiful and significant phrase *From Sinai into the sanctuary*—of which anon: most of all satisfactory is it to discover that the great *ascension* passage is left in substance intact, including in it such helpful accuracies as *captives* for "captivity," and the dwelling among *mankind* as the great object of the ascension—though, to that result, we come by a different route, which enables us to retain the clause *yea even the stubborn* ("rebellious") with a grip which nothing can at present induce us to relinquish. These explanations made, we attempt a brief survey of the passage.

The essential thing contained in the earlier part of it is, Jehovah's choice of Jerusalem as his fixed abode. The unquestioned clearness with which this is asserted, and the concurrence of O.T. testimony confirming it, may well make us chary of admitting that the present lapsed condition of Jerusalem is more than temporary. Nevertheless, we shall be well advised if we open our eyes to the magnitude of the Divine movement which is expressed in the solid line, *The Sovereign Lord hath come*



## PSALM SIXTY-EIGHT

from *Sinai into the sanctuary*. That he came escorted by *myriads* of angelic *chariots* may safely remain in the background; not, indeed, as in anywise incredible, but as not elsewhere distinctly asserted, and as in any case a generalised expression of a journey from Sinai to Zion which certainly did not *at once* take place, seeing that it was centuries after the entry into the land that the hill of Zion was captured. But the transition of the Divine Manifestation from Sinai into the sanctuary remains unquestioned; appealing strongly to what may be called the theological imagination, as a crystallised expression of a profound truth:—Sinai, the dark mountain of thunder and terror and law; Zion, the sunny mount of grace and praise. They are, indeed, in line with each other in historical continuity; but, in other ways, they are almost at opposite poles of Divine O.T. Manifestation. At the one end, Angel hosts: at the other, Levitical choirs. At the outset, Moses trembling in fear; at the close, David with his harp in an ecstasy of adoration and praise. It is true that *Sinai came into the sanctuary*, and that, accordingly, the Dispensation remained that of Sinai still; and further true that, to the last, Jerusalem, Hagar-like, was and is “in bondage with her children.” The “grace” and the “truth” did not and could not come by Moses. Nevertheless, Moses became witness to a grace he did not himself minister; and Jerusalem, with its Davidic ministry of praise, had given to it the function not only of pointing back to Sinai, but of pointing onward and upward to its heavenly counterpart; so that, indeed, the towers and palaces and temple of Jerusalem are ever pointing to the sky; and Jehovah’s home below becomes the counterpart of his home above; as in this very psalm, before we are well aware of it, we behold Jehovah *riding upon the ancient heaven of heaven*; and seem ourselves, in his strength, to mount up to *the fleecy clouds*.

Suddenly, however, we are brought back to earth, to recognize that we are slowly learning by types. *Thou* (O God, O Sovereign Lord—where note the abrupt direct address, *Thou*) *hast ascended on high*. In the first instance the language, as all admit, is used of the ascent of the ark to its resting place in Jerusalem, at which point Ps. 15, 24, and in some measure 47, come into line, comparison with which renders needless further comment here. But the very next clause—*hast captured a body of captives*—once more usefully revives the whole question of prophetic typology, or typological prediction. Expression has

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already been given, in the Exposition of Psa. 2, 24 and 45, to the conviction that types should be regarded as hints rather than programmes—as pencilled sketches rather than architect's plans; so that we never need conclude that, because a certain future is feeble in the type, therefore it must have either a small place or no place at all in the antitype. It is of the essence of types that they should be comparatively feeble. What, indeed, was the ascent of the ark up to Jerusalem, compared with the ascent of the Messiah into heaven? Therefore would it seem to be little better than trifling to ask, with any anxiety, whether David or Joab seized a "body of captives" when the ark was carried up the hill, or whether the captives presumably taken when Jebus was captured, were in evidence, as the spoils of a conqueror, when the ascent was made. It is surely abundantly sufficient that the ark was triumphantly carried up into its destined place in spite of all the difficulties that had to be surmounted: the custom of conquerors may answer for the rest. It is customary with conquerors to *capture a body of captives*; customary, for them to *accept presents consisting of men, yea even the stubborn*. And therefore, the very feebleness of any known facts that happened in David's day to fill out the language of the psalm at this point, may well make us conclude that something far transcending the type is here forthshadowed. Hence we turn with relief to the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4, and discover with delight how wonderfully well the great facts connected with the Messiah's ascension to the right hand of God in heaven, do something more than justice to the comprehensive language used in the psalm: "more than justice," in that the verbal departure of the apostle from the psalmist at a single point melts away into higher harmony when set in the light of the great fulfilling facts. The Messiah both received *gifts consisting of men*—his Apostles, his Church, all mankind—and, in turn, gave gifts to men, which gifts themselves were men, namely apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers! Critics truly affirm that the Hebrew itself cannot mean "gave gifts to men"; but it is submitted that all of them should have done what some have done; and, instead of being content with the phrase: "among men"—which leaves it very questionable what to do with the *rebellious* or *stubborn*—seeing that it is not very likely that Yah Elohim would "dwell" peacefully "*among them*,"—should have gone just the one step further, —on the strength of the *beth-essential*, as it is called, which is

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well exemplified in ver. 4 of this very psalm,—by saying, here, *gifts consisting of men, yea even the stubborn*; especially considering how clear and solemn a N.T. truth it is that “the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22), and that Jesus “died and lived again that he might be lord of both dead and living” (Rom. 14:9). Surely, right thoroughly does the New Testament pledge itself to fill the Old Testament to the full, seeing that it can suggest how really and grandly the Messiah, out of “the wicked spirits” darkening the lower “heavenly places” (Eph. 6), *captured a body of captives* when on his way to the central throne to *accept gifts consisting of men*, so “spoiling principalities and powers” (Col. 2) in demonstration of what more in that direction he will yet achieve when the time shall arrive for him to make his great and warlike descent into this lower sphere, and so further prepare the way for the final consummation, when “the tent of God” shall permanently “be with men.”

DIVISION VI.—If the reader will accept these Divisional summaries, not as exhaustive descriptions of contents, but as interpretive hints of special features, helping out the main theme of the psalm, it will be found that the point here made plain is, WHAT PEOPLE it is which, here and elsewhere through the psalm, comes into peculiarly close relationship to God: *carrieth a load for US—OUR salvation—is for US a God of saving deeds*. It is by taking into account in their entirety *all* the characteristics of this people, that we arrive at anything like certainty as to that people’s identity. All worshippers of the one true and living God—all saints among the Gentiles—all members of Christian churches the world over—may not unnaturally deem themselves to be included, so long as the Divine bearing of *daily burdens* and *salvation* itself are the benefits which come into view as calling forth praise; but, when it comes to *bathing thy foot in blood*, it becomes a question as to whether we had not better hark back, and reopen the inquiry as to *the people intended*. Surely, better leave it to the Twelve-tribed Nation, to sit for the portrait, as the people intended by the *we* and the *our* and the *us* throughout the psalm; than to throw the whole psalm into confusion, by overlooking the fact that *Gentiles also* are found here in their own right, so far as description is concerned: *kings, messengers out of Egypt, Ethiopians, Kingdoms of the earth*, are surely comprehensive enough designations to do ample justice to all Non-Israelites.

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In view of other prophecies, especially those which touch on the great biblical question of the bringing of life and incorruption to light, perhaps the line in this division of the psalm which most strongly attracts us is that which says: *And to Jehovah Sovereign Lord belong escapes in view of death.* Here, as in so many cases, translation and interpretation reciprocally serve each other: the right rendering helps out the true exegesis; and, *vice versa*. Until we are satisfied that we have seized the true exegesis, we cannot be quite sure that we have hit upon the happy rendering. *Escapes in view of death.* More literal than *escapes* is *outgoings*, and various "outgoings" are conceivable; "sallies," "outlets," "issues" or "results" each being worthy of a moment's thought. Indeed, had the Hebrew phrase been quite literally, "the outgoings of death," we might have thought of DEATH'S OWN EXITS, his departures from first one sphere and then another of his former dominion; so that first the Messiah dieth no more, then the Church dieth no more, until at length Death itself is swallowed up in victory. But probably this would in any case have been too great a stride to suppose here taken by the revealing Spirit, whose disclosures ordinarily advance by gently graduated degrees. Hence, and the Hebrew being literally as peculiar as it is, and the English phrase "escapes in view of death" being as striking and satisfying as it is, probably we shall be doing wisely to content ourselves with its obvious suggestions. The moment we do this, we bethink us of the numberless "escapes in view of death" which David himself had experienced; of the one marvellous "escape" of Hezekiah "in view of death;" then, rising to the level of national outlook, we recall the "escape in view of death" granted by the passage through the Red Sea; the resuscitation of the nation by deliverance from captivity; and realise how ample were the reasons for the insertion of such a line as this in such an ode, and how mighty is the impulse of devout thankfulness to attribute all such "escapes in view of death" to *Jehovah Sovereign Lord*. After submitting all which, it is difficult not to feel that even this rich line of things scarcely fills up the passage;—which apprehension, however, is partly due to the immediately succeeding lines, which, to say the least, countenance the surmise of a two-fold allusion; namely one to Jehovah's enemies, as well as one to his friends. In other words, vers. 21-23 suggest an enlarged application of the previous words, so far as this: "To Jehovah, Sovereign Lord, belong escapes in view of death"—which *he grants or withholds* according to his

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holy will; so that neither *by* death nor *from* death can his enemies escape the visitation of his righteous wrath. This extension of the sense will appear the more called for the more we find in Amos 9:1-4 a parallel to vers. 21, 22 of this psalm. The decisive force of ver. 23 in determining who are the *us* and the *we* of the psalm has already been indicated.

DIVISION VII.—It seems possible and convenient to comprehend all the remainder of this psalm under the one compound division-line placed at its head. *The goings of God . . . into the sanctuary* are pretty clearly pictured as “a procession,” or, still more probably, as “processions”: the whole being uplifted into the realm of the ideal, so as to comprehend not only an allusion to the original bringing up of the ark by David, and the repeated bringings home of the ark after it had gone out before the hosts of Israel to battle (2 Sam. 11:11) but also any procession which the future may have in store. Whether, in ver. 25a, we should read with some authorities *sharim*, “singers,” or with others *sarim* “princes,” is a nice question, which perhaps cannot be dogmatically decided: the verses following (especially ver 27) perhaps favour “princes;” and the more readily, when two things are considered—first, that procession without “princes” would be very incomplete; and, second, that a procession with “princes” leading the way, would even then not be without “singers,”—that is to say, if we may gather from Rev. 15:2-4 that *harpers* need not be tongue-tied, but may sing as well as play.

It seems quite fitting that the psalmist should, in ver. 26a, address the processionists in anticipation of the *assemblies* which they are about to form in the temple courts; and further that (in ver. 26b) he should synonymously term those “assemblies” *the elect of Israel*—to appropriate the word which Ginsburg decides should stand in the text; and which prepares us to find an *elect* group of *tribes* in ver. 27—probably as representatives of the whole twelve-tribed nation: before leaving which we may ask, without assuming that David himself wrote this part of the psalm, Who so likely as David to have set *Benjamin* at the head of the group? That David—partly out of his old habit of reverence for Saul and partly out of his love for Jonathan—should have done it is conceivable. No later singer would have been likely to indulge in such a stroke of antiquated chivalry.

From this point onward for some way in the psalm, there is little that demands comment: save, perhaps, chiefly, to note how admirable a parallel with ver. 28b is found in Isa. 26:12; to

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observe that by *the beasts of the reeds* we are, by general consent, to understand the "hippopotamus" as the symbol of Egypt, in which case the *mighty oxen* which follow would naturally suggest the monarchs of Assyria and Babylon, and thus prepare us to favour Dr. Briggs' emendation of 30c, remembering how repeatedly, between West and East, Israel was trampled in the mire.

After the direct address to God—*Command, Rebuke, Scatter* (ver. 23-31)—which may itself form part of the song which the processionists sing; we come upon the exhilarating climax of the entire psalm, in which (as it would appear) Israel in her gladness invites the outlying nations to join her in praise: a climax which is indeed exhilarating, by reason of the comprehensive vision it gives of earth and heaven united, and the frank and grateful strains in which we hear the nations themselves recognising that the God of the heavens is the God of Israel: *He rideth on the ancient heavens of heavens, yet over Israel is his majesty; His strength is in the skies, yet the God of Israel it is who giveth strength and abundant might to the people.* It is this very blending of earth and heaven, of the past and the future, which for once induces a slight uncertainty as to which *sanctuary* is intended in the last verse of the psalm. If we felt bound to restrict the outlook of ver. 35 to that of vers. 17, 24, we should decide for the earthly sanctuary; but, perceiving as we do the delightful way in which, here at the close, the vision of the psalmist seems to alternate and vibrate between earth and heaven with a general uplifting effect, we are disposed to leave this nice point for the event of fulfilment to determine. It is probably more important to note that, whether the Divine Manifestation intended be made from the heavenly sanctuary or the earthly, there will be in it a sufficiently marked element of terror to render it *fear-inspiring*. So far—no further as yet—does the vision reach. Nevertheless, coupling the end of the psalm with its beginning, and noting well the promising transition from Sinai to Zion in the centre of this magnificent composition, we can be well content to rest in the final note—*Blessed be God!* and can felicitate ISRAEL that, under the leadership of such men as David, Hezekiah and undoubtedly Isaiah, such strains as these were in the earlier centuries of the Monarchy prepared for the celebration of the "lily" feast at the beginning of the year, that is, for the Passover; according to Dr. Thirtle's principle for the re-adjustment of the musical inscriptions. "Undoubtedly Isaiah" may be thought to be going beyond the evidence; but after

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the weighty arguments for attributing the authorship of Isaiah 40-66 to the known Isaiah of Hezekiah's day, which have been advanced by Dr. Thirtle, in his "Old Testament Problems," it may soon be open to us to turn the tables upon Kirkpatrick, for example (who infers the late date of this psalm from its numerous resemblances to "Isaiah II."), by contending that, on the contrary, those very resemblances go far to prove that the closing chapters of Isaiah as well as the psalm were written early enough to justify the librarian's mark inscribing even this psalm *to (or by) David*: from whom we may well believe its fundamental strains actually came. That Hezekiah probably added to it and adapted it to temple worship, does not really throw doubt on the traditional heading; any more than does an addition or two by an exilic editor, who may, for example, easily have supplement Division I. by the line, *Howbeit the stubborn remain in a sunburnt land*. Even this supposition, however, is by no means necessary to the assumption of the Davidic authorship and the Hezekian co-authorship, seeing that extensive deportations to sunburnt eastern lands had already taken place in Hezekiah's day.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Perhaps the best we can do for discussion would be to reproduce the brief comments and somewhat extended outline of W. Graham Scroggie: "The Psalm has been called 'the grandest and most elaborate of all the Dedication Odes,'" and "one of the masterpieces of the world's lyrics"; and Maclaren says: "This superb hymn is unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in grandeur, lyric fire, and sustained rush of triumphant praise."

The main subject is, THE VICTORY OF GOD.

In stanza 1, is sung GOD'S VICTORIOUS MARCH (1-6). In verses 1-3 is an invocation, God is bidden *arise and scatter His enemies*; and in verses 4-6 is a summons wherein His people are called upon to *prepare His way*. Noteworthy here are (a) the flight and plight of God's enemies (1, 2); (b) the rapturous joy of His people (3, 4); (c) the description of God in his relations (5, 6), in which mark the contrast between the lot of subjects (5, 6a), and of rebels (6b).

In stanza 2, THE WILDERNESS LIFE IS DESCRIBED (7-10). Here is summarized the story of Numbers, *omitting the sins of Israel*. In graphic language is set forth the history of Israel from the Exodus to the Entry into Canaan. The *terror and tenderness*

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of God are prominent; His *power* and His *providence*. "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain" *in the wilderness!* He sends rain where it is needed most.

In stanza 3, THE VICTORIES WHICH WON THE LAND are recounted (11-14). This stanza covers the period of Joshua and the Judges. Here we observe the hurry of battle and the tumult of many voices on the field. Mark the scorn of verse 12, *kings fleeing*, and *women at home* dividing the spoil. When *the Lord speaks* (11), who can resist?

Maclaren has described verses 11-14 as "the despair of commentators," and Perowne says that "it is indeed almost hopeless now to understand the allusions," yet the general drift of the stanza is discernible. It is a picture of "a battle, with the battle left out." It has reasonably been suggested that it is "a fragment of one of those ancient battle-songs, sung by the women after the defeat of the foe." With verse 13 should be read Judg. V. 16, where Deborah upbraids Reuben for cowardice and irresolution, and for preferring the ignoble ease of pastoral life to the glorious dangers of the war of independence:

"Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,  
To hear the pipings for the flocks?"

These verses are extremely difficult to understand; indeed they are among the most difficult in the Psalter.

In stanza 4, THE ENVIABLE LOT OF ZION is depicted (15-18). The battle is won, and the conqueror enters Zion and its Sanctuary (16, 17), there to abide. The lofty peaks of Bashan envy the little mount of Zion (16), for here is the glory of God, and not there. The Conqueror enters not alone, but with a multitude of captives (18), anticipating that day when He ascended, with such a host, a higher Height from which He bestowed gifts on His Church (Eph. IV :8).

The climax of the Psalm is in this stanza. All that precedes has led up to it, and all that follows flows down from it. The Conqueror, the Lord God has reached this Sanctuary.

With this ends the first main division of the Psalm, the historical retrospect, and with the next stanza begins the second division, in which the Conqueror is seen, not in relation to Israel only, but to all peoples (32, 35).

In stanza 5, THE GREAT ALTERNATIVES are presented (19-23). Here are two contrasted pictures. If we behold *God*, we see Him first as *Burden-bearer* (19, R.V.), and *Deliverer* (20); and then



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as a *Warrior* (21), and *Destroyer* (21-23). If we behold the *people*, we see that God's first aspect and action are because they believe, and His second, because they do not. *If He does not bear your burden, you will have to bear your own.* By Him only is escape from death (20).

In stanza 6, THE SONG OF THE SAVED is sung (24-27). In verses 15-18 we learned of the Conqueror's march to the Sanctuary; how we see His redeemed people following Him (24) with songs (25) of praise (26), four tribes being specially mentioned (27). This is a description of a solemn procession of thanksgiving to the Temple. The faithful share in the Lord's triumph: they who follow in the way of the Cross will know at last the joy of the Crown.

In stanza 7, THE PRAYER OF THE PROCESSION is recorded (28-31). Is as Maclaren suggests, "command" be read instead of "hath commanded," in verse 28, it will be seen that these four verses divide into two and two, and that in each pair the first verse is a petition, and the second, an anticipation of the answer. Here *faith* and *hope* alternate; faith in *request*, and hope of *response*; and so read—faith (28), hope (29), faith (30), hope (31). Surely this stanza is Messianic, and looks forward to a day when this dream shall be fulfilled, when indeed "*Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.*"

In stanza 8, is A CALL TO ALL KINGDOMS (32-35). It begins with "*Sing unto God,*" and it ends with, "*Blessed be God*"; and the exhortation rests upon the declaration: Jehovah is *the God of Israel*, and is to become *the God of all the earth* by the acknowledgment of all peoples. He is *strong*: mark the occurrence of "*strength*" four times in these verses; none shall be able ultimately to resist Him (in verse 33 read, "a voice of strength"). The whole Psalm is a pean of praise; it throbs with exultation; in it we hear the roar of battle, melting in the song of triumph. The Lord is the Victor, and His people are the crowned. The great truth and message of this Psalm is that God will be finally triumphant and be universally sovereign, and that is implied which is not plainly declared, that this victory and sovereignty will be realized through Christ. But what in the future shall be true in the experience of a world, may in the present be true in the experience of each of us.

*Thought*: God's enterprise includes all the earth."

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### PSALM 69

#### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Pictures of Distress and Outcries for Deliverance, followed by Imprecations on Cruel Enemies, and by Promises of Praise.

#### ANALYSIS

This psalm is almost certainly Composite, not easily lending itself to Stanzaic divisions. The following are its principal contents. Chiefly under the figure of a Man Drowning in a Swampy Stream, the psalmist describes his sufferings from Innumerable Foes—vers. 1-4. He confesses his Folly and Wrong-doing—ver. 5. Prays that others may Not be Injured through Him—ver. 6. Declares that he Suffers for Jehovah's sake—vers. 7-9. Is Exposed to Ridicule—vers. 10-12. Yet Hopes to be Heard—ver. 13. Frames his Petitions on his Original Description of Peril—vers. 14, 15. Becomes yet More Importunate—vers. 16-18. Is Broken-hearted by the Bitter Mockery of his Enemies—vers. 19-21. At length, in seven strong couplets, he prays for the Punishment of his Foes—vers. 22-28. Returning to his Own Case, he Confidently Counts on Salvation and Promises Praise—vers. 29-31. He anticipates that the Humbled will be Revived and Jehovah Exalted—vers. 32, 33. And finally invites Heaven and Earth to Give Praise for the Restoration of Zion—vers. 34-36.

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(Lm.) By David.

- 1 Save me O God because waters have come in as far as the  
life:<sup>1</sup>
- 2 I have sunk into a swamp that is deep where is no place to  
stand,  
I have come unto depths of waters and a flowing stream  
hath swept me away;
- 3 I<sup>2</sup> am weary with mine outcry parched is my throat,  
bedimmed are mine eyes through waiting for my God.
- 4 More than the hairs of my head are they who hate me  
without cause,

1. U.: "soul."

2. These varying indentations indicate varying measures in the original

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more numerous than my bones<sup>1</sup> are they who are falsely my foes:

When I had seized nothing then I<sup>2</sup> had to make good.

- 5 O God thou knowest my folly,<sup>3</sup>  
and my wrong-doings from thee are not hid.
- 6 Let not those who have waited for thee be put to shame  
through me O Jehovah of hosts!<sup>4</sup>  
let not those who are seeking for thee be confounded through  
me O God of Israel!
- 7 Because for thy sake have I borne reproach,<sup>5</sup>  
confusion hath covered my face:
- 8 Estranged have I become from my brothers,  
yea an alien to the sons of my mother:
- 9 Because zeal for thy house hath consumed me,<sup>6</sup>  
and the reproaches meant for thee<sup>7</sup> have fallen on me.
- 10 When I have humbled<sup>8</sup> with fasting my soul  
then hath it become a reproach to me:
- 11 When I have made my clothing sackcloth  
then have I become to them a taunt-song:
- 12 They who sit in the gate compose songs<sup>9</sup> about me,  
yea, string-songs for the imbibers of strong-drink.
- 13 But as for me my prayer is to thee Jehovah in an acceptable  
time,<sup>10</sup>  
O God! in the abounding of thy kindness answer me in the  
truth of thy salvation.
- 14 Rescue me from the mire and oh let me not sink,<sup>11</sup>  
oh let me rescued from my haters and from depths of waters:
- 15 Let not a flowing stream of waters sweep me away, nor a  
deep swallow me up,  
nor a well close over me her mouth.
- 16 Answer me Jehovah! for good is thy kindness,<sup>12</sup>

1. So it shd. be (w. Syr.) (or "locks")—Gn.

2. So *Gt*—Gn.

3. Cp. 39:5.

4. So Sep. M.T.: "O Adonai Jehovah of hosts."

5. Cp. 44:22; Rom. 8:36.

6. Cp. Jn. 2:17.

7. M.T. (ml.): "And the reproaches of those reproaching thee."

8. So it shd. be (w. Sep.): cp. 35:13—Gn.

9. So Br. (cp. 105:2; Judges 5:10).

10. Ml.: "in a time of favour."

11. Cp. v. 2 ff.

12. Cp. 109:21.

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according to the abounding of thy compassions turn thou  
unto me;

- 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant,  
because I am in distress haste thee answer me.
- 18 Oh draw near to my soul redeem it,  
on account of mine enemies ransom thou me.
- 19 Thou knowest my reproach and my shame and my confusion,  
before thee are all mine adversaries.
- 20 Reproach hath broken my heart and I am incurable,  
And I waited for one to show sympathy and there was none,  
and for comforters but I found none;
- 21 But they put in<sup>1</sup> my food poison,<sup>2</sup>  
and for my thirst they gave as my drink, vinegar.<sup>3</sup>
- 22 Let their table before them become a trap,<sup>4</sup>  
and unto their friends<sup>5</sup> a lure.<sup>6</sup>
- 23 Let their eyes become too dim to see,  
and their loins continually cause thou to shake.
- 24 Pour out over them thine indignation,  
and let the glow of thine anger overtake them.
- 25 Let their encampment become desolate,<sup>7</sup>  
in their tents be there none to dwell.
- 26 Because whom thou thyself hadst smitten they pursued,  
and unto the pain of thy wounded ones they must needs add.<sup>8</sup>
- 27 Lay punishment on their iniquity<sup>9</sup>  
and do not let them come into thy vindication.<sup>10</sup>
- 28 Let them be blotted out of the register of the living,<sup>11</sup>  
and with the righteous let them not be enrolled.
- 29 But I am humbled and in pain,  
thy salvation O God shall set me on high!
- 30 I would fain praise the name of God in a song,  
and would magnify him with thanksgiving;

1. Or: "as"—O.G.

2. Cp. Mt. 27:34.

3. Cp. Jn. 19:29.

4. Cp. Rom. 11:9, 10.

5. "And their peace-offerings"—Br.

6. Or: "bait." So Dr.

7. Cp. Acts 1:20.

8. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

9. "Impute guilt to their guiltiness"—Carter.

10. Or: "righteousness."

11. ="book of life"—Cp. Exo. 32:32, 33, Ps. 87:6, Isa. 4:3, Eze. 13:9,  
Dan. 12:1.

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- 31 And it will be more pleasing to Jehovah than a bullock,—  
a bull with horn and split hoof.  
32 The humble have seen and rejoice:  
ye seekers after God! let your hearts then revive,  
33 Because a hearkener to the needy is Jehovah,  
and his prisoners hath he not despised.  
34 Let the heavens and the earth praise him,  
the seas and everything gliding therein  
35 Because God will save Zion,  
and will build the cities of Judah,  
and men shall dwell there and possess it;  
36 And the seed of his servants shall inherit it,  
and the lovers of his name shall abide therein.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 69

Save me, O my God. The floods have risen. Deeper and deeper I sink in the mire; the waters rise around me.

3 I have wept until I am exhausted; my throat is dry and hoarse; my eyes are swollen with weeping, waiting for my God to act.

4 I cannot even count all those who hate me without cause. They are influential men, these who plot to kill me though I am innocent. They demand that I be punished for what I didn't do.

5 O God, You know so well how stupid I am, and You know all my sins.

6 O Lord God of the armies of heaven, don't let me be a stumbling block to those who trust in You. O God of Israel, don't let me cause them to be confused,

7 Though I am mocked and cursed and shamed for Your sake.

8 Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me!

9 My zeal for God and his work<sup>1</sup> burns hot within me. And because I advocate Your cause, Your enemies insult me even as they insult You.

10 How they scoff and mock me when I mourn and fast before the Lord!

1. Literally, "for Your house."

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11 How they talk about me when I wear sackcloth to show my humiliation and sorrow for my sins!

12 I am the talk of the town and the song of the drunkards.

13 But I keep right on praying to you, Lord. For now is the time—You are bending down to hear! You are ready with a plentiful supply of love and kindness! Now answer my prayer and rescue me as You promised.<sup>1</sup>

14 Pull me out of this mire. Don't let me sink in. Rescue me from those who hate me, and from these deep waters I am in.

15 Don't let the floods overwhelm me, or the ocean swallow me; save me from the pit that threatens me.

16 O Jehovah, answer my prayers, for Your loving kindness is wonderful; Your mercy is so plentiful, so tender and so kind.

17 Don't hide from me;<sup>2</sup> for I am in deep trouble. Quick! Come and save me.

18 Come, Lord, and rescue me. Ransom me from all my enemies.

19 You know how they talk about me, and how they so shamefully dishonor me. You see them all and know what each has said.

20 Their contempt has broken my heart; my spirit is heavy within me. If even one would show some pity, if even one would comfort me!

21 For food they give me poison; for my awful thirst they offered me vinegar.

22 Let their joys<sup>3</sup> turn to ashes and their peace disappear;

23 Let darkness, blindness and great feebleness be theirs.

24 Pour out Your fury upon them; consume them with the fierceness of Your anger.

25 Let their homes be desolate and abandoned.

26 For they persecute the one You have smitten; and scoff at the pain of the one You have pierced.

27 Pile their sins high and do not overlook them.

28 Let these men be blotted from the list<sup>4</sup> of the living; do not give them the joys of life with the righteous.

29 But rescue me, O God, from my poverty and pain.

1. Literally, "in the truth of Your salvation."

2. Literally, "Your servant."

3. Literally, "their table."

4. Or, "Let them be blotted out of the book of life."

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30 Then I will praise God with my singing! My thanks will be His praise—

31 That will please Him more than sacrificing a bullock or an ox.

32 The humble shall see their God at work for them. No wonder they will be so glad! All who seek for God shall live in joy.

33 For Jehovah hears the cries of His needy ones, and does not look the other way.

34 Praise Him, all heaven and earth! Praise Him, all the seas and everything in them!

35 For God will save Jerusalem;<sup>1</sup> He rebuilds the cities of Judah. His people shall live in them and not be dispossessed.

36 Their children shall inherit the land; all who love His name shall live there safely.

## EXPOSITION

This psalm is remarkable, on the one hand, for its terrible imprecations on enemies; and, on the other, for the frequency with which it is quoted in the New Testament: also, in a minor degree, for its manifestly composite structure, which sets stanzical arrangement at defiance—as may be seen by observing the varying indentations of the lines, which in the present rendering call attention to the numerous metrical changes evident in the Hebrew.

As to this past peculiarity, it may at once be remarked: That only by a drastic re-arrangement of its parts, can continuity of measure and symmetry of form be secured; and, even so, only at the risk of obliterating traces of living adaptation to his own circumstances effected by the final author: whose spontaneous comments on the two original psalms before him, we can here and there with probability distinguish. Readers caring to follow up this suggestion may find assistance by noting: That lines here set fully out in the margin are regarded as pentameters, those pushed in one degree at tetrameters, and those indented two degrees as trimeters, counting with Dr. Briggs by word-group beats. After making reasonable allowance for possible contractions and expansions of the lines without serious disturbance of the sense, there will still surely emerge to the critical eye clear indications that, in its present form, the psalm is decidedly composite.

1. Literally, "Zion."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

Neatly connected with these matters of form arises the always interesting question of authorship. The traditional headline traces the psalm ultimately to David; nor is this note of origin probably so easily discredited as some critics appear to suppose. The opening lines of this psalm remind us of the first stanza of Ps. 40, which we saw reason to conclude came from David's pen; and at the close of those lines (namely at ver. 4c) is a statement so peculiar that scholars have pronounced it a mere proverbial saying, the exact meaning of which is not to be pressed; *when I had seized nothing then had I to make good*. It seems not to have occurred to them to reflect how naturally this would become literally true of David, in those early days when he was accustomed to make raids in the name of King Saul into the territories of the Philistines and others, and when the hatred of the meaner spirits amongst Saul's courtiers had already begun to show itself. As, however, there is no temptation to attribute the entire psalm to David, it becomes easy to remark how well many parts of the psalm could have come from Hezekiah—especially its close. To what extent the early life of Hezekiah was conformed to that of David in respect of the stern discipline of suffering and waiting, perhaps we shall never know, but from slight indications, discovered in Psa. 35, 42 and 43, our minds are familiarised with the possibility that Hezekiah had a considerable share in sufferings such as are so emphatically memorialised in this psalm. Naturally, JEREMIAH stands pre-eminent as a prince of sufferers; and if in Ps. 31 we felt constrained to admit "the weeping prophet" into that gallery of portraits—even though placed there by the Sopherim (Intro., chap. I.)—it would be taking an extreme position to assume that we have none of Jeremiah's work in this psalm. Nevertheless the reasons for so late a date to the whole psalm are probably by no means so conclusive as, for instance, Kirkpatrick deems them to be. But, in truth, anything like adequacy in experience of suffering to prepare the psalmist for penning the more sorrowful of the strains before us, is the less anxiously to be sought, the more we perceive the spirit of the Messiah to have been at work in preparing these lines of lamentation. If even Briggs has to say: "This sufferer is doubtless the ideal community of Ps. 22, Is. 53; "how readily may we assure ourselves that "the ideal community" has to be summed up and made possible by the patiently borne sufferings of the IDEAL MAN who, to our eyes, is in those scriptures so plainly delineated.



## PSALM-SIXTY-NINE

In point of fact, as in previous psalms, so in this, the reachings forth of the Divine Spirit towards something more than types could express, are plainly visible; so that, for instance, as in Ps. 45 no "king most beautiful" can be found in Israel fully answering to the description there given, so probably it would be vain to expect to find in Israel any typical sufferer—or circle of sufferers—exhausting the terms of this psalm. Suffice it to observe, at this point, that whether with types or without them, many and undeserved are the woes which lead up to the great imprecatory passage which fills vers. 22-28 of this psalm: which, indeed, for length and intensity, is really not exceeded by Psalm 109.

Now there are several considerations which may well be urged in mitigation of the difficulty widely felt respecting the OUTCRIES FOR VENGEANCE which are scattered throughout the Old Testament; and which, in the devotional atmosphere of the Psalms, are, to many sensitive minds, painfully unacceptable.

In the *first* place, it should be considered: That desire for the punishment of persistent evil-doers, is an ineradicable instinct of the human breast, rooted in the persuasion that the Judge of all the earth must needs do right, and in the apprehension that, were it otherwise, all faith in the government of God would necessarily come to an end.

In the *second* place it should be remarked: That vengeance is seldom if ever expressed, with any show of Divine approval, except as provoked by atrocious crimes of wilful cruelty and bloodshed. In this very psalm, an aggravation of offence is alleged against those against whom imprecations are uttered:

*Because whom thou thyself had smitted they pursued,  
And unto the pain of thy wounded ones they must  
needs add.*

With which may be compared Isaiah 47:6 and other passages.

In the *third* place, it should be remembered: That there was no clear revelation, in those older times when the Old Testament was being written, of the reservation of rewards and punishments to a future life. Under such conditions the feeling naturally sprang up: "Now or never must justice be done!" Hence it was inevitable that, in periods of strain due to the triumph of the wicked, good men should cry out for early Divine intervention; so that normal moral conditions of life might be restored, and men generally be reassured that "there is fruit

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

to the righteous." Given, then, the instinctive impulse, the bitter occasion, and the time urgency—what wonder that grossly injured men should cry out to God for vengeance?

But in the *fourth* place, it should be called to mind: That to a large extent, times have been constitutionally changed since those Old Testament imprecations were uttered. For the Church of Christ, at least, a new Era has set in; seeing that the example, the commands, and especially the spirit of the Lord Jesus not only forbid outcries for vengeance, but render indulgence in them abhorrent to our better natures: so that what was excusable under the Law is unpardonable under the Gospel. We ourselves have been forgiven; and, at the risk of having our own pardon withdrawn (Mat. 18:21-35), we are solemnly bound by our Master to forgive even our enemies. Their repentance we must seek; and be ready to pardon. Hence we live in the atmosphere of forgiveness, human and divine. This is very much the reason why we are so shocked at the imprecations of the older time, and have to excuse ourselves from making them our own.

But this is not all. We have now, in the *fifth* place, to brace up our minds and to sharpen our vision to perceive and to realise: That the forgiveness of injuries is only a partial and after all temporary manifestation of the spirit of Christ. It is binding on individual Christians, and binding on the collective Church; but it is certainly not binding on the civil magistrate, or he would indeed "hold the sword in vain;" and even on individual Christians and the collective Church, it is, though binding, yet transitionally educative rather than of absolute and permanent obligation. For the present, retaliation is forbidden: for the present, forgiveness of injuries is enjoined: for the present, the forcible suppression of evil is to a real and serious degree postponed: for the present, prayers for the punishment of evil-doers naturally falter on our lips. Adequately to realise this is to reach a vantage ground which reveals on the one hand to what a spiritual elevation our Lord Christ has uplifted us, and on the other hand that the kingdom of God comprehensively viewed has in it lower levels which must be included. The most effective way to bring this home to us to study, not the earthly life only of our Master, but his entire commission as Redeemer and Monarch of mankind. On earth, he did not curse; he only blessed. But he warned, and uttered woes; he denounced, and he predicted; and the woes that trembled on his lips seemed to fore-

## PSALM-SIXTY-NINE

cast the terrible "accursed" which he knew he should have to utter when he should sit as king on his throne of glory (Mat. 25:41). And, finally, "the wrath of the Lamb," in its partial unveiling, is seen in the Apocalypse to strike apprehensive consternation into the hearts of men who would if they could hide themselves from its terrors (Rev. 6:16, 17). So that, when we declare that the spirit of Christ is opposed to imprecations on the doers of wrong, this statement needs to be brought under the regulative restriction: That the Messiah in his humiliation, while as yet he was learning obedience by the things that he suffered (Heb. 2:10) might not curse, and did not; but that, when released by his Father from that severe course of discipline, his "love of righteousness and hatred of lawlessness," may and must so flame forth that "his own right hand shall teach him fearful things" (Ps. 45:4). Whether as it is now with him so it will hereafter be with us, when vested with immortal strength to bear so weighty a responsibility, may to some minds seem speculative and doubtful, and in any case probably remains to be seen. Ideally considered, it might seem fitting that, even to the Church, regarded as the Bride of the Lamb, should NOT be given the work of inflicting punishment on offenders, nor even be assigned the duty of offering prayers for its infliction; but, if not to Christians as such, yet almost certainly to Hebrews, there is in store a prerogative of vengeance of which the most formidable of Gentile nations might do well to stand in fear. Anything more solemnly admonitory in that direction than Ps. 149 cannot well be conceived; seeing that therein Jehovah's very "men of kindness" are taught that it will be nothing less than a splendid service which they shall render when they are commissioned to—

"Let extollings of God be in their throats,  
And a two-edged sword be in their hand;  
To execute an avenging on the nations,  
(To inflict) chastisements on the peoples;  
To bind their kings with chains,  
And their honorables with fetters of iron,—  
To execute upon them the sentence written."

Let Turkey beware! Let Russia beware! And let us British Christians learn to respect and not be wholly ashamed of the punitive element in our Holy Oracles.

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The QUOTATIONS made from this psalm in the N.T. are too instructive to be passed over in silence. From Mat. 27:34 and Jn. 19:28, 29; also from Jn. 2:17, 15:25, and Rom. 15:3, we see how clearly the Apostles discovered in their Lord the Sufferer of the psalm. From Acts 1:20, we gather how the imprecations of the psalm served the useful purpose of preparing the minds of his fellow-apostles for the falling of Judas out of their number. And, finally, from Rom. 11:9, 10, we perceive that this psalm assisted the Apostle Paul in accepting the unwelcome conviction that a temporary hardening of heart had been permitted by God to befall his own chosen people. In fine, while on the one hand there is in the N.T. no distinct echo of the maledictions of this psalm—no direct cursing therefrom repeated; yet, on the other hand, there is no shrinking from the practical use thereof in other ways—on the contrary, the evidence goes to shew how deeply its lessons had engraven themselves on the most godly minds in Israel. We ourselves also, in humble obedience to our Lord, must abstain from cursing—from making our own its prayers for the punishment for the wicked, even the maliciously injurious; but, if we enter intelligently into the reasons why this abstention becomes our duty, we can then study to profit this and the like examples of O.T. imprecations. The high standard of poetic beauty mostly attained by these stern lyrics may excite our reverent admiration; while the intense moral earnestness which they breathe may help to brace our minds to the strong and healthful conviction that in sacred things there should be no trifling, and that, after all, justice is the foundation of grace.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham feels this psalm practically defies outlining. Scroggie on the other hand offers this outline: "The Song is divided into two equal parts (1-18) and (19-36). Each of the two main parts have three minor parts—This is a personal psalm and the writer is always in view: (1) His Condition 1-6; (2) His Claim 7-12; (3) His Cry 13-18; (4) His Calamity 19-21; (5) His Curse 22-28; (6) His Confidence 29-36." Please read the psalm with this outline before you—see if it fits. Discuss.
2. The authorship of this psalm seems to be a real problem—are we to abandon the Davidic authorship? Discuss.

## PSALM SIXTY-NINE, SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

3. Why do so many students suppose that Jeremiah was the author? Cf. Jer. 15:15-18; 11:18-23; Lam. 3:53-58. Discuss this possibility.
4. This psalm is quoted often in the New Testament—Cf. Matt. 27:34; Jh. 2:17; 15:25; 19:28, 29; Rom. 15:3; 11:9, 10. What do these New Testament references teach us about this psalm?
5. Rotherham gives five fine observations concerning the OUT-cries for Vengeance found in this psalm and others. Please list and discuss his observations.

## PSALM 70, 71

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer Not to be Forsaken in Old Age.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3 (70), Prayer against Enemies. Stanza II., vers. 4, 5 (70), Prayer in behalf of Friends. Stanza III., vers. 1-3 (71), Prayer for Rescue and Deliverance, with Appeals to Divine Righteousness and Protection. Stanza IV., vers. 4-6 (71), For Deliverance from One who is Lawless, Perverse and Ruthless, sought by Reference to Youthful Days. Stanza V., vers. 7-9 (71), The Wonders of a Lifetime are pleaded against Rejection in Old Age. Stanza VI., vers. 10-13 (71), Urgency against Appearance of being Forsaken. Stanza VII., vers. 14-16 (71), More Hopeful Strain. Stanza VIII., vers. 17-19 (71), Renewed references to Youth and Age, coupled with desire by this Aged Saint to do more for his Matchless God. Stanza IX., vers. 20-24 (71), In view of Resurrection, whose-souled Praise is Promised, aided by Lute, Lyre, Lips and Tongue.

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(Lm.) By David—To bring to remembrance.

- 1 Be pleased<sup>1</sup> O God to rescue me,  
Jehovah! to help me oh make haste!
- 2 Put to shame and abashed<sup>2</sup> be they who are seeking my life,<sup>3</sup>  
Turned back and confounded be they who are taking  
pleasure in my hurt,<sup>4</sup>

1. So *Gt.*: cp. 40:13—*Gn.* Cp. throughout w. 40:13-17.

2. Cp. 71:24.

3. *U.*: "soul."

4. Cp. 71:13, 24; also 35:4, 26, 40:14.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 3 Let them turn back on account of their own shame  
who are saying<sup>1</sup>—"Aha! Aha!"<sup>2</sup>
- 4 Glad and joyful in thee be all who are seekers of thee,  
and let them say continually "God<sup>3</sup> be magnified!"<sup>4</sup>  
who are lovers of thy salvation.
- 5 Since I am humbled and needy O God do haste for me!  
my help and my deliverer art thou  
Jehovah!<sup>5</sup> do not tarry.

(Nm.)

## PSALM 71

(Nm.)

- 1 In thee Jehovah have I taken refuge,  
let me not be put to shame to the ages:
- 2 In thy righteousness wilt thou rescue me and deliver me,  
incline unto me thine ear and save me:
- 3 Be thou unto me a rock of refuge<sup>6</sup>  
a place of security<sup>7</sup> for saving me,  
because my cliff<sup>8</sup> and my fastness art thou.<sup>9</sup>
- 4 My God! deliver me from the hand of a lawless one,  
from the grasp of a perverse and ruthless one;
- 5 For thou are mine expectation Sovereign Lord,  
Jehovah my trust from my youthful days:
- 6 On thee have I stayed myself from birth,  
thou art he that severed me from the body of my mother,—<sup>10</sup>  
of thee shall be my praise continually.
- 7 A very wonder have I been to multitudes,  
but thou hast been my strong refuge.

1. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Cyr., Vul.) add: "of me"; cp. 40:13—Gn.

2. Cp. 35:21.

3. Some cod. (w. Aram. and Vul.): "Jehovah"; cp. 40:16—Gn.

4. Cp. 35:27.

5. Some cod. (w. 6 ear. pr. edns. and Syr.): "O my God"; cp. 40:18—Gn.

6. So in some cod. (w. 6 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Sep., Vul.): cp. 31:2—

Gn. M.T.: "rock of habitation."

7. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Vul.); cp. 31:2—Gn.

8. Cp. 42:9.

9. Cp. 31:2, 3.

10. Cp. 22:9.

PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

- 8 My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,  
all the day with thy splendour,<sup>1</sup>
- 9 Do not cast me off in old age,<sup>2</sup>.....  
when my vigour faileth do not forsake me.
- 10 For mine enemies hath said concerning me,—  
yea the watchers for my life<sup>3</sup> have taken counsel together,—
- 11 Saying, “God himself hath forsaken him,  
pursue and capture him for there is no one to rescue him!”
- 12 O God! be not far from me,  
my God! to help me oh make haste.<sup>4</sup>
- 13 Put to shame and confounded<sup>5</sup> be they who are accusing  
my soul,  
covered with reproach and confusion be they who are seeking  
my hurt.<sup>6</sup>
- 14 But I continually will hope,  
and will add to all thy praise.
- 15 My mouth shall record thy righteousness,  
all the day thy salvation,—  
though I know not how to record it.<sup>7</sup>
- 16 I will enter into the mighty doings of Adonai,  
Jehovah! I will mention thy righteousness thine alone.
- 17 O God! thou hast taught me from my youthful days,  
and hitherto have I been declaring thy wondrous works:
- 18 Even now therefore that I am old and grey-headed<sup>8</sup>  
O God! do not forsake me,—  
until I declare thine arm to a (new) generation—<sup>9</sup>  
to everyone who is<sup>10</sup> to come thy might.
- 19 And as for thy righteousness up to the height,  
wherein thou hast done great things  
O God! who is like unto thee?
- 20 Whereas thou hast let me<sup>11</sup> see many distresses and  
misfortunes  
thou shalt again restore me<sup>11</sup> to life,

1. Or: “beauty,” adoring.”

2. Cp. ver. 18.

3. U.: “soul.”

4. Cp. 70:1, 5.

5. So some cod.: cp. 35:4—Gn.

6. Cp. 35:4, 28, 40:14, 70:2.

7. Ml.: “numbers” or “records.”

8. Cp. ver. 9; also 1 Sam. 12:2.

9. Sep.: “to every generation that is coming.”

10. A sp. vr. (sevir): “all who are”—Gn.

11. Written “us”: reud “me” (w. Sep. and other authorities)—Gn.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- yea out of the deeps of the earth shalt thou again bring me<sup>1</sup>  
up:
- 21 Increase thou my greatness  
and on every side console me.
- 22 I also will thank thee by the aid of the lute for thy truth  
O my God,  
I will make melody unto thee with a lyre O Holy One of  
Israel!
- 23 My lips shall ring out their joy when I make melody unto  
thee,—  
yea my soul which thou hast ransomed:
- 24 My tongue also all the day shall talk to me of thy  
righteousness,  
because put to shame because abashed are they who were  
seeking my hurt.<sup>2</sup>

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 70

Rescue me, O God! Lord, hurry to my aid!

2, 3 They are after my life, and delight in hurting me.  
Confuse them! Shame them! Stop them! Don't let them keep  
on mocking me!

4 But fill the followers of God with joy! Let those who love  
Your salvation exclaim, "What a wonderful God He is!"

5 But I am in deep trouble. Rush to my aid, for only You  
can help and save me. O Lord, don't delay.

#### PSALM 71

Lord, You are my refuge! Don't let me down!

2 Save me from my enemies, for You are just! Rescue me!  
Bend down Your ear and listen to my plea and save me.

3 Be to me a great protecting rock, where I am always  
welcome, safe from all attacks. For You have issued the order  
to save me.

4 Rescue me, O God, from these unjust and cruel men.

5 O Lord, You alone are my hope; I've trusted You from  
childhood.

1. *Written* "us"; *read* "me" (w. Sep. and other authorities)—Gn.

2. Cp. 70:2.



## PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

6 Yes, You have been with me from birth and have helped me constantly—no wonder I am always praising You!

7 My success—at which so many stand amazed—is because You are my mighty protector.

8 All day long I'll praise and honor You, O God, for all that You have done for me.

9 And now, in my old age, don't set me aside! Don't forsake me now when my strength is failing!

10 My enemies are whispering,

11 "God has forsaken him! Now we can get him. There is no one to help him now!"

12 O God, don't stay away! Come quickly! Help!

13 Destroy them! Cover them with failure and disgrace—these enemies of mine.

14 I will keep on expecting You to help me. I praise You more and more.

15 I cannot count the times when You have faithfully rescued me from danger. I will tell everyone how good You are, and of Your constant, daily care.

16 I walk in the strength of the Lord God. I tell everyone that You alone are just and good.

17 O God, You have helped me from my earliest childhood—and I have constantly testified to others of the wonderful things You do.

18 And now that I am old and gray, don't forsake me. Give me time to tell this new generation (and their children too) about all Your mighty miracles.

19 Your power and goodness, Lord, reach to the highest heavens. You have done such wonderful things. Where is there another God like You?

20 You have let me sink down deep in desperate problems. But You will bring me back to life again, up from the depths of the earth.

21 You will give me greater honor than before, and turn again and comfort me.

22 I will praise You with music, telling of Your faithfulness to all Your promises, O Holy One of Israel.

23 I will shout and sing Your praises for redeeming me.

24 I will talk to others all day long about Your justice and Your goodness. For all who tried to hurt me have been disgraced and dishonored.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### EXPOSITION

Although by this time the general terms and tenor of this compound psalm have become so familiar as to render detailed exposition needless, yet are there several most interesting questions which cluster around this composition as a whole. And first there is the position that it *is* a compound psalm—in other words that the two psalms are really one. Dr. Thirtle comes to the natural conclusion that, lacking any inscriptional line to divide them, they should be conjoined; and when we examine the contents in quest of confirmatory internal evidence, the result must be pronounced satisfactory, as the references appended to the two psalms will sufficiently indicate.

We next observe that, with a single exception, this psalm stands alone in its specific allusions to *old age*, and absolutely alone in the pathetic character of those allusions. In Ps. 92 the reference is wholly triumphant, as an outburst of joy in the assurance that the righteous do still bring forth fruit in old age. Here a very different note is struck. It is the plaintive appeal of an old man, that he may not be *forsaken* now that his *vigour* is departing from him. This note is the more touching in that it is deliberately repeated, and is set in striking contrast with the memories of a long and chequered life.

In point of fact, this feature of the psalm at once raises the familiar question of authorship, investing it, in the present instance, with an especial interest; inasmuch as we at once become inquisitive as to what psalm-composing saint of those olden times is likely to have been so deeply moved and so clearly depressed by the consciousness of advancing years, as the writer of this psalm manifestly is. The ascription of the psalm to *David*, naturally reminds us that this famous singer himself lived to become an old man; and the example of Ps. 39 would have prepared us for a sombre outlook, had that been all that is here in evidence; but it certainly would not have led us to look for an apprehension of being *forsaken*! The glimpse given us in Chronicles of the venerable monarch dedicating his bountiful gifts and those of his people for the building and furnishing of the Temple (1 Ch. 29), utterly forbids the supposition that David could have feared being forsaken in his old age. We are not surprised, therefore, that these critics who are pre-disposed to post-date the authorship of the Psalms, should think of Jeremiah rather than of David as the writer, nor are we much surprised

## PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

to find so conservative a critic as Delitzsch strongly inclining to that opinion: the drawback against that hypothesis being the not very serious one, that there is nothing beyond conjecture, or at most plausibility, to sustain the thought that the "weeping prophet" continued weeping till the last—though, even had he done so, it may be surmised it would rather have been over Jerusalem than over himself. But now, further noticing that, according to its superscription, this pathetic psalm was designed *To bring to remembrance*, the suggestion arises whether it may not enshrine *memorials* of the prophet *Samuel* himself: leaving David as the actual writer of the psalm, even as many of the incidents alluded to are Davidic, and much of the imagery is Davidic; still, embodying strains with which the youthful harpist first became familiar from the lips of the venerable president of the school of the prophets. The more we think of it, the more this supposition attracts us, at least as an alternative opinion—not the less so in that such a persuasion strikes a companion note to that which would trace to Samuel the first beginnings of the so-called Wisdom Literature. What, if in Samuel's long and consecrated life, should be discovered the seeds of Sacred Song and the training of Sacred Minstrels, as well as the shaping of proverbs and aphorisms, the evolution of Sacred Drama? How did those sons of the prophets cultivate their gifts; they used musical instruments—therefore they sang, therefore they must have had, and probably composed, songs for singing. If his pupils did this must not he, their president, have had the gifts needed for their guidance? Assuming this probability, it is obvious to remark next, that Samuel had much in his old age to sadden him and to draw from him on a memorable occasion a pathetic reference to his grey hairs (1 Sam. 12:2): his sons not following in his steps, the people becoming envious and discontented, Saul a failure as king. We know that Samuel and David came into contact; and we ask whether it is not within the bounds of likelihood that, on some never-to-be forgotten occasion, the forebodings of Samuel's troubled heart found rhythmical utterance in terms which made a profound impression on David's mind; and that, although the latter may never have used them, hitherto, yet now at length, when his own age is advancing, with sufficient self-consciousness to move his sympathy from other ageing men, these strains are revived with sufficient strength to urge him to embalm them in a psalm of exquisite tenderness

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

and deep pathos. As soon as this likelihood finds lodgment in our minds and we again peruse the psalm under its influence, expression after expression leaps out into vividness as even more suited to Samuel's story than to any other with which we are familiar. Who, more fittingly than he could claim that Jehovah had been his *trust* and his *teacher from his youthful days*? Who, so justly as he, could assert that he had been spending *his life hitherto in declaring God's wonders*? Who, so well as the trainer of prophets and minstrels, could plead with such force to be spared yet a little longer to prepare instructors for *coming generations*? We do not dogmatise; nor do we more than suggest the traces of an influence affecting the avowed singer's mind. The psalm is David's—at least, it has upon it the tokens of his experience, the abounding of his figures of speech; but it is enriched with memories other than his own, memories which strengthen rather than weaken the claims of the psalm to be attributed to him.

There is one other matter claiming attention before this psalm is dismissed, namely, its assertion of a hope of resurrection (71:20). The surprising thing about this is the degree to which such an assertion has been obscured by translators and expositors; by translators, in softening down, to the ambiguous idea of "quickenings," of a word which primarily means *to restore to life*; and by expositors, in a rather hasty and needless turning aside to a mere national resuscitation. The correct principle of interpretation surely is—first, fact—then figure; first, the individual—then the national. Who would speak of the *birth* of a nation, to whom the birth of an individual was not familiar? In like manner, who would think of the *re-birth*, or resurrection, of a nation, to whom the re-birth or resurrection of the individual was not already pre-supposed, as the more familiar conception? It might have been thought that in a text like this, wherein the parallel of resuscitation is the being *brought up out of the deeps of the earth*, in clear recognition of the Hebrew doctrine of Sheol or Hades (cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Hades"), the assertion of individual resurrection would have been allowed a chance of asserting itself. But no! Delitzsch Perowne, and Kirkpatrick all fail us; and even the Massorites are blamed for preferring the singular "me" to the plural "us" in their various readings, notwithstanding the admitted fact that they had the Septuagint and other ancient versions to justify their

## PSALM SEVENTY AND SEVENTY-ONE

preference, and the further fact that—according to the confession of Dr. Briggs—"the first person singular best suits the context." The last-named critic does not hesitate to apply the entire Psalm to the Hebrew nation, with regard to its *old age* as well as with regard to its *youth*. Now, we can understand how a nation may not hesitate to count itself to be still young; but it is by no means so easy to acquiesce in the likelihood that it would complacently and pathetically confess itself to be aged and nearly worn out. In fact we cannot help wondering, at what precise stage of *this* nation's existence, it settled down so easily to the admission that it had become decrepit, as to find heart to *sing about its pitiable senility!* And this concerning a race remarkable for its longevity, and whose embodied nationality may, after more than five-and-twenty centuries' further lapse, be only in abeyance. Would it not be better to admit frankly, that a nation may easily, in song, regard itself as summed up in the persons of its chief heroes, without wiping those heroes out of personal existence, or assuming that they had no individual experience worth recording? And further, in the admitted infrequency of O.T. allusions to a future life and to incorruption, is it worthy of Christian scholars to pare down those allusions to the lowest possible number? Rather let us hear and individual hope, whether voiced by Samuel or by David or by Jeremiah, triumphantly expressing itself by saying:

Whereas thou hast let me see many distresses and  
misfortunes,  
Thou shalt again restore me to life,  
Yea out of the deeps of the earth shalt thou bring  
me up.

And then, if you will, leave it to Hezekiah, to bring up *lute* and *lyre* and *lips* and *soul* and *tongue* to celebrate the glowing expectation.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### Psalm 70

1. Why are these two psalms considered as one?
2. Read Psalms 40:13-17. Why is this psalm repeated?
3. Evidently these verses had a special appeal for a special occasion. What was the occasion? Could you give some imaginative guess?

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

### Psalm 71

1. This is indeed a unique psalm in several particulars:—the allusions to old age is one—the nature of such allusions is also unique—how? Could you give another unusual quality about this psalm?
2. The question of authorship is raised—what prevents us from accepting the title—"By David"? Several other authors have been suggested—name two. Rotherham has an interesting suggestion as to authorship—who is it?
3. Read verse twenty of this psalm—is this a reference to life after death—to the resurrection? Discuss.
4. Could this psalm be used to aid the aged today? Read the paraphrase version before you answer. Discuss.

## PSALM 72

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A People's Prayer for a Perfect King.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Prayer for King of Royal Descent, that the Divine Attributes of Justice and Righteousness may be Given Him, and that he may exercise them with Fruitfulness and Efficiency. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Unlimited Continuance, Penetrating Gentleness, Abounding Fruitfulness, and Universal Extension, desired for his reign. Stanza III., vers. 9-11, The Submission to Him of All Enemies and Rivals, is besought. Stanza IV., vers. 12-15, these Petitions are based upon the King's Effective Interposition for the Needy and Helpless. Stanza V., vers. 16-17, Material Prosperity and the Brightening of City Life, entreated; as Rebounding to the Perpetual Praise of the King, and as Realising Ancient Covenant Blessing. Benediction: Closing this Second Book of Psalms, and therewith associating the God of Israel and his wondrous doings with all the Earth, which is thus filled with his glory.

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(Lm.) By Solomon.

- 1 O God! thy justice<sup>1</sup> to the King do thou give,  
and thy righteousness unto the son of a king;

1. "So Sep. and Jerome in accordance with the parallel 'righteous.'"—Br. M.T.: "just decisions" ("rights"—Del.)

PSALM SEVENTY-TWO

- 2 May he judge thy people with righteousness,  
and thy humbled ones with justice:
- 3 May the mountains bear<sup>1</sup> tidings of welfare to the people,  
and the hills in righteousness:
- 4 May he vindicate the humbled of the people,  
bring salvation to the sons of the needy;  
and crush the oppressor.
- 5 May he continue<sup>2</sup> as long as the sun,  
and in presence of the moon,—  
to generation of generations.
- 6 May he come down as rain on meadows to be mown,  
as myriad drops replenishing the earth.
- 7 May there be a springing forth in his days of righteousness,<sup>3</sup>  
and an abundance of welfare until there be no moon.
- 8 And may he have dominion from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- 9 Before him may adversaries<sup>4</sup> kneel  
and as for his foes the dust may they lick!
- 10 The Kings of Tarshish and the Coastlands a gift may they  
render,  
the kings of Sheba and Seba a present bring near.
- 11 And may there bow down to him all kings,  
all nations do service to him.
- 12 Because he rescueth the needy from the mighty,<sup>5</sup>  
and the humbled when there is no helper for him:
- 13 Hath pity on the weak and the needy,  
and the lives<sup>6</sup> of the needy saveth:
- 14 From oppression and violence redeemeth their life,<sup>7</sup>  
and precious is their blood in his sight:
- 15 "Let him live then! and let there be given to him of the gold  
of Sheba;"

1. "The mountains are personified for the messengers who come over them, proclaiming from all parts the prevalence of peace and righteousness —Br. Otherwise, if the verb be rendered "bear"="bring forth": "May peace or well-being be the fruit that ripens upon all mountains and hills" —Del.

2. So Sep. (*sunparamenei*).

3. So in some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

4. "So most moderns"—O.G. 850. Reading *zarim* for *zum*. M.T.: "desert dwellers."

5. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "him that crieth out."

6. U.: "their souls."

7. U.: "their soul."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- so will he pray for him continually,  
all the day invoke on him blessing!<sup>1</sup>
- 16 May there be an expanse<sup>2</sup> of corn in the earth unto the top  
of the mountains,  
and the fruit thereof rustle like Lebanon;  
and they of the city bloom like fresh shoots of the earth.
- 17 Be his name to the ages,  
in presence of the sun fruitful<sup>3</sup> be his name!  
May all the families of the ground<sup>4</sup> bless themselves in him  
all nations pronounce him happy.
- 18 Blessed be Jehovah God of Israel,<sup>5</sup>  
who doeth wondrous things by himself alone;
- 19 And blessed be his glorious name to the ages,  
and filled with his glory be all the earth:  
Amen and amen!
- 20 Ended are the prayers of David son of Jesse.  
(Lm. None; unless ver. 20 be one.)

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 72

O God, help the king to judge as You would, and help his son to walk in godliness.

2 Help him to give justice to Your people, even to the poor!

3 May the mountains and hills flourish in prosperity because of his good reign.

4 Help him to defend the poor and needy and to crush their oppressors.

5 May the poor and needy revere You constantly, as long as sun and moon continue in the skies! Yes forever!

6 May the reign of this Son<sup>6</sup> of mine be as gentle and fruit-

1. "The poor man is he who revives and is endowed, who intercedes and blesses; while the king is the beneficent giver. It is left for the reader to supply in thought the right subjects to the separate verbs"—Del.

2. "An abundance that occupies a wide space"—Del. "Expanse(?)"—Dr.

3. Ml.: "propagate," or "be propagated." Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.)—"be established"—Gn.

4. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Vul.)—Gn. Cp. Gen. 12:3.

5. M.T.: "Jehovah God, God of Israel;" but some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.) omit first occurrence of "God"—Gn.

6. The reference seems to look beyond Solomon's son to Jesus the Messiah.



## PSALM SEVENTY-TWO

ful as the springtime rains upon the grass—like showers that water the earth!

7 May all good men flourish in His reign with abundance of peace and to the end of time.

8 Let Him reign from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

9 The desert nomads shall bow before Him; His enemies shall fall face downward in the dust.

10 Kings along the Mediterranean coast—the kings of Tarshish and the islands—and those from Sheba and from Seba—all will bring their gifts.

11 Yes, kings from everywhere! All will bow before Him! All will serve Him!

12 He will take care of the helpless and poor when they cry to Him; for they have no one else to defend them.

13 He feels pity for the weak and needy, and will rescue them.

14 He will have them from oppression and from violence, for their lives are precious to Him.

15 And He shall live; and to Him will be given the gold of Sheba, and there will be constant praise<sup>1</sup> for Him. His people<sup>2</sup> will bless Him all day long.

16 Bless us with abundant crops throughout the land, even on the highland plains; may there be fruit like that of Lebanon; may the cities be as full of people as the fields are of grass.

17 His name will be honored forever; it will continue as the sun; and all will be blessed in Him; all nations will praise Him.

18 Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, Who only does wonderful things!

19 Blessed be His glorious name forever! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and amen!

20 (This ends the psalms of David, son of Jesse.)

## EXPOSITION

If we assume that behind this psalm lay many prayers by David taking effect in the mind of Solomon his son by fostering a worthy ideal of what a good king might do for his people and a determination to fulfil that ideal; and that the youthful heir to the throne himself embodied that ideal and that determination

1. Literally, "men shall pray for him continually."

2. Implied. Literally, "they" or "he."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

in a prayer to be used by his people on his accession to the throne,—we shall probably form a correct conception of the origin of the psalm. The deep and wide desire here expressed is worthy of David; the form it assumes is Solomonic to a marked degree; and if, beyond this, there are conceptions going far beyond any which we should have thought it likely that Solomon would entertain,—these we may attribute in part to the educative influence which we have elsewhere seen cause to attribute to the Davidic Kingly covenant communicated through Nathan the prophet, and partly to the free action of the inspiring Spirit on the psalmist's mind. There is certainly one element in the psalm, which might have seemed at first sight better suited to a later reign, such as that of Hezekiah—following the declension of King Ahaz's days, or even of Josiah—succeeding to the corruptions of the reigns of Manasseh and Amon; namely, a background of existing oppression and wrong, loudly calling for relief, and which we can with difficulty imagine David to have bequeathed to his son Solomon. If, notwithstanding this, we feel, as well we may, that at no later period than that immediately succeeding David's day, could there have been, in the atmosphere, such a constellation of bright hopes, ready for recognition and psalmody, as here bursts upon our view, then we must needs see, once more, the Antitype breaking loose from the Type, and going beyond it. And this is, in all probability, what we are here called upon to recognise; for, if, with the Targum, we hold that this Ideal King is ultimately the Messiah, and if we look for Messiah's manifested reign to follow upon the evil domination of Antichrist, it is easy to see what a throng of wicked deeds of oppression, the world over, will be waiting for relief and redress when the Messiah himself ascends the Throne of David.

Not only in respect of manifold oppressions needing royal interposition in order to their removal, do we here perceive an element carrying us beyond Solomon, but in other ways besides; for example, in the universality of his dominion, in the peerless glory of his name, and in the realisation through the Ideal King of the worldwide blessing promised to Abraham. Leaving the thoughtful reader to conceive, as best he may, how mighty the Messianic impulse of the psalm thus appears, it may serve a useful purpose to emphasise one or two of the more obvious characteristics of the Ideal King as here portrayed.

## PSALM SEVENTY-TWO

The central position and causal efficacy of Stanza IV. are remarkable. This stanza is introduced by the only *Because* of the psalm. And here let us note what it is that leads up to this stronghold of the logical sense—that it is nothing less than the Imperial Supremacy which is desired for the Ideal King. Let his *adversaries kneel* before him; let his *foes lick the dust*; let *distant kings* come to *render him homage* with their *rich gifts*; in short, let *all kings bow down to him* and *all nations do him service*; BECAUSE he deserves it—because he deserves it in a peculiar way, with a worth proved by deeds, deeds of pity and love and matchless generosity; for note how the verbs are accumulated in support of this one strong *because*: “because” he *rescueth, hath pity, saveth, redeemeth*, and finally, if Delitzsch is correct in the striking climax to which he brings this stanza, *endoweth*, out of his own royal treasury, the lives that he spareth: —THEREFORE let all kings and nations do him willing homage and service, gladly acknowledging that never such a king bare rule before. Not by doings of power, but by deeds of love, is universal dominion here desired.

And yet there is power behind and along with the love: power wielded by love, power giving effect to love—no pity for the perverters of justice, to the extent of sparing them to be perverters again. No! the implied threats to those who wrong their poor neighbors, are strong as iron, fitted to strike terror into cruel hearts. In order that he may *vindicate the humbled* and *bring salvation to the needy*, let him—so it is expressly desired—*let him crush the oppressor! May his foes lick the dust.* Language like this ought to stand high and clear above the possibility of mistake.

Nevertheless, this Ideal King knows how to be gentle. It is desired that his beneficent influence be *like rain coming down on a mowing*, bringing the crop to perfection before it is cut. How much that beautiful phrase, *coming down*, suggests—of efficacious gentleness, descending into all the nooks and crannies and crevices of actual lowly life. Nor does the psalmist shrink from pointing to actual temporal benefits, anticipated to result from this gentle yet strong king's dominion. In language which it would be a sin to spiritualize, he prays, that, instead of *uncultivated wastes*, agriculture may carry her triumphs, terrace above terrace, to the summits of the mountains; and then, while the breezes of Lebanon are still upon his cheeks, he thinks of

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the pale-faced *city-dwellers*, and desires that they may *bloom like the fresh shoots of the earth*.

Such is the picture. It is Messianic. But it is unfulfilled. It does not correspond with the spiritual and invisible reign of the Messiah in heaven. It is a mockery of the down-trodden of earth, to treat this psalm as if it were now in course of fulfilment. It is valid, but it is in reserve. It has never yet been fulfilled; but it will be fulfilled in the letter and in the spirit. Why its accomplishment has been so long delayed, must be sought elsewhere. Meantime, a comprehensive study of all the psalms which have a direct bearing on the Kingdom of God, will assist the student to get upon the high-road of correct and successful interpretation. When men are ready to do ungrudgingly honour to the God of Israel, then will the time not be far distant when the *whole earth shall be filled with his glory*. Cp. Intro., Chapter III., "Kingdom."

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There seems to be at least two ideal kings—who are they?
2. All of the characteristics of God's ideal king cannot find fulfillment in anyone in the history of Israel—what is important about this thought?
3. What shall we say of "existing oppression and wrong, loudly calling for relief" if we relate this psalm to the time of Solomon? Discuss.
4. There is the wonderful promise of the universal reign of this king—"his adversaries will kneel before him; his foes will lick the dust, distant kings will come to do him homage—and to give him gifts—*why* will there be such a response to this king?
5. Give five blessings granted because of this king. Discuss
6. When will all these grand descriptions become a reality? Discuss.